

A Comparative Framework for Academic Freedom and Race Pedagogies across United States and Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This article presents a conceptual comparative analysis of the United States and Nigeria. Using scholarly and documentary sources and drawing on Critical Race Theory together with postcolonial perspectives, it examines how law, politics, and institutional governance shape academic freedom and the teaching of racism and racial inequality. The analysis traces how dominant power structures in both settings regulate classroom discourse about race and situates these efforts within wider struggles over historical narratives and social justice. The article makes three contributions. First, it offers a comparative framework for explaining constraints on academic freedom across the two countries. Second, it synthesizes evidence to show where mechanisms converge and where they diverge in limiting truthful teaching about racism. Third, it applies an established classroom model to show how instructors can teach difficult histories under restrictive conditions. The study clarifies how race-conscious pedagogies can be maintained while meeting institutional expectations, and it identifies practical steps instructors can adapt to varied educational settings. The paper concludes that sustaining truthful teaching about racism in the United States and Nigeria depends on enforceable protections for academic freedom, insulation of universities from partisan control, and the careful, context-aware application of established CRT-informed pedagogies.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, Academic Freedom, Racial Inequality, Comparative Education, Systemic Racism

Introduction

The discourse surrounding race and racism in education is fraught with contention, often marked by adult apprehension about discussing these complex issues with young learners and educators' feelings of unpreparedness to navigate such topics effectively in the classroom (Husband, 2010). This apprehension highlights a societal discomfort that often translates into avoidance, despite the early awareness children develop regarding racial differences and their societal implications. Vittrup (2016) further underscores the challenge, noting that teachers often lack experience or confidence in facilitating these crucial conversations. Yet, as Tatum (2017) and Winkler (2009) observe, children begin to comprehend racial differences and the consequences of racism from an early age, influenced by a myriad of sources, including family, peers, and media. These early messages, interpreted through the development of intellectual capacities, shape their understanding of the world and their place within it. This paper posits that a profound understanding of how students, particularly Black students and other marginalized groups, experience racism is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and for developing pedagogical strategies that actively disrupt systemic inequities. Racism, understood not merely as individual prejudice but as a societal system that legitimizes the unjust maltreatment of specific communities, such as the historical

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and ongoing oppression resulting from the forcible expulsion and extermination of native peoples, the enslavement of Black people, and the widespread persecution of various groups, perpetuates significant disparities (Thurber et al., 2019). These disparities manifest in numerous ways, including stark differences in economic outcomes (Owens et al., 2024), and access to opportunities like homeownership (Swope et al., 2022), historically impacted by discriminatory practices like redlining in the United States (Demirchyan, 2015), which systematically denied Black Americans access to housing loans and wealth accumulation, irrespective of their income levels (Taylor, 2019).

In this article, academic freedom refers to the liberty of faculty and students to teach, learn, research, and publish without undue interference from the state, institutional authorities, or private actors. Truthful pedagogy refers to instruction that presents historically and empirically grounded accounts of racism and racial inequality, even when such accounts contest dominant narratives. The aim is explanation and guidance rather than measurement of outcomes.

In response to increasing efforts to curtail discussions about race and racism in higher education, Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerges as an indispensable analytical and pedagogical framework (Anderson, 2022). This article is a conceptual comparative analysis of the United States and Nigeria. It integrates CRT with postcolonial perspectives and draws on statutes, court decisions, government directives, institutional policies, investigative reporting, and peer-reviewed scholarship. CRT offers a lens to truthfully represent and interrogate racism and racial inequalities, particularly within the U.S. context where it originated, by asserting that racism is not an aberration but is systemic and embedded within societal institutions (Price, n.d.). This paper adopts CRT to explore strategies for truthful pedagogies and to analyze the profound impact of contemporary anti-CRT movements on academic freedom in both U.S. and Nigerian higher education. The urgency of this exploration is underscored by legislative attempts to ban or restrict the teaching of CRT, often mischaracterizing it as divisive or harmful, thereby seeking to silence critical examination of historical and ongoing racial injustices (Anderson, 2022).

