

THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for
Social Justice: News,
Issues, and Ideas

TALKING ABOUT RACE

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A MAGAZINE & WEBSITE: CHANGEAGENT.NELRC.ORG

The Change Agent is the bi-annual publication of The New England Literacy Resource Center. Each issue of the paper helps teachers incorporate social justice content into their curriculum. The paper is designed for intermediate-level ESOL, ABE, GED, and adult diploma classes. Each issue focuses on a different topic that is relevant to learners' lives.

In New England, online access to *The Change Agent* is available free of charge through NELRC's affiliated state literacy resource centers. Email changeagent@worlded.org to learn how to access the site.

Submissions: Our next issue is on transportation. See the "Call for Articles" on the back cover. We welcome submissions from teachers and students as well as activists and thinkers from outside the field. For submission guidelines visit: changeagent.nelrc.org or contact us at 617-482-9485 or changeagent@worlded.org.

Subscriptions

Individual, bulk, and electronic subscriptions to *The Change Agent* are available. See the back cover and/or our website for details.

Editor: Cynthia Peters

Proofreading and editing help from: Sydney Breteler, Andy Nash, Kathleen O'Connell, Leah Peterson, and Sally Waldron.

The Change Agent is published by the New England Literacy Resource Center/World Education
44 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210
(617) 482-9485
changeagent.nelrc.org

No information in this magazine is intended to reflect an endorsement for, or opposition to, any candidate or political party.



A Note from the Editor

It's no accident that our opening article in this issue is titled, "You Want Me to Do What?" Talking about race is hard! True, it has shaped U.S. history, continues to shape current events, and shapes our lives and our students' lives. Yet it is a challenging topic to bring up (not to mention teach) in the classroom.

If you're not sure race matters in your teaching or to your students, just listen to what *they* say about it: "In America, talking about race can be risky, but we should do it anyway so that we can all learn to fight racism" (p. 3). "I want to live in a world where we could feel free to wear that hoodie and have no fear. Just to know that we are safe really would set us free" (p. 16). "Many [immigrants] have struggled to survive racism in America. For all those who are suffering out there, you should know that you can do more than you think you can. NEVER GIVE UP!" (p. 34). "If you want to live in the U.S. or study in the U.S., I think [you] must study the history of African Americans" (p. 41). "I asked [my son] if he felt uncomfortable around African Americans and his response was, 'Yes'" (p. 50).

Race matters to our self-perception, to our children, at our jobs, in our communities, and in history. Indeed, it matters in almost every aspect of life in the U.S. It is so important that we made an extra effort with this issue to offer supports to teachers. Students themselves (on pp. 3 and 41) make the case for why race should be taught in the classroom. Educators share advice and insights on pp. 40, 42, 43, and in our "Issue Extras" on our website changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/issue-42.

Throughout the magazine, students' heartfelt stories and penetrating analyses remind us that race manifests itself internally, interpersonally, and institutionally, and the costs of ignoring it are greater than the possible costs of taking it on.

—Cynthia Peters, cpeters@worlded.org

The Editorial Board



The editorial board clockwise from left: Ruby Reyes, World Education; Cynthia Peters, Change Agent editor; Ebony Vandross, World Education; Manny Reynoso, teacher, Notre Dame Educational Center (NDEC), Matthew Hurley, student, NDEC; Anita Blohm, student, Cambridge Learning Center (CLC); Jenny Casildo, student, CLC; Lisa Gimbel, teacher, CLC; Elizabeth Nguyen, Unitarian Universalist minister; Andy Nash, NELRC; Tanaya Ingram, NDEC; Mireya Gonzalez, CLC. Not pictured: Jereann King, Equipped for the Future, North Carolina.

You Want Me to Do *What*?



Yes, We Can Talk about Race in the Classroom!

Race can be a hard topic, but it is important. When we talk about race, we might remember painful experiences. But we might also be inspired by people's courage. Talking about race helps us understand history and current events in the U.S. It helps us support our children and our communities. It helps us build community in the classroom. This ABE class at El Rio Learning Center in Tucson, AZ, studied race. Here is what students said about it:

Racism in History and Today

I first started to hear about race when I came to the U.S. It is hard to see our community and our people suffer because of race. Racism started a long time ago – with slavery and then segregation. Today, racism continues. I turn on the TV, and I hear about race all the time. I don't like what I hear. Everybody should have the same rights.

-- Alma Alicia Zepeda G.

Learn from History

It helps to talk about race so that we don't repeat the same mistakes from the past.

-- Mark Reynolds

It Is Frustrating

In class, I wrote about when my dad got pulled over by two white cops and they were giving him a hard time, I think, because of his tattoos and his skin color. There are people out there who are racist and people who aren't. Oh well, you can't change it. That's life. It frustrates me.

-- Natalie Roche

We Need to Teach Our Children

We need to teach our children to treat everyone the same. We want them to see everyone as an equal. In America, talking about race can be risky, but we should do it anyway so that we can all learn to fight racism.

-- Matias Rodriguez

We Can Do Something

It is important to talk about race at home and in school. If we share our opinions and feelings, we can do something about this problem. When I talk about race, I feel angry. Why can't people accept others? We are here sharing this planet. We could all live in peace like brothers and sisters.

-- Leticia Alvarez

Inspired to Focus on My Dreams

Talking about race is hard, but it is also inspiring. Black people experienced many abuses in their lives. But they were strong and fought for their rights. They joined forces. They were brave and they fought for their dreams. They inspire me to be strong and brave, and to focus on my dreams.

-- Rosa Imelda Quintana

MORE STRATEGIES FOR TALKING ABOUT TALKING ABOUT RACE: P. 43 AND "BEST PRACTICES" BY LISA GIMBEL AND RIVA PEARSON <CHANGEAGENT.NELRC.ORG/ISSUES/ISSUE-42>.

We Were on Our Honeymoon But No One Believed We Were Paying Customers

Roxana Martinez

In June of 2012, my husband and I, who are from El Salvador, went to Miami for our honeymoon. We spent two weeks in a hotel there. Sadly, the hotel staff did not treat us fairly.

On several occasions the security guards questioned us about our stay at the hotel. Several times, they asked to see our identification and asked us about our room number. They acted as if we could not possibly be paying customers. When we sat in the dining room, the waiter served everyone except us. He totally ignored us. We were both upset because he was discriminating against us.

We were sad that the hotel staff discriminated against us on our honeymoon. It is an example of racism. We were treated differently because of our race. In my opinion, racism in the United States continues to be a big problem.



Roxana Martinez is an ESOL student in Fayetteville, AR.

Evaluate the Text

What argument is Roxana making? _____

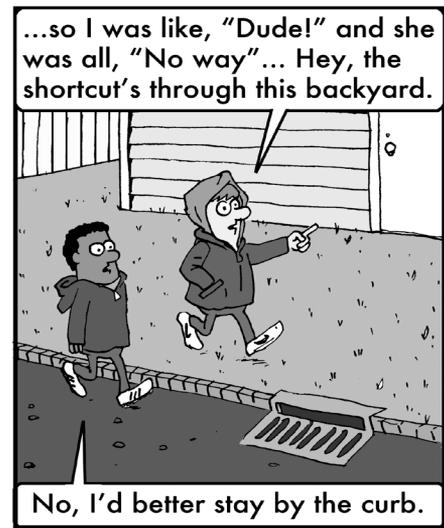
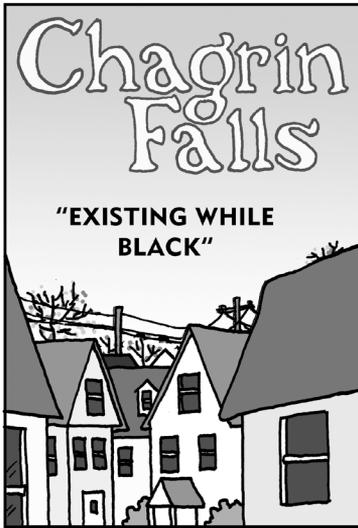
What details does she provide to back it up? List three details here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Do you think she makes her case well? If yes, why? If no, how could she make it stronger?



Used with permission by Ruben Bolling. See tomthedancingbug.com

See <changeagent.netrc.org/issues> for an ESOL lesson plan to accompany this. Subscription required. Also, see pp. 26-27 for more on "existing while black."

A Muslim Crossing the Border

“The Police Stop Us Every Time.”

Abukar

On September 11, 2001, a few people did something terrible. They committed terrorism. These people were Muslims, but they did not act like real Muslims. The Koran teaches us not to kill.

These terrorists killed many people on that day. They hurt many families. They also hurt the Muslim community. For example, last year, I went to the U.S. to visit my sister. On the border, the police stopped us. They saw we have a Muslim name. They held us for four hours. They checked the car. They fingerprinted us and took our pictures.

It was a horrible moment. I felt helpless. The police still stop us every time we visit the U.S. It takes many hours for us to cross the border.

Now I don't visit my sister. I hate the humiliation of crossing the border.



Abukar lives in Toronto, Canada, and takes classes at George Brown College. This was adapted from his piece published in the Sept. 2011 issue of The Change Agent.



Illustration by David Lester

Share what you know about what happened on September 11, 2001.

According to the author, whom did the terrorists hurt?

Why do you think having a Muslim name means that Abukar gets stopped at the border? (The author does not say directly. Use inference to answer this question.)

Look at the illustration. What point is the illustrator making?

“You’re on Your Own, Son,” My Father Said, “This is the United States.”

Ronal Cadogan



Growing up in Barbados, I didn’t think much about race. I had seen white people living in the big houses and I had a friend who was white. We played together, fished together, and ate together in his house. He never was bad to me. My mother and grandmother taught me to love God first. They said, “The color of your skin does not matter. Only love in your heart matters.”

When I came to the United States, I began to look at things differently. My first experience with race was in Hartford, Connecticut. As I entered my apartment building, two white men approached

The worst thing they did was when they told me they could beat me and ship me back to where I came from.

me and pushed me up against the wall. They said, “Don’t move or we’ll beat you.” My father was expecting me to come home, and when I didn’t, he

came to rescue me. This was the one time that he intervened to help me. After that, he said, “You’re on your own, son. This is the United States.”

As a young black immigrant, I had a heavy accent. I wore dreadlocks and carried a backpack as I walked to school, to my job, and then home. The police did so many bad things to me. They said hurtful things to me, pushed me up against a car, put guns in my face, handcuffed me, and pushed me into a police car. The worst thing they did was when they told me they could beat me and ship me back to where I came from. After that, I wanted to return to Barbados. I didn’t want to be in the United States any longer.

I continued to be harassed in different situations until I was in my early thirties. At that time, I was fortunate to have two jobs and two white

bosses who told me how I could avoid this kind of treatment. One gave me extra hours of work to keep me off the streets. He explained to me how the issue of race had been going on since the years of slavery in the South. He told me that the more I occupied my time, the less frequent the incidents would be. My other boss told me to change my appearance, so I cut my dreadlocks, bought different clothes, became clean-shaven, and started to blend in with my co-workers.

About six months after my transformation, I was walking to work early in the morning. One of the cops who had stopped me in the past rolled up beside me and stared at me. I stared at him and he drove off without a word. I knew I was on the right track.

In Barbados I learned that if you cut your skin and I cut mine, we both bleed red. However, in the United States I learned through violence that it is all about appearance.

Race is a huge issue and in order to avoid discrimination, I had to lose my individuality. Do I like it? Absolutely not! Is it worth it? Yes – if I want my own children

to blend in and not experience the prejudice and humiliation that I went through as a young man.

AFTER YOU READ: Summarize the change Ronal describes in this essay. What do you think about it?

Ronal Cadogan is a student at Read to Succeed Adult Literacy Clinic in Hartford, CT. He came to CT from the beautiful island of Barbados almost 27 years ago when he was given the opportunity to get to know his dad. Ronal is the father of four children and enjoys reading the Bible daily.

My boss told me to change my appearance, so I cut my dreadlocks

The “Chief Illiniwek” Half-Time Show

What’s Wrong with It and What People Did about It

Demetrius Wade

Is this Mascot Racist?

In 2006, when I was a sophomore at the University of Illinois, I heard people saying the school’s mascot “Chief Illiniwek” was racist towards Native Americans. At first, I struggled to understand why. But then I began to look into other cultural stereotypes, such as “Sambo” and “black face,” and I began to see their point.

According to Encyclopedia.com, “Sambo” characterizes black men as “passive buffoons” and is a “form of denigration.” As a stereotype, it has been used to “justify the inhumane treatment of slaves, provide a rationale for Jim Crow segregation,” and use racism to entertain white audiences.

“Black face” refers to make-up worn by white or even black entertainers in “minstrel” shows. The make-up exaggerates black features and ridicules black people as a form of entertainment. Professor Blair Kelley writes that minstrel shows “desensitized Americans to the horrors of chattel slavery.” They encouraged audiences to laugh at slavery and to think of it “as an appropriate answer for the lazy, ignorant slave. Why worry about

the abolition of slavery when black life looked so fun, silly, and care-free?”

It didn’t take me long to see that the “Chief” was the exact same thing. He misrepresented an entire culture for the entertainment of white people. Many of these white people



don’t think too much about how their ancestors may have contributed to the genocide against Native Americans, yet here they are being entertained by a stereotype “Indian” just as they were entertained

The “Chief” misrepresented an entire culture for the entertainment of white people.

by a “stereotype” black person in black face.

In Native culture, ritualistic dancing is very sacred. Depending on the tribe, Native Americans feel that dancing connects them with sacred spirits. To take something so personal and culturally sacred, and parade it around like it’s something funny and designed for the consumption of a bunch of sports spectators is clearly not only insensitive but also downright disrespectful.

More than 20 years ago, Native American groups and supporters started protesting the Chief Illiniwek mascot. You might think that people would have some empathy for the Native Americans who did not want to see their culture ridiculed in this way. On the contrary, students, alumni, and supporters of the university were outraged that they might lose their mascot. Alumni even threatened to stop making contributions to the university if the mascot was discontinued.

To the University, Profit Matters More

At that moment, I realized that I couldn’t expect empathy from people who have never had to deal with being mocked, or negatively portrayed in the media. I also realized the powerful role of money in this controversy. Despite protests, the univer-



sity stubbornly held on to their mascot for more than 20 years – because they were afraid to lose the money from their alumni network. Apparently they were more afraid of losing money than they were of being viewed as an institution that tolerated and supported the use of racist images.

The university didn't start to change until the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) threatened to ban the university from hosting playoff games if the mascot was not eliminated. In August 2005, the NCAA called "Chief Illiniwek" a "hostile or abusive" mascot and banned the university from hosting post-season activities as long as it continued to use the mascot. There is a ton of money to be made by hosting playoff games, and the university did not want to lose out. So finally, the Chief was banned – *not* because it was the right thing to do and *not* because it perpetuated Native American stereotypes. The Chief was banned because it was more profitable to get rid of him than it was to keep him.

