

ywca anti-racism tool kit

Racism undermines a person's quality of life.

Far from being harmless, it denies a person opportunity, dignity, security and freedom.

Racial Justice and Women's Economic Advancement are the Hallmark Programs of the YWCA. They carry out our mission. They are a reflection of our brand. They are what distinguish the YWCA from all other socially conscious organizations.

Our Hallmark Programs have direct impact and create meaningful change with measurable results. We not only intend to raise awareness of the issues, we intend to affect real change. Our goal is not to pave the way for the future. It is to create the future, a better future.

Race Prejudice + Institutional Power = Racism.

Table of Contents

I.	YWCA Can Help Create a World Without Racism	3
II.	10 Easy Things You Can Do for Racial Justice	4
III	YWCA Racial Justice Historic Facts	6
IV.	Diversity vs. White Privilege	9
V.	It's Good to Talk About Racism	15

You Can Help Create a World Without Racism

- Value the differences and views of all individuals.
- Ask people of different backgrounds what racism means to them to better understand their experiences.
- Be inclusive when planning meetings, activities, posters, and surveys to ensure everyone is represented.
But don't do it for appearance purposes only. Make sure your organization has truly embraced diversity.
- Racial jokes aren't funny. Don't laugh. Interrupt and ask the person to stop telling the joke.
- Do not tolerate prejudiced talk or racist action. Intervene and tell those involved that their behavior is unacceptable.
- Make a list of injustices and commit to fighting them.
- Start looking at each individual as an equal and as an individual.
- Ask people about their preferences when describing their ethnicity. For example, some people prefer Latino to Hispanic or Black to African American.
- Organize brown bag luncheons to discuss news about racism and to feature speakers to address racial justice topics. Then move beyond discussion to action.
- Make an ethnic dish and invite someone who has never tried it to dinner. Use it to open a dialogue to explore other cultures.
- Write letters to newspapers, magazines, and TV sponsors about public statements and actions that demean people.
- Set an example for your family and friends by showing an unbiased respect and acceptance of others.
- Attend diversity and anti-racism workshops to arm yourself with the knowledge and confidence necessary to fight racism at all levels: individual, institutional and systemic. Workshops are offered through the YWCA and classes are often available through colleges and other social justice organizations.
- Be proud of and share your heritage so others can learn about you. Find others who are taking active steps to eliminate racism and join them.

10 easy things you can do for racial justice

1. Don't laugh at racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic and other stereotypical jokes or assumptions.

By laughing, you're acknowledging the joke is appropriate and encouraging more inappropriate comments. You can interrupt without being rude. Don't let your silence speak for you. Simply say, "I don't find that funny," or "I don't appreciate jokes like that."

2. Make an effort to get to know people different than you.

Look for things in common with other people and celebrate the differences. We can learn from and appreciate something about everyone.

3. Learn about other people and their culture.

By learning about other people, your life will be greatly enriched and your appreciation for your own culture will deepen.

4. Think before you speak.

Words can hurt, whether you mean them to or not. When describing a person, think if mentioning their race is important to the story. Do you refer to everyone from South or Central America as Mexican? If you don't know someone's country of origin, don't assume. Some people prefer Black, while others like African-American. Some prefer Latino/a, others like Hispanic. If you're unsure which to use, ask. It's important to use the correct language.

5. Be a role model.

Be vocal in opposing discriminatory views and practices, especially with friends and family who respect your opinion. Don't criticize, but help educate others about issues and about your own experiences.

6. Don't make assumptions.

Stereotypes hurt everyone. Examine what your prejudices are and make adjustments to look at everyone as an individual.

7. Explore the unfamiliar.

Attend an organization meeting, religious service or travel to a new region where you are in the minority. For example, if you are Christian attend a Jewish service at a synagogue. If you attend an all white suburban school visit an inner-city multi-cultural school. This first-hand experience can be enlightening and give you perspective.

8. Work on projects with members of groups different from your own.

Working as an equal alongside others from different groups on a common project is one of the best ways to undo prejudice and increase familiarity with others.

9. Be a proactive parent.

Expose your children to diversity at a young age. Read stories that explain the point of view of other groups. Discuss TV shows, movies or books that present stereotypes. Children can benefit from knowing other children from different groups at very early ages, before prejudices and biases are formed.

10. Support anti-prejudice and anti-racist organizations.

Whether your efforts are in volunteering, financial donation or being an advocate,

working with other groups working toward the same goal can be beneficial to you and the community. You'll meet great people and find real support for your efforts. By getting involved, your voice can make a big difference at the local level. Donate your time to the YWCA by becoming a volunteer.

