

On Becoming an Antiracist Philosopher in a Polarized Society: Challenges and Possibilities

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Abstract

This paper examines the polemical nature of anti-racist education and discourse in America today. On one side of this dispute are those who think of the efforts towards inclusion, diversity, and the pursuit of social justice in the academia as serving constructive ends. On the other side are those who oppose and vilify such efforts as evidence of the destructive ethos of liberal education. This has led to a situation where universities and schools across the country have seen professors and teachers, including philosophers, experience backlash for speaking seriously and courageously about confronting the problem of racism in society. One recent example of this anomaly is the kind of faux outrage or moral panic that drives the hysteria against Critical Race Theory, an inquiry that examines the intersection of race and law in the United States, as well as unearthing the reality of structural racism in America, often disguised in the mainstream liberal approaches of racial justice. This moral panic has led legislatures across the county to pass bans and enforce policies or rules that restrict how professors and teachers can talk about race or the problem of racial injustice in the classroom. Given this context of resistance, this paper explores the challenges and possibilities of becoming an antiracist philosopher in the context of such polarization.