Mascot Banned but Racism Lingers

From 1927 to 2007, the Chief was played by 38 people but never by anyone of American Indian heritage. This mostly made-up character was not based on an actual American Indian chief, nor did a historical figure with this name ever exist. There was nothing factual about this character, which is

fitting because there is also nothing factual about the stereotypes that it conveys. The University may have rid itself of the mascot for the wrong reasons, but we should still count the university ban as a victory. It shows that pressure works and change can happen! However, there is still work to do. The local community keeps the mascot going by putting the Chief's image on clothing and accessories. Remnants of the Chief, just as remnants of racism, linger.

Demetrius Wade, who is part Native American, is a student at the University of Illinois/Urbana Champaign. He is majoring in English with a minor in Gender and Women's Studies. He is from the south side of Chicago, and both his parents were addicted to crack cocaine. He will be 29 when he graduates because he has had to take time off for financial reasons. He wants you to know: it's never too late to get your education.



Sources: <www.ais.illinois.edu/documents/Gone-IlliniwekArticle.pdf>, <www.encyclopedia.com> <councilofchiefs.org/history>, <thegrio.com/2013/10/30/a-brief-history-of-blackface-just-in-time-for-halloween>, <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Illiniwek>, <www.dailyillini.com>.

AFTER YOU READ: What is the role of money in the university's decisions regarding the mascot? Find an activity related to research and using sources at: <changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/issue-42>.



This poster was created by the National Congress of American Indians. It includes one real sports mascot and two fake ones. The caption under the poster reads, "No race, creed, or religion should endure the ridicule faced by Native Americans today. Please help put an end to this mockery." Which is the real mascot? Which ones are fake? Do you find these mascots offensive? Why or why not?

I Am Not a Model Minority

Bernadette Lim

BEFORE YOU READ: Discuss what “model minority” means.

I am a third generation Asian-American woman at Harvard, and I despise living under the impression that I belong to the “model minority.” For a label that sounds so positive in tone, living under this stereotype has been anything but ideal.

Believing that Asian Americans are the model minority diverts attention from past and existing discrimination.

In high school and at Harvard, I have encountered the consequences of living under the model minority myth constantly. My personal and academic achievements are the result of simply “being Asian.” My interests in biology and physics in high school were “typical,” and

being stereotyped as “too smart” garnered unwarranted envy and competition from classmates and friends. My achievements weren’t considered the by-product of hard work; they were simply expected and representative of the Asian-American model minority stereotype.

Many believe that the model minority label allows me to ride on the coattails of my ethnicity, giving me a “one-up boost” ahead of others. Yet to me, the model minority myth has done nothing but strip me of my humanity.

The term “model minority” was first introduced to the public by sociologist William Peterson in a 1966 *New York Times* article entitled “Success Story, Japanese

American Style.”¹ Peterson purported that the Japanese cultural emphasis on hard work was a mechanism for overcoming discrimination and achieving success post World War II. Perpetuating Peterson’s views, *U.S. News and World Report* published an article called “Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.” in 1968,² and *Newsweek* published “Success Story: Outwhiting the Whites” in 1971.³ In 1987, *TIME* Magazine’s cover headlined “Those Asian-American Whiz Kids” with a smiling group of young Asian-American students.⁴ The Asian-American community has for decades been presented as a homogenous group of people who 1) work hard, 2) never complain, and 3) live with above average success and satisfaction—a dangerous myth calcified by the media and ingrained in the minds of the public.

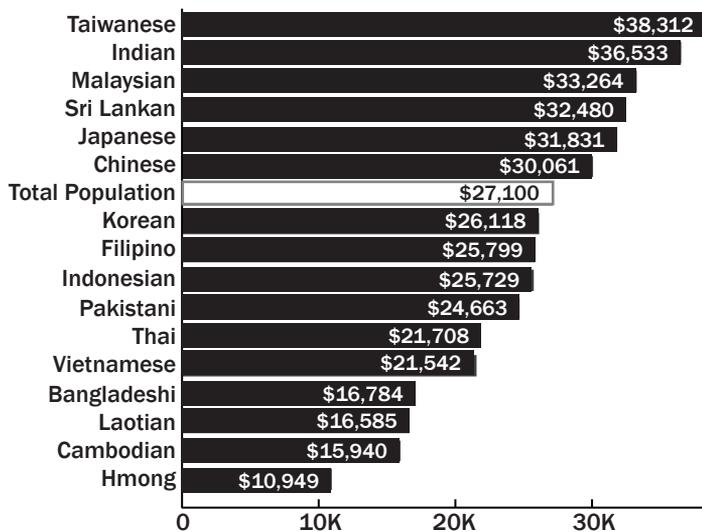
Looking closely, one can see that the Asian-American model minority myth is simply that:

a myth. While Asian Americans earn higher median household incomes than whites, blacks, and Hispanics/Latinos, these statistics obscure the fact that Asian-American families include multiple earners (white vs. Asian American per capita income is close; household income is not),⁵ likely the result of the many generations living under one roof and the retirement savings of elders. Southeast Asian Americans drop out of high school at an alarming rate; nearly 40 percent of Hmong Americans, 38 percent of Laotian Americans, and 35 percent of Cambodian Americans fail to finish high school.⁶ These Asian-American subgroups, along with Vietnamese Americans, earn below the national average.⁷



Photo from the Asian and Pacific Islander Student Alliance

Per capita income by ethnicity, 2007-2009



“Per capita” comes from the Latin and means “for each head.” We use it to mean “per person.” Study the chart above and write several true sentences based on the data. Source: See Endnote #5.

Believing that Asian Americans are the model minority diverts attention from past and existing discrimination. The stereotype renders racial inequity for Asian Americans invisible and unimportant. For example, the portrayal of the Asian-American woman as the servile “Lotus Blossom” or the domineering, deceitful “Dragon Lady” has been common for years. There’s the 1958 movie “China Doll” and Lucy Liu’s cunning character Ling Woo on the popular TV show “Ally McBeal.”⁸ Before the cancellation of Margaret Cho’s TV series “All-American Girl” in 1995, her producer hired an Asian consultant after claiming that Cho’s acting simply wasn’t “Asian enough.”⁹ Nearly 20 years later, we still see incredibly sparse representation of Asian Americans in the media, as well as in other areas like government, journalism, and high levels of business.

Perhaps the most poignant repercussion of the model minority label is the assumption that being “Asian” is an automatic guarantor of success, a mark of coming from a “privileged” racial group that has “achieved more and struggled less”

than other minority groups. The model minority myth has thus undermined the formation of positive relationships among minority groups by preventing the recognition of the intersection among racial histories. It is more than simple chance that the appearance of the “model minority” term coincided with the rise of the African-American Civil Rights Movement and Chicano Civil Rights Movement. Why don’t we acknowledge this? The model minority myth is a wedge that impedes solidarity, emphasizing differences in socioeconomic outcomes rather than commonality in the historic struggle for civil rights.

By being part of the model minority, I am expected to feel nothing less than gratitude and honor for being labeled through a “positive stereotype.” Yet focus on the upper echelons of the Asian-American population has rendered everyone else invisible. In grouping all Asian Americans as high achievers, avid students, and career climbers, society fails to acknowledge the nuance and disparity. “Asian American” encompasses a diverse range of dialects and ethnicities (and of course, a diverse umbrella of individual, personal, human experiences within those subgroups).

I am not a model minority and never will be. No such thing exists.

Bernadette N. Lim, Harvard class of 2016, is a joint human evolutionary biology and women, gender and sexuality studies concentrator in Dunster House. This piece was reprinted with permission from <www.thecrimson.com>.

1. “Success Story, Japanese American Style,” <inside.sfuhs.org/dept/history/US_History_reader/Chapter14/modelminority.pdf>
2. “Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.,” <www.dartmouth.edu/~hist32/Hist33/US%20News%20&%20World%20Report.pdf>
3. “Outwhiting the Whites,” <depts.washington.edu/college/mce/Myth1.pdf>
4. “Those Asian-American Whiz Kids,” <content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,965326,00.html>
5. “A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States, 2011,” <www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/sites/aajc/files/Community_of_Contrast.pdf>
6. <www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/aapi/data/critical-issues>
7. Ibid.
8. <www.sagepub.com/dines3estudy/articles/12_Sun_Pg656.pdf>
9. <asiasociety.org/arts/film/margaret-cho-shes-one-she-wants>

AFTER YOU READ: How does the author make her case that the myth of the model minority is indeed a myth? How is the model minority myth used against communities of color?

They Bullied the White Kids

Glenda Archibald

When I was ten years old, there was one white family that lived on our block. Then another white family also moved on the block. That was the first time I had a white friend, and we became close.

At the age of 13, I went to Manual High School. There were only two white kids in the whole school. One of them was in my classroom. I

I would stand next to the white boy after school and I fought for him.

didn't like the way that the black kids treated him. They threw paper balls at him, hit him, and teased him. I didn't know why they did that, because he was a nice kid. After school, they

would chase him through Gilham Park, calling him names like, "honky," "white boy," and "white pig."

Their bullying used to make me mad and I would tell my mother about it because I didn't understand why they acted this way. She would always tell me never to be in a category with people like that. "We are not racists," she told us. "We are supposed to love everybody."

I would stand next to the white boy after school and I fought for him. I stood up to the bullies, both the boys and the girls. I told them to leave him alone because he hadn't done anything to them. The bullies were scared of me because I had brothers and cousins who would back me up.

When I look back on this, I think they acted this way because they were ignorant about the color he was and didn't think white kids were good enough to go to that school. But as I got older I thought about that time, and I realized that they had just as much of a right to go to that school as we did. They wanted education, and we wanted education. Why couldn't we all just get along?



Glenda Archibald grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. She attends school at Literacy Kansas City and Manual Tech and is working on getting her GED. She has four children, 13 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Defining Racism

Racism is the systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of one group of people by another based on racial heritage.

– Gloria Yamato

[For more on "institutional racism," see pp. 26-27.]

Racism: the poor treatment of or violence against people because of their race; the belief that some races of people are better than others.

– Merriam Webster Dictionary

Explain the difference(s) between the two definitions above.

See the box on the next page for more activities.

Fear and Confusion

Carol Guevara

When I was about 12 or 13, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was shot. In my school, the Black kids rioted and started beating up the white kids. They were angry at white people because James Earl Ray, the man who shot Dr. King, was white. A group of Black kids approached me and asked me

I was shaking and really scared. They wouldn't let me leave.

if I was a “cracker.” They were cursing me out and shoving me until I said, “No, I am Mexican American.” My heart was

beating so fast; I started to sweat and almost peed my pants. I was shaking and really scared. They wouldn't let me leave.

It seemed like hours had passed until finally the gym teacher came out and said, “Hey, what's going on here?” The kids took off running and I was crying. The gym teacher took me to the office where my brother and two sisters were waiting for me. Was I glad to see them!

I guess I was very lucky that day, for nothing happened to me besides feeling scared. It was much worse for other people in my school and outside that night with people rioting.

Looking back on this event, I realize that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a good role model, not only for Black people, but for all people—just like Gandhi and Cesar Chavez. Dr. King stood up not only for his own people, but for everyone. He spoke for people who couldn't speak for themselves. The Black students who were rioting that day were hurt and confused about the situation, especially the younger kids who didn't really understand. They were saying: “Why? How could this happen?” Dr. King said shortly before he was killed, “A riot is the language of the unheard.” This is because of the conditions that were lived at the time: for example no money and a lack of



education. People didn't feel heard so they lashed out and rioted. They wanted to get even with anyone who was white and in their way. I do not hold a grudge against the kids who did that to me. I always forgive people who do bad things because deep down inside I know we are all scared. It's going to take some time, but some day we will all overcome to become one.

Carol Guevara is a mother of four who was born in Denver, CO and moved to Oakland, CA at the age of 15. She is now attending Next Step Learning Center, striving for her HiSET.

Racism or Bullying?

In the stories on pp. 12-13, were the black students behaving in a racist way toward white students? Read the definitions on the previous page to help you answer the question.

Explain this Martin Luther King quote in your own words: “A riot is the language of the unheard.”

Growing Up with Racism

Shirley Lewis

Whites Only

In the 1960s, I visited my grandmother and cousins in Arkansas. One Saturday morning some of us decided to go downtown to see a movie. I felt like the big-shot girl from the city having fun with my cousins from the country, and I was so excited as we entered the theater.

After getting our tickets, I automatically ran down to the front to get our seats. My cousins didn't come with me, so I stood up and looked for them. To my surprise, the usher approached me.

With tears in my eyes, I went to the balcony, which was the only place blacks were allowed to sit.

He was a large man, wearing a uniform, and he said, "You cannot sit here." I was stunned, and I said "Why?" Then I saw my cousins beckoning me to come back, but I refused. I had not

experienced this kind of thing in my hometown of Kansas City, so I said, "I'm from Kansas City." The usher's face turned very red. The look on his face scared me, so I decided to join my cousins. With tears in my eyes, I went with them to the balcony, which was the only place that blacks were allowed to sit. I was eight years old when this happened, and I have never forgotten that awful experience.

Light vs. Dark in My Own Family

To my great surprise, I was exposed to racism in my own family. Back then, if your skin was darker and your hair was shorter, people thought you were less worthy than your counterparts. Girls who had fairer complexions and long hair were treated better, even within their own families. For example, since I was the darker skinned girl, I was usually the one who was asked to wash dishes or

clean up, while the other girls just had to look pretty. Due to this treatment, I spent many years feeling that I didn't deserve better. I did some very extreme things to feel pretty and accepted, such as bringing gifts every time I visited a friend because I didn't feel like I was good enough on my own. I would also ask my friends' parents if they needed help cleaning up. I felt like I needed to perform some act of service to be considered a worthwhile individual and to be accepted by others.

As I grew older, I gained more confidence, and now I am very proud of my personal appearance. In my 20s, while I was married, a friend invited me to a fashion show and I was overwhelmed with the models who were all shapes, sizes, and colors. Soon after, I started attending a modeling school because I thought if all of these girls can model, so could I. My husband did not approve of me joining the school, but he became very proud of me and my accomplishments. This experience helped change my attitude about myself and I gained more confidence in myself and my appearance.

Racial Tension at School

I went to an all-black school until eighth grade, and then I switched to a predominately white school. I was the only black eighth-grader. The white students were not nice to me. They were not



used to going to school with black students. As a result, I became something of a trouble-maker. I tended not to listen in class, talked back to the teacher, and cracked a lot of jokes.

I was helped by a great teacher, Mrs. James. She was a stern gym teacher, and most of the black students, including me, didn't like her. We disliked her so much, a group of us verbally attacked her one day after school. In my heart, I knew this was wrong, so all of a sudden, I jumped in front of the other kids and said, "This is wrong! We can't do this!" Mrs. James showed no fear, and everyone backed down.