YWCA Racial Justice Historic Firsts

1858	First women's organization forms: "Ladies Christian Association": New York City
1889	First African-American YWCA branch: Dayton, OH
1890	First YWCA for American Indian young women: Chilocco, OK
1891	First public cafeteria: YWCA, Kansas City
1894	USA joins Great Britain, Sweden, and Norway to found World YWCA: YWCA extends to India and China, and the first American Secretary (director) to work abroad arrives in India
1898	Seven African-American Student Association affiliates formed
1909	First Secretary (director) works with African-American colleges; in under a year such student YW's double
1911	Bilingual instruction featured in new YWCA Internal Institute for immigrant families
1913	Eva Bowles appointed first African-American Secretary to work with local YW Associations
1915	First interracial conference in the US South: Louisville
1916	First English –as-a second-language classes: New York, NY
1918	Seventeen YWCA run hostess houses operate as recreation and service center for segregated Negro troops
1924	First African-American woman elected to YWCA National Board
1932	Local YWCAs urged by Convention action "to foster right public opinion which shall be effective against the menace of lynching and mob violence in every form"
1933	YWCA national Board sends Board member to Decatur, AL to assess administration of justice in the Scottsboro case
1934	YWCAs are urged by Convention to encourage/support federal policies of interracial cooperation rather than segregation, and efforts to protect Negroes' exercise of basic civil rights
1936	First co-ed intercollegiate, interracial student conference held in the South: Shaw University, Raleigh, NC
1938	Students at YWCA Convention call for investigation of segregation and discrimination in YW and community life

1942	YWCA extends services to Japanese-American women and girls incarcerated in World War II Relocation Centers
1946	Convention adopts Interracial Charter: commits YWCA to work for end to racial injustice and full integration of black women in the “mainstream of Association life
1955	Convention commits local YWs and National Board to review progress toward inclusiveness of all women and decide on “concrete forward steps” to be taken by 1958 Convention YWCA national Student Assembly votes to persuade their college administrations to outlaw fraternities and sororities that discriminate along racial lines
1960	Atlanta YWCA cafeteria opens to blacks, becoming the city’s first segregated public dining facility National Board reaffirms support of non-violent civil rights movement and of Student YWCA members involved in sit-ins
1965	YWCA sets up Office of Racial Justice Student YWCA votes to oppose apartheid in South Africa and urges National Board to investigate YWCA investments
1967	Convention adopts constitutional amendment disaffiliating and YW not “fully integrated in policy and practice”
1970	Convention adopts “One Imperative:” To eliminate racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary (see The One Imperative: An Historical Perspective)
1974	YWCA sponsors Conference para Mujeres Puertorriqueñas Study begun to interpret dimensions of internal racism
1974	YWCA sponsors Conferencie para Mujeres Puertorriqueñas Study begun to interpret dimensions of international racism
1979	Convention approves key programs for the ‘80’s: multicultural concerns, affirmative action, and societal conditions affecting women and Third World persons
1980	YW continues working for Voting Rights Act, and preservation of federal, state, and local affirmative action programs
1983	YWCA USA celebrates 125 anniversary
1990	Key civil rights leaders, public officials, and university and colleges representatives develop blueprint for racial justice training, at YWCA USA Racial Justice Convocation

1992	YWCA organizes first National Day of Commitment to Eliminate Racism, responding to Rodney King beating/Los Angeles riots: the kick-off is a Washington DC press conference; YWCAs nationwide take part
1994	YWCA USA initiates a partnership with Study Circles on Racism to engage communities where YWCA associations are located in a dialogue on race relations
1995	YWCA launched the YWCA Week Without Violence, an annual weeklong campaign where one day focuses on alternatives to hate and race-related violence
1997	YWCA establishes its Race Against Racism to emphasize the importance for all Americans to work to improve race relations
1998	A partnership with President Clinton identified the YWCA as a leader in effectively addressing race relations. To commemorate the YWCA National Day of Commitment to Eliminate Racism and Erase the Hate, President Clinton issues a "Call to Action" to the nation's Governors to proclaim a Statewide Day of Dialogue in his or her state and to partner with local YWCAs to implement dialogues on race relations and reconciliation in their communities
2001	<i>Steps to Absolute Change</i> was adopted. The YWCA shifted from a top down to a bottom up grassroots organization. Local associations joined regions and elected their regional representatives to the National Coordinating Board. They also adopted a focus on Hallmark Programs – the Economic Empowerment of Women and Racial Justice, set in place the goal for a revitalized brand identity and put a renewed emphasis on advocacy, developing leaders under 30 and enhancing connections with the World YWCA.
2006	Igniting the Collective Power of the YWCA to Eliminate Racism -- moving the conversation to the next level, the YWCA USA's Summit on Eliminating Racism is held in Birmingham, Alabama, bringing together associations from across the country to explore YWCA best practices and create a plan for full equality for all.
2007	The National Coordinating Board Hallmark Committee chose four racial justice and three economic empowerment programs to serve as examples of how local associations can meet the YWCA's national Hallmark standards for programming. The models were chosen because of their proven effectiveness and their detectable ease for being implemented by other YWCAs across the country.

Diversity vs. White Privilege

An Interview with Christine Sleeter

The following is condensed from an interview with Christine Sleeter, a professor at California State University - Monterey Bay and co-editor of Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference. Sleeter was interviewed by Barbara Miner and Bob Peterson of Rethinking Schools. She explains why multiculturalism, at its core, is a struggle against racism, and must go beyond an appreciation of diversity.

Q: You stress the importance of multicultural education as a struggle against white racism, rather than multiculturalism as a way to appreciate diversity. Why?