The central argument of this paper is that a clear application of CRT is essential for understanding the persistence of racial and ethnic inequality in education, and for defending and expanding academic freedom in the pursuit of genuinely equitable and anti-racist educational environments. It contends that threats to teaching about race and systemic oppression are, in essence, assaults on academic freedom, designed to maintain dominant narratives and power structures. By examining the U.S. context, where CRT is directly under political attack (AAUP, 2022), and the Nigerian context, where academic freedom faces distinct but related challenges often linked to "national goals" and postcolonial power dynamics (Arowosegbe, 2024), this paper aims to contribute to the international scholarship on race, racism, and ethnicity in education. Such a comparative approach is vital because, as postcolonial scholars argue, understanding educational phenomena requires acknowledging both local particularities and transnational structuring forces, moving beyond methodological nationalism that often centers Western experiences (Mukherjee, 2019). The United States and Nigeria are selected as paired cases because both are diverse democracies with sustained debates over race and history, yet they differ in constitutional design, higher education governance, and party systems. The contrast allows identification of common mechanisms that travel across contexts and distinct features that are tied to local histories.

The purpose of this paper is to explain how law, politics, and institutional governance shape academic freedom and the teaching of racism in the United States and Nigeria, and to offer a classroom model that can be used under restrictive conditions. The paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How can CRT, potentially in synergy with Postcolonial Theory, illuminate the mechanisms through which racial and ethnic inequalities are perpetuated and contested within U.S. and Nigerian educational systems, and how do these mechanisms reflect broader global patterns of power and

- knowledge production?
2. In what ways are contemporary challenges to academic freedom in the United States and Nigeria related to efforts to control narratives about race, history, colonial legacies, and systemic oppression, and what does this reveal about the function of education in maintaining or challenging the status quo?
 3. What pedagogical strategies, informed by CRT and responsive to postcolonial critiques, can educators employ to foster truthful engagement with racism, decolonize curricula, and advance educational equity in diverse international contexts, particularly in the United States and Nigeria?

The sources cited in this paper were included if they directly addressed academic freedom, classroom speech about race, or governance structures in higher education, and if they provided sufficient detail to identify mechanisms of constraint. The analysis privileges peer-reviewed scholarship and authoritative documents and uses journalism only where it supplies verifiable facts. This paper first outlines the core tenets of CRT and its application to education in the United States, providing a detailed examination of its principles and historical development. It then explores the concept of academic freedom, analyzing the multifaceted struggles faced by educators in the United States and Nigeria, with particular attention to the ways in which these struggles are shaped by racial, ethnic, and postcolonial dynamics. This article applies the Movius (2020) CRT pedagogical model without modification and critically examines its use as a strategy for deconstructing racism in U.S. and Nigerian higher education settings. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes the arguments and emphasizes the important role of CRT in fostering truthful pedagogies and protecting academic freedom as a cornerstone of equitable education globally.

This article makes three contributions. First, it offers a comparative framework that combines Critical Race Theory and postcolonial perspectives to explain how legal restrictions, political patronage, and institutional governance shape academic freedom in the United States and Nigeria. Second, it synthesizes evidence to show where mechanisms converge and where they diverge in limiting truthful teaching about racism and racial inequality. Third, it applies an existing classroom model for teaching difficult histories under restrictive conditions, providing context-specific guidance for use in the United States and Nigeria.

Literature Review

Critical Race Theory and Education in the United States

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged from legal scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s, as scholars and activists grew disillusioned with the slow pace of racial reform following the Civil Rights Movement (Hatch & Khan, 2024). Despite landmark legislation, Hatch and Khan (2024) observed that racial inequality persisted, deeply embedded within American societal structures and institutions, a point further supported by Hatcher et al. (2022). CRT asserts that racism is not merely a collection of individual prejudices or isolated incidents but is a systemic and deeply ingrained feature of American society, including its legal and educational systems (Price, n.d.). Its application to education, pioneered by scholars like Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate in their seminal 1995 article "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," provides a critical lens to understand how racial inequality is produced, maintained, and challenged within educational settings (Anderson, 2022). CRT in education posits that understanding the existing system of oppression requires an honest examination of the roots of racism and the pervasiveness of racial dominance, often manifested as white supremacy (Bell, 2019). As Parker and Lynn (2006) articulated, CRT serves as "a critique of racism as a system of oppression and exploitation that explores the historic and contemporary constructions and manifestations of race in our society with particular attention to how these issues are manifested in schools" (p. 282).