This made me unpopular with the other kids, but Mrs. James became an advocate for me. She told the other teachers I was a good person and they should give me a chance, in spite of my rude behavior. I became a better, more productive, and nicer student after that. I graduated and was voted

best athlete in my senior year. It made a big difference to have an ally. I need people to believe in me, and Mrs. James showed me how to believe in myself.

Shirley Lewis is a 65-year old native of Kansas City, MO. After years of working and raising two successful children, she recently decided to focus on herself, so she started taking classes at Literacy KC. She is also a caretaker for her sister, a church member, and an active participant in community organizations.



An African-American man goes into the "colored" entrance of a movie theater in Belzoni, Mississippi, 1939. Photo, by Marion Post Wolcott, is in the public domain.

Institutional, Internalized, and Interpersonal Racism

In this article, the author discusses three different experiences of racism. Look at the definitions below and say which experience goes with which type of racism.

Institutional racism is when schools, courts, or private businesses have policies and practices that negatively affect a certain racial group. Unlike the racism perpetrated by individuals, institutional racism has the power to negatively affect *the bulk* of people belonging to a racial group.

Internalized racism is when people of color absorb and act on negative messages about themselves.

Interpersonal racism is when an individual acts on his/her negative perceptions of another racial group.

Fear of Police

Reco Davis

Gunshots ringing out in the neighborhood! Another black person is dead!

When I was growing up, I remember nights that I couldn't sleep because of gunshots. One night, I heard gunshots ring out just two houses down from where I lived. I found out later that the gunshots were fired by a black policeman killing another black man, who turned out to be my cousin Tony Harris. He was 25 years old, and he was shot for not wanting to surrender while he was being arrested.

Later that same night, a white policeman killed another black man for not wanting to pull over. He was shot three times, yet it was the first shot in the head that killed him.



I was scared to walk down the street because I thought somebody would pop up out of nowhere and try to shoot me, maybe mistaking me for someone else. When I was growing up, my feeling about the police was that they went around arresting and tasing people, sometimes just for wearing a hoodie, for having sagging pants, or even because of the people that we might hang around with. Really? I don't want to live in a world like that.

I want to live in a world where law enforcement tries to help the community and where police see everyone as a human being. For example, I would like for us all to come together and have a BBQ in the park. The police would see that we are all human and we'd learn to respect one another as human beings, and they would not assume we are criminals just because of the color of our skin, the clothes that we wear, or even who our friends are.

I want to live in a world where we could feel free to wear that hoodie and have no fear. Just to know that we are safe really would set us free.

Reco Davis is 18 years old. He is a student in the SSD program at Allen Correctional Center in Kinder, LA. He is originally from Abbeville, a small city in Vermilion Parish, LA. One day, he hopes to travel the world, and he wants to start with seeing Mt. Rushmore.

Really? I don't want to live in a world like that.

Deepen Your Understanding

Killed by police during arrest, by circumstance
2012 supplementary homicide report, FBI

■ Black ■ White □ Hispanic

U.S. population



All victims



Not attacking when killed



Source: <www.vox.com/2015/4/10/8382457/police-shootings-racism>

Interpret the chart above. Write several true statements about what you see.

Infer means to judge that something is true based on evidence not on an explicit statement. Circle the best word in italics to complete this sentence: "After reading the text, I can infer that Reco felt *safe unsafe happy* when he was growing up." Now list three details that led you to make that inference.

KILLED BY POLICE



Remarley
Graham



Yvette Smith



Darriem Hunt



Malissa
Williams



Wendell
Allen



Michael
Brown



Jonathan
Ferrell



Akai Gursley



Kendrec
McDade



Tamir Rice



Rumain
Brisbon



Eric Garner



Manuel
Loggins, Jr.



John
Crawford



Timothy
Russell



Stephon
Watts



Rekia Boyd



Ezell Ford



Larry
Jackson, Jr.



Gary Hatcher

**20 UNARMED MEN, WOMEN, &
CHILDREN OF COLOR KILLED BY
LAW ENFORCEMENT SINCE 2012**

Pick one of these people and research what happened to him or her. Create a poster, essay, or Powerpoint presentation to share what you learn. Use at least three credible sources.

Source: < youthvoices.net/blacklivesmatter >

Defending Myself against Racism

Chrislucia Brown

One day my oldest son got picked up by the police by mistake. He was picked up because the police thought he matched the description of someone

I felt disrespected, but I decided to stand up to him.

they were looking for. In the neighborhood, the men dress alike, so the police often detain the wrong person. A friend stopped by my house and told me

that my son was in the police car up the street, so I went to see what was happening.

When I got there, I saw my son in the police car. I walked over to ask him what happened, and one of the male officers said, "If you don't move, I will slap the [expletive] out of you." I responded

loudly, saying, "What kind of man, who is six-feet-two and 220 pounds, would slap the [expletive] out of a woman who is 120 pounds?" Everyone, including the other officers, watched this exchange. The neighbors who lived in the community were looking on. I told him that if he put his hands on me, I would sue him.

I felt he treated me that way because of the area I live in and the color of my skin. He took advantage of his authority as a police officer. I felt disrespected, but I decided to stand up to him. He needed to know that just because I am a single black parent, who stays in a not-so-rich neighborhood, that doesn't mean that I don't know my rights or that I'm not an intelligent individual. Next time he'll know not to judge a book by its cover.

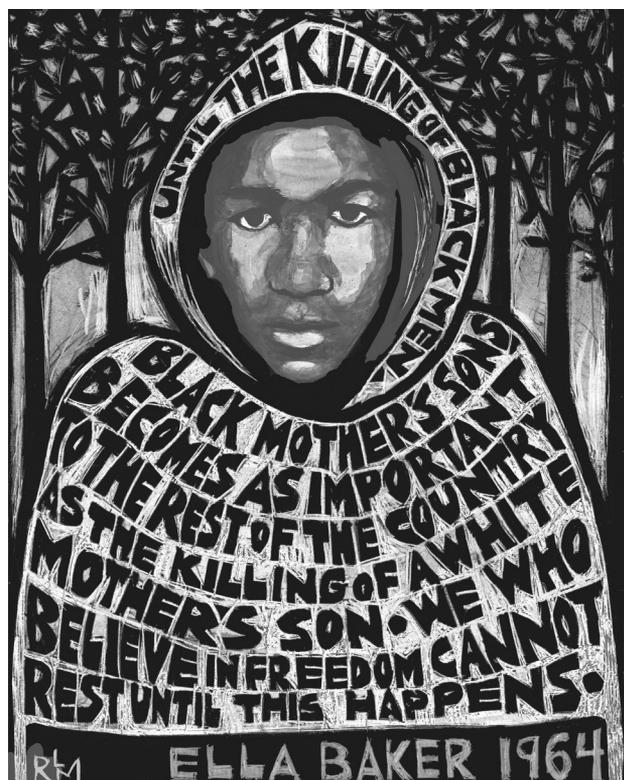


Image of Trayvon Martin by Ricardo Levins Morales. <www.rlmartstudio.com>

Chrislucia Brown is a student at Next Step Learning Center in Oakland, CA, and she is a parent of ten kids.

Take it Further

Read the definitions of racism on p. 15. Which ones can you identify in this article?

Interpret the quote by Ella Baker in the image on the left. What does it mean?

Who was Trayvon Martin? Find several sources and write a short piece about him.

Who was Ella Baker? Find several sources and write a short piece about her.

Boy Blue

Jelal Huyler

Boy is born.
He is beautiful, as everyone is.
He is brown, like his parents.
He is loved.
He grows.

One day coming from school, cops stop boy.
Cops do not love boy.
Tell boy so.
Call him stupid. Bad. Stupid. Ugly. Brown. Black. Black.
Brown. Ugly.
Call him stupid. Bad. Ugly.

TV tells boy what cops say, true.
Teachers show boy they believe what cops say, true.
News say, tubes say, people say,
Seems like even steeples say, what cops say, true.

Boy blue.
Brown boy blue.
Forgets he is loved.
Love does not love him.
To him, only bad love him.
Only black love him.

Cops say black bad.
TV say what cops say is true.
Brown boy blue.

Gets his own face misconstrued.
Is what TV say is true.
Brown boy get hot.
Burning red hot.
Brown boy red hot.
Get pushed and pop
Past point of control.

No one to hold him.
Just scold him.
Mold him into what cops say, true.

TV say what cops say, true.
But brown boy just blue.



This image is from the youtube video of Jelal Huyler reciting "Boy Blue," which was featured in the film "Cracking the Codes," crackingthecodes.org. His poem is reprinted here with permission.

Divided We Fall

Sergio Hyland

BEFORE YOU READ: Discuss the phrase, “Divided we fall.” Skim the pull-out quotes to get a sense of the divisions the author is referring to.

I was born to an African-American mother and an Italian immigrant father. Growing up was tough. I lived in a poor neighborhood, where there was a lot of tension between blacks and whites. People might wonder how poverty and racial tensions go

[Our] economic system benefits from people being divided from each other and hating each other.

together. Here’s part of the explanation: When you are living in poverty, you are living with a lot of frustration and a strong feeling that you can’t remedy

the problems you face. Meanwhile, you are trying to get along in an economic system that is rooted in usury and greed and that benefits from people



Whites and blacks united to protest the Vietnam War.



The Southern Tenant Farmers Union organized black and white sharecroppers in the 1930s. Poor farmers (and their children) united across races to defend their shared interests.

being divided from each other and hating each other. Often, those divisions are drawn on racial lines.

I used to get into fights over some racist remark that was directed at me or my younger brother. People thought that just because my father was white, it meant that we had a lot of money. I started to internalize all this negativity, and it began to affect my performance at school. I started acting out in class, just so I would be suspended or sent home. And the school fell for it. Instead of doing something to help me, they just kicked me out, which reinforced my feeling that I didn’t belong. I became anti-social. Even when I went outside to play, I found myself wanting to be alone most of the time. Nobody understood me or what I was experiencing.

Trying to avert catastrophe, my parents nearly went bankrupt sending me to an all-white private school. At

I was hurt and angry, and I started hating white people.

first, I was excited and hopeful. And then it all came crashing down. One day, I asked the white teacher if I could get a drink of water. She started

laughing at me. “I see that you’re even speaking like us now,” she said. This was the first time I had been around white people, and I was trying to talk the way they talked. I was humiliated, and I felt extremely small. I was hurt and angry, and I started hating white people and all things white,

Everything is about competition. We’re encouraged to outdo the “other,” in order to gain some small benefit.

including my own father, who I somehow blamed for making me half white.

I soon realized that I was alone. To the blacks in my neighborhood – whom I wanted to be around – I wasn’t “black” enough, and obviously I wasn’t

“white” enough to hang with whites. I was a square peg, surrounded by round holes, and I hated my life. I figured out how to survive in such a harsh world, but it came at a hefty price: in order to survive, I found that I had to hate and distrust nearly everybody I came into contact with.

Even now, in my mid-thirties, I’m still angry – but not towards whites. My anger is towards a system responsible for creating differences among human beings and giving us incentives to hate each other for those differences. For example, everything is about competition. We’re encouraged to outdo the “other,” in order to gain some small benefit. Whether we are vying for programs, grants, jobs, or housing, we – the poor – compete with each other for these things, and it causes hostilities. Sometimes, sadly, the results can be deadly, which causes even more hatred between



Two members of the Justice for Janitors campaign.

people. It’s all a cycle, and we don’t even realize it.

I’ve made a lot of mistakes, and I take responsibility for them. I’ve spent half my life in prison. Too much of my brief existence before being incarcerated was spent fighting back and fighting for respect. Things went too far. I wonder: would I have had to fight so hard if it weren’t for this system that has historically stoked the fires of white supremacy? It has dominated my life to this point, and my life is exactly what I’ve been paying with as a result.

Communities need to work together to educate each other on the issues of race and culture, so that future generations can understand that, while our differences make us different, they don’t make us enemies.

Sergio Hyland grew up in Philadelphia and is currently in prison in Coal Township, PA, where he is enrolled in a computer-aided drafting course. Find more of his writing at <decarceratepa.info> and <booksthroughbars.org>.



Divided vs. United

Read the article on pp. 22-23, “The Construction of Race in the U.S.” What is the connection between that early history and the current conditions Sergio describes here?

The first part of the phrase, “Divided we fall” is “United we stand.” Look at the images that accompany this article. What examples of unity do they show?

Share a time when unity—at work or in your community—made a difference in your life.

The Construction of Race in the U.S. An Early History

Cynthia Peters

BEFORE YOU READ, consider this vocabulary: construction, American colony, servant, slave, bribe, rebel/rebellion. Consider the title and the quote below. What will this essay be about?

*"Nature does not create masters and slaves. Nature does not create blacks and whites."*¹

Before Slavery: Poor Whites and Blacks Together

Richard Johnson was one of the first black people to live in the American colonies. He came as an "indentured" servant. This means he had to work for free for two years. After two year, he was free. He started to make money. He bought property and he had his own servants.²

During this time, whites and blacks were indentured servants. Poor members of both races were "owned" for a period of time and they received no pay. Life was not easy. Many died because they were sick or did not have enough to eat. Sometimes, their "owner" made them work extra years.³

It is interesting that there was very little difference between white and black servants. They worked together and lived together. "The first black and white Americans ... developed strong bonds of sympathy." They did not think about race too much.⁴

Who Will Be the Slaves? A Decision is Made

However, the owners of the big farms had a problem. They needed more workers to work in their tobacco, sugar, and cotton fields. Slaves are the cheapest workers. But who will be the slaves? American Indians would not make good slaves because they knew the area too well. They could easily escape or fight back. There were not enough white people, and they had the same skin color as

the big owners. The owners decided that Africans would be the ideal slaves.⁵

And so in the 1660s, the owners decided to create a system of human slavery based on skin color.⁶ But this was not easy. Poor whites and blacks were part of the same community. They were close to each other. They were in families together. They liked and loved each other. White owners had to break these connections.

Teaching Racism to White People

Poor white people had to learn that they were "better" than black people. Rich whites had to create a system of racism, and they had to convince poor whites to be racist. They used both the carrot (also known as the "racial bribe") and the stick to create racist attitudes.

- New laws said that free black men and mixed race men could not vote.
- White women and men were whipped for marrying blacks.⁷
- Those who rebelled against these laws were punished, tortured, and killed. They cut off the heads of black and white rebels and put them on poles along the road as warnings to black people and to white people.⁸
- Poor whites acted in brutal ways toward blacks. They received rewards for returning runaway slaves.⁹



White people systematically tortured black slaves and treated them like they were less than human.

- The Virginia Assembly passed a law in 1705 that said the masters of white indentured servants had to give their servants food, money, and a gun, as well as 50 acres of land. This was an example of a “racial bribe.” These new white farmers were not rich, but they had more than blacks did. They started to believe that they had more in common with rich whites than they did with poor blacks.¹⁰
- Black slaves were not allowed to learn skills that would give them better jobs. Skilled jobs were for whites only.
- The colonies were worried that there were too many black people, so they passed Deficiency Acts. These were laws requiring plantation owners to hire white workers and pay them enough so that they felt more connected to the white plantation owner than to the black slave.

