

**The Nefarious Doctrine and Praxis of ‘Woke Culture’ a review from Dick Burkhardt of
Against Illiberalism: A critique of illiberal trends in liberal institutions with a focus on
Unitarian Universalism
By David Cycleback (2022)**

Cycleback is a no-nonsense kind of guy, a scholar who digs in wearing a skeptics hat, alert for injustice masked by beguiling mantras. Thus, this concise and well-documented book begins with an exposé of Critical Race Theory (CRT). This is because CRT has played a key role in the cultural wars, radicalizing formerly liberal institutions to mirror their antagonists on the far right. Cycleback examines the case of Unitarian Universalism (UU) in detail since the damage has been recent, dramatic, and not widely known, even among UUs (stealth and deceit are key CRT, or woke, strategies).

Later in the book he cites authors, such as John McWhorter, who’ve been impressed by the religious nature of CRT – it operates like a fundamentalist religion. In the UU case there has been a coup, with new leadership determined to replace UU liberal principles (especially rights of conscience, expression, and democratic governance) by domineering practices based on the beliefs of CRT, but in a surreptitious manner.

Cycleback is well aware that this is an elitist agenda, which is rejected by the vast majority of “people of color”, who are far more interested in practical measures to get ahead in life, not in promoting esoteric ideologies to exploit white guilt. He is ethnically Jewish, and would easily qualify as a person of color. Yet he notes the antisemitic hypocrisy of purveyors of CRT who would label him “white adjacent”, ignoring the fact that Hitler deemed the Jews to be an inferior race. He also takes CRT to task for categorizing US Asians as “white adjacent” because of their social and economic success.

Cycleback lists the key dogmas of CRT right up front. (1) Racism in the US is universal and systemic, implicating all whites. That is, the US is “fundamentally a racist nation”. (2) This system cannot be fixed and must be dismantled. (3) Whites are oppressors and blacks are their victims, a “victimhood culture” originated in 1619. (4) CRT is “postmodern” – skeptical of science, reason, objectivity, and humanism, which are viewed as tools of white oppression.

In addition, Cycleback lists several applications or elaborations of CRT. (1) It rejects universal legal principles such as the freedom-of-speech and innocent-until-proven-guilty: claimed emotional harm to an oppressed minority is subject to social or legal punishment, regardless of motivation or context. *Note: This is the justification for UU cancel culture.* (2) Statistical disparities that are unfavorable to blacks must be due to racism and must be rectified by affirmative action, reparations, or other pro-black policy. *Note: This does not derive from postmodern critical theory but from Kendi’s identity politics of race.* (3) White culture is a monolithic “white supremacy culture” so whites cannot comprehend the “lived experience” of oppressed minorities, theirs being the only authentic voices on issues of race, to which whites must submit, regardless of circumstances or their personal integrity. *Note: This has corrupted UU leadership.*

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Of course, none of this CRT doctrine is based on solid bodies of research in the social sciences. And Cycleback provides a thorough critique through multiple chapters. However, such critiques do not stop the acolytes of CRT because postmodern philosophy is designed to make it impervious to scientific and logical critiques. That is, they can be dismissed as “white supremacy culture”, which is precisely why so many regard CRT as a religion.

Later Cycleback shows these CRT doctrines in action in Unitarian Universalism, particularly in the totally unjustified persecutions of Rev. Todd Eklof and Rev. Richard Trudeau. Since this is only the tip of the iceberg, there is now a growing backlash among UUs, just as there is nationally against CRT, from across the political spectrum. Cycleback concludes that this CRT regime is doomed to failure. Most minorities are already turned off by CRT and white guilt will eventually crash on the rocks of reality. His predicted result? – Shrinking membership, illustrated by a quote from one former UU: “They talk a lot about tolerance and diversity – until you disagree with them.”

Cycleback ends the book with short essays from two UU ministers, Rev Munro Sickafoose and Rev Jim Aikin. The Sickafoose essay exposes recent abuses of power in the UUA and their fundamentalist characteristics, focusing on the official racial policy. He critiques the UU Seminary Starr King, the UU Ministers Association, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, and overall governance. The Aikin essay takes up the collective (Universalist) versus individualistic (Unitarian) approaches to religion. He proposes a denominational split, as Eklof has suggested, with the CRT collective leaving. *Note: Presumably this collective will enforce groupthink by holding themselves “accountable” by open ended means to their “covenants”.*

Well done, David.