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“Critical thinking” will be missed

By Steve Bakke  June 25, 2021



The June 12 Minneapolis StarTribune “Opinion Exchange” featured Steve Backus’ article titled “The dea(r)th of critical thinking.” Quoting: “Critical thinking simply means drawing an objective conclusion from a set of facts.....I teach critical thinking.....most students want nothing to do with it. They think it involves conflict which is taboo in our culture. They also don’t care if something makes sense or not.....” Nevertheless, Backus experienced renewed hope by observing students being laser focused on objective fact-based conclusions during the Floyd murder trial.

Something unexpected is discouraging objectivity. Dedicated CRT advocate Ibram X. Kendi’s wrote this in his book “How to be an antiracist”: “I thought I was stupid, too dumb for college.....intelligence is as subjective as beauty.....I kept using ‘objective’ standards, like test scores and report cards, to judge myself.”

During a recent forum including Ibram X. Kendi and antiracism leader and journalism scholar William Jelani Cobb, these men pointed out that journalistic objectivity comes from a history of reporting one person’s claims, then reporting the opposing side.” Contrary to what’s best for journalism, they encourage budding journalists to prioritize “fairness” over objectivity.

Smithsonian’s African American History Museum exhibited an unflattering series of charts listing “whiteness” characteristics, including emphasis on scientific method and objective thinking. Most characteristics listed are commonly considered favorable national values.

Kendi and Cobb are “antiracism” leaders, and Kendi’s book became a philosophical “shot-in-the-arm” for the controversial Critical Race Theory (CRT) used in developing school curricula. The exhibit mentioned was a CRT project. Finally, Oregon’s Department of Education trains math teachers to deemphasize “finding the right answer.” It’s considered a manifestation of white supremacy.

Backus is competing against CRT in a difficult up-hill battle.