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Analysis

In the digital age, political discourse transcends the traditional boundaries of televised debates proliferating on online platforms where individuals engage in discussions, share opinions, and scrutinize the actions of elected officials. One instance of this phenomenon is the Facebook video of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' bill signing press conference, which subsequently became a focal point for commentary and critique within the online community. This analysis delves into the dynamics of the press conference itself, examining Governor DeSantis' messaging, ideologies and the reactions it elicited from viewers. This analysis aims to delve into the intricacies of the Facebook video, specifically focusing on the dynamic interplay between the content of the press conference and the reactions it has evoked in the comments section. The comments section of online platforms has become a digital agora where diverse perspectives converge, clash, and intertwine. By examining the discourse within this space, we can gain valuable insights into the multifaceted reactions to DeSantis' actions, as well as the broader socio-political context in which they unfold.

The press conference, serves as the focal point of our analysis, provides a visual and auditory platform through which DeSantis communicates his stance and decision on CRT to the public. However, the significance of this issue extends beyond the immediate content of the press conference itself. The comments section accompanying the video serves as a microcosm of public sentiment, offering a snapshot of the diverse range of opinions that shape the political

discourse surrounding Critical Race Theory. This exploration is not intended to be a mere dissection of the video or a cataloging of comments; rather, it seeks to uncover patterns, themes, and nuances within the video that illuminate the broader implications of the political moment captured in the press conference. As we navigate through the video and comments section, we will analyze the varying tones, ideologies, and rhetorical strategies employed by participants to express their perspectives, creating a tapestry that reflects the complexity of discourse surrounding CRT in public education.

Ron DeSantis facilitated the bill signing press conference but did not stand on stage alone. He was accompanied by a diverse group of about 50 people which is very tactical. As we know CRT is fully committed to the teaching of slavery and how it affects black people in our country. DeSantis having a mixed group of parents and kids of color stand in support of the banning of CRT is very strategic. CRT scholars insist that “being in control, whites will be at the top and blacks at the bottom” (Brooks 90). An equal and just society is something most if not all black people would advocate for, meaning there’s something deeper going on here. CRT in short “argues that disparity in black society is sustained by white hegemony”(Brooks 90) which should unify black ideologies. But DeSantis conservative views and strategies challenge this notion of CRT.

Critical race theory (CRT) is not a monolithic ideology, nor is it a singular approach to understanding race and racism. It's not a prescription for action or a set of beliefs that all adherents must follow. It's also not anti-white or inherently divisive, despite some misconceptions. CRT doesn't assert that all white people are racist, nor does it dismiss the experiences or perspectives of individuals based on their race. It's not solely focused on individual acts of discrimination but rather examines systemic and institutionalized forms of

racism. Additionally, CRT is not limited to the legal field; it has been applied across various disciplines such as sociology, education, and history to analyze power structures and social inequalities. It is important to note that CRT does not offer a one-size-fits-all solution to addressing racism; instead, it provides a framework for critically examining how race intersects with other social identities and structures.

The CRT that DeSantis and his party along with the Facebook commentators oppose in the press conference is totally different from the one scholars and people advocate for. Ron DeSantis, the Governor of Florida, and his supporters vehemently oppose Critical Race Theory (CRT), aligning with a broader conservative stance against what they perceive as divisive and harmful ideologies infiltrating education and public discourse. A fierce commenter thanked Governor DeSantis for his “commitment to protect our state and our children from this evil indoctrination and woke agenda that our leaders are trying to destroy this country with.” DeSantis, a prominent figure in the Republican Party, has been vocal about his stance on CRT, framing it as a threat to traditional American values and principles. His perspective, echoed by many of his supporters, reflects concerns about the potential impact of CRT on education, social cohesion, and national identity. His perspective on CRT really had his followers believing that he was “protecting children from the evil wickedness of some teachers and administrators. The blatant ignorance of Christopher Rufo puts the conservative ideologies and viewpoints into perspective. Christopher Rufo is known to be the activist who initiated CRT attacks. According to an article by Teitelbaum he admitted that his strategy was to “make absurdly distorted claims about CRT in order to steadily drive up negative perceptions...eventually turning it toxic”(Teitelbaum 50). This is the same man who was a spokesperson in the press conference. DeSantis and his supporters view CRT as a divisive and ideologically driven framework that

undermines the foundational principles of the United States. They argue that CRT promotes a narrative of systemic racism that portrays America as inherently oppressive and irredeemably flawed. For DeSantis and his crowd, this narrative is not only inaccurate but also detrimental to national unity and progress. Elated with DeSantis stance one commenter said “that’s my Governor, a true fighter for our freedom against leftist, Dems torture of our children!” They believe that focusing on past injustices and systemic issues detracts from individual responsibility and diminishes the accomplishments of American society.

