



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

**Resource Guide**

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# 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.

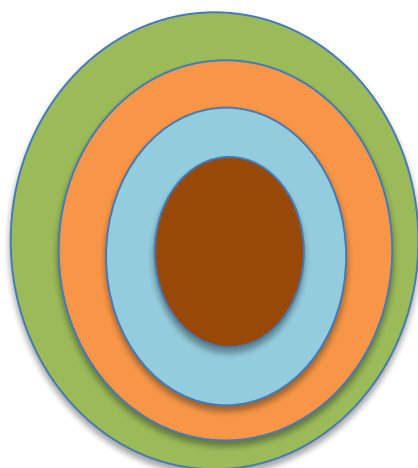
The system draws on physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, and bone structure to reinforce the idea that race is biological. However, there is no scientific basis for race.

*\*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**  
**INSTITUTIONAL**  
**INTERPERSONAL**  
**INTERNALIZED**

## **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)*

## What is Unconscious Bias? What are Microaggressions?

**Unconscious Bias:** Also known as *implicit bias*, unconscious bias refers to our attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes that influence our understanding, actions, and behavior when interacting with various identities. These preferences, which can be for or against groups, are developed through an exposure to stereotypes and misinformation informed by our upbringing and life experiences. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness.<sup>1</sup>

**Racial Microaggressions:** Subtle, verbal and nonverbal, racial insults, indignities and denigrating messages, often automatically and unconsciously, directed toward an individual(s) due to their racially marginalized identities. Usually committed by well-intentioned people who are unaware of the hidden messages committed, the impact of their statements and the unintentional connection to the institutional, interpersonal and internalized manifestations of racism.<sup>2</sup>

### Impact of Unconscious Racial Bias and Microaggressions in Schools

#### *Treatment in School Discipline*<sup>3</sup>

- African American students are punished more frequently than their white peers, although they do not exhibit more frequent and serious misbehavior, and African American students receive harsher disciplinary sanctions than their white peers for the same offenses
- White students are more likely to be disciplined for objective violations like smoking and vandalism, while African American students are more likely to be referred for subjective infractions like showing disrespect, loitering, or making excessive noise

#### *Mental and Physical Health*<sup>4</sup>

- Racial microaggressions have been found to: (a) assail the mental health of recipients, (b) create a hostile and invalidating work or campus climate, (c) create physical health problems, (d) lower work productivity and problem solving abilities
- People of color who encounter greater amounts of racial microaggressions are likely to exhibit a number of mental health issues, such as depression or negative affect as well as physical health issues such as pain or fatigue.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity: <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/>

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: Sue, (2010) *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from NAACP LDF Report, "Barriers Rooted in Race and Gender Bias Harm Educational Outcomes and Must Be Addressed" <http://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/barriers-rooted-race-and-gender-bias-harm-educational-outcomes-african-american-girls>

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Psychology Today: "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201010/racial-microaggressions-in-everyday-life>

### *Academic Achievement*

- Studies suggest that the impact of microaggressions affects students of color differently. For examples, Asians are viewed as the model minority and Black students and Latino students were viewed lesser than, discouraged from joining advanced level classes, and attributed unfair discipline and their lower grades to racial discrimination.

### *Self Esteem<sup>5</sup>*

- There is a strong link between positive self-esteem and better educational outcomes for African American girls.

### *Effects on Perpetrators<sup>6</sup>*

- On cognitive, emotional, behavioral and spiritual levels, research in psychology indicate that when microaggressive perpetrators become increasingly aware of their biases, they often experience debilitating emotional turmoil (guilt, fear, defensiveness), cognitive distortion and constriction - false sense of reality, and behavioral avoidance or inauthentic actions that impair relationships with marginalized individuals and/or groups.
- Microaggressions may also hinder conversations and might work to create a false sense of superiority for the individual making the comments, especially within a classroom setting.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from NAACP LDF Report, "Barriers Rooted in Race and Gender Bias Harm Educational Outcomes and Must Be Addressed" <http://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/barriers-rooted-race-and-gender-bias-harm-educational-outcomes-african-american-girls>

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Psychology Today, "How does oppression (microaggressions) affect perpetrators?" <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201102/how-does-oppression-microaggressions-affect>

## **Strategies for Creating Racial Equity In Classrooms and Schools**

### **Short-Term Strategies**

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

#### **Breathe**

Take a breath to pause and ground yourself before responding to a challenging situation. Continue to breathe throughout your conversation. Be aware of body language and tone.