Key tenets of CRT, which are foundational to its application in educational research and practice, include:

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- ***The Permanence of Racism:*** CRT asserts that racism is an ordinary and enduring aspect of American life, not an aberration (George, 2021). This challenges colorblind ideologies that suggest race no longer matters.
- ***Critique of Liberalism:*** CRT critiques the liberal notions of neutrality, objectivity, and meritocracy, arguing that these concepts often mask the ways in which white supremacy and racial power are maintained (George, 2021). For instance, seemingly race-neutral policies in school funding, admissions, or disciplinary practices can perpetuate racial disparities (Price, n.d.).
- ***Interest Convergence:*** This tenet, developed by Derrick Bell, suggests that policy changes benefiting marginalized racial groups typically occur only when those changes also align with the interests of the dominant white group (Bell, 2019).
- ***Counter-Storytelling:*** CRT values the experiential knowledge of people of color and employs counter-storytelling as a method to challenge dominant narratives that often silence or distort their experiences (George, 2021). These narratives provide critical insights into the lived realities of racism within educational institutions.
- ***Intersectionality:*** Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a core tenet of CRT that recognizes that race intersects with other social identities and categories of difference, such as gender, class, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and national origin, creating unique and compounded experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

In recent years, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has become a focal point of intense political controversy in the United States, with legislative efforts in numerous states seeking to ban or restrict its teaching in K–12 schools and universities (Anderson, 2022). These attacks often grossly misrepresent CRT, portraying it as divisive, anti-American, or discriminatory against white people. Such mischaracterizations serve to suppress critical discussions about systemic racism, historical injustices like slavery and segregation, and their ongoing legacies in contemporary American society. These legislative actions and the broader political climate they foster directly impinge upon academic freedom and the ability of educators to provide a truthful, comprehensive, and critical education about the role of race and racism in the United States (AAUP, 2022).

The Contested Terrain of Academic Freedom: U.S. and Nigerian Perspectives

Academic freedom refers to the freedom to research, teach, speak, and publish, subject to scholarly standards, without undue interference or penalty. Ergüder (2010) further emphasizes that it encompasses the liberty to teach one's ideas and act on knowledge without intimidation. It is essential for the pursuit of knowledge, the critical examination of societal norms, and the education of informed and engaged citizens. However, the practice and protection of academic freedom are frequently contested, particularly when academic inquiry confronts dominant power structures, political ideologies, and deeply entrenched societal narratives, especially those related to race, ethnicity, and history. This section explores the challenges to academic freedom in the United States and Nigeria, highlighting both the unique contextual factors and the common threads that emerge when viewed through a critical race and postcolonial lens.

Academic Freedom in the United States: The CRT Battleground

In the United States, the debate over CRT has evolved into a significant battleground for academic freedom, particularly within publicly funded higher education institutions (Anderson & Svrluga, 2022). Faculty leaders and senates at prominent universities have increasingly found themselves compelled to denounce legislative efforts aimed at weakening academic freedom by regulating or outright banning the teaching of concepts associated with CRT (AAUP, 2022). Resolutions passed by faculty senates, such as those at the University of Alabama, Ohio State University, and Pennsylvania State University, explicitly oppose such legislative interference in curriculum development and affirm the professional responsibility

of educators to teach difficult truths about racism, historical injustices, and their contemporary manifestations (Faculty Senate, The University of Alabama, 2021; Faculty Council Ad-hoc Committee on Teaching About Racism, 2021; Penn State Faculty Senate, 2022). For instance, the Ohio State University Senate resolution powerfully asserted, “There are no ‘two sides’ to racism... any more than there are two sides to the Holocaust or the roundness of the earth; there are only truths that must be taught well so that we might ensure better futures for all citizens” (Faculty Council Ad-hoc Committee on Teaching About Racism, 2021). This statement underscores the academic conviction that certain historical and social realities are not matters of mere opinion but are subjects of scholarly inquiry and factual understanding.

