



I Don't See Color: Understanding the role of anti-racism in society

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Race, Racism & Systemic Racism

Definitions

Race:

The categories into which society places individuals on the basis of physical characteristics (such as skin color, hair type, facial form and eye shape)

Racism:

The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people

Systemic Racism:

A combination of systems, institutions and factors that advantage White people and cause widespread harm and disadvantages in access and opportunity to BIPOC

Individual Racism vs. Systemic Racism

Individual racism is the expression of personal prejudice

Systemic Racism is the expression of a whole organization's practices and culture that reinforce individual prejudices

Why?

- People are not born with biases
- Biases are learned through culture and experiences
- Biases are contextual

The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea

- Gomes Eanes de Zurara (1493)
 - First defense of African slave trading
 - New twist on slavery: A mission from God to help civilize and Christianize the African “savages”
 - Became the primary source of knowledge on then-unknown Africa and African peoples for the original slave traders and enslavers

Theories for Inferiority

Climate Theory:

Aristotle questioned whether Africans were born “this way” or if the heat of the continent made them inferior.

Curse Theory:

English travel writer George Best introduced the curse of Ham. Climate was not the cause of inferiority, but, Africans were cursed. (1577)

Order Theory:

William Perkins, wrote *Ordering a Familie*, published in 1590, in which he argued that the slave was just part of a loving family unit that was ordered a particular way (1590)

Human Hierarchy

John Cotton and Richard Mather (Puritans of the Great Migration from England)

- Puritans were better than Native Americans, non-Puritan English people, and African people

Richard Baxter (1664 Christian Dictionary)

- Slavery was helpful for African people and they were “voluntary slaves”

John Locke (English Philosopher)

- The most unblemished, purest, perfect minds belonged to Whites

Lucilio Vanini (Italian Philosopher and Physician)

- Africans were born of a “different Adam,” and had a different creation story

Firsts In America

First Slaves:

- America's first cash crop is labor intensive
- In 1619, pirates hijacked a Spanish ship and took 60 of the Angolan slaves onboard
- In Jamestown, Virginia, the pirates sold 20 slaves to the Governor, George Yeardley

First Race Codes:

- Established by Virginia colonial governments in mid-1600's
- Prohibited interracial relationships
- Tax imported captives
- Classify Natives and Blacks as property in the tax code
- All property owned by a slave is sold

Declaration of Independence (1776)

- Thomas Jefferson
 - Wrote draft language with the antiracist sentiment that slavery was a “cruel war against human nature,” but that language was removed
- Notes on the State of Virginia
 - Black people could never assimilate due to their perceived inferiority
 - Felt love more, but pain less
 - Operated only on instincts

American culture, from the very beginning, developed around the idea of race and racism.

White Privilege

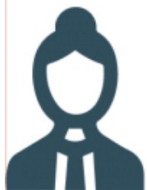
WHITE PRIVILEGE



"I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race."



"I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection."



"I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group."



"I will feel welcomed and 'normal' in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social."



"If I have low credibility as a leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem."



"I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking."



"If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones."

SOURCE: Peggy Macintosh. "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."

Hallmarks of Privilege: Check Yourself

Talking	Taking	Failing	Assuming	Assuming	Correcting
Talking first and talking over others	Taking credit for ideas (checking to make sure your ideas are yours)	Failing to take other people's ideas seriously	Assuming you will speak for the group	Assuming you will have greater influence over the group, or that your opinion counts more	Correcting others or articulating their ideas for them

Implicit Bias



Our Brains → How Bias Creeps In



Premise → all we see
is objective



Reality →
impossibility



Scientists estimate
exposed to 11 million
pieces of information
at any one time, but
our brains can
consciously process
about 40.



That means that over
99.9% of incoming
cues are processed
automatically or
unconsciously by our
brains.



Our brains filter
incoming cues based
on preexisting short
cuts, and this is
implicit bias.

