

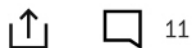
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Democracy Dies in Darkness

Opinion: Why U.S. military academies should teach critical race theory

Opinion by Lynne Chandler García

July 6, 2021 at 3:23 p.m. MDT



Lynne Chandler García is an associate professor of political science at the U.S. Air Force Academy. The views expressed are the author's own.

Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark A. Milley's recent defense of teaching critical race theory at the U.S. military academies shows that it is not unpatriotic to understand a fuller version of American history, nor does it promote division among our military members.

As a professor of political science at the U.S. Air Force Academy, I teach critical race theories to our nation's future military leaders because it is vital that cadets understand the history of the racism that has shaped both foreign and domestic policy.

Cadets, like all military members, take an oath to defend the Constitution with their lives — so it is crucial they have a sensitive understanding of that Constitution.

In my classes, cadets learn about the ideals embedded in this founding document. We explore the liberalist theories that promoted these ideals, and we embrace our democratic system of government. But we also acknowledge that the United States was founded on a duality: liberalism and equal rights on the one hand; inequality, inegalitarianism and second-class citizenship on the other.

Critical race theory provides an academic framework to understand these nuances and contradictions. It helps students identify the structural racism and inequality that has been endemic in American society. And it provides methods for deconstructing



UNITED STATES

Opinion: I'm a professor at a U.S. military academy. Here's why I teach critical race theory.

Today



Signs opposing the teaching of critical race theory line the entrance to the Loudoun County School Board headquarters, in Ashburn, Va., on June 22. (Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters)

Opinion by Lynne Chandler Garcia
July 6, 2021 at 5:23 p.m. EDT

Lynne Chandler Garcia is an associate professor of political science at the U.S. Air Force Academy. The views expressed are the author's own.



The reality of the Constitution is that it upholds the rule of law and human rights, but once also allowed slavery and has been used to perpetuate legal discrimination. As Frederick Douglass pointed out, although the Declaration of Independence and Constitution espoused liberty and justice, enslaved people had no part of those virtues and no reason to celebrate a day like the Fourth of July.

I don't coddle my cadets out of fear that exposure to certain literatures might make them uncomfortable or test their existing beliefs. Cadets must learn to be brave on the literal battlefield, yes — but they must also be equipped to participate bravely on the battlefield of ideas.