These legislative efforts, often driven by partisan political agendas, seek to control how educators discuss racism, sexism, and other issues of fairness and justice, effectively censoring academic content and pedagogical approaches (AAUP, 2022). Such actions directly contradict the core principles of academic freedom, which uphold the rights of faculty to teach, research, and discuss issues within their fields of expertise without fear of censorship or reprisal (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2025). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has been a vocal critic of this political interference, linking it to attempts to shield the United States from a critical examination of its history and policies, particularly concerning racism, slavery, and state-enabled violence. The AAUP’s 2021 “Statement on Legislation Restricting Teaching about Race” condemned these actions in the strongest terms, reaffirming its longstanding opposition to political interference in education (AAUP, 2021).

The impact of these restrictions extends beyond the specific content banned; they create a chilling effect, where educators may self-censor to avoid controversy, professional repercussions, or online harassment. A significant percentage of faculty report feeling less academic freedom and increased worry about expressing their views freely compared to previous years (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2025). This climate of fear undermines the intellectual vitality of educational institutions and limits the scope of inquiry and discussion necessary for a robust democracy. While K-12 teachers often face more direct curricular constraints due to standardized testing and state mandates, the current wave of anti-CRT legislation has blurred these lines, targeting K-12 and higher education with similar regulatory fervor (La Noue, 2021).

Academic Freedom in Nigeria: National Goals and Postcolonial Realities

In Nigeria, the struggle for academic freedom, while sharing some parallels with the U.S. concerning state influence, is deeply embedded in its unique postcolonial context, history of military rule, and complex ethnic landscape (Arowosegbe, 2024). The National Policy on Education (NPE) by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) ostensibly grants universities traditional areas of academic freedom, including student selection, staff appointments, research direction, and course content determination. However, a critical and often problematic caveat exists: this freedom is contingent upon being “in line with national goals” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). This vaguely defined proviso creates a significant loophole, allowing for arbitrary government interpretation and intervention, thereby posing a persistent threat to genuine academic autonomy and critical inquiry. This is not just an academic argument but a public concern, as Apata (2024) argues in *The Nation*, where safeguarding academic freedom in Nigeria is presented as an urgent societal challenge, underscoring the need for classroom models that protect critical inquiry. As Arikewuyo (2005; 2013) critically questioned, “What constitutes non-consonance with national goals? Any government could arbitrarily determine this,” highlighting the inherent vulnerability of academic freedom under such a framework.

The history of Nigerian higher education is replete with struggles for academic freedom, often spearheaded by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) (Arowosegbe, 2024). ASUU has

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consistently advocated for academics' rights, improved working conditions, better university funding, and institutional autonomy, frequently facing government aversion and outright bans for its activism. These protracted conflicts underscore the tense and often adversarial relationship between state officials and the academic community, rooted in the government's desire to control higher education and the universities' push for the freedom to critique and pursue knowledge independently. The issues extend beyond remuneration; ASUU's struggles have encompassed broader demands for the decolonization of education and the preservation of public universities against policies perceived as detrimental to quality and accessibility (Arowosegbe, 2024).

From a postcolonial perspective, the challenges to academic freedom in Nigeria are inextricably linked to the enduring legacies of colonial education systems. These systems were often designed not to foster critical indigenous scholarship or national cohesion but to serve colonial administrative and economic interests, sometimes by deliberately exacerbating ethnic divisions, a "divide and conquer" strategy (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020). The pressure to align with "national goals" in the post-independence era can, in some instances, mask neo-colonial influences or serve to protect the interests of dominant ethnic, political, or economic factions, thereby marginalizing dissenting academic voices or alternative developmental paradigms that challenge the established order (Mboyonga, 2025). The devaluing of multicultural education and indigenous knowledge systems, a direct colonial inheritance, further constrains the intellectual space, contributing to societal issues like brain drain and internal distrust among Nigeria's diverse groups (Obiakor, 2024).