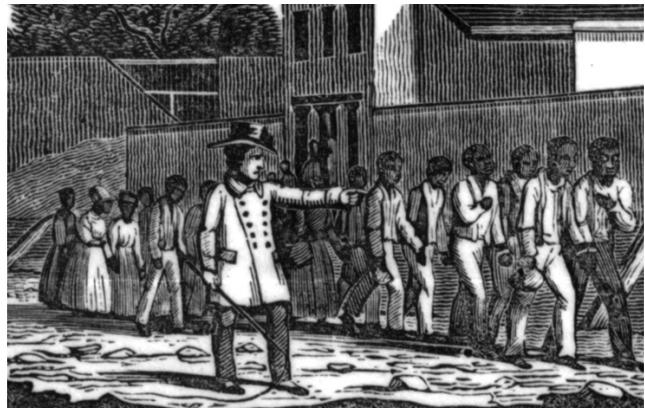
This system hurt black people and gave small benefits to white people. It turned poor whites against blacks. Poor whites started to believe that blacks were less than human. Even the poorest whites felt “pride” in their “race.” Thus, “whiteness” was born. The rich white people could relax a little. They knew that poor whites and blacks would not join together to fight against the rich whites.

Rich Whites Motivated by Fear

Rich whites had a reason to be afraid of poor blacks and whites uniting. In the past, poor blacks and white rebelled against rich whites. For example, Nathaniel Bacon, led a rebellion of poor people and slaves. Bacon’s rebellion did not succeed, and afterwards both blacks and whites were hanged. But the rebellion was alarming to the rich white people. They were afraid of what blacks and whites could do if they united against them.¹¹

The Good News Is...

This early history of race is tragic. Racism taught whites to hate blacks. But there is some good news too: *it was not easy* for rich white people to teach poor white people to be racist. They had to



Poor whites acted as guards and overseers of slaves. From the Library of Congress.

pass laws, give brutal punishments, and provide “bribes” to white people to convince them to be racist. Racism did not come naturally or even easily to white people. If it took so much work to “construct race” and teach racism to white people, then we know it is possible to *deconstruct* it and *unteach* it.

Endnotes

1. Bennett, Lerone, *The Shaping of Black America*, New York: Penguin Books, 1993, p. 68.
2. Bennett, Lerone, *Before the Mayflower*, New York: Penguin Books, 1988, p. 39.
3. <www.ushistory.org/us/5b.asp>
4. Bennett, *Before the Mayflower*, Op. Cit. pp. 39-40.
5. Zinn, *A People’s History*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1995, p. 25.
6. Bennett, *Before the Mayflower*, Op. Cit. p. 45.
7. <memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/slavery.html>
8. Bennett, *Shaping of Black America*, Op. Cit. p. 74.
9. Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow*, New York: The New Press, 2010, pp. 22-26.
10. <www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinncolorline.html>
11. Alexander, Op. Cit. pp. 22-26.

Cynthia Peters is the editor of The Change Agent.

AFTER YOU READ: Explain “racial bribe.” Explain what the author means by saying there is “good news” within this tragedy.

NOTE: A higher level version of this piece is available at <changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/issue-42>.

White Is Not Just a Skin Color

Jordan Freundlich

I had my first, “Oh-my-god-I’m-white” moment in 6th grade. I was walking into my middle school, the Timilty, where I was one of four white kids. Two black women looked at me and did a double-take. They then whispered to each other, “I didn’t know we had one of those at this school.”

Of course, before I went to the Timilty, I knew I was white, but I had never really realized what it meant to be white. At the Timilty, I was around kids who had very different lives than I did. At the Timilty, I discovered that what I thought was normal—for example, having season tickets to a local sports team—was actually not normal. In

Most white people are not rich, [but] we have benefited from an uneven playing field.

fact, many of my classmates had never been to a professional sports game. While I travelled to Colorado for vacation, most of my classmates stayed home and watched TV. And while my family paid for extra tutoring to prepare me to take a test that would get me into the most well-funded school in Boston, most of my peers of color could not afford this benefit. I have received many privileges because of my skin color, but why wasn’t I ever aware of them? Because I never had to be.

White privilege means growing up in a world built to cater to your needs. White privilege means growing up in a world that has been systematically engineered in your favor at the expense of people of color. White privilege means growing up

in a world where you never even have to be aware of white privilege because you think it’s just...normal.

If I hadn’t gone to the Timilty, if I had followed the educational track I was placed on

at birth, I easily could have gone through my life never having an, “Oh-my-god-I’m-white” moment. It is far too easy for white people to remain ignorant to the meaning of our skin. White is not just a skin color. It is a history that includes terror and cruelty; it is a history we must grapple with.

How do we grapple with it? Well, for starters we must develop relationships with other white people who are grappling with white history and with present-day white supremacy. We must challenge each other to learn and grow and figure out how to fight racism. Furthermore, we must never stop. It will take a long time to undo the effects of racism.

Most white people are not rich. Many white people may have worked hard to get what we have and what we own, but much of what we have is rooted in centuries of oppression. We have benefited from an uneven playing field. We need to challenge racist systems in our society, while on a personal level, we must teach our children to love. That’s how I believe we can combat racism.



Jordan Freundlich is 20 years old and is a student at City College of New York in New York City.

AFTER YOU READ: Discuss the concept of an “uneven playing field.” What advantages does the author say he had as a result of being white?

Institutional Racism

Glenn Fuller

I first ended up on paperwork (*aka* getting tangled up in the criminal justice system) when I was 25. I lost my rights when some friends gave me a ride to the doctor because I have Sickle-Cell Anemia, and I was sick. I guess those friends were up to no good because we got pulled over and suddenly I was in cuffs, going to jail for burglary.

I got bailed out and was fighting the case from the outside. I thought the way the police were treating me was racist because they just assumed that I was part of the burglary. They tried to place me at the scene of the crime based on a

I told them my nine-year-old daughter was in the house and please don't scare her.

picture that wasn't even me; it was a picture of a black man in a hoodie and jeans.

Apparently, that was enough for them to say it was me. I fought to get acquitted for a whole year before I got tired of fighting and

took a deal. The deal was court probation with a four-way search clause for 3 years. A four-way search clause is when an officer can search you, your car, your house, and the people with you.

One day, my friend and I were on our way to get something to eat when the police pulled me over. I asked, "Why are you pulling me over?" He told me I was speeding. He asked for my license, registration, and insurance. Then he wanted my friend's ID as well. My friend had a warrant for his arrest, so they pulled us out of the car. They told me, "Your friend is going to jail for the warrant, and we have to search you, your car, and your home because you have a four-way search clause."

They were assuming I was a drug dealer or a gangster. Five cops and a police dog went to my house. I told them my nine-year-old daughter was in the house and please don't scare her, but they

did not care. They came to the door with their guns out and they had the gun on my daughter. It was embarrassing for me. I didn't want my kid to see this, but that's life. I tried to walk up the stairs, and

they grabbed me and I stumbled. They were using unnecessary force and treating me like I was less of a human even though I was cooperating.

Why was I pulled over? Is it because I am black? Statistics show that there is racial profiling going on in Oakland. As reported by the *East Bay Express*, 59% of people stopped by the Oakland Police Department were black and yet we are only 28% of Oakland's population. An even higher percentage of people on probation or parole who were stopped were black. I think the reason I was pulled over was because I'm black. I thought to myself, "I was supposedly pulled over for speeding, but they didn't even give me a ticket."

Source: <www.eastbayexpress.com/SevenDays/archives/2015/02/04/oaklands-unacceptable-stop-data-by-the-numbers>

Glenn Fuller is a student at Next Step Learning Center. He is a father of two beautiful little girls. He has lived in Oakland his whole life. His goals are to be a man of value and values.

AFTER YOU READ: Check the definition of institutional racism on p. 15. Do you agree with the author that he experienced institutional racism? Why or why not? Read the article on p. 24. How might things have been different for Glenn if he had been white? Read "Black People & Institutional Racism" on pp. 26-27 to further your understanding.



Black People & Institutional Racism

Lisa Gimbel

BEFORE YOU READ:

- 1) Think about this vocabulary: institutional, suspend, expel.
- 2) Discuss what we mean by “institutions.” Some institutions are: schools, the media, prisons, the courts, and work. What are some other examples of institutions in the United States?
- 3) Look at the pictures and skim the headings. Every heading says “...while black.” Why?

Introduction

Do you ever ask yourself, “Is this really racism? Or is it just a personal problem?” Sadly, statistics show us that racism is part of the way that many institutions work. Institutional racism is in schools, policing, prisons, and jobs. It then impacts our basic human rights to housing, water, and food. It affects *all* people of color, but this article focuses mainly on black people. Institutional racism is the American way of life. Not sure you agree? Keep reading! As you read, remember that 16% of people in the U.S. are black.



1. Being in Preschool While Black

Black children are punished much more than white children. For example, 50% of children suspended in preschool are black, even though only 18% of children in preschool are black.

Sources: 1. NPR; 2. Dept. of Education; 3. <www.slate.com>; 4-5. <www.usnews.com/news/blogs/at-the-edge/2015/05/06/institutional-racism-is-our-way-of-life> 6. <www.motherjones.com>.



2. Being in School While Black

Forty percent of children expelled from elementary, middle school, and high school are black. Unfair punishment gets more serious, too. The schools refer students to the police! Sixty-five percent of children referred to the police are Black or Latino, according to the Department of Education.

3. Doing a Science Project While Black

Research shows 75% of all people in the U.S. have racial bias. They automatically connect black people with “dangerous or aggressive” behavior. For example, Kiera Wilmot (picture below) is a 16-year old girl who lives in Florida. She was arrested at school when the top came off of her chemistry experiment and smoke came out. No people or things were hurt, but the police arrested her and took her away in handcuffs. She was suspended from school for 10 days and charged with two felonies.





4. Driving While Black

Blacks and whites break traffic laws equally. They are not arrested equally, though. For example, on the New Jersey Turnpike, 15% of drivers are black, but 40% of people stopped for breaking traffic laws are black. It's worse, though. Seventy-three percent of people arrested on the New Jersey Turnpike are black.

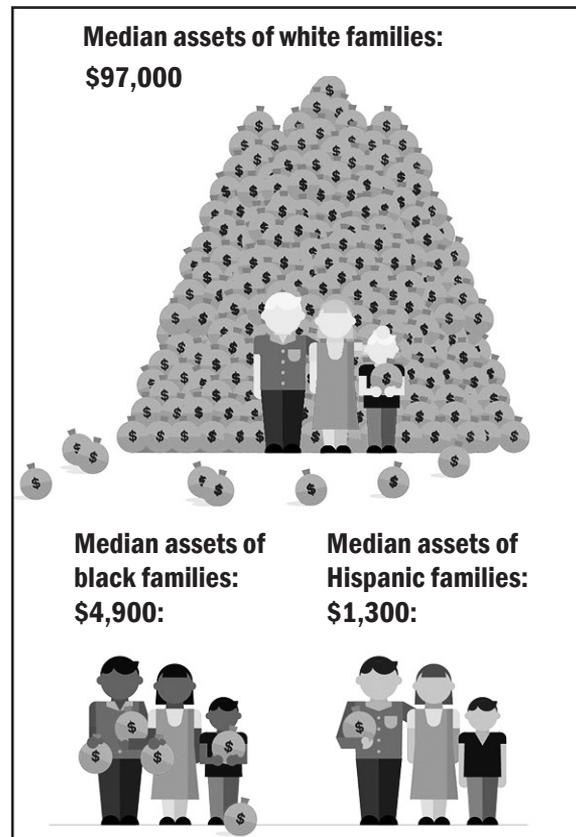
5. Getting a Call-Back While Black

Black people who graduated from college have difficulty finding jobs twice as often as white people. Why? One reason is that people with black-sounding names have to send out almost twice as many applications as people with white-sounding names, just to get a response to their resume. After finally getting an interview, black people are called back to talk with the company again only 14% of the time. White people are invited back 34% of the time. Remember how the schools and police work together? When a person has a criminal record, it's even harder to get a job, especially if a person is black.



6. Trying to Survive While Black

Is this just a personal problem? No. The average black or Latino family has less cars, property, and money than the average white family. Without the assets white families have, many black families have to rely on landlords, banks, and credit card companies. These institutions also work against black people and people of color. It is difficult to escape institutional racism. The cycle continues.



AFTER YOU READ: What argument is the writer making? Which statistics are especially interesting? Why? Do some research to find facts that further support the author's claims or disprove her claims. In the Introduction, the author says that institutional racism impacts basic human rights. Use the text to explain how that could be true.

Lisa Gimbel teaches at the Cambridge Learning Center in Cambridge, MA.

Race and Voting Rights in 2016

Andy Nash

For decades, people have worked on the state and federal level to make it easier for citizens (the electorate) to vote. They have passed laws that enable people to register more easily, vote at more convenient times, and vote online from home. These efforts strengthen our democracy because they allow more voters to be involved in choosing government representatives and making decisions.

But that trend shifted in 2010, when state lawmakers across the U.S. began introducing hun-

dreds of bills to restrict voting. These laws will be in effect for the 2016 election. They include strict photo ID requirements, significant reductions to early voting, and limits on same-day registration.

Although each state's laws are different, they all have something in common—a disproportionate impact on communities of color and the poor. According to studies at UMass and the Brennan Center for Justice, the more a state saw increases in minority and low-income voter turnout in the 2008 election, the more likely it was to push laws cutting back on voting rights. Let's examine how.

Dumped from the Voting Rolls after 70 Years of Voting



In 1942, 21-year-old Rosanell Eaton took a two-hour mule ride to a courthouse in North Carolina to register to vote. She recited the preamble to the Constitution from memory and passed a literacy test. She was one of the few blacks to be able to vote in the Jim Crow era. But in 2013, after voting for 70 years, she became a casualty of North Carolina's new voter-ID law because the name on her voter-registration card (Rosanell Eaton) did not match the name on her driver's license (Rosa Johnson Eaton). In early 2015, Eaton tried to match her documents. She made 11 trips to various agencies – the DMV, two Social Security offices, and several banks. "It was really stressful and difficult, [a] headache and expensive," she said.

– Excerpted/adapted from article by Ari Berman in <www.thenation.com>.

Voter ID Laws

Voter identification laws require citizens to present specific forms of ID in order to vote. Nationally, 11% of Americans do not have the current photo IDs required under the stricter laws, including 25% of African Americans, 20% of people 18-29, and 18% of seniors.¹

Laws that require photo ID at the polls vary, but the strictest laws limit the list of acceptable IDs to ones that many poor people do not have. Even when the state offers a free photo ID, those voters may not have the necessary documents, such as a birth certificate, to obtain one. For example, in Wisconsin, Alberta Currie was born at home and doesn't have a birth certificate. Another voter Sammie Louise Bates, faced with the choice of paying \$42 for a birth certificate or buying food, chose food because "we couldn't eat the birth certificate."²

Also, in rural communities with almost no public transportation, traveling to get the needed documents is extremely difficult. This year, Alabama is planning to close 31 driver's license offices (where most people get their IDs), including the offices in every county where black people make up more than 75% of the registered voters. This makes it much harder for those citizens to obtain an ID and will certainly suppress the black vote.