Furthermore, DeSantis and his supporters are concerned about the influence of CRT in educational institutions, particularly in K-12 schools. They argue that exposing children to CRT concepts will foster resentment, guilt, and division among students based on race. Instead, they advocate for a curriculum that emphasizes American exceptionalism, celebrates the nation's achievements, and promotes unity rather than division. From their perspective, CRT represents a form of indoctrination rather than education, pushing a particular ideological agenda onto impressionable young minds. DeSantis and his crowd see this as a threat to academic freedom and intellectual diversity, advocating for a balanced approach to teaching history and social issues. They argue for a curriculum that acknowledges the complexities of American history while emphasizing patriotism and civic responsibility.

They accuse proponents of CRT of seeking to silence dissent and impose a monolithic worldview on society, labeling any opposition as racism or bigotry. For DeSantis, this represents a broader cultural and political battle against what he perceives as the forces of radical leftism, which he sees as antithetical to American values and principles. Ron DeSantis and his crowd view CRT as a divisive and ideologically driven framework that undermines American unity and progress. Some believe that it is leftist that in the comments they said “thank you for supporting

families and having a backbone to stand up to the twisted ideology with no morals and values, stop the woke crazy. They oppose its teaching in schools and advocate for a curriculum that promotes patriotism, academic freedom, and intellectual diversity. The polarizing sides view CRT as two completely different ideologies, largely in part to their own ideologies. It is hard to formulate an agreement when two parties aren't in continuity on the subject matter at hand. The conservative ideologies of the DeSantis party are so prevalent that it makes it nearly impossible for them to have any understanding of what CRT truly stands for.

Conservative Ideologies (Whiteness)

The press conference with Ron DeSantis and the comments perpetuate whiteness through several facets of the discourse and its framing. “Whites don't see their viewpoints as a matter of perspective. They see it as the truth” (Taylor 122). Firstly, in DeSantis' rhetoric and approach to the issue, there may be an underlying reinforcement of white hegemony. The blatant ignorance of how whiteness perpetuates is prevalent in the comments, “If you don't respect FL's Governor and Florida's way of doing things, DON'T move to Florida! We DO NOT want or need you.”By positioning CRT as a threat or an enemy to be combated, he amplifies the anxieties of white constituents who perceive any challenge to the status quo as a personal affront. This framing suggests that whiteness and its associated power structures are under attack, fostering a defensive posture among those who benefit from them. The composition of the press conference itself reflects the perpetuation of whiteness. Coining CRT as a form of “indoctrination” is beneficial for white individuals. Black people were brought to America for the purpose of slavery and seen as inferior to the white race, which is arguably the biggest stamp of indoctrination in American history. DeSantis said “what we will not do is let people distort history to try and serve their current ideology.” This comment is hypocritical because his party is the one trying to rewrite

history in a way that benefits white Americans and hides the truth. CRT analyzes systemic issues within society and DeSantis refers to this as a “distortion” of American history. The panel consisted of predominantly white individuals, reinforcing the idea that discussions about race and racism are primarily the domain of white voices, sidelining perspectives from marginalized communities which explains comments like “funny you are supposedly for freedom and take away freedom from others by banning book and making it harder for the LGBTQ community. Freedom only seems to be for those you agree with.” This marginalization perpetuates the dominance of whiteness within the conversation, as non-white perspectives are either tokenized or excluded altogether. The language used during the press conference can contribute to the perpetuation of whiteness. One commenter stated “you're doing it right, keep up the good work and thank you for your American Values. If freedom was truly an American value slavery and racism would have never existed in this country. Senator Simpson said “we must remember we are not responsible for sins of the past”, totally taking away the responsibility of acknowledging the best to make a more equitable future. When terms like "colorblindness" and "indoctrination" are employed without critical examination, it reflects a failure to acknowledge the ways in which whiteness operates as a social construct that confers privilege and advantage. By dismissing or downplaying the significance of race, these discourses uphold the status quo of white dominance by avoiding uncomfortable discussions about systemic inequalities. DeSantis says he wants the “curriculum to consist of stories that embody the principle of freedom.” The historical context of black people in America was not built on the principles of freedom. Therefore, it would be false advertisement to depict America in this way. In the CRT press conference with Ron DeSantis, the perpetuation of whiteness is evident through the framing of the issue, the composition of participants, the language used, and the proposed policies and actions. By examining these

various aspects, it becomes apparent how discussions about race and racism can inadvertently reinforce existing power structures and privilege, thus perpetuating whiteness in society.

