

Racism is a system that encompasses economic, political, social, and cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that institutionalize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources and power between White people and people of Color. This system is historic, normalized, taken for granted, deeply embedded, and works to the benefit whites and to the disadvantage of people of color (Hilliard, 1992).

Basic Tenets of Anti-racist Education

- Racism exists today, in both traditional and modern forms
- All members of this society have been socialized to participate in it
- All white people benefit from racism, regardless of intentions; intentions are irrelevant.
- No one here chose to be socialized into racism (so no one is “bad”). But no one is neutral – to not act against racism is to support racism.
- Racism must be continually identified, analyzed and challenged; no one is ever done
- The question is not “did racism take place”? but rather “how did racism manifest in that situation?”
- The racial status quo is comfortable for most whites. Therefore, anything that maintains white comfort is suspect. If you are white, practice sitting with and building your stamina for racial discomfort.

Common White Patterns that obscure and protect racism

- Preference for racial segregation / isolation. Lack of a sense of loss about that segregation / isolation
- Lack of understanding about what racism is
- Seeing ourselves as individuals, outside of racial socialization
- Not understanding that we bring our group’s history with us; history matters
- Cultural appropriation
- Assuming everyone is having/can have our experience
- Lack of racial humility / unwillingness to listen
- Lack of authentic interest in the perspectives of people of color
- Inability to sustain long-term relationships with people of color
- Believing we can be exempt from the power of racial socialization (because we have good intentions, experience another oppression, know some people of color, or took a class or workshop)
- Taboos on talking directly about race and racism
- Wanting to jump over the hard personal work and get to “solutions”
- Confusing “not agreeing” with not understanding
- Need to maintain white solidarity / save face / look good
- Guilt which paralyzes or is an excuse for inaction
- Defensiveness about any suggestion that we are connected to racism
- A focus on intentions over impact

The Binary: Racism as Either / Or (Trepagnier, 2007).

Racist = Bad	Not Racist = Good
Ignorant	Progressive
Bigoted	Educated
Prejudiced	Well-intentioned
Mean	Open-minded
Old	Young
Southern	Northern

The Continuum: Racism as Ever-Present



(“Less racist” is not a fixed location based on good intentions, self-image, or past actions. It is continually strived for through on-going and demonstrated practice, and ultimately determined by peoples of Color.)

“Anti-racism refers to taking a committed stand against racism, a stand that translates into action that interrupts racism in all of its forms, whether personal or institutional, blatant or routine, intended or unintended. Antiracism is active by definition - the opposite of passivity, which colludes with racism. If one claims to be antiracist but takes no action against racism, the claim is false” (Trepagnier, 2007, p.104).

White Discussion Prompts

(adapted from Crossroads Antiracism Organization)

What thoughts or feelings do I have in talking openly about racism?

How have I benefitted from white privilege?

What are some of the strategies I use to maintain face and look good regarding racism and my white privilege? (e.g. present myself as open and “cool”)

How have I noticed whiteness manifesting today?

What are some of the strategies I notice that whites use to protect our positions in this institution?

How does whiteness play out in our institution?

- What is welcoming, affirming, and inviting for white people here?
- What about our institution “looks white”?
- How do white people in our institution come together and maintain white solidarity?

What are some of my patterns and how do they work to collude with racism?

How can I move from feelings of guilt, shame, or resentment about racism to taking responsibility for my role as an agent of racism?

What would I have to give up in order to move forward in this work (aspects of my identity, narratives or stories I tell or believe, concrete privileges and advantages, comfort, obliviousness, racial “innocence” etc.)