Fewer Opportunities to Vote Early

Early voting is important for people who can't easily get to the polls on voting day (people who have to work, people without reliable transportation, etc.). In the last two presidential elections, a full one-third of Americans voted early, and a disproportionate number of them were black.³ The new laws reduce the number of days for early voting and often the weekend and evening hours that are commonly used by working people or church groups that organize Sunday voting drives.

Voter Registration Restrictions

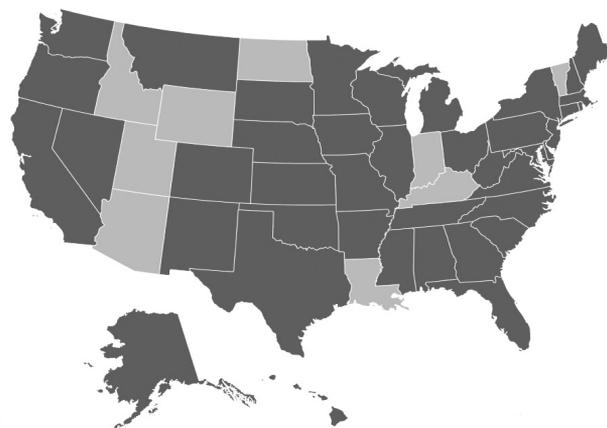
In ten states, it has gotten harder for citizens to register or stay registered if they move. In North Carolina, for example, voters can no longer register the same day that they vote. Why does this matter? Because the voting lists have many errors! In the past, if your name did not appear on the list of registered voters when you came to vote, you could just register again right there. Same-day registration made voting easier for everyone by allowing voters to do everything in one trip.

Furthermore, Florida, Iowa, and South Dakota all made it harder for Americans with criminal convictions to have their voting rights restored. Overall, 7.7 percent of African Americans have lost their right compared to 1.8 percent of whites.

Fighting Back Against Voter Restrictions

Organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and The Sentencing Project, as well as black churches and other community organizations are working to restore voting rights. They are experiencing some success. In March, Oregon adopted legislation that will automatically register eligible residents when they renew their driver's license. Also this year, Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear issued an executive order that will restore the right to vote for 170,000 Kentuckians with past convictions for non-violent crimes. Until that order, Kentucky was one of three states (along with Florida and Iowa) that completely barred persons with past felony convictions from ever voting.

States with Restrictive Voting Legislation Introduced Since 2011



41 states introduced 180 restrictive laws. 34 introduced photo ID laws. 17 introduced proof of citizenship requirements. 16 introduced bills to limit registration. 9 introduced bills to reduce early voting periods. Map from the Brennan Center for Justice. Find out more at <www.brennancenter.org/analysis/election-2012-voting-laws-roundup>.

Despite these efforts, not all Americans have the same opportunity to cast a ballot. Someone eligible to vote in one state might not be in another. Critics claim that state legislatures revise their voting laws to intentionally make it more difficult for poor people and people of color to vote. We may have come a long way since this country was founded and the Constitution gave only white male property owners the right to vote, but politicians are still devising ways to pick the voters they want rather than the other way around!

Sources: 1. <www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download_file_39242.pdf>; 2. <www.advancementproject.org>; 3. <prospect.org/article/22-states-wave-new-voting-restrictions-threatens-shift-outcomes-tight-races>.

Andy Nash is director of the New England Literacy Resource Center.

LESSON IDEA: See <changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/issue-42> for CCR-aligned activities you can use with this article, as well as links to other voting rights materials.

Being Black in the Welfare Office

Miriam

I am from Honduras, and I am black. I have been in the U.S. for five years, and for the last two years we've been living in a shelter. A shelter is a place for homeless people. Because I am homeless and because I am an unemployed single mother, I need help from social services.

My social worker is a white woman from Puerto Rico. Unfortunately she is very rude to me.

We are all poor. We are all single mothers. And we all need help. So, what could it be? The only thing I could think of is: I am black, and they are not.

For example, she told me I must go to her office to speak with her. I tried to make an appointment, but I couldn't because she never answered the phone. When I got the answering machine, it said I couldn't leave a message because it was full. Believe me, I tried calling many times. Finally, I went to the office without an appointment. She was very angry. "Why didn't you make an appointment?" she asked me. She didn't even wait for my answer. I asked her some of my questions, and she answered in a way that was so brief and unfriendly that I was too afraid to ask more. Instead, I started to cry. I was unable to fight for my rights.

Over time, I saw her with other clients. She seemed to be very friendly. She was making jokes and they were laughing together. I noticed that these clients were white people. Perhaps some were from her country. I tried to change my behavior. I was very friendly and polite. However, her behavior didn't change at all. She was always



very unfriendly and rude to me. Finally, I started to ask myself, what is the difference between other clients and me? We are all poor. We are all single mothers. And we all need help. So, what could it be? The only thing I could think of is: I am black, and they are not.

Later, I got a new social worker. She has helped me to find permanent housing in a beautiful apartment with my children. Now I

know how helpful social workers can be, and this has given me hope!

In the end, I don't know if my first social worker was racist or only a bad social worker. What I do know is: if you are in the U.S. and you are a poor, homeless, single mother and you are black, you really need help, and sometimes it's hard to get it.

Miriam (not her real name) is a Garifuna woman from Honduras. She is a student at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, MA. She has two children. She is currently focusing on learning English, and she plans on studying criminal justice in the future.

What Could Miriam Do?

Have you ever worked with a professional who did not act professionally or who behaved in a racist manner? Write a description of the situation and share what you did about it.

Research how you could file a complaint in your city or state. What are the channels for holding government employees accountable? What about private employees? Remember: discrimination is against the law.

The Colors of Our Flesh

Chandra Duba

The colors of our flesh are
different.
But our soul is the same.
You are from a place I do not
understand.
I am from a place you seek.
With open arms I welcome you.
Come teach me with no fear.
We will learn together.



Chandra Duba is a student at Vermont Adult Learning and a single mother of three teenagers living in Winooski, VT. She started writing books and plays as a young child then turned to poems as an emotional outlet later in life. She plans to publish a book of poetry with the help of her children.

Racism at Work

Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein



Image and text from *Problem Posing at Work*, published by Grass Roots Press.

Jean-Louis: I'm quitting.

Jose: How come?

Jean-Louis: I don't want to be stuck washing dishes forever.

Jose: Your English is good. Why don't you apply for a job at the front desk?

Jean-Louis: Have you ever seen a Haitian in the front of the house?

Put It in your Own Words

Describe what you see in the picture. Describe what the dialog is about. Explain how racism happens at work sometimes.

Hispanic People Do the Harder Jobs

Miriam Reyes

A few months after I moved here from Mexico, I got a job at a chicken plant. A lot of Hispanic people worked there. At the chicken plant, we cut the chicken breasts and weighed them. It was a simple job, but the difficult part was working in the cold and standing up for more than eight hours.

In that chicken plant, I understood that being Hispanic meant working harder than

The bosses would always send the Hispanic people to do the harder jobs.

other races because the bosses would always send the Hispanic people to do the harder jobs. Even the Hispanic bosses sent Hispanic people to do

the harder jobs. However, we didn't mind doing the hardest jobs because we came to this country to improve our lives.

Every year, more and more Hispanic people graduate from college, and I feel very happy and grateful because that means Hispanic people aren't just useful for hard jobs. I am hopeful that future generations of Hispanic immigrants will be treated with more respect than what I have experienced so far. Meanwhile, we must demonstrate to our children through our actions that hard work and education are valuable assets that will provide them with opportunities and confidence that many of us did not have when we arrived in the U.S.



Miriam Reyes is a student at the Fort Smith Adult Education Center in Fort Smith, AR. She is from Mexico. She is happily married and has three wonderful children.

Examine the Structure

How does the author organize her thoughts in this essay? Write a one-sentence summary of each paragraph. Is there anything she could do to make her argument stronger?

They Called Me Stupid So I Read More

Elizabeth F. Raygoza

In 2004, I was hired at a company called Phillips Plastics in New Richmond, Wisconsin. Even though I didn't speak fluent English, I somehow got hired, and I was happy! It was my very first job here in America.

My position was to collect and count plastic pieces and pack them into boxes and then print

When I asked her for help, she was not happy at all! She shook her head and said, "You are one STUPID Mexican."

out labels from a computer and stick each one on the finished box. The first day, my supervisor, Cassandra, showed me how to print labels out of the computer. By the second day, I had already forgot-

ten all of the steps for label printing. I was afraid to touch the computer keyboard. There were so many keys, and it looked so confusing.

When I asked her for help, she was not happy at all! She shook her head and said, "You are one

STUPID Mexican." You should go back to where you came from." I felt so embarrassed! I wanted to sink down into the concrete floor or run away and never come back. But it took a long time to find this job, and I needed to keep it.

After that, everybody started to make jokes about me. They called me names like "Peso," "Greasy Mexy," and "Shorty." While working at Phillips, I literally never heard anybody call me by my real name. My co-workers made life hard for me in other ways too. They would hide my stuff. They would turn my plastic injector off. I was constantly in trouble! It was a nightmare (even though I wasn't sleeping). After all of this trouble, I realized that they were being racists towards me.

At lunch time, I didn't talk to anybody because I was afraid of using my poor English. To avoid having people talk to me, I grabbed the newspaper, covered my face, and pretended that I was busy reading. I would check the clock a thousand times. Every day, I wanted time to fly and for the shift to be over as quickly as possible.

Eventually, I forced myself to learn as many English words as I could by talking to people whom I trusted. One day, I stopped to think for a minute about what Cassandra had said to me. Then I came



What Would You Do...



...if people called you racist names?
(Or if you heard someone else being called a racist name?)

"Wait a minute!" I thought to myself. "I am not stupid! I just don't speak English!"

up with a conclusion: “Wait a minute!” I thought to myself. “I am not stupid! I just don’t speak English!”

I then made a commitment to memorize as many English words as I could, and I knew that my brain was the only thing that would save me from that horrid nightmare I was living in.

I have learned how to manage the ignorance of others by reminding myself that I am a human being, and I have the same rights as others.

Living in America has been a big challenge for me, partly because I am not fluent in English, and partly because I feel alone in this country. I miss all my family that I haven’t seen in 14 years. None-

theless, racism and discrimination have made a stronger woman out of me. I have learned how to manage the ignorance of others by reminding myself that I am a human being, and I have the same rights as others.

Not everyone was so hurtful, so I decided to take the advice of many kinder Americans and improve my English by reading more. One article that caught my attention was on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Reading and understanding this wonderful article only strengthened my belief that I could be equal too! I made a commitment to find new ways to become a successful person by continuing with my learning.

There are many other immigrants who have come to this country looking for better opportunities and better education. Many have struggled to survive racism in America. For all those who are suffering out there, you should know that you can do more than you think you can. NEVER GIVE UP! This is the world we live in! Racism and discrimination will persist, but we will persevere.

My name is Elizabeth F. Raygoza, and I’m an ABE and GED student at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) in New Richmond, Wisconsin. I’m a mother of three boys, and my goal is to become a nurse.

Learn These English Words

Look at the list of vocabulary words in bold below and find them in the text. See if you can write a definition based on context clues. Check your work by looking up the word online or in a dictionary.

Literally: _____

Nightmare: _____

Avoid: _____

Conclusion: _____

Nonetheless: _____

Extra Credit

Look up the Equal Rights Amendment and explain briefly what it is:

Is Race Real?

Ebony Vandross

“There is no such thing as race. None. There is just a human race – scientifically, anthropologically. Racism is a construct, a social construct... it has a social function, racism.”¹

No such thing as race? Then what does it mean? Is it biological? Sociological? Psychological? Is it ascribed? Assigned? Achieved? What does race mean to Mariah Carey? To Tiger Woods? To Barack Obama? To me?

Racial categories have no basis in science. As philosopher Paul Boghossian states, “This thing could not have existed had we not built it.”² In other words, race is a social construct, which means that people have decided what it is and what it means for millions of people worldwide.

Throughout history, there have been plenty of scientists who tried to make the case that there is a scientific basis to classifying people by race. Nine-

Racial categories have no basis in science.

teenth century natural scientist Samuel George Morton popularized the idea that white people are more intelligent because their skulls are larger and therefore “hold” more intelligence.³ In 1994, researchers Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray argued that whites generally have better jobs and more wealth because they are naturally more intelligent than blacks.⁴ And in 2014, science journalist Nicholas Wade published a book where he argued that differences in economic success are in part due to race.⁵

Many scientists criticize these arguments, claiming that proponents of racial difference related to intelligence complete their studies under unconscious racial bias. In other words, these scholars already believed there was a natural hierarchy between the races, and their (sometimes questionable) research only serves to support their already biased notions.



Other scientists, such as Stephen Jay Gould claim that there were “many errors piled together into Morton’s experiments.”

But, he says, “the most important error is the primary fallacy of categorization. To think that intelligence, which is a word we use to encompass all these hundreds of different cognitive skills, to even think that ... it’s one quantity which can be measured in terms of the cubic centimeters of some stuff you have in your head, it’s such a naïve notion.”⁶

Another scientist, Alan Goodman, states that you need commonly measurable variables to produce credible scientific findings. About race, he asks, “Where is your measurement device? We sometimes [measure] by skin color... [But] what’s black in the U.S. is not what’s black in Brazil or what’s black in South Africa. What was black in 1940 is different from what is black in 2000. ... In 1920, as a Jew, I was not white then, but I’m white now.... There’s no stability and constancy.”⁷

Consider, for example, some well known people who defy easy categorization.

Professional golfer Tiger Woods, who is one-fourth black, one-fourth Thai, one-fourth Chinese, one-eighth white, and one-eighth Native American, has expressed that “black” does not sufficiently describe his identity: “Growing up, I came up with this name. I’m a ‘Cablinasian.’ And in reference to checking both African American and Asian on school forms, Woods says, “Those are the two I was raised under and the only two I know. I’m just who I am... whoever you see in front of you.”⁸

Performing artist Mariah Carey has also described her identity in more specific terms: “Ethnically, I’m a person of mixed race. My father’s mother was African-American. His father was

from Venezuela. My mother is Irish. I see myself as a person of color who happens to be mixed with a lot of things..." However, amidst controversy surrounding her description, coupled with her management initially misrepresenting her as "a white girl who can sing," Carey later stated that she is "a black woman who is very light skinned."⁹

And finally, President Barack Obama, who is of multiethnic background states: "[I'm] An African-American, but not grounded in a place with a lot of African-American culture."¹⁰ In his memoir,

And what about me? I claim the identity of Black-American.

he noted that "when people who don't know me well, Black or white, discover my background (and it is usually a dis-

covery, for I ceased to advertise my mother's race at the age of twelve or thirteen, when I began to suspect that by doing so I was ingratiating myself to whites), I see the split second adjustments they have to make, the searching of my eyes for some telltale sign. They no longer know who I am."¹¹

And what about me? Although I don't believe in race as a biological concept, I claim the identity of Black-American. I do so because I recognize the significance of race as a social marker, and that the experiences of racial groups are unbalanced. At the age of 11, I was called a racial slur. I was vacationing with my family and one day while playing outside with a friend, a young white girl shouted, "Why are you two n----- on our property?" I felt shock and confusion, and my friend and I went inside and told our parents.