Furthermore, chronic underfunding of Nigerian universities by the state often compels them to seek external funding, frequently from international donors (Mboyonga, 2025). While such partnerships can provide essential resources, they also introduce the risk of donor agendas influencing research priorities, subtly shaping the boundaries of permissible inquiry and potentially diverting academic focus from locally relevant issues to those favored by external funders (Mboyonga, 2025). This dynamic can further erode genuine academic autonomy. Internal threats also compound the challenges. Political patronage in university appointments, from vice-chancellors to council members, can create a climate of sycophancy and self-censorship, where academic advancement may depend more on political loyalty than scholarly merit (Elekwachi & Ufomba, 2024). Academics perceived as overly critical of the government or dominant interests may be labeled as opposition supporters, facing repercussions such as diminished promotion prospects, denial of research funding, or social isolation (Ofor-Douglas, 2023). This "panoptic gaze," where academics feel constantly under surveillance by university management and state security forces, fosters an environment where self-censorship becomes a survival strategy, leading scholars to avoid sensitive topics like human rights violations, corruption, or ethnic tensions (Mboyonga, 2025). The absence of academic freedom is not limited to federal universities but also mars private and state universities in Nigeria (Arowosegbe, 2024).

Comparative Insights: Power, Pedagogy, and Freedom

Comparing the U.S. and Nigerian contexts through a CRT and postcolonial lens reveals both striking differences in the overt manifestations of threats to academic freedom and profound similarities in their underlying functions. In the U.S., the assault is often framed through highly politicized and racialized attacks on specific theoretical frameworks like CRT, aiming to sanitize national history and preserve a narrative of American exceptionalism free from the tarnish of systemic racism (AAUP, 2022). In Nigeria, threats are often more embedded in the structural relationship between the state and universities, mediated through ambiguous concepts like "national goals," the legacies of colonial governance, and the political economy of a postcolonial state (Arowosegbe, 2024).

However, in both nations, restrictions on academic freedom serve to protect dominant narratives and entrenched power structures. Whether it is the racial hierarchy in the U.S. or the complex interplay of ethnic, political, and neo-colonial power in Nigeria, academic inquiry that critically examines these structures is often perceived as a threat. CRT critiques how dominant ideologies perpetuate power (Price, n.d.), while Postcolonial Theory critiques how colonial and neo-colonial ideologies maintain dominance and restrict knowledge production (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020). Thus, academic freedom becomes a crucial site of struggle where dominant power, whether structured by race, coloniality, or ethno-nationalism, seeks to control the production, dissemination, and critical engagement with knowledge. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing strategies to defend and expand the spaces for truthful and transformative education globally. A "critical synergy" between CRT and decolonial thought can offer a more robust framework for such comparative analysis, moving beyond methodological nationalism and recognizing the interconnected global histories of racial and colonial power (Tinsley, 2024).

Applying the Movius (2020) CRT Pedagogical Model

To translate the critical insights of CRT into classroom practice, this section applies the model developed by Movius (2020) without modification and provides context-specific examples for the United States and Nigerian higher education. This model, rooted in the fundamental assumptions of CRT, aims to facilitate a deeper understanding of how dominant culture privilege (DCP) operates, how it leads to the oppression of marginalized groups, and how it manifests as individual, systemic, and institutional racism, thereby influencing perceptions and realities related to class, ability, race, and ethnicity. The ultimate goal is to equip educators and learners with the tools to deconstruct these oppressive systems and advocate for a more just and egalitarian society.

Figure 1 illustrates the pathway from dominant culture privilege through oppression and racism to inequality in power, law, and education. This article applies the Movius (2020) CRT pedagogical model without modification to organize classroom strategies for teaching difficult histories in higher education in the United States and Nigeria.

