

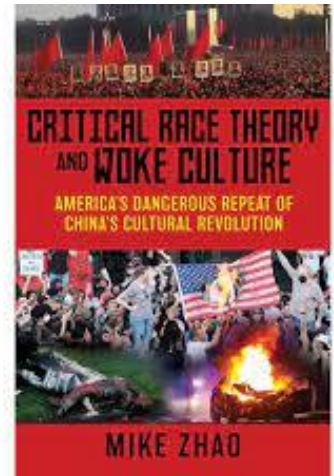
“Earth Culture, Not Cancel Culture”

a review from Dick Burkhardt of

“Critical Race Theory and Woke Culture:

America’s Dangerous Repeat of China’s Cultural Revolution”

By Mike Zhao (2022)



Mike Zhao and his family lived through the horrors of Mao’s Cultural Revolution and see disturbing parallels with the cancel culture of Wokism in the US. In China the bad people (the 5 Black categories) were fair game, even the good people (the 5 Red categories) eventually turned on each other. In the US the Whites and Asians are deemed to be oppressors by the Woke, or radical Left, hence fair game for disrespect, blame, discrimination, and humiliation or cancellation. Meanwhile less affluent people of color are regarded as their victims (deserving of special privileges). Zhao neglected to mention that sometimes Jews are also categorized with the oppressor class, because in the US they are often high achievers, like many Asians.

Zhao has been a leader in combatting quotas or other policies which discriminate against Asians, especially in education and employment, such as at Harvard. Yet, despite his well-grounded attitudes toward identity politics, it is obvious that he also lives in a conservative media bubble, hence has many misconceptions other issues. One is the assertion that the US was founded on the “free market system” when that concept was not even well developed let alone debated until a century later.

Instead the economic issues during the founding era focused on like taxation, land ownership, slavery, trade, piracy, etc. Though most of the economy was “private” in practice, it was simply assumed that the government could regulate as needed without being bound by a “free market” ideology. For example, local governments sometimes limited the prices of goods and services (Motley Fool, 11-7-2016). So when Bernie Sanders and Alexander Ocasio-Cortez advocate for democratic

“socialism to limit the free market system” (p 30), such as to regulate monopolies and tax windfall profits, they draw on many precedents throughout US history.

And Bernie Sanders is not part of the “radical left” as claimed by Zhao (p 34): His focus is thoroughly mainstream - like the social democracies of Europe, such as Denmark, or by upgrading the New Deal to include universal medical insurance. I actually witnessed Black Lives Matter activists block a street speech he was to give in Seattle because he was not woke enough. For example, he always calls for a “political revolution” - conspicuously dissociating himself from the “violent revolutions” in Russia and China - to reverse the escalating inequality driven by Wall Street, etc. This is unlike woke ideology which uses the word “dismantle” without qualification - leaving it open to include unethical manipulation, force, and violence, such as the antifa street violence abhorred by Bernie.

Where Zhao is on firmer ground is when acolytes of Critical Race Theory “divide Americans into ‘the oppressors’ (white Americans) and ‘the oppressed’ (people of color), which is similar to what the communists did by dividing Chinese people into ‘the oppressors’ (landlords and capitalists) and ‘the oppressed’ (peasants and workers)” (p 42). Instead of systemic racism, he cites statistics that only “14 unarmed Blacks were killed by the police in 2019” and that “Black people being arrested as they simply commit more crimes” (pp 44-45), pointing to other causes.

However Zhao’s list of “root causes” reads more like a list of symptoms: “dependence on welfare, high crime rates, broken families, high drug abuse rates, and failing public schools in American inner cities” (p 108). Deeper analysis suggests that these symptoms are all legacies of past racial practices – slavery, Jim Crow, KKK terror, etc. – combined with neoliberal globalization and suburbanization. These took good working-class jobs away from many inner cities and put substantial numbers in direct competition with cheap labor from overseas. Revitalizing black culture is an ongoing generational project, just as it is for indigenous groups, and other disrupted societies throughout history.

As Zhao so eloquently warns, the Cultural Revolution being promoted by Wokism in the US will certainly fail, just as Mao’s did in China, even with university trained “Red Guards”. However Zhao doesn’t see beyond a simplistic “capitalist” vs

“socialist” dichotomy. Real solutions to growing global crises and the threat of collapse – a new Earth Culture - must be grounded in global systems thinking, rooted in the earth itself, not in narrow minded and vastly outdated ideologies of economics. I recommend the book “Earth for All – A Survival Guide for Humanity”.