#### **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 to get more information about what is going on in a situation. Apply active listening to hear what is being said, and what isn't being said.

- "What do you mean by...?"
- "What are you feeling?"
- "Can you tell me more?"

#### **Continue The Conversation**

Think about whether or not it's the appropriate time to continue the conversation. Sometimes emotions are high and it might be best to come back to the conversation at a later time. Once you are ready to have the conversation, open it to other perspectives, including your own. Bring your own racial identity into the conversation and share with students your perspective based on that identity.

- "Sometimes in society..."
- "How do other people feel...?"
- "As a (*insert racial identity*) person, my perspective is....."
- "Where do you think we learn these messages?"
- "How do you think we can change that?"
- "I want to think more about this and will get back to you."

**Intervene**

Some situations require intervention without conversation—especially when students' immediate physical or emotional safety is at stake. That said, use this type of intervention sparingly, and remember that you can still ensure emotional safety while allowing yourself and your students to take risks that may feel uncomfortable in the moment.

**Apply a Racial Equity Lens**

Be mindful of how institutional, interpersonal or internalized racism is manifesting in the particular situation, and how the students may be consciously or subconsciously responding as a result. Applying a racial equity lens allows for uncovering the structures, policies and behaviors that sustain unequal outcomes for students based on race.

**Follow Up**

Though racial prejudice or racism may show up in the classroom in the form of a comment or action, this behavior is only a symptom of a larger system of racial oppression in society. Ensure ongoing follow-up to address the larger systemic racism and to promote racial equity in your classroom and school community.

**Long Term Strategies*****How can I Promote Racial Equity in my Classroom and School?*****Continue to Educate Yourself about Race and Racism**

- Continue to learn about the history of race and racism in the United States
- Explore how racial privilege and/ or oppression (including internalized racism) has affected you. Become aware of your own triggers around race and racism.
- Think about how race or racial bias has played a role in your life as an educator: What impact has it had on your curriculum, your pedagogy and the way you relate to students, colleagues and families?

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

- Have intentional conversations among the adults at your school (through professional development, learning circles, working groups)
- Explore how racism is impacting your schools and communities on a systemic level
- Create affinity spaces that can provide spaces for deeper dialogue about the affects of racism and strategize for change

**Analyze School Structures through a Racial Equity Lens**

- When exploring curriculum, ask yourself: Whose story is being told through my curriculum? Whose stories are not being told?
- Apply a racial equity lens when discussing disciplinary policies, opportunities for youth and parent voice, professional development offerings

**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
- Form alliances within your school community (across and within racial groups)
- Connect to a larger network of racial justice educators, organizers and advocates

**Observer Rubric:  
Addressing Situations Related to Race and Racism**

Strategy for Success	Evidence
<b><u>Grounded/ Open Body Language:</u></b> Paused to find grounding before and while responding. Body language and tone was open and present.	
<b><u>Affirmation of Student:</u></b> The humanity of child was affirmed, even if re-directed or held accountable. Student was validated, seen and heard.	
<b><u>Inquiry:</u></b> Asked clarifying questions to obtain more information, and listened actively to hear what was being said and not said.	
<b><u>Continuing the Conversation:</u></b> Used appropriate judgment to determine whether or not it was the right time to continue conversation. Brought in other perspectives including his/ her own, and from the vantage point of his/ her own racial identity.	
<b><u>Intervention:</u></b> Intervened appropriately, with a balance of ensuring physical and emotional safety while allowing for the opportunity to take risks.	
<b><u>Applying Racial Equity Lens:</u></b> Demonstrated awareness to how institutional, interpersonal or internalized racism was manifesting in this situation, and responded to student with appropriate sensitivity.	
<b><u>Following Up:</u></b> Indicated what follow up actions might be taken to support a racially equitable classroom and community.	

# 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 Mnektart 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

- “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/letsci/africology/faculty/upload/children\\_colorblind.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/letsci/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

- Border Crossers: [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 Border Crossers

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- Benny Vasquez, Co-Executive Director, Border Crossers [benny@bordercrossers.org](mailto:benny@bordercrossers.org)

# who we are

Border Crossers trains and empowers educators to be leaders of racial justice in their schools and communities.

At Border Crossers, 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.

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# 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

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

Border Crossers 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 Border Crossers 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 Border Crossers, 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