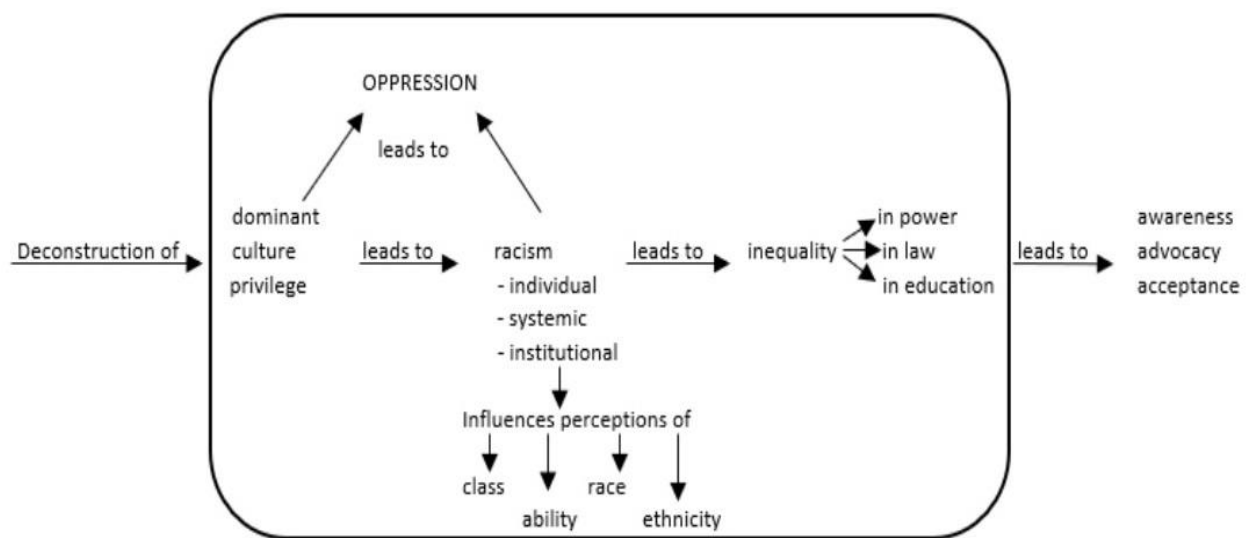


Figure 1. Movius (2020) CRT Pedagogical Model

Note. Reproduced from Movius, S. E. (2020), “Critical race theory,” in J. Egbert & M. Roe (Eds.), Theoretical models for teaching and research (WSU Open Textbooks), licensed under Creative Commons Attribution–Non-commercial 4.0 International.

The core components of this pedagogical approach, when expanded and contextualized, involve:

1. **Identifying and Interrogating Dominant Culture Privilege (DCP):**

- **Explanation:** This foundational step involves guiding learners to recognize, critically examine, and understand the unearned advantages, benefits, and societal power that accrue to members of the dominant racial or ethnic group in a given society simply by virtue of their group membership. In the U.S. context, this often refers to white privilege, which is systematically embedded in institutions and social norms, often invisible to those who possess it.
- **Classroom Application:** Educators can use historical analyses, contemporary case studies, personal narratives (counter-storytelling), and statistical data to illustrate how DCP operates. For example, discussions could explore how historical housing policies, employment practices, or media representations have systematically advantaged white individuals while disadvantaging people of color. Activities might include privilege walks (for context and student maturity) or analyzing media for implicit biases and representations of normalcy. The aim is to make the invisible visible and to denaturalize privileges that are often taken for granted.

2. **Analyzing Oppression as a Consequence of DCP:**

- **Explanation:** This component focuses on facilitating an understanding of how DCP is not benign but actively translates into systemic oppression that disadvantages and marginalizes other groups. Oppression is presented not as isolated incidents of unfairness but as a complex network of institutional and societal barriers, restrictions, and harms.
- **Classroom Application:** Learners can explore various forms of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, ableism) and how they intersect. Case studies of discriminatory laws, policies (e.g., in criminal justice, education funding), and social practices can be analyzed to show how oppression is maintained. For instance, examining the school-to-prison pipeline can illustrate how educational and disciplinary policies disproportionately target and criminalize students of color, limiting their life chances (Hatcher et al., 2022). The focus is on understanding the systemic nature of oppression rather than attributing it solely to individual bad actors.