Their reaction surprised me because they simply sighed and shook their heads, calling the girl "ignorant." At the time, I didn't understand their apparent indifference, but as I got older they shared stories about growing up in the very segregated southern United States. They told us about being terrified to integrate into white schools, harassment, and discrimination on the job, and why their own parents and grandparents kept guns in the house to protect themselves from violent racists. To them, slurs were mild.

My identity as a Black-American woman has shaped my life experiences, and will continue to be an important part of my journey. That little girl who insulted us may not have known about the lack of "science" behind race, but her casual use of such a hurtful word communicated the superiority she felt as a white person. Thus, although I do believe that race is a social construct and that it is often used to oppress some and benefit others, I am also aware that the issues I face are consistent with the experiences of other black Americans, and I choose to join the fight to improve the status of black and other marginalized groups.

Endnotes

1. Toni Morrison (3:35): <www.cc.com/video-clips/9yc4ry/the-colbert-report-toni-morrison>.
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5. Wade, Nicholas. *A troublesome inheritance: Genes, race and human history*. Penguin, 2014.
6. Stephen Jay Gould: <www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-01-09.htm>
7. Alan Goodman: <www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-01-07.htm>
8. Younge, Gary. "Tiger Woods: Black, White, Other." *The Guardian*. 28 May 2010. <www.theguardian.com>.
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10. Maron, Marc. "Episode 613: President Barack Obama." *WTF with Marc Maron*. 22 June 2015. www.wtfpod.com
11. Obama, Barack. *Dreams from my father: A story of race and inheritance*. Canongate Books, 2007.

Ebony Vandross is a Staff Associate at World Education, Inc.

Explore Further

Do Races Differ? <partners.nytimes.com/library/national/science/082200sci-genetics-race.html>

Bill Nye the Science Guy talks about race: <bigthink.com/think-tank/bill-nye-race-is-a-social-construct>

Racism in Schools

Cesar Nateras

It started in elementary school. I noticed it everywhere in school: racism from teachers, bus drivers, coaches, and even students.

When I went to school, I didn't have many friends. I didn't talk much. I think that's what gave the teacher the idea that I didn't speak English. When the teacher asked a question, I was willing to answer. But I was never called on. They never

I was never called on. They never looked my way

looked my way, and it made me lose my self-esteem. So I just didn't talk to a lot of people.

A few years passed, and then I was in middle school. One

day, the teacher tried to talk to me in Spanish, and he looked at me like I was slow. He made me feel stupid. In fact, I don't speak Spanish. The rest of the day he kept talking to me in Spanish. The class thought that it was funny: a Mexican that can't speak Spanish.

I started to shut everybody out. I didn't have a reason to talk to anybody. I felt like I was a mute. I felt like I didn't exist.

You might come to the conclusion that it was the teacher who made me drop out of school. But the real reason was that I stopped talking. I should have stayed in school and stood up for my educa-



tion. Now I don't have a problem with standing up for what is right. I'm a better and stronger person. I'm willing to fight for my rights and my education and knowledge. What I learned from this experience is: never give up.

Cesar Nateras is a student at LearningQuest in Modesto, CA. He wants to get his GED and work for the city of Modesto or as an astrophysicist. He was raised back and forth between Modesto, CA, and Cairo, GA.



Explore Identity

Drawing from the text, explain how race played a role in Cesar's schooling. Name two incidents where Cesar's teachers misunderstood his identity. How did these misunderstandings affect Cesar?

Share your identity: Using presentation software (such as Powerpoint) to share information about your identity, language, ancestors, and/or current community.

Defending my Son against Racism

Daffeh Fatou

When my son went to public school, some children tore his books and bullied him. They made fun of his name and called him an “African Boodie Scratcher”! One boy kept making fun of his name and changing the letters around to something very rude. The teacher didn’t do anything. She said that my son was being a troublemaker. But he never started any of the trouble!

It happened more than 10 times. We had many meetings with the teacher about this problem. She never did anything to help. If this same

Confronting the teacher and the principal was hard. But it was even harder for me to see what my son was going through.

thing happened with other people, I think the teacher would have done something more quickly.

Finally, we had a meeting that included the teacher and the principal. The principal told the teacher that she must tell that boy to stop being a bully. Confronting the teacher and the principal was hard. But it was even harder for me to see what my son was going through. Compared to that, going and talking to the principal was not very hard to do.

After the meeting with the principal, the problem was solved. No more problems at school!



Before this happened, I always believed whatever a teacher said. That was my mistake. I even decided to volunteer at that school, to see what was going on there. That’s how I realized that my son was being bullied and that the teacher’s story was wrong. I became a Learning Leader at my son’s school. I learned that it is good to listen to your child and believe your child. What they are telling you is the truth.

Daffeh Fatou is a student at the Adult Learning Center, at Lehman College, in the Bronx. She is from Gambia, in West Africa, and was born in a city called Banjul. Her family worked as farmers there. She has been living in the Bronx for the last 27 years.

Write to Daffeh!

In your letter, notice how this experience helped her grow and change as a parent. Acknowledge the efforts she made on behalf of her son. Base your observations on the text.

Share with Daffeh your experience of advocating for your child or for someone else you know. How did it change you or affect you? In your writing, use temporal language (first, later, finally) and transition words (consequently, furthermore). See p. 49 for more ideas.

A White Teacher Reflects on Race

Lisa Gimbel

Our English textbook is missing some important pages. It has pages that describe hair and eye color, height, and weight. But it doesn't have a page to describe race. A student asked me about a housing application, "How should I answer the questions about race? I'm from Brazil. Black or African American? White? Asian?"

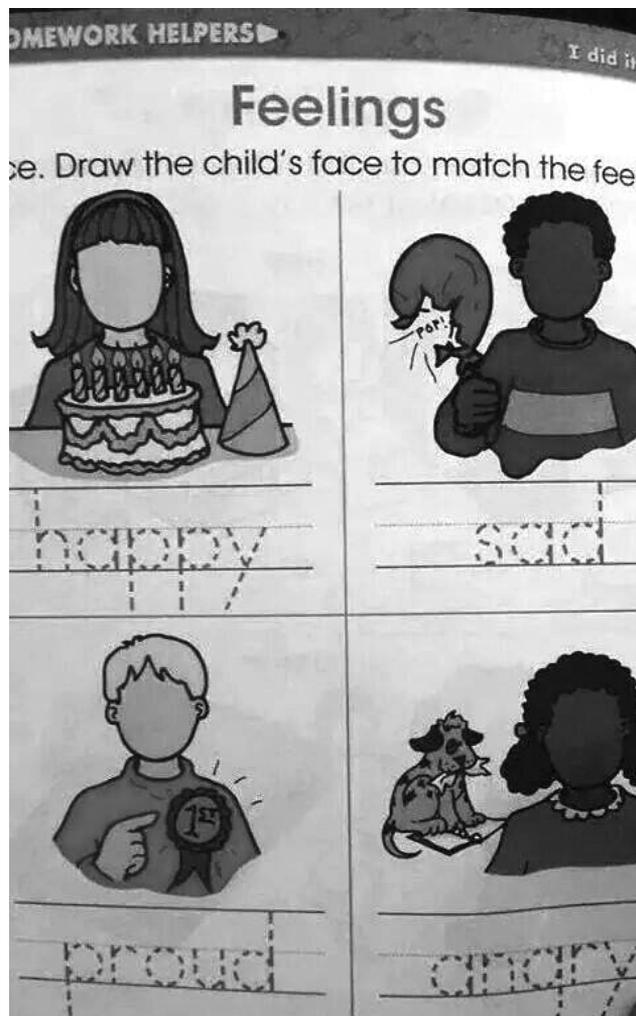
The book has dialogues practicing what to say at the library, at the store, and talking to the landlord. There is no practice, though, for answering a neighbor's racist comments. There is no dialogue for responding to a person yelling, "Go home, terrorist!" at the supermarket. My students tell me about many difficult situations that are not in the textbooks. The situations are also not in my experience because I am white.

My students are learning English. They are also learning what it means to be Black, Latino, white, and Asian in the U.S. My students are people of color and I am white. I know the language and can teach about it. But I don't have the experience of

My students tell me about many difficult situations that are not in the textbooks.

being a person of color in the United States. Can I teach about it? What can I say? The textbook pretends race isn't important, but I know it is.

What do I do? I talk about race and about being white. I ask students their experiences. I ask students to see race. When we describe what is happening in a picture, we include the races of the people. We read stories and watch videos by people of color about their experiences. We practice situations responding to racism. We have the city Commission on Discrimination come to our class. We learn about people resisting racism now and in the past. Sometimes, I need to say, "I



This is a page from a children's textbook. What does it communicate about race?

don't know," and ask other people. Sometimes I'm uncomfortable, but that's okay. Most English teachers are white, and many people who write the textbooks are white. But we must still support students as they learn what it means to be Black, Latino, or Asian in the United States.

Lisa Gimbel is an ESL teacher at the Cambridge Learning Center.

ESL Students Reflect on Race

Kathy Budway

When I was teaching ESL at Shoreline Community College in Seattle, I discovered that many of my students were unaware of the sacrifices and contributions of African Americans to U.S. society. I decided that for one quarter, my students would study African American History. I asked them to reflect on how their attitudes and prejudices changed during their studies, and I made a short film about it. You can watch the 8-minute film called "Who Paved the Way?" here: <vimeo.com/40630589>. More teaching materials at <changeagent.netrc.org/issues/issue-42>.

Before Studying African American History



JASON: My stereotype about African Americans was negative.



AMAR: The media shows you that black people are gangsters and they carry guns.



JANE: My white real estate agent told me [that finding] a location without black people was the most important factor.



MILA: When I came here, I couldn't understand blacks. I thought, "Why are they talking about racism too much?"

After Studying African American History



ALEX (studied the prison system): I was shocked when I was doing research.



ASTER: Black people contributed to America. [They] are doctors, scientists, professors. I was so surprised.



JACKIE (studied black wall street): What [black people] have done — they never talk about in history.



SARINA: If you want to live in the U.S. or study in the U.S., I think [you] must study the history of African Americans.

Kathy Budway is the Civics and Student Leadership Coordinator for Pima College Adult Basic Education in Tucson, AZ.

A White Teacher's View of Racism

Lee Gargagliano

As a white educator, teaching in communities of color has exposed me to many of the ways that racism shapes my students' lives – the experiences of racism have been similar everywhere that I have taught: in New York, Chicago, and Oakland. The constant harassment of students on their way to school sends a clear message: "It doesn't matter how hard you work to play by the rules, you have already been judged as less-than, and the cards are stacked against you." Of course, by the time a student reaches my classroom, they have received this message again and again: in school, applying for public assistance, in the healthcare system, as they search for housing, and in the job market. Fortunately, people are resilient, and many students in adult education have learned how to block out this message.

The first time I witnessed a student of mine get arrested was directly outside the doors of the Chicago community center where I worked at the time. It was my first year teaching, and I was on my way to make copies when I saw my student with his hands against a cop car and a police officer rifling through his bag. He had been stopped for walking through an alley, and the police had decided that was enough of a reason to violate his 4th Amendment rights and search his belongings. Meanwhile, I walked through the alleys every day

without facing harassment. I stood and watched as he was searched illegally in the hope that my presence would serve as some sort of protection. I was shaken and outraged at his lack of power and my lack of power to defend him, but my student was unfazed. This was his life; it was an everyday occurrence.

Twice this year, Black students who I work with have been incarcerated the day before they were scheduled to take a high school equivalency test. In one case, a judge literally said that he was sending my student to Juvenile Hall to "teach [her] a lesson" on the day before she was scheduled to take the last section of the GED. A second student was arrested the evening before he was scheduled to take the HiSET and spent four days in jail for loitering. As I shared these stories with my friends and family, they expressed shock and horror, yet as I discussed it with the students they shrugged their shoulders or blamed themselves for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We need to talk about racism because, for those directly impacted, racism, when unspoken, becomes normal; and for people who are not directly impacted, racism, when unspoken, becomes invisible. We cannot accept racism as invisible or normal, so we must speak out. One powerful thing about the #BlackLivesMatter movement has been its ability to a) make racism visible, thus pushing those with privilege to act, and b) make everyday racism unacceptable to people who have been pushed to quietly accept it as a fact of life. With racism both visible and unacceptable, we can work together to end it.

We cannot accept racism as invisible or normal, so we must speak out.



Lee Gargagliano teaches high school equivalency at Next Step Learning Center in Oakland, CA.

Classroom Strategies for Talking about Race

Excerpted and adapted from Everyday Antiracism, edited by Mica Pollock

Learn

- Racial categories are not biological realities.
- Develop the will, skill, and capacity to engage in courageous conversations about race.

Remember

- We are all treated as racial group members and need to examine that experience. However, within racial groups, experiences will be different based on other identities.
- Students may have experienced unequal expectations based on their race. Educators need to work with student anxiety about unequal intelligence or potential.

Teach

- Basic skills! Defy racially based ideas of potential careers and contributions.
- Create curriculum that explores how people have been (and still are) treated differently or disadvantaged based on race or ethnicity.
- Analyze systematic racial barriers (such as over-policing, discrimination in hiring, etc.) and the impact over time of such practices.
- Find materials that teach the history and literature of diverse cultures. Show students their stories matter. Use readings and images, of people who share your students' background.
- Listen to your students. They are experts in their own experiences.

Navigate

- Notice and investigate students' silences. Avoid putting students on the spot to represent their race or ethnicity.
- Directly discuss racially charged topics in a structured and safe format, such as:



- a) Create ground rules, such as not interrupting, active listening, allowing for pauses, and ensuring everyone gets a chance to talk.
- b) Elevate learning, growing, and connecting over being right.
- c) Model *not* responding to everything and instead just trying to understand. Show appreciation for where each person is at and each person's struggle to be present.
- d) Provide time for evaluation so students can say what went well & what could go better.

Connect

- Analyze with coworkers and students how your race affects your teaching.
- Learn about your students' home lives and communities.
- Find support so that you can keep thinking about everyday antiracist strategies.

Act

- Invite students to help define and debate the antiracist policies necessary for improving your school.
- Work together with others in your community and your school to change unequal systems.