Implicit Bias



We all have biases



These biases creep into our organizations



Our brains, cannot sort all the information so it interprets incoming information, and it happens below our level of conscious awareness



Unconscious thinking is fast and feels intuitive

Types of Bias

- **Confirmation Bias**
 - Tendency to recall information that reinforces prior beliefs
- **Attribution Bias**
 - When a person makes assumptions about others
- **Availability Bias**
 - A mental shortcut that relies on immediate examples that comes to a person's mind, although they may not be most representative
- **Affinity Bias**
 - Gravitate toward people who are like us (“in” group)

Ways to Interrupt Your Own Biases

Question those gut reactions

Think of evidence that contradicts

Use inclusiveness skills to create a full picture

Breathe

Create safety mechanisms within your organization to check these biases

Microaggressions



WE MEAN MICROAGGRESSIONS.

Understand the Micros

Micro-Inequity:

- How individuals are singled out, ignored, overlooked, and discounted.
- Not necessarily based on someone's identity.
- Microinequities are subtle – conveyed through facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice

Microaggressions:

- Subtle acts that show dominance, specifically when members of a higher status group behave in a certain way.
- A microaggression is an act that stereotypes or denigrates the recipient
- Microaggressions are based on individuals belonging to a diverse group

Micro-Affirmations:

- Antidote to microaggressions
- Small, brief acts that affirm other people's value and competence
- Acknowledging people, nodding head when people speaking, coming to a person's defense
- Putting away phone
- Interrupting the microaggression in any way possible

"I Don't See Color."

Nice Concept, Flawed Premise

- Being “color blind”
- “The logic underlying the belief that color blindness can prevent prejudice and discrimination is straightforward: If people or institutions do not even notice race, then they cannot act in a racially biased manner.” Apfelbaum, E. P., Norton, M. I., & Sommers, S. R. (2012). Racial Color Blindness: Emergence, Practice, and Implications. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21(3), 205–209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721411434980>
- Misconstruction of the language of the Civil Rights Movement – See [The Distortion of Martin Luther King's Dream](#), E. J. R. David, Ph.D. , Psychology Today (Aug. 11, 2015)
- Not seeing physical racial differences = impossible

Intent of the Phrase

- Expression of personal values
 - Not racist
- Focus on commonalities
- Make decisions without considering race/differences
- Neutrality
 - Problem 1: "I'm not racist" = can be a form of racism
 - Problem 2: Indifference is not the same as antiracism

Impact - Personal

- Erasure of Identity & Self
 - Lived experience
 - Culture
- Isolation
- Unseen
- Counseling and advice
 - Decreased credibility
 - Facially neutral and unintentionally harmful
- Failure to recognize bias
 - Possible increase in racial bias: ...”people exposed to arguments promoting colorblindness have been shown to subsequently display a greater degree of both explicit and implicit racial bias (Internal citation omitted)” Apfelbaum, et al.
- Denial of individual responsibility



Impact - Institutional

- Centers Whiteness
- Inertia
- Exacerbation of racist systems and lack of inclusivity
 - Reliance on proxies, “fit,” “professionalism,” “soft skills,” etc.
- Lack of retention
 - Hostile environment for BIPOC
- Prohibits inclusiveness and belonging
 - False equity
- Waste of organizational time and resources
 - Undermines DEI efforts

Allyship

Being an Ally

An **ally** is someone who is not a member of an underrepresented group but who takes action to support that group. It is up to people who hold positions of privilege to be active **allies** to those with less access, and to take responsibility for making changes that will help others be successful.

Anti-Racism

Being Anti-Racist

- A belief or practice that recognizes pervasive racism in society, and actively combats racial prejudice and discrimination in order to promote racial justice and equality:
- *Most people are proud if they are not racist, but antiracism establishes a higher bar—what are you doing to dismantle racism?*

Difference Between an Ally and an Anti-Racist

Allies agree to:

Have	Have your back when you aren't in the room
Support	Support minority efforts
Empathize	Empathize with what BIPOC are going through
Take	Take action

Anti-Racists agree to:

Daily	Daily commitment
Question	Will ask the question as to whether something is anti-racist or not
Comfort	Will Stay out of comfort zone
Speak	Will speak up and speak out