

# **CENTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION**

**DISMANTLING RACISM.  
TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES.**

## **TALKING ABOUT RACE FOR PARENTS RAISING CHILDREN FOR RACIAL JUSTICE RESOURCE GUIDE**

Center for Racial Justice in Education  
96 Morton Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10014  
[www.centerracialjustice.org](http://www.centerracialjustice.org)

## What is Racism? How does it Manifest?

**RACE** is a hierarchical classification system of human beings invented by Europeans who would come to be categorized as white. This hierarchy uses 'whiteness' as the model of human worth for the purpose of establishing and maintaining social, economic, and political power.

The system draws on physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, and bone structure to reinforce the idea that race is biological. However, there is no scientific basis for race.

\*Adapted from (Ronald Chisom and Michael Washington, *Undoing Racism: A Philosophy of International Social Change*. People's Institute Press. People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. 1444 North Johnson Street. New Orleans, Louisiana, 70116. 1997. Second Edition. p. 30–31.)

**RACISM** is a system of social structures that provides or denies access, safety, resources and power based on race categories and produces and reproduces race- based inequities.

Racism is different from discrimination or racial prejudice.

Racism is race discrimination plus power.

**Institutional Racism** is the way racism manifests itself within various institutions in society. This includes the policies and practices that perpetuate a cycle of racial inequity and are promoted (overtly or subtly) by institutions (i.e. schools, government, housing, media).

**Interpersonal Racism** is verbal or nonverbal communication and/or actions by those with racial privilege, white people, that consciously or subconsciously harm, discriminate against, isolate, and/or minimize the experience of those with no historical/structural power, People of Color.

**Internalized Racism** is the acceptance and affirmation of a racial hierarchy with whiteness at the top. This manifests through one's conscious or subconscious thoughts and behaviors.

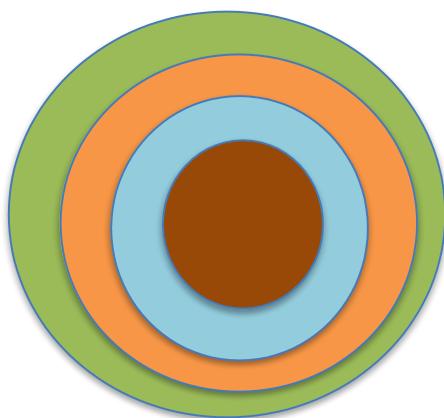
- Internalized White Superiority: Consciously or subconsciously believing that aspects of whiteness are superior and/or the norm.
- Internalized Racial Oppression of People of Color: Thinking and/or acting as if aspects of one's one racial group are inferior, deficient, not-enough, not deserving and/or other.

### **Ideology: White Supremacy**

A historical and institutionally perpetuated system of ideas and beliefs that exploits continents and nations and oppresses People of Color.

The purpose of white supremacy is to maintain and defend a racialized system of wealth, power, and privilege.

\*Adapted from Martinas & Ellinger (1992)



IDEOLOGY
INSTITUTIONAL
INTERPERSONAL
INTERNALIZED

## Talking about Race with Children: Strategies for Parents

### Short-Term Strategies

**"How can I respond in the MOMENT to situations related to race or racism with my child?"**

#### Breathe

Take a breath to pause and ground yourself before responding to a challenging question and/or statement. Continue to breathe throughout your conversation. Be aware of body language, tone and be open to talking about race and racism.

#### Affirm the Child

Affirm the humanity of each child, even when it is necessary to re-direct or hold a child accountable. Validate that each child is seen and heard.

"That's a really great question/observation."

"Good question. I know that sometimes adults have trouble figuring it out..."

"That's a good observation. Sometimes I wonder the same thing..."

"Yes, and..."

"Thank you for saying/asking that..."

#### Inquire

Ask questions and listen openly to hear what the child is actually saying, and what the child isn't saying. Meet children where they are at, using their own language, to understand how they are making sense of what is happening. Ask questions that allow children to share what they see in regards to race. Name differences and affirm a common humanity. Use media and picture books as tools to begin the conversation.

- Can you tell me more about what you mean?
- What made you think about/ say that?
- How does that make you feel?
- How is my skin color different than and/or similar to this character?
- Do we know anyone else who looks like this character?
- What similarities might you share with this character that you can't see?

#### Initiate and Return to the Conversation

Bring up issues of race and racism. Once you are ready, bring your own racial identity into the conversation. Question where stereotypical messages are coming from and, together, think about how to challenge biases. One conversation is not enough. If you are unsure how to respond, it might be best to come back to the conversation at a later time.

- "As a (Latino/Black/Asian/ White/ Mixed-Race, etc) \_\_\_\_\_...."
- "Sometimes in society..."
- If your child says something that is shocking- use it as a teachable moment. Don't silence the child (i.e. "No Billy

her skin color is not worse/ better/ weird. We all have different skin colors. Look around, how many different shades do you see?"")

- Ask critical questions: (i.e. "How could we draw a community of superheroes that represent the different shades of people that make up our world?")
- "How do you think we can change that?"