FOR MORE TEACHING IDEAS AND SUPPORTS, SEE PP. 3, 40, 41, 42, AND <CHANGEAGENT.NELRC.ORG/ISSUES/ISSUE-42>.

We Thought this Time was Past Forever

Anita Blohm

BEFORE YOU READ: Share what you know about refugees trying to get into Europe. Where are they coming from? Why? Share what you know about Nazi Germany.

Many thousands of refugees have recently arrived in Europe, especially in Germany. There are women, men, children, babies, and old people with many thousands of different, horrible experiences and stories. Most of the people are very sick and without strength after their long, dangerous journeys. They all have lost their homes because of war. Often they paid a lot of money hoping for a better life of peace and free-

dom, but they have been in the cold and rain, day and night, for weeks.

For the German organizations that are trying to help, too many refugees have come in too short of a time. Helpers are not always able to give them food, a dry place to sleep, or warm clothes, nor are they able to build restrooms, showers, and other necessary things. There are not enough apartments to stay in with winter coming, and the train of refugees doesn't stop. It's like water in a river. It seems there will be no end.

These problems are building deep divisions in my country. On one side, there are people who

On one side, there are people who help with all they can give: money, clothes, and their own time.

On the other side, there are people who set fire to the houses where refugees will live. On the road they yell, "Go back!"



Germans hold up "Welcome" sign for incoming refugees.



Germans protest refugees coming to their country. The sign says, "Germany: unauthorized persons are forbidden to enter."

help with all they can give: money, clothes, and their own time. They stay at the checkpoints with friendly welcome signs, and they give water and fruit. On the other side, there are people who set fire to the houses where refugees will live and even in houses where they live already. On the road they yell, "Go back!" and "Foreigners go home!" They agitate against those who provide help and threaten to kill them. They spread fear.

I feel embarrassed about these pictures in the news. Racism is a big problem in my country. Not too long ago, Nazis ruled the country. They promoted the "Aryan" race. They said Jews were less than human. The German government and military murdered six million Jews because they did not belong to the Aryan race. They also murdered communists, homosexuals, Romani people, disabled people, and others. Some white Germans opposed the Nazis, but most white Germans stood by while the Nazis committed terrible crimes.

Now, racism is happening again in my country. Some people are treating refugees like they are less than human.

Racism is a big problem in my country. Not too long ago, Nazis ruled the country.

There are many countries where people act badly towards refugees or anyone who is "different." But in Germany, we have a history

where racism led to genocide. We must work to make sure that time is past forever.

Nobody knows the answer to all these problems. What is the answer for all of the poor people who came with such great hopes, fleeing from bombs and war? What is the answer for all the people who stay firm in their racism? I am afraid. What will the future for my country be?



Anita Blohm, originally from Germany, is a student at the Cambridge Learning Center in Cambridge, MA.

Connecting to History

Consider the author's title. What "time" is she referring to when she says, "We thought this time was past forever."

As a German, why do you think Anita is particularly concerned about racism against refugees?

Research "Aryan race." What was it? Explain what role it played during the time that Nazis controlled Germany.



A Nazi woman measures the skull of a Romani woman.

Find out more about Nazi Germany and the Jewish Holocaust. Start by exploring <www.theholocaust-explained.org>. Scan the site and narrow your focus.

Decide on a topic you want to investigate more fully. (If everyone in the class picks a different topic to study and then present, you could all teach each other about this important historical moment.)



Child survivors of Auschwitz. Still photograph from the Soviet Film of the liberation of Auschwitz, 1945.



What is the cartoonist saying in this cartoon? After studying the cartoon and reading the article and the box on p. 46, what do you think about the phrase “black lives matter”? (Used with permission from Kris Straub <chainsawsuit.com>.)

nity protested and pressured the Department of Justice (DOJ) to investigate the police department.³ By raising their voices together as one, they convinced the DOJ to investigate, and the DOJ found that the Albuquerque Police Department fostered a “culture that emphasizes force and complete submission over safety.”⁴ That’s why movements like Black Lives Matter are so important. Like the people in Albuquerque, they help get justice for those wrongfully murdered and harmed by police.

Organizing Works!

Think back to all the gains that groups of people have won when they united with one voice: the abolition of slavery, the women’s rights movement, and the fight for the equality of all people! When people fight for something together, they eventually put enough pressure on the right people. When that happens, either the government will make new legislation, or the court will stop protecting crooked public servants who believe they are above the law.

My hope is that, one of these days, real justice will be served to everyone who needs it. That will only happen through movements like the Black Lives Matter. It takes the voices of many standing together and protesting in a legal and nonviolent way. So far, the Black Lives Matter movement is doing just that.

Endnotes

1. <www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/08/25/usa-today-pew-poll-police-tactics-military-equipment/14561633/>
2. <www.wsj.com/articles/police-rarely-criminally-charged-for-on-duty-shootings-1416874955>
3. <www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-launches-investigation-albuquerque-nm-police-department-s-use-force>
4. <www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/02/son-deceased>

Jeff Cunningham is a student at North Kansas City Schools in Kansas City, MO. He has successfully finished three of the five sections of the HiSET exam. He is looking forward to taking the last two portions of the test in the near future.

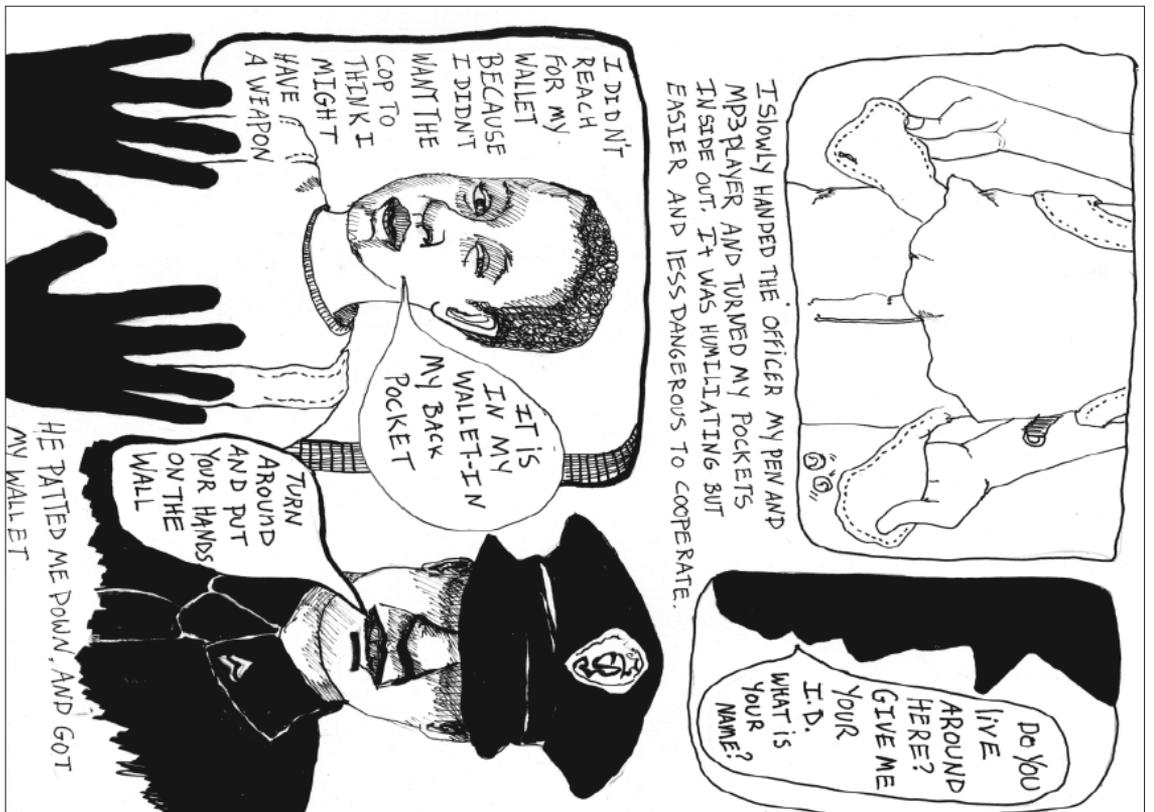
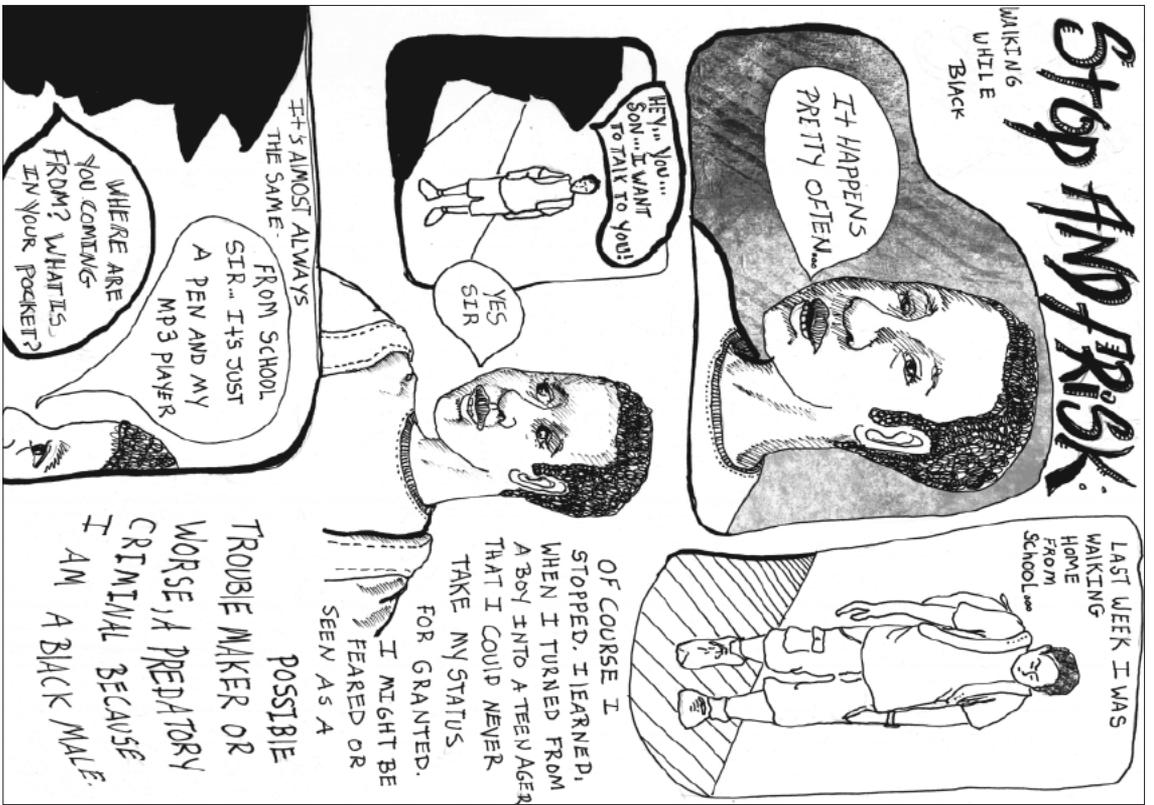


Examine the Structure

What does the author say he wants to accomplish in this essay?

Break down this article into an outline. List his three main arguments and the details he uses to support those arguments.

Critique it! How well does the author make his case? How could he improve it?



Excerpted from "Blue and Black: Stories of Policing and Violence" by Rachel Marie Crane Williams. Permission to reprint from Marianne Koba at <www.project-ria.org>.

Latinos and Police Violence

Nancy Lozano

BEFORE YOU READ:

- 1) Discuss what these phrases mean: “speak up” and “raise our voices.”
- 2) Look up these vocabulary words: sympathy, threatening, manner, allegedly, discriminate.
- 3) Share what you know about the Black Lives Matter movement.

Black people are not the only race that has problems with police. Latinos also have problems with police. As Latinos, we show our sympathy to

We as a community should not let the police treat us this way.

the Black Lives Matter movement. But we don’t want to speak up about our own problems with the police. We are afraid because many of us are immigrants in this country. We protest for

immigration reform more than we protest police shootings of Latinos.¹

Now and then, you hear about a Latino getting shot. For example, there is the case of Oscar Ramirez in Los Angeles. A police officer shot

him because he “moved his arms in a threatening manner,” according to the *Los Angeles Times*.² Another Latino, Antonio Zambrano-Montes, was shot by police because “he was allegedly throwing rocks at passing cars.”³ We as a community should not let the police treat us this way.



Therefore, Latinos should not focus only on immigration issues. We should march and raise our voices about police violence as well. Police discriminate against African Americans and Latinos. We should unite with each other to stop this from happening.

Sources: 1. NPR, 7-27-15, “Despite Spotlight on Police shooting, Incidents with Latinos Often Forgotten”; 2. “Latino police shootings stay under the radar” adapted by Newsela, 8-12-15; 3. <www.cnn.com/2015/09/11/opinions/reyes-antonio-zambrano-montes>.

Nancy Lozano is a HiSET student at North Kansas City Schools in Kansas City, MO. She has two wonderful children and looks forward to passing her test.

After You Read: Study the Writing

Look closely at how the author uses quotes and sources. What are some similarities and differences in the way she uses the three sources. Note whether she paraphrases the source or quotes directly from it. Note whether she attributes the source in the text.

Discuss how the use of sources makes her argument more or less effective. Are there places where she could have added sources to make her argument stronger?

Notice the use of “for example” and “another” in the second paragraph. How do these words help the reader make sense of the text? Here are some more words that help a writer flow from detail to detail: for instance, in addition, furthermore, finally.

Notice the use of “therefore” in the last paragraph. How does this word help the reader transition from the previous paragraph to this one? Learn more about transition words at <writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/transitions-esl>.

Why I Don't Watch TV News

David Diaz

It might seem extreme, but I don't watch the news on TV anymore. I've noticed that the media seems to be filled with negative accounts of African Americans and Hispanics. I don't want my young son, Jyzeah, to be exposed to these hateful accounts.

I believe that no human being is born racist. People learn these behaviors because they are taught to us. Before I got full custody of my son, I noticed that when we were out in public, if an African American, or anyone with a dark complexion

I believe that no human being is born racist. People learn these behaviors because they are taught to us.

would walk by, Jyzeah would stop being talkative. On his face, I could see fear. He would quickly come closer to me like a magnetic force and grip my hand. As time passed, I picked up

on his behavior. I had a talk with him. I asked him if he felt uncomfortable around African Americans and his response was, "Yes."

I don't know where or how he picked up this fear towards a specific race. The media may have had something to do with it. I'm not sure. But I am grateful he is now in my custody, because that fear no longer lives in him.

In Social Studies class I have been learning about the Declaration of Independence and how

the 13 colonies worked together to become independent and give future generations great opportunities. I've learned about the first ten Amendments

to the Constitution called the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment gives the right to free speech. That means people have the right to make racist comments and other people have the right to say those comments are racist. The media has the right to speak about any topic they want. And I have the right to write my opinion here in this magazine.