Another aspect of whiteness that DeSantis uses is the ideology of being “color blind.” The ideology of colorblindness perpetuates racism by ignoring the realities of racial disparities and systemic discrimination. According to Eduardo Silva, colorblind racism is the “idea that race is no longer a central factor determining the lives of Americans” (Silva 191). Colorblindness dismisses the significance of race and racial identities. By promoting the idea that one should be "blind" to race, it suggests that acknowledging racial differences is unnecessary or even harmful. However, race plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' experiences and opportunities within society. Ignoring race overlooks the unique challenges and forms of discrimination faced by black people. The racial ideology, color-blind racism, has emerged as a central ideological mechanism for supporting and reproducing the new racial structure of the United States. Colorblindness fails to address systemic racism and inequalities. By refusing to acknowledge the existence of race-based disparities in areas such as education, employment, housing, and criminal justice, colorblind ideology hinders efforts to combat these injustices. Without recognizing the structural barriers that certain racial groups face, there can be no meaningful progress toward achieving equality which is the goal of whiteness.

Color blindness leads to the erasure of marginalized voices and experiences. When individuals are encouraged to overlook race, it becomes difficult to discuss and address issues of racism and discrimination. Furthermore, colorblindness perpetuates the myth of meritocracy, the idea that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed based solely on their abilities and efforts. This narrative ignores the historical and ongoing effects of slavery, colonialism, segregation, and other forms of oppression that have systematically disadvantaged certain racial groups. In reality,

factors such as socioeconomic status, access to education, and systemic biases heavily influence individuals' life outcomes.

The primary function of color blindness is to “create a justification for the perpetuation of a racist social structure by placing responsibility for poverty and other societal issues on Blacks themselves” (Monnat 641). Color blindness is used as a tool to maintain the status quo and uphold existing power structures. By denying the significance of race, those in positions of privilege can avoid acknowledging their own advantages of taking responsibility for addressing inequality. This allows systemic racism to persist unchecked, perpetuating disparities and injustices.

Tokenism

The black and brown kids and parents that stood on stage in favor of the banning of CRT are merely examples of tokenism. Having little black kids who are too incompetent to understand CRT stand on stage is quite disturbing. From commenter Jeff Lynne, “like the Governor, but using kids as props (do they even understand the signs they are holding) is really disgusting.” Defined by “Oxford Reference”, tokenism is “the promotion of disadvantaged groups to give the impression of equal opportunity.” In predominantly white spaces tokenism becomes even more effective. This ultimately creates an illusion of diversity or inclusion without fundamentally challenging existing power structures or addressing systemic inequalities. In this scenario, people of color are valued primarily for their racial or ethnic background rather than their qualifications, skills, or expertise. They are expected to conform to stereotypical expectations and represent their entire racial or ethnic group, thereby reinforcing existing biases and limiting their agency. In an article by Lorraine Code, King is quoted, “tokenism has sufficed to appease the masses

and prevent national revolt from people of color. If we are to have a truly integrated society, it will never develop through tokenism” (King 325)

Racial tokenism serves as a strategy for white people and institutions to mitigate accusations of racism or discrimination by showcasing a superficial appearance of diversity. The panel consisted of predominantly white individuals, reinforcing the idea that discussions about race and racism are primarily the domain of white voices, sidelining perspectives from marginalized communities. This marginalization perpetuates the dominance of whiteness within the conversation, as non-white perspectives are either tokenized or excluded altogether.

By placing individuals from marginalized groups in visible roles or positions, white-dominated ideologies can claim to be inclusive and progressive without addressing deeper issues of structural inequality or racism. It is argued by Lorraine Code that “tokenism is negatively evaluated because of its persistent association with individualistic conceptions of subjectivity” (Code 246). Ron DeSantis repeatedly says “everyone can succeed” and “don’t let anyone say you can’t” as the people of color stood behind him. He was symbolically saying that because black people have equal opportunity”, no one should be supporting CRT as it lies about the ideology of our country. Tokenization aligns with docility as you aren’t supposed to challenge the status quo, rather accept things for what they are. Token members are generally “expected to make themselves "fit in," to conduct themselves according to the standards of the dominant group, and to avoid calling attention to their "difference"(Code 247). The few black people on stage served as a visual to the illusion of equal opportunity and the perception that all black people's stance should align with those on the stage. DeSantis ends his speech by saying “we are going to make sure everyone has a fair shot of living out their dream” just before the black parents and officials speak. John Davis, the secretary of Florida is the epitome of

tokenization. He begins his speech bragging on his accomplishments and how he attended Florida State University on full scholarship. His accolades earned him extended praise from the audience. He concludes his speech about how he was a black kid from a small town turned successful, only illuminating the strategy behind tokenism. As he reminisces on his upbringing and how it relates to the teaching of CRT, he believes that “CRT would have you believe that a black kid couldn’t or doesn’t have a fair chance to succeed.” Davis used his personal success to generalize the entire black community. Disregarding the struggles blacks face just because he was fortunate enough to make it out, which is part of a larger strategic ideology, tokenism.

