



2.3 The Class Left

Key building blocks

As we learned earlier (video 2.1), directly challenging the racism in dog whistle politics typically backfires, leading the left to divide regarding how to fight back. We've discussed the Race Left, those who believe we should nevertheless call out dog whistle politicians for being bigots. **This video looks at those who believe the best response is to ignore dog whistling.**

- The **Class Left** are those who believe the best response to dog whistling is to ignore dog whistle politics, convinced that this is the best way to hold onto white support.
- The Class Left is less about class than about race; indeed, think of it as **a racial strategy of running silent on racism**. This strategy has been widely adopted in areas not related to economic fairness, for example by many within the environmental movement.

THE Class Left	
1. The Class Left believes it is best to ignore dog whistle politics. Why is that?	<p>Like the Race Left, the Class Left assumes progressives have only two choices: challenge white racism, or ignore it.</p> <p>People on the Class Left see challenging racism as likely to be divisive. They hope they can avoid division by focusing on things that affect everyone—for instance economic injustice (or climate collapse).</p>
2. Even though it may not seem like it at first, the Class Left is actually pursuing a racial strategy. Can you describe their racial strategy?	<p>The strategy reflects the beliefs that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressives should maximize support from white people, • and that in order to do so, progressives should avoid challenging racism.

<p>3. Is the Class Left wrong to want to win over as many whites as possible?</p>	<p>Maximizing white support is not the problem. Progressives should work to increase support from every racial group, whites included. Convincing as many people as possible is key to building a super-majority.</p>
<p>4. So what's the problem with the Class Left's approach?</p>	<p>The video makes the point that racial division is the most powerful weapon of the ultra-rich against the rest of us. When you ignore the other sides' most potent weapon, you set yourself up for defeat. Digging deeper, there are two problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, ignoring dog whistle politics is not effective with whites themselves. We will see this in video 2.4 • Second, this strategy is racist. It seeks to win support from whites by sacrificing the concerns of communities of color. Building white enthusiasm is great. But doing so by sacrificing people of color is racist.
<p>5. The video links racism and climate collapse. What's the connection?</p>	<p>In order to prevent meaningful government regulation, Koch Industries, one of the leading corporate polluters, funded the Tea Party movement. In other words, they profited by stoking fear of a Black president and hysteria about Muslims, immigrants, and African Americans. They gained political power by funding racial anxiety and outrage.</p>

Anti-racist protip

We should contrast two approaches to connecting race and class, or race and the environment: systemic racism and strategic racism. The most common way progressives link race and class or the environment is to focus on systemic racism and disproportionate harms to communities of color. A typical systemic racism analysis in the environmental context would go something like:

- Environmental harms have a devastating impact on all of us.

- Because of decades and centuries of racism, people of color disproportionately reside in poor or otherwise vulnerable communities.
- Therefore environmental harms, through institutionalized racism, disproportionately injure communities of color.

This argument is entirely accurate. But the race-class analysis is different. It connects racism to climate collapse by identifying racial division as a weapon of the rich that divides us and facilitates their capture of government.

It's important to understand both arguments. Systemic racism helps us understand the intense, cumulative hardships imposed on communities of color. Strategic racism helps us understand how racism has restructured politics and the economy for everyone (with especially intense harms to communities of color).