But just because they are saying it, doesn't mean I have to listen to it. My solution has been not to watch the news. My son doesn't see violent images and I'm not listening to negative talk about the black and Hispanic races. It's working for us!



David Diaz is 33 years old, was born in New York, and raised in Massachusetts. He has been blessed with a son, who is 8 years old. David has a passion for making music and videos, which can be viewed at [facebook.com/ShowDivineRazz](https://www.facebook.com/ShowDivineRazz), YouTube: Show Divine & Razz, or [SoundCloud.com/Razz_ShowDivine](https://www.soundcloud.com/Razz_ShowDivine). David's goals are to complete the HiSET, enroll in community college, and continue making positive music. He is a student at the Methuen Adult Learning Center in Methuen, MA.

AFTER YOU READ, COMPLETE THE SENTENCES BELOW TO DEMONSTRATE COMPREHENSION:

David noticed _____, so he _____.

The media has the right to _____, and I have the right to _____.

Now: write about a strategy you use to avoid or push back against negative media messages.

Division among Us

Joseph Fimbres

Racism has been a divider among people for many years. I have seen people of color treated like they are less than human. I have seen white people try to put themselves above the law and above other people. I have experienced it for myself. A white police officer treated me with a disrespectful attitude because I am Hispanic.

On a Sunday morning, while on my way to church, a police officer got behind my truck and began to run my plates. Then he followed me to church, trying to pull me over. I wasn't break-

There are no winners on either side of racism; it's a lose-lose situation.

ing the law or even causing trouble. I believe he did this because I'm Hispanic. I felt annoyed that this police officer was singling me out, and I took

it personally. I allowed it rob me of my joy, peace, and sound mind.

When I pulled in to the church parking lot and got out of my truck with my wife, I began to rehearse this offense over and over in my mind to the point that I wanted to explode. I needed to talk to someone, so I talked with my pastor and told him what had happened. Once we were done talking, I felt better and I was able to let it go. This situation helped me to grow up and mature spiritually. God used it as a character-builder in my life. In my past, this would have gone a totally different way.

I strongly believe wholeheartedly that God created all mankind equally in His image. There are no winners on either side of racism; it's a lose-lose situation. Any man, regardless of race, loses his God-given identity when he chooses to act in a racist way because it boosts false pride and destroys his integrity. We as a nation under God are bringing division among ourselves, and we are hurting ourselves as a people and as a nation.

The only thing that racism brings is division, strife, hate, and bitterness. Clearly, then, there is no room for love, unity, and friendships among races — only discord.

In conclusion, even though there are still people out in the world that live this way, I believe that if I walk in love, I can lead by example and help break the cycle of racism where I live. I pray that other people will do the same.

Joseph Fimbres is a GED student at Pima College Adult Education in Tucson, Arizona. He and his wife are involved in Celebrate Recovery, a Christian-based 12-step program. Joseph wants to use his GED credential to increase his opportunities to help people who, in his words, are broken.



AFTER YOU READ, COMPLETE THE SENTENCES BELOW TO DEMONSTRATE COMPREHENSION:

Joseph felt robbed of _____, so he _____.

Joseph feels that racism causes _____, but he believes that _____.

Now: write about a strategy you use to return to a feeling of peace after being attacked.

We Are Country Folks

I Celebrate Our Multicultural History

Karrie Lynn

When people first look at me, they see a white female, but I am much more than that. My great-grandpa was born in Ireland. He moved over to the states when he was older. My great-grandpa left his children in an orphanage. This included my grandpa. My grandpa’s sister was adopted, and my grandpa went to live with his sister’s new family. My grandpa changed his last name from

Beggs to Gibson which was his sister’s adopted name.

On my mother’s side, my great-grandpa was half Cherokee.

Both my great-grandpa and grandpa look like

American Indians. I didn’t know them very well, but my great-grandpa married my great-grandma, who was white, and they moved to a small town in Missouri.

I consider my family “country folks” because I grew up in a small, rural Missouri town. My nearest neighbor was a mile away, it was pretty

secluded. But, what I celebrate about my race is all the cultures that are in my family. Now I live in a city, and I appreciate seeing so many

different cultures and the way that other people live. I believe I have that appreciation for different cultures because of my family’s multicultural heritage.

But most of all I celebrate being an individual and not being defined by my race. I celebrate my kindness for everyone I meet no matter their race. I celebrate my personality and how different and unique I am. I celebrate my culture and history and my individuality.



Karrie Lynn is a student at Literacy Kansas City. She plans to attend college and get her nursing degree.

I celebrate my kindness for everyone I meet no matter their race.

Compare and Contrast

Read the articles on this page and the next. Both Karrie Lynn and Althea Richardson celebrate their race. Based on the text, what do they have in common and what is different? On a clean sheet of paper, make a chart like the one below and fill it out.

In common	Different

I Celebrate My Race

...to defend against negative messages

Althea Richardson

One day, I bought a gummy candy at the store, and when I unwrapped it, some of the plastic fell on the ground. A white person walked by and said, "Pick it up and put it in the garbage like the trash that you are."

What can we do to defend ourselves against these messages that we get every day? What can we do to remind ourselves that we all deserve to be respected and to be accepted as equals? What I do is I celebrate my race to remind myself that we are not trash.

For example, I celebrate our heroes, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He had a dream that blacks and whites would get along. He fought and died

for his beliefs. Thanks to him and others who joined the Civil Rights movement, we can all use the same water fountain and attend the same schools.

I fortify myself and protect myself from negativity.

Rosa Parks is another hero. She refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white person. Her action started the Montgomery bus boycott. For almost a year, 99% of the African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to ride the bus. Instead they walked, rode bikes, or carpoled. Finally, the Supreme Court decided that segregated buses were unconstitutional.

On a personal level, I celebrate my race by being a beautiful black African American young lady who remains positive by doing things I love to do and focusing on my goals. I want my high school equivalency, so that's why I go to school Monday through Friday. Moreover, I work hard to take care of my health. It's very important that I go to dialysis three days a week and be compliant with medications, so that I can get a kidney transplant

by 2016. Every Saturday I work out in a class called Caribbean Cardio. It's so motivating because it inspires me to want to do much more.

By maintaining all of these actions, I fortify myself and protect myself from negativity. I have morals, values, and self-respect, which prevent past hurts from stopping my success. The saying, "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger" keeps me going. I thank God every day that I'm here to grow and learn.



Althea Richardson was born in Manhattan at Harlem Hospital. At 26 years old, she's currently trying to get her HSE. She's also interested in going into a trade. Specifically, she would love to become a CNA, so she's studying hard to achieve that goal. In addition, she loves working with children and others. Growing up, she always wanted to do something in the health field, like being a pediatrician.

Healing and Dealing

Write an essay that discusses strategies for healing from and dealing with racism. Base your essays on the content from the articles on these pages:



p. 46



p. 50



p. 51



p. 53



p. 54

Strategies for Healing

Elizabeth Nguyen

All of us need healing from the way that racism has impacted our lives. People of color — Asian, black, Latin@, Native American/Indigenous — need practices of healing to restore our spirits after painful experiences and to strengthen our ability to face inequality.

Often when bad things happen in my life because of racism, I don't know what to do. I feel sad. Or angry. Or frustrated. Or powerless. I feel sad that I don't know how to speak Vietnamese because my dad thought it was more important for

I try to take action because when I am changing our racist system, I am showing myself that transformation is possible.

me and my brother to speak good English. I feel angry that the police came to the school where my friend works as a janitor and handcuffed him because they thought that he must be trespassing or stealing since

he's black. I've learned a lot of tools from activists, family, and friends to help my heart face racism.

I try to connect with something bigger than myself. In my house, I have a small altar with candles, incense, quotes, and photos of my ances-



Religious leaders action at the Department of Justice in St. Louis on the anniversary of Michael Brown's murder by police. Photo by Heather Wilson.

tors. I put things on the altar that inspire me and remind me of everyone else who is struggling for a better world. I also try to connect with my own spirit by making time to sit in silence. Just sitting (even on the train or bus!) for five minutes in silence and breathing makes me feel more calm and less scared. I also love to make *pho* or Vietnamese coffee — things that make me feel connected to my communities.

I try to take action because when I am changing our racist system, I am showing myself that transformation is possible. When I tell my story about a racist experience, interrupt someone who is using racist language, recognize a racist thought in my head, attend a protest, or help to change a law, I am healing through acting for justice.

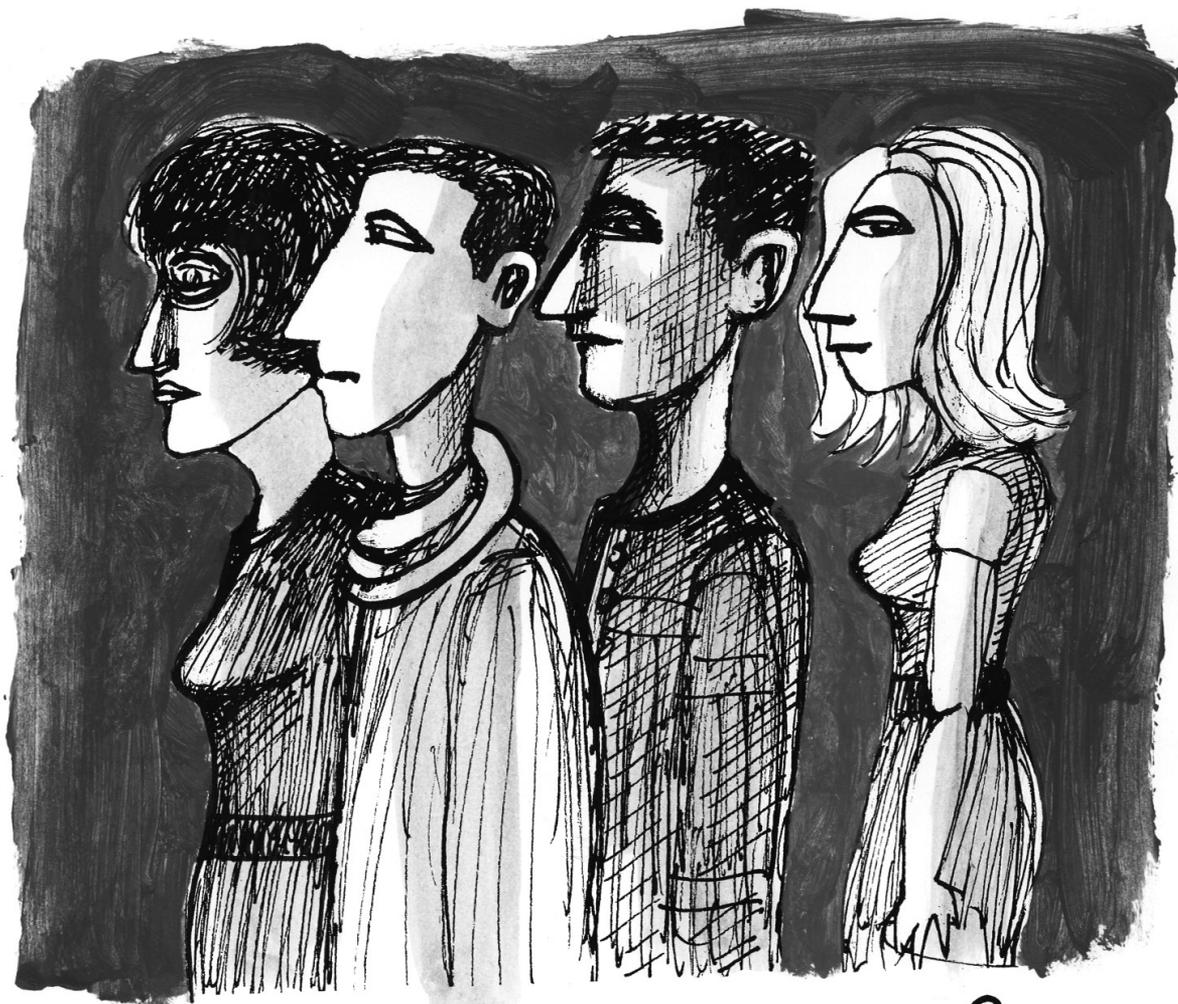
I try to put myself in the way of beauty since so much of life is hard. I make sure to cuddle the baby that I live with or take a moment to look at the leaves on the trees or listen to a song with a positive message. Some of my favorite songs for struggling against racism are "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free" by Nina Simone, "I am Not My Hair" by Indie.Arie, "I Like the Things About Me" by Mavis Staples, and "Something Inside So Strong" by Labi Siffre.

What helps you heal when you encounter racism?

Elizabeth Nguyen is a Unitarian Universalist (UU) minister, and she is the Leadership Development Associate for Youth and Young Adults of Color.

AFTER YOU READ: What are three things Elizabeth does to aid her own healing? Discuss your healing strategies. What's on your healing play list?





What are we waiting for?

A Final Note from the Editor

We want to hear from you! When the editorial board first met to plan this issue, we decided our three goals were to **expose** racism (as it is often hidden), **educate** the reader about how it works, and offer ideas about how to **heal** from it. What do you think? How well did we meet our goals? Write to us about which articles were most effective in exposing racism, educating about racism, and offering strategies for healing from racism. Write to us at: changeagent@worlded.org.

Write to the Writer! Use this lesson plan <changeagent.nelrc.org/in-the-classroom/strategies/write-to-the-writer> developed by ABE teacher, Gale Czerski. It includes worksheets and guides that help students draft responses to *Change Agent* writers.

Write for *The Change Agent*

CALL FOR ARTICLES

YOU MUST include contact information in *all* articles and emails. Please cite sources.

THEME: Transportation. We invite adult learners to share their experiences in writing or illustrations. Use one or two (not all!) of the following writing prompts to guide your writing:

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What is your commute to work or school like? How long does it take? What method(s) of transportation do you use? What would make it more enjoyable?
- What do you do to pass the time while you travel?
- Name 1-3 problems associated with transportation where you live. What could you and your community do to solve this problem (or problems)?
- What is your favorite method of transportation? Why?
- What are the long-term costs of the way we travel – for example, to the environment? What could we do about that?
- Describe your first time using some form of transportation.
- Is there a difference between how you use transportation now and how you used it as a child or in your country of origin? If so, what has changed?
- Is transportation equally accessible to everyone in your community? Are there disparities in who has access to buses vs. subways? Explain the dynamics.
- How accessible is public transportation to handicapped people in your area?
- How does your community/city/state fund public transportation? Is it affordable to all? What works well about it? What doesn't work so well?
- What is transportation justice? Have you ever advocated for more just transportation in your area? Describe what happened.
- Research the history of the car in the United States. How did the federal government support the car industry? Research the history of other forms of transportation (such as the train) in the U.S. How did the federal govt. support it (or not)?

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: May 6, 2016. Make sure to include contact information. Send to: cpeters@worlded.org. For more information: changeagent.nelrc.org/write-for-us.

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