

CRT vs the Wheel of Power

What UK DEI training quietly does to race — and the test the Wheel can't pass.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Race is **central** to how power is structured. Racism is not an aberration but a feature of laws, institutions and everyday life — a structural force in its own right.

Names racism. Centres race. Asks: "Is racism present here?"

Wheel of Power & Privilege

Power is central; race is one spoke alongside class, gender, sexuality, disability, citizenship, education and more. Marginalisation is read as overlapping disadvantage.

Names power. Distributes race across spokes. Asks: "Which overlapping systems produce unequal outcomes?"

What happens in UK DEI rooms when these meet

The quiet move

A facilitator using a wheel framework will often: reframe a "racism" claim into broader *structural disadvantage* language, foreground class and power intersections, and avoid centring race as the explanatory variable.

The conversation shifts from "**Is racism present?**" to "**Which overlapping systems produce unequal outcomes?**" — and racism, having been one spoke among many, quietly drops out.

The result is not balance. It is **minimisation by abstraction**: racism is not denied, it is dissolved into a wider story until it no longer requires anyone to act on it specifically.

"But CRT is a US issue" — the deflection

CRT is treated, in much UK DEI training, as a foreign import. This is not a neutral observation — it removes the most direct vocabulary the UK has for naming race as a structural force, and replaces it with frameworks that allow race to be politely averaged out. The British state, education system, media and policing all have their own well-documented racial histories. CRT's central claim — that race shapes how power is structured — does not stop being true at Heathrow.

Power did not protect them — the test the Wheel can't pass

If race were really just one spoke, people sitting at the very centre of the Wheel — wealthy, educated, citizens, high-status, well-connected — should be largely insulated from racism. They are not.

Meghan Markle Duchess, global platform, immense wealth — racialised relentlessly by the British press from the moment her relationship became public.	Rishi Sunak Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom — still the target of racialised abuse and questions about whether he was "really" British enough to lead.
Akshata Murty Successful businesswoman in her own right and wife of a sitting PM — racialised commentary about her wealth, status and citizenship was constant.	Kemi Badenoch Leader of the Conservative Party — even at the top of British politics, faces racialised commentary the Wheel of Power would predict she had escaped.

Each sits at or near the centre of every spoke the Wheel measures — class, education, wealth, citizenship, status. Each is still subjected to racism in British public life. That is not what the Wheel predicts. It is exactly what CRT predicts: **race operates independently of class, and centring power in general lets racism in particular off the hook.**

AEMWG's position

The Wheel of Power is not wrong — it is a useful map of overlapping disadvantage. In the UK it is **too often used as a replacement for CRT rather than an addition to it**, and the effect is to minimise racism even where everyone in the room can see it operating.

A serious UK equality conversation needs **both** languages: the Wheel to map how systems overlap, and CRT to keep race named, central and unflinchingly visible when it shows up.

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