Race and Racism

What is race?

Race is a socially constructed categorization rooted in certain physical characteristics. Racial categorization was developed by European 'scientists' as a means to justify colonization. We still center conversations around race because it has an outsized social impact in many countries with colonial histories.

What is racism?

> Racism is a system that is built upon a hierarchy of power.
>
> Power is the ability to act or have influence over others.

Therefore, we can define racism as:

> **RACISM =** RACIAL PREJUDICE + INSTITUTIONAL POWER

While the idea of race was invented without any real biological basis, over time it has been used to construct systems that subjugate and oppress. **Race was made very real through racism.** These systems continue in many aspects of society.

Misconceptions

There is no such thing as a "diverse" person. Groups can be diverse, not individuals.

Even people who are color blind see light and dark. You can't 'not see' skin color.

Since racism relies on hierarchies of power, reverse racism does not exist by definition.

FOUR TYPES OF RACISM

Individual Racism refers to the idea that one's race is superior and to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support and perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. The US cultural narrative about racism typically focuses on individual racism and fails to recognize systemic racism.

Interpersonal Racism occurs between individuals and includes public expression of racism, often involving slurs, biases, hateful words or actions, or exclusion and rejection

Institutional Racism occurs in organizations via policies and practices that intentionally or unintentionally give unfair advantages to whites over people of color. These institutional policies often do not mention any racial group, but the outcomes result in advantages and disadvantages based on one's race

Structural Racism is the interplay and compounding impact across institutions and society. These systems give privileges to white people resulting in disadvantages to people of color

Adapted from : National Museum of African American History and Culture (https://nmaahc.si.edu)

Responding to racism

Anti-Racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racist actions at the institutional or collective level will be key to achieving progress towards dismantling racist systems.

Racial Equity is the condition that would be achieved if a person's racial identity no longer predicted how they fare, statistically. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them.

Targeted Universalism means setting universal goals with targeted processes to achieve those goals. Within a targeted framework, universal goals are established for all group concerns.

Source: Racial Equity Tools

Where can I go to learn more?

www.wef.org/dei for WEF's DEI Committee resources

Podcast: NPR's "*Code-switch*"

US history: National Museum of African American History and Culture (https://nmaahc.si.edu)

Rothstein, Robert. *The Color of Law: A forgotten History of how our Government segregated America.* (2017)

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* (2017, 1997)

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to be an Anti-Racist* (2019)

Racial Equity Tools (racialequitytools.org)

What can we do?

Educate yourself. There is a lot of information out there about how racism affects our lives down to the most granular detail in how we communicate with each other, how we experience the workplace, how we access services in the community, etc. When our colleagues volunteer information about their experiences, we can engage in an open and empathetic conversation. We can continue to learn about those experiences from trusted sources.

Be an ally. Effective allyship is rooted in action. When we witness racist comments or behaviors, we must take it upon ourselves to intervene. See WEF's *Effective Communications* document for ways to interrupt problematic comments. Additionally, if we notice decisions made in the workplace that exclude our coworkers from other cultures, it is our responsibility to speak up and bring it to the attention of leadership.

Get involved. Many of the decisions that affect communities of color are made at the local level. Attend town halls and local government meetings, get involved in local committees, and join your local water equity commissions. Your knowledge, expertise, and drive is needed in providing insights on how historically excluded communities can better access resources.

What not to say

"I don't see skin color"

"You're not like 'them'."

"We're all discriminated against."

"You're so well-spoken/articulate!"

"What about Black-on-Black crime?"

"That was a long time ago!"