WIKI on woke: *Woke* (/ˈwoʊk/ *WOHK*) is a word which originally referred to awareness about racism and discrimination. It later came to include an awareness of other issues of social inequality, for example regarding gender and sexual orientation. Since the late 2010s it has also been used as a general word for left-wing political movements and viewpoints which emphasize the identity politics of people of color (those who are not white), LGBT people, and women.

The phrase "*stay woke*" began within the everyday language of some African Americans in the 1930s, because in African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) *woke* is instead of *woken*, the usual past participle form of *wake*.

After the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, the word was used by Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists who wanted to raise awareness about police shootings of African Americans in the US. It became an Internet meme and was increasingly utilized by individuals who were not African American to show that they supported BLM. Popular among millennials, the word spread worldwide and was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2017.

The word ended up being used as a catch-all term to describe left-wing ideologies, often centered on the identity politics of minority groups and informed by academic movements like critical race theory, which identified themselves as being devoted to social justice. This included BLM, anti-racism, and campaigns on women's and LGBT issues. By 2020, parts of the political right in some Western countries were ironically using the word "woke" to describe left-wing movements and ideologies they disagreed with. In turn, some left-wing activists came to consider it an offensive term used to belittle those campaigning against discrimination.[1]

What does 'woke' mean? For conservatives, it's so much more than political correctness.
Ingrid Jacques USA TODAY 3/10/2023

No one has elevated the fight against 'woke' more than Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. He has repeatedly said that his state is where 'woke goes to die' and that he'll never surrender to the 'woke mob.'

A new USA TODAY/Ipsos Poll found a that majority of Americans, including 78% of Democrats and 37% of Republicans, see "woke" in a positive light, and define the term as "to be informed, educated on and aware of social injustices."

Yet nearly 40% of those surveyed (and 56% of Republicans) say the word constitutes something more negative, "to be overly politically correct and police others' words."

At the recent Conservative Political Action Conference, the word was a common refrain among declared Republican presidential candidates, including former President Donald Trump, former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy (recently dubbed the "CEO of Anti-Woke, Inc.").

"I'm running for president to renew an America that's proud and strong, not weak and woke," Haley said at CPAC.

Others are getting on board, too. Earlier this year, Indiana GOP Rep. Jim Banks has recently formed the "Anti-Woke Caucus," with an aim to "defund wokeness."

No one, however, has elevated the fight against "woke" more than Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. He has repeated frequently that his state is where "woke goes to die" and that he'll never surrender to the "woke mob."

DeSantis has riled many on the left for pushing legislation that actively seeks to suppress woke ideology in classrooms and workplaces. He even signed a law named the "Stop WOKE Act."

Despite its frequent use among politicians, it's infrequently defined, leaving most of us to our own definitions. If conservatives are going to keep using "woke" as a rallying cry, there needs to be a much clearer consensus about its meaning and what the right hopes to accomplish.

A DeSantis spokesperson has called it a slang term for "progressive activism" and a "general belief in systemic injustices in the country." That's pretty vague.

In an attempt to get a clearer definition, I reached out to several organizations on the right.

Zach Goldberg, a self-proclaimed "wokeness studies scholar" at the Manhattan Institute, says "woke" means more than just left-wing radicalism. He says the essence of woke is "the belief that outcome disparities between groups – be they races, sexes, or 'genders,' etc. – are largely if not entirely the product of oppressive social forces and structures."

I think that hits on what DeSantis and others are worried about. The woke ideology is about more than preferred pronouns and avoiding offensive words. It's a view of America that pits "oppressors" against the "oppressed."

Carrie Sheffield, a senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum, says "woke" has evolved over the years, much like feminism. The word originally was used to signal awareness of racism and injustice. But, Sheffield says, its meaning has swung so far to the left, it now undermines tenets of Western civilization such as capitalism.

She argues that critical race theory – as it has been adapted at the K-12 level – is teaching schoolchildren to dislike each other.

That kind of division is dangerous to the future of our country. If that's what Republicans mean when they're talking about "woke," they need to do a better job explaining it.