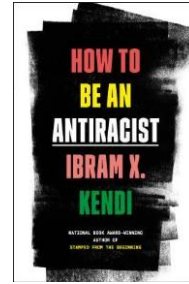


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The lexicon of Antiracism and Critical Race Theory

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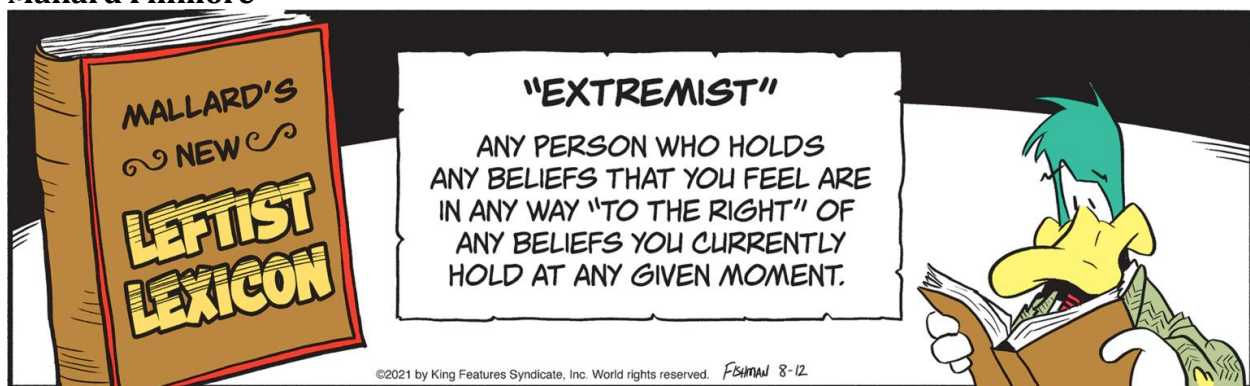
Professor Ibram X. Kendi's 2019 book has been a boon to the celebrity and energy of Critical Race Theory (CRT). That book, "How to be an Antiracist," is very much Kendi's autobiography. He weaves together his life experiences with explanations of how they affected his unique concept of racism and how to eliminate it.

CRT has a reputation of teaching that America's history and governance should be viewed exclusively through a prism of racial conflict. Kendi's analyses and explanation reflect that approach.

An important part of Kendi's message is to develop and communicate the new and developing language of his theories. He's careful to gradually introduce most chapters with an explanation of important terminology. I initially started referring to this as his "glossary."

Rather than it being a mere glossary, however, I eventually realized this list of terms, words, and explanations can act as sort of an outline of Kendi's theory of antiracism. I relied on Mallard Fillmore, via the cartoon below, to provide me with a proper label for this material. I decided to call this list a "lexicon."

Mallard Fillmore



The lexicon is presented in the approximate order Kendi introduces each item. I include terms and words that he uses to introduce each chapter. Those entries are embellished with other definitions and context provided throughout the text. You will find the terminology is very nuanced. Often one of the author's definitions require a follow-up definition to clarify his meaning. Very seldom is a definition or explanation the product of my interpretation.

The book is difficult and confusing to read. This is partly due to the confusion of introducing a new vocabulary, but it's mostly due to the nuanced and circular reasoning and writing Kendi employs. Perhaps that's by design as a clever defensive measure. The book's style makes it difficult to pin down CRT proponents when questioning them. For example, here's a quote of Professor Kendi answering a question at a symposium:

I would define [racism] as a collection of racist policies that lead to racial inequity and are substantiated by racist ideas. (A "Patriot Post" commentator made this observation: "Racism is racism that leads to racism substantiated by racism. Got it.")

Here's an example of a typical "Kendi explanation" that you would find when reading the book (which I'm not recommending):

We use the terms "demonstration" and "protest" interchangeably, at our own peril, like we interchangeably use the terms "mobilizing" and "organizing." A protest is organizing people for a prolonged campaign that forces racist power to change a policy. A demonstration is mobilizing people momentarily to publicize a problem.

Obviously, I don't intend this material to be relaxing bedside reading. It's just a reference I put together to help me better understand the important current CRT debate. Just glance briefly at the next few pages to see what I've provided.

Lexicon of Antiracism

Chapter 1. Definitions

Racist: One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea.

Antiracist: One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea.

Racist vs. Antiracist policy: The defining question for determining racist vs. antiracist policy is whether the discrimination is creating equity or inequity. If a discriminatory policy is creating equity, then it is antiracist. If it is creating inequity, then it is racist.

Equity: This describes a condition when different groups are on approximate equal footing.

Non-racist: Race neutrality, often referred to as "colorblindness," can't exist in this theory. Claims of race neutrality is considered the most threatening of all acts of racism.

Remedy for racism: The only remedy for racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination.

