

CRITICAL RACE THEORY EXPLAINED; BOOK REVIEW OF VICTOR RAY, ON CRITICAL RACE THEORY: WHY IT MATTERS AND WHY YOU SHOULD CARE (RANDOM HOUSE (2022) 209 PP.)

51 Rutgers L. Rec. 171 (2024) | [WestLaw](#) | [LexisNexis](#) | [PDF](#) **I. INTRODUCTION**

Victor Ray's new book, *On Critical Race Theory*, offers non-specialists the best available introduction to critical race theory. Before its publication, the standard introductions have been the classic works by legal scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw and by Richard Delgado.¹ They were largely intended for legal theorists and academics; they had become somewhat dated, on the one hand, by the burgeoning application of the insights of critical race theory outside the law, and by the increasing controversy about critical race theory in the broader political and public discourse. Ray, a sociologist and an advocate of critical race theory, expressly tries to fill this gap, both explaining the expanding scope of critical race theory and defending it against its critics. Ray writes clearly and precisely about sometimes complex arguments. As a result, *Critical Race Theory* performs these two missions admirably.

Ray's book is a simple, almost journalistic, contribution to the defense of critical race theory. That's not a weakness; just such a work is what our public, political discourse requires. As Ray notes, his first draft was written in "a three-month sprint." (p. 125) The book should be judged on this basis, rather than as a more deliberative assessment of the theory and its limitations. From this perspective, it's hardly fair to call out omissions that a reviewer might find significant in what is intentionally and self-consciously only a survey of an expansive, multi-disciplinary project. Readers will undoubtedly find their own gaps. Ray's book offers a defense of critical race theory. It doesn't pause to expressly acknowledge any substantive or rhetorical overstatement by critical race theory's advocates. There are necessarily trade-offs in such an expedited publication schedule, both in the scope and the depth of the resulting product. In general, the pay-off in accessibility and timeliness that *Critical Race Theory* achieves more than outweighs these costs.

¹ See generally [RICHARD DELGADO & JEAN STEFANCIC, CRITICAL RACE THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION \(2d ed. 2012\)](#); [KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW, CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE KEY WRITINGS THAT FORMED THE MOVEMENT \(1996\)](#). [View the Entire Article](#)