

## Background

“Rather than emerging from a scientific perspective, the notion, “race,” is informed by historical, social, cultural, and political values. Thus, we find that the concept “race” is based on socially constructed, but socially, and certainly scientifically, outmoded beliefs about the inherent superiority and inferiority of groups based on racial distinctions (Montagu 1952, 1963; Gossett 1963; Bernal 1987; Bennett 1988).” (Guess, 2006).

The conversation of race in America is largely dominated by things Black folks don’t have because of their skin color. The problem with this way of thinking about race is it ignores the construction of “whiteness” by treating it simply as a given, and even as a benign factor in ‘race’ relations. ... post-structuralists and critical theorists tend to problematize whiteness in relation to the ‘other.’” (Guess, 2006).

RACISM BY INTENT	RACISM BY CONSEQUENCE
<p>Operates at the level of the individual</p> <p>Manifested as racial prejudice and discrimination towards non-white individuals</p> <p>Racism by intent has overtime informed institutional cultures and practices that rest on assumptions of white superiority over non-white ethnic groups</p>	<p>Operates at the macro level of society</p> <p>Represents a historical evolution, a gradual shift away from a conscious, almost personalized conviction of the inferiority or an “othered” “race”</p> <p>Discrimination becomes institutionalized, so racial prejudices decline over time, but more subtle patterns of discrimination persist</p> <p>Not typically recognized by ‘white’ Americans</p> <p>Reflected in: different educational opportunities, economic differences between whites and non-whites, residential segregation, health care access, etc.</p>

## Activity #1

Watch Peggy McIntosh’s TED talk, [How to recognize your white privilege – and use it to fight inequality](#) (2012).

What privilege systems do you benefit from? What privilege systems harm you?

### Diversity & Inclusion Programs- DIP

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*“I thought, oh, I hope my attitudes didn’t show. I hope I was so nice I covered them over. But after struggling with that for a couple of years, I said yes, I was oppressive to work with. And my niceness didn’t cover my basic racial superiority assumption. And then I thought, maybe niceness has nothing to do with it. And that’s what I believe today. Niceness has nothing at all to do with this whole matter of being oppressive to others.”*

Can you think of someone who you’d describe as “nice”, who is also oppressive?  
How have you been oppressive?

Make a list of the unearned advantages you have. What can you do to give away some of those unearned advantages to folks with unearned disadvantages?

## Activity #2

Read Jennifer A. Richeson’s article, [Americans Are Determined to Believe in Black Progress](#) (2020).

Sit with your initial reactions to reading this article. Do you believe in the myth of racial progress? How has that perception been challenged?

The article mentions how Supreme Court decisions reinforce the myth of racial progress, and specifically talk about the Voting Rights Act of 1965. We learn that while in theory all Americans have the right to vote, stringent voter-ID laws and purging voter rolls are violations of voting rights. What other ways are non-White voters impacted by laws and policies such as this?

*“The mythology of racial progress is corrosive in countless ways. It provides a reason to blame the victim: If we’re converging on equality, then those left behind must not be trying. And it diffuses moral responsibility for actively and significantly reforming the American system: If we’re converging on equality anyway, then why do we need laws and other measures to promote it?”*

Can you think of a story, either from the news or in your life, where BIPOC folks were blamed for inequality?

What are 3 actionable items white and non-Black folks can do now to “address current gaps in every significant domain of social well-being: jobs, politics, education, the environment, health, housing, and of course criminal justice”?

*“In other words, if people accepted that progress had been slower than they’d imagined—the takeaway message of the article they read—then they arrived at the idea that the past must not have been as bad as they thought. They did not entertain the idea that the present must be worse than they think it is.”*

Sit with this statement. What can you point to that shows how the present is much worse we're taught to believe it is?

### Resources

Guess, T. J. (2006). The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence. *Critical Sociology*, 32(4), 649-673.

McIntosh, P. (2012, October). How to recognize your white privilege - and use it to fight inequality. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/peggy\\_mcintosh\\_how\\_to\\_recognize\\_your\\_white\\_privilege\\_and\\_use\\_it\\_to\\_fight\\_inequality?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/peggy_mcintosh_how_to_recognize_your_white_privilege_and_use_it_to_fight_inequality?language=en)

Richeson, J. A. (2020, July 27). Americans Are Determined to Believe in Black Progress. Retrieved from [https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/the-mythology-of-racial-progress/614173/?utm\\_campaign=later-linkinbio-theatlantic](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/the-mythology-of-racial-progress/614173/?utm_campaign=later-linkinbio-theatlantic)

### Further learning

Code Switch (podcast), *What's In a 'Karen'?* (2020). Link to listen: <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/14/891177904/whats-in-a-karen>.

Ruby Hamad (article), *How white women use strategic tears to silence women of colour* (2018). Link to read: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/08/how-white-women-use-strategic-tears-to-avoid-accountability>.

Reni Eddo-Lodge (podcast), *White Women Crying is Racist!* (2018). Link to listen: <https://radiopublic.com/AboutRace/s1!fd8d7>.