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A Reader's Guide to Project 2025

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A Reader's Guide

What does Project 2025 say about DEI and CRT?

DEI stands for *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* – values and policies being promoted to help address historic discrimination of marginalized groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, ability, gender and sexual orientation. Put simply, DEI initiatives seek to level the playing field.

CRT stands for *Critical Race Theory*, an academic and legal framework that recognizes that racism is more than individual bias and prejudice, but is manifested as systemic racism embedded in the fabric of our culture and society.

The backlash over DEI. Over the past decade, DEI policies and frameworks were introduced in the workplace and other spheres as a measure of redress, to assure equal access for racial and gender minorities, and LGBTQ people. These efforts were done on the basis of historic evidence that Black and brown Americans, women and gay people suffer discrimination, and it pointed to white racism and policies that favor whites and men and heterosexuals. But Project 2025 authors oppose discussions of racism in America, and oppose feminism, and they would criminalize LGBTQ identity.

Their anti-DEI logic is regressive and a form of gaslighting, but it has gained currency. Among Project 2025's advisors are frontline groups leading anti-DEI campaigns and court challenges. Underneath this anti-DEI rhetoric is a historic legacy of whiteness and white supremacy, and patriarchy: DEI opponents fear whites becoming a minority in America, while men fear women gaining equal rights, and oppose any blurring of strict gender norms and roles. The anti-DEI platform is about maintaining white, male, heterosexual social power.

Here is what Project 2025 says about DEI:

DEI is presented as unlawful, racist, and a way of depriving Americans of their First Amendment rights. Project 2025 calls for eliminating all references to DEI in federal documents, and declaring all DEI initiatives as illegal.

It starts with public visibility and flags: no one should be allowed to celebrate their identification or 'inclusion' in a marginalized group anymore. States Project 2025: "*Divisive symbols such as the rainbow flag or the Black Lives Matter flag have no place next to the Stars and Stripes at our embassies.*" (pg. 89)

"Woke" culture is the enemy that threatens America: Project 2025 views DEI as one of the main elements of "woke" culture, and are declaring war on it. While they never actually define



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what they mean by “woke” culture, they call for stripping away recently-gained federal protections from marginalized groups in areas of racial and gender equality, in particular:

“The next conservative President must make the institutions of American civil society hard targets for woke culture warriors. This starts with deleting the terms sexual orientation and gender identity (“SOGI”), diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”), gender, gender equality, gender equity, gender awareness, gender-sensitive, abortion, reproductive health, reproductive rights, and any other term used to deprive Americans of their First Amendment rights out of every federal rule, agency regulation, contract, grant, regulation, and piece of legislation that exists.” (pg. 4)

DEI is branded as unlawful discrimination: Project 2025 claims that “*numerous federal laws prohibit discrimination based on notable immutable characteristics such as race and sex*” (pg. 561) and “*nondiscrimination and equality are the law; DEI is not.*” (pg. 582). Project 2025 seeks to make an ahistorical claim everyone is treated equally – despite centuries of evidence to the contrary. By pointing out that the law should not discriminate, they deny the lived reality and historic discrimination against individuals on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation or ability.

How can DEI be called racist? It’s a bold form of gaslighting. Project 2025 argues that to recognize race as a category is *in itself racist* – thus a form of discrimination. They cite Martin Luther King, Jr.’s vision of “colorblind” nation in his famous “I Have a Dream Speech,” as if that dream has been achieved, so America can now move on -- as if racism no longer exists. Those who point out racial inequities -- “woke leftists and liberals” – are being racist for focusing on racial aspects, claims Project 2025. The leftists who point out a problem are the real problem, argue Project 2025 -- not America’s history of white racism.

Denying Critical Race Theory: Project 2025 says that it will no longer be acceptable to talk about *racial classifications* – even though these still exist. The Biden administration, says Project 2025, has “*pushed `racial equity’ in every area of our national life, including in employment, and condones the use of racial classifications and racial preferences under the guise of DEI and critical race theory, which categorizes individuals as oppressors and victims based on race.*” (pg. 582).

What’s the result? There will be no more teaching about race and racism. It erases discussion of black and brown lives and history. The subject is made taboo. States Project 2025: “*When critical race theory is used as part of school activities such as mandatory affinity groups (and) teacher training programs in which educators are required to confess their privilege, or school assignments in which students must defend the false idea that America is systemically racist, the theory is actively disrupting the values that hold communities together such as equality under the law and colorblindness.*” (pg. 342).



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The erasure is historic revisionism: This erasure extends into the past as well as the present and the future: school curricula should not discuss the history of slavery in the US, nor any examination of the ongoing effects of historic and systemic racism.

That's not all: race gets criminalized. If discussion of race is made taboo, and criminalized, *then people who continue to discuss it can be criminalized too.* We see that happening in real life, with attacks on teachers, professors, historians, school librarians, etc. who are getting fired for teaching about historic racism. That's what's happening around book bans of stories about Black history.

DEI is an enemy of merit: Project 2025 argues that DEI initiatives “corrupt” the workplace, racialize it, and create a hostile work environment for anyone who disagrees with “identity politics.” Those who don't agree with DEI policies are penalized, because promotion is no longer based on merit, claims Project 2025: *“This pursuit of ideological purity threatens merit-based professional advancement for staff who do not overtly conform ...”* (pg. 257).

Scratch the surface of that argument and the **fear of White Replacement** rears its ugly head – the below-the-surface racial/racist fear held by some white people that Black and Brown people will replace them. Who are the people who are oppose DEI programs? Most are white, and express an underlying white class fear of losing social power and their historic privilege in the workplace and educational system. It's no surprise that DEI opponents also oppose affirmative action programs they feel give racial minorities an unfair advantage in school and the workplace versus leveling the playing field. By denying racism, opponents don't have to fix the problem.

What Are Project 2025's Counter-Proposals?

DEI will be illegal: Project 2025's solution to curbing DEI is to fire Chief Diversity officers in federal and other programs, and *“issue a directive to cease promotion of the DEI agenda, including the bullying LGBTQ+ agenda”* (pg. 258). Meanwhile universities would no longer be allowed to use federal research money to pay for DEI efforts (pg. 355).

That is already happening: Under Governor DeSantis, Florida has already banned all state funding for DEI initiatives, and moved to penalize schools who failed to fully implement the ban.¹ DeSantis is also facing 15 lawsuits by Florida groups challenging the DEI ban and his “Don't Say Gay” bill.

Project 2025 wants to replace DEI policies with pro- “traditional” family ones: *“We must replace “woke” nonsense with a healthy vision of the role of labor policy in our society, starting with the American family,”* states Project 2025. (pg. 587). They make no bones about it – there's

¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/florida-board-governors--state-funding-dei-initiatives/story?id=106634715>



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only one acceptable form of family: “*Families comprised of a married mother, father, and their children are the foundation of a well-ordered nation and healthy society*” (pg. 450). That means no LGBTQ, single or divorced people. Project 2025 makes it clear: the only people who deserve extra help, if anyone, are white, straight, married couples who adopt traditional gender roles.

The bottom line? If enacted, Project 2025’s blueprint will reverse decades of gains made by racial minorities, women, and LGBTQ Americans to address inequities in law and policy. Eliminating DEI and CRI from federal statutes will result in the opposite of redress for a historic wrong: it will deny the problem, and move to criminalize those with the temerity to call attention to it. Project 2025’s positions are designed to worsen, not improve, social inequity in America.