Racial tokenism often involves the selective elevation of individuals who are perceived as non-threatening or palatable to white sensibilities. Because tokenism aligns with whiteness a lot of black people fall into the trap which leads to interest divergence. This can manifest in the preference for individuals who adhere to dominant cultural norms, speak fluent English, or have achieved a certain level of education or socioeconomic status. By elevating these "acceptable" minorities, white-dominated institutions can maintain their power and control while appearing inclusive. This further explains the use of black parents and officials in the press conference.

Interest Divergence

For white people, interest convergence makes them more inclined to support black people when they perceive it as beneficial to themselves or to the larger social order. It posits that “dominant groups will tolerate social change only if such change suits their interest” (Pelak 307). Understanding interest convergence is essential for white individuals because it highlights the complexities of racial dynamics and underscores the need to critically examine their own motivations and actions in the pursuit of racial justice. For the purpose of the CRT press conference, interest convergence is very present. It is rare for a black person to be so heavily

involved at a predominantly event/cause. They were given the stage because it provided white people an opportunity to hide their agenda in the racial sphere. Their shared beliefs with white ideologies made it easy for them to be incorporated.

Interest convergence is defined as the “interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites” (Bell 523). This encourages black bodies to align themselves with whiteness for societal acceptance. In other words, advancements in racial equality tend to occur only when they serve the interests of those in power. This concept sheds light on why black people find themselves participating in actions or movements that, on the surface, seem to benefit them, but in reality, serve to maintain or reinforce existing power structures. The parents and government officials in the CRT are prime examples. Interest divergence forces black people to seek validation from white people. John Davis sought approval for graduating college as he took a long pause to make sure the audience gave him a round of applause. He was trying his very hardest to fit in and align himself with the status quo. Interest convergence suggests that meaningful advancements in racial equality typically occur when the interests of the oppressed group align with the dominant group in order to hide the racial equality in our country. In the context of CRT, this theory acknowledges that progress for Black people often occurs not solely out of a genuine desire for justice but rather when such progress also serves the interests of white society or those in positions of power. In the contemporary context, interest convergence continues to be relevant in understanding why Black people participate in various movements or initiatives that hinder them more than help them and the CRT banning press conferences is another example.

CRT Supporters

(CRT) has garnered significant support from various individuals and groups, particularly in academic and social justice circles. CRT is a framework that seeks to understand and address systemic racism and inequality embedded within societal structures and institutions. Those who strongly support CRT often do so because they believe it offers valuable insights into the persistent racial disparities and injustices present in contemporary society. An ideological approach that supports CRT is the belief in the importance of acknowledging and confronting historical and ongoing racial injustices. Proponents argue that CRT provides a lens through which to critically examine how power dynamics, historical legacies of slavery and colonialism, and institutional practices have contributed to the marginalization of certain racial groups. By recognizing and grappling with these realities, supporters of CRT assert that meaningful progress toward racial equity and justice can be achieved. Which is ultimately what people of color are fighting for. Ideologically, those who support CRT often align with progressive or liberal ideologies that prioritize social justice, equity, and inclusivity. Which is what leads to comments like “Maybe some of the Democrats would like him better if he were walking around lost like our President.” They see CRT as a tool for uncovering and dismantling the underlying mechanisms that perpetuate racial disparities.

Advocates argue that understanding how race intersects with other forms of oppression, such as class and gender, is crucial for addressing the complexities of inequality. By analyzing how power structures have historically marginalized certain racial groups, CRT seeks to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for policies that promote racial equity. This approach is aligned with ideologies that prioritize historical context, intersectionality, and the redistribution of resources to marginalized communities. Supporters of CRT emphasize the importance of lived experiences and storytelling as legitimate sources of knowledge about racism

and oppression. Proponents argue that centering the voices of marginalized groups is essential for understanding the full extent of racial injustice and for crafting effective solutions. This emphasis on narrative and experiential knowledge resonates with ideologies that value diversity, multiculturalism, and the amplification of marginalized voices.

The clash between support for CRT and conservative ideologies stems from fundamental differences in how each side perceives the nature of racism and inequality, as well as divergent views on the role of government, institutions, and individual responsibility in addressing these issues. You have people who fully support the challenge of systemic racism and racial injustice and comment on FB in solidarity with CRT, “God help us from this man and his promotion of non-problems for his political benefit.” Though CRT is mainly about black people, the support extends beyond that. It supports the teaching of history including the racist history of our country. Supporters of CRT would agree that if you truly support a fair and just society we must face the harsh realities of our country. Though the world has progressed tremendously since the times of slavery, racism still persists and CRT supporters remind us that we can not ignore it.

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