Chapter 2. Dueling Consciousness

Assimilationist: One who is expressing the racist idea that a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior and is supporting cultural or behavioral enrichment programs to develop that racial group. Assimilationist ideas are racist ideas. Assimilations position a racial group as the superior standard that another racial group should be measuring themselves against, the benchmark they should be trying to reach. It's racist to consider one cultural standard as superior to another. Assimilation decries identity politics.

Segregationist: One who is expressing the racist idea that a permanently inferior racial group can never be developed and is supporting policy that segregates away that racial group.

Antiracist (yes, again): One who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity.

Chapter 3. Power

Race: A power construct of collected or merged difference that lives socially.

Chapter 4. Biology

Biological Racist: One who is expressing the idea that the races are meaningfully different in their biology and that these differences create a hierarchy of value.

Biological Antiracist: One who is expressing the idea that the races are meaningfully the same in their biology and there are no genetic racial differences.

Microaggression: Kendi avoids this term in favor of “racial abuse.”

Chapter 5. Ethnicity

Ethnic Racism: A powerful collection of racist policies that lead to inequity between racialized ethnic groups and are substantiated by racist ideas about racialized ethnic groups.

Ethnic Antiracism: A powerful collection of antiracist policies that lead to equity between racialized ethnic groups and are substantiated by antiracist ideas about racialized ethnic groups.

Chapter 6. Body

Bodily Racist: One who is perceiving certain racialized bodies as more animal-like and violent than others.

Bodily Antiracist: One who is humanizing, deracializing, and individualizing nonviolent and violent

Chapter 7. Culture

Cultural Racist: One who is creating a cultural standard and imposing a cultural hierarchy among racial groups.

Cultural Antiracist: One who is rejecting cultural standards and equalizing cultural differences among racial groups. Cultural differences are viewed as equals.

Chapter 8. Behavior

Behavioral Racist: One who is making individuals responsible for the perceived behavior of racial groups and making racial groups responsible for the behavior of individuals.

Behavioral Antiracist: One who is making racial group behavior fictional and individual behavior real. The idea of culture must be separated from the idea of behavior.

Chapter 9. Color

Colorism: A powerful collection of racist policies that lead to inequities between Light people and Dark people, supported by racist ideas about Light and Dark people.

Color Antiracism: A powerful collection of antiracist policies that lead to equity between Light people and Dark people, supported by antiracist ideas about Light and Dark People.

Chapter 10. White

Anti-White Racist: One who is classifying people of European descent as biologically, culturally, or behaviorally inferior or conflating the entire race of White people with racist power.

White supremacists: They are anti-human – in fact, both Black and White.

Chapter 11. Black

Powerless Defense: The illusory, concealing, disempowering, and racist idea that Black people can't be racist because Black people don't have power.

Chapter 12. Class

Class Racist: One who is racializing the classes, supporting policies of racial capitalism against those race-classes, and justifying them by racist ideas about those race-classes.

Capitalism: Joined at the hip with racism.

Antiracist Anticapitalist: One who is opposing racial capitalism.

Chapter 13. Space

Space Racism: A powerful collection of racist policies that lead to resource inequity between racialized spaces or the elimination of certain racialized spaces, which are substantiated by racist ideas about racialized spaces.

Space Antiracism: A powerful collection of antiracist policies that lead to racial equity between integrated and protected racialized spaces, which are substantiated by antiracist ideas about racialized spaces.

Separation vs. Segregation: The antiracist desire to separate from racists is different from the segregationist desire to separate from “inferior” Blacks.

Chapter 14. Gender

Gender Racism: A powerful collection of racist policies that lead to inequity between race-genders and are substantiated by racist ideas about race-genders.

Gender Antiracism: A powerful collection of antiracist policies that lead to equity between race-genders and are substantiated by antiracist ideas about race-genders.

Intersectionality: Occurs when a person more than one oppressed group – e.g. woman of color, or queer person of color.

Chapter 15. Sexuality

Queer Racism: A powerful collection of racist policies that lead to inequity between race-sexualities and are substantiated by racist ideas about race-sexualities.

Queer Antiracism: A powerful collection of antiracist policies that lead to equity between race-sexualities and are substantiated by antiracist ideas about race-sexualities.

Chapter 16. Failure

Activist: One who has a record of power or policy change.

Abolitionist: Progressive assimilationists who are paternalistic and believe Black behavior is a result of oppression and should strive for White standards of behavior.

Activist: Someone who produces power and policy change. Merely changing minds doesn't count because policy is the controlling feature.

Chapter 17. Success

Institutional Racism: A term Kendi avoids in favor of “racist policies.”

Antiracist Intersection: The state of mind where racism is mixed with other bigotries.

Chapter 18. Survival

Colorblindness: Another term for race neutrality which can't exist in Kendi's antiracist theory. Colorblindness is an example of powerful policymakers erecting racist policies out of self-interest, then producing racist ideas to defend and rationalize the inequitable effects of their policies.