3. **Deconstructing Racism: Individual, Institutional, and Systemic Dimensions:**

- **Explanation:** This involves breaking down the multifaceted nature of racism into its interconnected dimensions:
 - **Individual Racism:** Prejudiced beliefs and discriminatory actions by individuals.
 - **Institutional Racism:** Policies, practices, and procedures within societal institutions (e.g., schools, legal system, healthcare) that, intentionally or unintentionally, produce and reproduce racially inequitable outcomes. This includes, for example, biased standardized testing (La Noue, 2021) or curriculum content that marginalizes non-white perspectives

(Price, n.d.).

- **Systemic/Structural Racism:** The overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society, encompassing the historical legacy of racism and the ways in which various institutions interact to reinforce racial hierarchy and white supremacy.
- **Classroom Application:** Educators can use historical timelines, policy analysis, and community-based research projects to help students identify and analyze these different dimensions of racism. For example, students could research the history of racial segregation in their local community and its ongoing impact on school demographics and resource allocation. They could also analyze school disciplinary data for racial disparities (Collins & Horne, 2022) and explore the institutional policies that might contribute to these patterns.

4. Examining Intersections of Race with Other Social Identities:

- **Explanation:** Drawing on Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), this component emphasizes that experiences of oppression and privilege are shaped by the interplay of multiple social identities. Race does not operate in isolation but intersects with gender, class, sexuality, disability, religion, national origin, and other markers of identity, creating unique and often compounded forms of advantage or disadvantage.
- **Classroom Application:** Using case studies, literature, and personal narratives, educators can facilitate discussions about how, for example, the experiences of a Black woman in higher education might differ from those of a Black man or a white woman due to the intersection of race and gender (Mirza, 2015). Students can explore how policies or social norms might disproportionately affect individuals at these intersections (e.g., the "double bind" faced by women of color in leadership). The goal is to foster a better understanding of identity and inequality.

5. Fostering Critical Consciousness and Action (Praxis):

- **Explanation:** The ultimate aim of this pedagogical model extends beyond intellectual understanding to the cultivation of critical consciousness, an awareness of social, political, and economic contradictions and injustices, and the inspiration for informed action towards creating a more egalitarian and just society. This aligns with CRT's commitment to praxis (Price, n.d.).
- **Classroom Application:** This can involve engaging students in community-based action research projects, policy advocacy, peer education initiatives, or the creation of counter-narratives through various media. For example, students might research a local issue of racial inequity and develop a proposal for addressing it or create a documentary or performance piece that raises awareness about a particular form of injustice. The emphasis is on empowering students to become agents of change.

Adopting the Model for the Nigerian Context:

The adoption of such a model developed in the United States in a context like Nigeria requires careful consideration and a deep engagement with local realities, informed by postcolonial theory and an

understanding of Nigeria's unique socio-historical fabric (Obiakor, 2024). While the core principles of analyzing power, privilege, and oppression are universally relevant, their manifestations and the language used to describe them must be contextualized:

- Dominant Culture Privilege (DCP) in Nigeria:** "Dominant culture privilege" in Nigeria is not primarily about a Black/White racial binary as in the U.S. Instead, it might relate to privileges associated with dominant ethnic groups, religious affiliations, regional power, political connections, or socio-economic class, all within a complex postcolonial state structure. Educators would need to facilitate discussions that help students identify and analyze these context-specific forms of privilege and how they manifest in access to education, resources, political power, and social influence. The historical "divide and conquer" strategies of colonial rule often entrenched or created certain ethnic hierarchies that persist today (Obiakor, 2024).
- Racism and Ethnicism:** While "racism" in the Western sense (based on phenotypic differences linked to continental ancestry) has a specific historical trajectory, Nigeria grapples intensely with ethnicism, nepotism, and religious bigotry, which share functional similarities with racism in terms of creating in-groups and out-groups, distributing resources unequally, and perpetuating systemic discrimination (Obiakor, 2024). Instruction should use context-appropriate terminology, while the Movius (2020) model's steps remain unchanged, for Nigeria, terms like *federal character principle* and patronage in university governance; for the United States, terms like *Jim Crow* (legal segregation) and *redlining* (discriminatory housing policy).
- Colonial Legacies and Knowledge Production:** A crucial contextualization is to integrate a postcolonial critique of knowledge (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020). The curriculum itself in many Nigerian institutions may still reflect Eurocentric biases, a legacy of colonial education that often devalued indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and cultural practices. Adopting the CRT model would mean using it to deconstruct these colonial legacies within the curriculum and pedagogy, and to validate and incorporate community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and indigenous epistemologies. This aligns with the call to decolonize the curriculum, which involves decentering Western knowledge and foregrounding diverse perspectives (Meda, 2020; Tran, 2021).
- Intersectionality in Nigeria:** Intersectionality remains highly relevant but would focus on the interplay of ethnicity, religion, gender, class, regionalism, and potentially caste-like systems within specific Nigerian communities. For example, the experiences of a woman from a minority ethnic group in a patriarchal setting who is also from a low-income background would be a key site for intersectional analysis.
- Counter-Storytelling and Local Narratives:** The emphasis on counter-storytelling is vital. This would involve encouraging the sharing and validation of narratives from marginalized ethnic groups, religious minorities, women, and economically disadvantaged communities within Nigeria, challenging dominant national or ethno-nationalist narratives.
- National Goals & Social Justice:** The tension between state-defined "national goals" and the pursuit of social justice through critical pedagogy would be a central point of discussion. The model could be used to critically analyze whose interests these "national goals" truly serve and how they

might perpetuate inequities.

By adopting this CRT-informed pedagogical model, educators in both the U.S. and Nigeria can create learning environments that not only deconstruct various forms of systemic oppression but also empower students to envision and work towards more just and equitable societies. The process of adopting itself becomes a decolonizing act, ensuring that theoretical frameworks are not merely imposed but are engaged and transformed to meet local needs and realities.

Recommendation for Future Research

Future research should continue to explore the multifaceted application of CRT in diverse global contexts, particularly within the Global South, focusing on the development and evaluation of pedagogical strategies that effectively address local manifestations of racial, ethnic, and colonial oppression. Furthermore, comparative studies that employ a synergistic CRT-Postcolonial framework can offer deeper insights into the transnational dynamics of power, knowledge, and resistance in education, contributing to a more robust and globally relevant understanding of how to achieve educational justice for all. The work of organizations like the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality (CRED), which seeks to inform policy and decolonize curricula (Leeds Beckett University, n.d.), provides a valuable model for such engaged scholarship.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the struggle to teach truthfully about racism and racial inequality is not confined to a single national setting but reflects broader global dynamics. Through a comparative analysis of the United States and Nigeria, the study demonstrated how Critical Race Theory, in dialogue with Postcolonial Theory, offers a framework for understanding the systemic nature of academic freedom constraints. In the U.S., legislative attacks on CRT seek to suppress inquiry into racism and its legacies, while in Nigeria, the requirement to align teaching with vaguely defined “national goals” and postcolonial power dynamics similarly limits critical engagement. In both contexts, restrictions ultimately function to protect entrenched hierarchies and to insulate dominant narratives from rigorous scrutiny.

The paper also applied the Movius (2020) CRT pedagogical model to show how educators can sustain critical inquiry under restrictive conditions. While the model provides universal tools for deconstructing dominant culture privilege and fostering critical consciousness, its application in Nigeria requires contextual adaptation that accounts for ethnic, religious, and postcolonial realities. The findings, therefore, highlight that sustaining truthful pedagogies depends on enforceable protections for academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and context-aware strategies that empower educators to resist suppression. Ultimately, universities must embrace their role as sites of critical knowledge production, guided by scholarly merit rather than political pressures, if education is to contribute to equity, justice, and democratic possibility.

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