### **Apply a Racial Equity Lens**

By applying a racial equity lens, you are mindful of how institutional, interpersonal or internalized racism is manifesting in the particular situation, and how children may be consciously or subconsciously responding as a result. Part of this process is teaching your child about historical and present day oppression and liberation struggles of people of color.

### **Do As I Say.... AND As I Do**

Create an environment for your family that includes multi-racial experiences and perspectives. Talk about the racial identities in your family. Have conversations around your children that challenge racial biases, stereotypes and inequities. In order to avoid "colorblindness," it is important to honor the diversity of people's racial identities and racialized experiences. Be comfortable saying words such as Black, White, Latino, Asian, Indigenous, etc. to expose your child to various racial identities. That said; include multiple characteristics when describing people, not only their racial identities.

#### **Long-Term Strategies**

**"What can I do to teach my child about racial equity in the long-term?"**

### **Continue to Educate Yourself about Race and Racism**

- About race and racism (books, trainings, film)
- About the impact of your own racial identity on your life and family
- Attend a trainings on race and racism
- Think about how race and racism has played a role in your life as a parent

### **Create Dialogue about Race and the Impact of Systemic Racism**

- Have intentional conversations with other parents, educators, families
- Explore how racism is impacting your schools and communities on a systemic level
- Create and attend racial affinity spaces that provide the opportunity for you to discuss the effects of racism and to strategize for change.

### **Approach Education through a Racial Equity Lens**

- When exploring educational material, starting with the books your child reads, ask yourself: Whose story are being told? Whose stories are not being told? Who is telling the story?
- Consider how the educational institutions of which your child is a part address issues of race and racism, including: disciplinary policies, opportunities for youth, parent and community voice, and professional development offerings.
- Become active in your child's school diversity initiatives.

### **Build Alliances**

- Create intentional opportunities to discuss the impact of race and racism
- Create structures that will help with accountability around issues of race and racism
- Connect to a larger network of racial justice educators, parents, organizers and advocates.

## Resource List

### Books

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*. New York: The New Press, 2012.
- Bolgatz, Jane. *Talking Race in the Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2005.
- Derman-Sparks, Louise and Patricia Ramsay. *What if All the Kids Are White? Anti-Bias Multicultural Education with Young Children and Families*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2006.
- Genishi, Celia and A. Lin Goodwin. *Diversities in Early Childhood Education: Rethinking and Doing*. New York: Teacher College Press, 2008.
- Irving, Debbie. *Waking Up White in the Story of my Race*. Chicago: Elephant Room Press, 2014
- Lee, Enid, Deborah Menkart and Margo Okazawa-Rey, eds. *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*. Washington, DC: Network of Educators on the Americas [NECA], 1998.
- Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. The New Press, 2013
- Michael, Ali. *Raising Race Questions: Whiteness and Inquiry in Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2015
- Pollock, Mica. *Colormute: Race Talk Dilemmas in An American School*. New Jersey: Princeton Press, 2003.
- Pollock, M., ed. *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real About Race in School*. New York: The New Press. 2008.
- Steele, Claude M. *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect us and What We Can Do*. New York: W. W Norton & Company, 2010
- Stevenson, Howard C. *Promoting Racial Literacy in Schools: Differences that Make a Difference*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2015
- Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.
- Tatum, B.D. *Can We Talk About Race? And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation*. New York: Beacon Press, 2007.
- Van Ausdale, Debra and Joe R. Feagin. *The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2001.

### Articles

- “6 Things White Parents can Do to Talk to Raise Racially Conscious Children;” Bree Ervin: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/08/raising-racially-conscious-kids/>
- “5 Reasons we All need to Talk to Kids about Race in America;” Bree Ervin: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/08/talk-to-kids-about-race/>
- “37 Books that Teach Kids about Race;” Kristen Howerton. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kristen-howerton/talking-to-kids-race-racism-books\\_b\\_2618305.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kristen-howerton/talking-to-kids-race-racism-books_b_2618305.html)

- “60+ Resources for Talking to Kids about Racism;” Lorien Van Ness. <http://creativewithkids.com/resources-for-talking-to-kids-about-race-and-racism>
- “Children are not Colorblind, How Young Children Learn Race;” Erin N. Winkler. [https://www4.uwm.edu/letscli/africology/faculty/upload/children\\_colorblind.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/letscli/africology/faculty/upload/children_colorblind.pdf)
- Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist, Multicultural Organization.” [http://www.aesa.us/conferences/2013\\_ac\\_presentations/Continuum\\_AntiRacist.pdf](http://www.aesa.us/conferences/2013_ac_presentations/Continuum_AntiRacist.pdf)
- “Five Shifts of Consciousness for Multicultural Educators;” <http://www.edchange.org/handouts/paradigmshifts.pdf>
- “How to Talk about Race with your Kids;” Melanie Pinola. <http://lifehacker.com/how-to-talk-about-race-with-your-kids-1681298311>
- “Talking to our Children about Racism and Diversity;” Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund. [http://www.civilrights.org/publications/reports/talking\\_to\\_our\\_children/](http://www.civilrights.org/publications/reports/talking_to_our_children/)
- “Teaching Young Children about Race: A Guide for Parents and Teachers;” Louise- Derman- Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards. <http://www.teachingforchange.org/teaching-about-race>
- “What White Children Need to Know about Race;” Ali Michael and Elonora Bartoli. <http://www.nais.org/Magazines-Newsletters/ISMagazine/Pages/What-White-Children-Need-to-Know-About-Race.aspx>

