



Be Peace. Choose Peace. Create Peace.

DO SOMETHING ABOUT RACISM

What is racism?

Racism (also called “systematic racism,” “systemic racism,” or “structural racism”) is a condition in which members of one racial group have power to carry out discrimination of members of other racial groups through the policies and practices of their shared society and by the shaping of the cultural beliefs and values that support those policies and practices.¹ Related is racial prejudice (also called “individual racism”), an irrational *attitude of hostility* directed against a person or group based on their race.² “Racial discrimination” occurs when a person, group, or institution *acts prejudicially* against an individual or group based on their race.³

How widespread is racism in the United States?

Racism directed by White people against people who are American Indian, Black/African American, Latinx, Asian American, and other races and ethnicities has been a feature of United States society since White settlers from Europe first arrived in the Americas. Racism influenced how the governance, economy, and social structure of the U.S. were organized. Race-based decisions dating back centuries has led to discriminatory effects that persist to this day. Examples:

- Most members of racial and ethnic minority groups live in poorer neighborhoods compared to White people with similar income levels.⁴
- White Americans use more drugs than Black Americans, but Black people are three times more likely to be arrested for drug possession.⁵
- Job candidates who are Black are half as likely to receive callbacks than equally qualified White candidates.⁶
- On local news programs, Black people are more likely to be portrayed as criminals, and White people are more likely to be portrayed as victims.⁷

Both Black and White people believe that discrimination based on the prejudice of individual people is a bigger problem than discrimination built into the nation’s laws and institutions. However, White people attribute racial discrimination to individual factors at a far higher rate than Black people—70 percent among Whites compared to 48 percent among Blacks.⁸

¹ Dismantling Racism Works. (n.d.) Dismantling racism web workbook. [Internet.] <http://www.dismantlingracism.org/racism-defined.html>, viewed January 17, 2020.

² Prejudice. (n.d.) in Merriam-Webster Dictionary. [Internet.] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prejudice>, viewed January 17, 2020.

³ Discrimination. (n.d.) Merriam-Webster Dictionary. [Internet.] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discrimination>, viewed January 17, 2020.

⁴ Logan, J. R. (2011, July). Separate and unequal: The neighborhood gap for Blacks, Hispanics and Asians in metropolitan America. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from Brown University website: <https://s4.ad.brown.edu/Projects/Diversity/Data/Report/report0727.pdf>

⁵ Fellner, J. (2009). Race, Drugs, and Law Enforcement in the United States. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from Human Rights Watch website: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/8%20Fellner_FINAL.pdf

⁶ Prager, D., Western, B., & Bonikowski, B. (2009). American Sociological Review. Discrimination in a low wage labor market: A field experiment, 777-799. doi:10.1177/000312240907400505

⁷ Godsil, R., Tropp, L., Goff, P., & Powell, J. A. (2014, November). The science of equality, volume 1: Addressing implicit bias, racial anxiety, and stereotype threat in education and health care. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from Perception Institute website: <http://perception.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Science-of-Equality.pdf>

⁸ Pew Research Center, June 27, 2016. “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart.”

Seventy-one percent of Black Americans and 52 percent of Latinx Americans say they have personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity.⁹

What culture changes and public policies are necessary for preventing racism?

Media reinforces negative stereotypes of members of racial and ethnic minority groups. One way we can reduce racism then is by insisting that media producers portray members of racial and ethnic minority groups neutrally or positively.¹⁰ As to public policy, the list of remedies is long and includes non-discrimination laws, neighborhood investments, poverty-reduction measures, justice reforms, and reparations.

What practical solutions are effective for preventing racism?

Implementation of practical peaceful solutions such as bias reduction education, dialogue groups, racial healing processes, and restorative justice processes are effective for preventing racism. See our Peaceful Practices Inventory for further information about these solutions.

What can I do to prevent or stop racism?

- **Examine Your Behavior**—Take a free [implicit association test](#) to discover discriminatory or prejudicial beliefs or behaviors you may not even be aware you hold.
- **Learn about the Subject**—Read some of the many recent books about racism. Ask your public librarian or bookseller for recommendations or search the web for reading lists. Watch educational videos about racism, such as LeVar Burton’s “This is My Story” series on YouTube. Or, listen to podcasts that address racism, such as NPR’s “Code Switch.”
- **Join or Start a Dialogue**—Guides and methods for holding dialogues or taking deeper action on racism include [National Day of Racial Healing get involved resources](#) and [Showing Up for Racial Justice \(SURJ\)](#) chapters. Also, many religious denominations have initiatives and curricula to facilitate dialogue and action on racism. Ask your faith leader to connect you to the curricula; offer to lead the program in your congregation if needed!
- **Speak Up**—When you hear a racist comment or joke, respond that you do not find the comment appropriate or funny. If you are a bystander witnessing another person being harassed, interrupt the situation if you feel comfortable so doing, by interacting with the victim of the situation and ignoring the harasser. Here’s a [cartoon](#) demonstrating how to conduct a bystander intervention.
- **Report It**—If you experience or witness racism by an institution or person in authority, report the incident to a human resources leader or trusted adult. File a grievance. Demand corrective action.
- **In Case of Emergency**—If you are experiencing or witnessing an emergency, such as a crime motivated by hate, call 911 or try to get to a location where others can observe your distress and intervene.

Where can I find statistics about racism?

- For data and statistics about racism, go to the Pew Research Center website: <http://www.pewresearch.org/>.

⁹ Pew Research Center, June 27, 2016. “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart.”

¹⁰ Bhatnagar, C. (2013, March 21). A roadmap for fighting racism. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://www.aclu.org/blog/human-rights/roadmap-fighting-racism>

Where else might I go to learn more about racism?

Nonprofit organizations, research centers, and/or think tank organizations with expertise in fighting racism include:

- [Equal Justice Initiative](#) challenges poverty and racial injustice, advocates for equal treatment in the criminal justice system, and creates hope for marginalized communities.
- [Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#) promotes and protects the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States.
- [NAACP](#) eliminates racial discrimination and protect the rights of people.
- [Racial Equity Tools](#) offers a glossary of terms, research, ideas for action, and curricula.

Peace Through Action USA activates and equips Americans to implement practical peaceful solutions to aggression and violence in their communities and our country. We are a national-scope, charitable, social capital-building organization.

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