## Organizations

- Center for Racial Justice in Education: [www.bordercrossers.org](http://www.bordercrossers.org)
- CARLE Institute: <http://www.carleinstitute.com>
- Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education: <http://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity>
- Leadership for Educational Equity: <https://educationalequity.org/>
- Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility: <http://www.morningsidecenter.org>
- National Equity Project: [www.nationalequityproject.org](http://www.nationalequityproject.org)
- New York City Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE): <http://www.nycore.org>
- People’s Institute of Survival and Beyond: <http://www.pisab.org>
- Race Forward: <https://www.raceforward.org>
- Teaching Tolerance: <http://www.tolerance.org>

## Videos

- “Everyday Racism: What Should we Do?” (Guardian) <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/video/2015/mar/18/everyday-racism-what-should-we-do>
- “Race: The Power of an Illusion.” (California Newsreel) <http://newsreel.org/video/RACE-THE-POWER-OF-AN-ILLUSION>
- “Racism is Real.” (Brave New Films) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTcSVQJ2h8g>
- “The Myth of Race, Debunked in 3 Minutes.” (Vox) <https://youtu.be/VnfKgffCZ7U>

## Other

- Harvard Implicit Bias Test: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

## For More Information about Center for Racial Justice in Education

- Natalia Ortiz, Training Director, Center for Racial Justice in Education [natalia@bordercrossers.org](mailto:natalia@bordercrossers.org)
- Benny Vasquez, Co-Executive Director, Center for Racial Justice in Education [benny@bordercrossers.org](mailto:benny@bordercrossers.org)

# **WHO WE ARE**

Center for Racial Justice in Education trains and empowers educators to be leaders of racial justice in their schools and communities.

At Center for Racial Justice in Education, we envision a world where young people of all racial identities learn and thrive in equitable, liberating and empowering educational spaces that embody and promote racial justice. Our trainings support educators in building learning environments where ALL children are treated with dignity, free from racial bias, discrimination, and invisibility.

**Center for Racial  
Justice in  
Education**

96 Morton Avenue  
7th Floor, New York, NY 10014  
(646) 688-4470  
[www.centerracialjustice.org](http://www.centerracialjustice.org)

# PROGRAM OFFERINGS

## **Talking About Race in the Classroom: A Training for Educators Committed to Racial Justice**

Through this training, educators strengthen their analysis of how racism manifests in schools and classrooms, enhance their understanding of how racism affects children, practice utilizing tools to address race and racism with students, and gain strategies to support a school-wide culture of respect, equity and inclusivity.

## **Talking About Race for Parents: Raising Children for Racial Justice**

This training provides parents, guardians and caregivers with strategies for how to talk about race and racism with their children. Participants learn how children see race, gain skills for approaching age-appropriate conversations with a racial equity lens, and practice strategies to promote positive racial identity development in children.

## **Talking About Impact: Addressing Our Unconscious Bias as Educators**

(prerequisite: "Talking about Race in the Classroom")

Through this training, educators explore the impact of unconscious bias on the academic and social emotional development of students. Educators gain tools to recognize and address their own racial biases, and learn how these biases affect curriculum, pedagogy and relationships with students, families and colleagues. Participants will identify instances where they themselves may have witnessed or committed racial microaggressions, and gain strategies to interrupt them.

## **Talking About Equity: Creating Racially Equitable Schools** (prerequisite: "Talking about Race in the Classroom")

This training, designed for teams of individuals who exercise leadership roles in educational institutions, explores how to promote racially equitable outcomes for students beyond the walls of individual classrooms. Teams will assess the degree to which racial equity is upheld in school culture, structures, policies and curriculum. They will brainstorm, prioritize and gain strategies to implement racial justice initiatives at their institutions.

## **Customized Trainings**

Center for Racial Justice in Education customizes training and support for schools and educational organizations dedicated to enhancing racial equity and justice in their institutions. This includes, but is not limited to: coaching, curriculum development, strategic planning, and training for stakeholders.

### **what people are saying**

"Prior to attending the Center for Racial Justice in Education workshop, I was unsure whether or not to talk openly about race with young learners. After the workshop, I made race a core focus of my lessons as an ethics educator. Furthermore, because of my experience with Center for Racial Justice in Education, I have been able to navigate conversations with students and colleagues around the horrific racial injustices that have taken place in this nation recently, and have allowed myself to be more honest and bold in these conversations."

## **NOTES**

**Center for Racial Justice in Education**

\* 96 Morton Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor\* New York, NY \* 10003

[www.centerracialjustice.org](http://www.centerracialjustice.org)