Both historically and in contemporary society, the relationships between racial and ethnic groups in this country are framed within a context of unequal power. People of European descent generally assume the power to claim the land, claim the resources, and claim the language. They even claim the right to frame the culture and identity of who we are as Americans. That has been the case ever since Columbus landed on the North American continent.

Generally, people of European de-scent still claim white privileges. This is particularly true of wealthy people of European descent. I know a lot of poor people who, while they reap the benefits of looking white, are certainly disenfranchised in many ways.

I keep going back to the fact that multicultural education came out of the civil rights movement. It wasn't just about, "Let me get to know something about your food and I'll share some of my food." The primary issue was one of access to a quality education. If we're not dealing with questions of why access is continually important, and if we're not dealing with issues like why we have so much poverty amid so much wealth, we're not dealing with the core issues of multiculturalism.

I know it may sound trite, but the central issue remains one of justice.

Q. You talk a lot about white privilege. Why do you use that term and how do you explain it to white teachers?

If I do well at something, nobody is going to say, "You're a credit to your race." Saying that presumes that the race that the person is a member of ordinarily doesn't do very well.

Because I am white, nobody says that about me. Yet such statements frequently surround kids of color. People make assumptions about their intellectual ability, about their family support, simply on the basis of their skin color.

That's what I mean by reaping privileges of white racism, just on a personal level. At a more institutional level, I sometimes use this example.

My grandfather was a painter and wallpaper hanger who did fairly well in his life by buying property, renovating it, and then selling it. I grew up with the family story that he only had a second-grade education and look how well he did. Yet he was buying property at a time in which property ownership was much easier for white people. As a part of New Deal legislation, Franklin Delano Roosevelt made a deal with southern Senators that the money for low-cost federal subsidized housing loans would be made available to white families and not to families of color, because the southern senators

wanted to keep African Americans working as sharecroppers.

Part of that New Deal legislation was specifically crafted so that people like my grandfather could buy property. I have inherited then, the benefits of that piece of systemic, historic white racism. Even today, I can walk into a real estate office and will more likely be shown places in "better" neighborhoods. I am also more likely to be given a better mortgage deal.

Those are examples of how white racism keeps reaping me benefits. Sometimes I am aware of it and sometimes I am not.

Q. A lot of white people resist using terms such as white racism, white supremacy, white privilege. How do you break through that defensiveness where they might argue, "I am where I am because I worked hard, not because I am white."

One tactic is to look at family stories and situate those stories in a historical context. Let's use my grandfather as an example again. My grandfather worked very hard and I can't say that he didn't. But I can't just individualize his success. I have to look at it in the historical context of who had access to what. This allows me to say that yes, my grandfather worked hard, but in a situation in which the doors were closed to people who may have worked equally hard but who were not white.

Q. A lot of teachers might respond, "That was 80 years ago. Today, we're in a color-blind society and it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of race. How can you say white privilege still exists?"

Often, I have my students go out and do mini-investigations in the community. Here's an exercise that helps. One of the investigations involves students pairing up - one white student and one student of color. Sometimes they've looked at places to rent and one will go in and then the other and they later compare notes. I have a colleague who's done a similar exercise with the students applying for the same job. Sometimes my students will go shopping together - that seems to be a popular one - and they will compare their treatment by store clerks. With that one, inevitably they come back with biased differential treatment.

After these investigations, the students will try to interpret what happened. Students of color aren't surprised by the differing treatment, but the white students tend to be surprised. And some will say, "Well, that was just that store clerk, who was having a bad day."

If the white students are allowed to think of the differing treatment only in terms of one particular instance, they can still minimize and individualize the phenomenon. But in classes where I have been teaching about institutional racism, I'll have groups of students come in and report what they've found. If eight of 10 students report incidents of racism, it becomes much harder to say that racism doesn't happen today. And when they report that data in conjunction with information I bring to class - statistical data about racism and home mortgages, and racism in educational tracking, and racism in racial profiling by police - it makes a powerful statement.

Q. Multicultural education is more than a self-help movement for racist whites. What does this have to do with schools and multicultural education?

Teachers will often frame multicultural education in terms of merely teaching about cultural differences. This is a sort of a stereotypical way that often happens. I remember talking with a kindergarten teacher who had this lesson around Thanksgiving about the Pilgrims and the Indians sitting down together at the first Thanksgiving. She wanted to use that as a tool for teaching about the cultures of indigenous people.

"But that isn't the story," I said. "From the perspective of indigenous people, the real story has been one of genocide and of taking land away. It's important for kids to understand that story. From the perspective of indigenous people today, what's important is reclaiming land, reclaiming sovereignty, rebuilding economies, reclaiming and rebuilding cultures that have been devastated. If kids today really want to understand relationships between whites and indigenous peoples, we need to understand that within an accurate historical context."

She responded, "Kids are too young for that." I disagree. I've seen teachers of young children teach a much more accurate version of history. I don't think kids are too young if you frame matters properly and in a way they can understand.

For example, recently I watched a combination fourth-fifth grade teacher teach a lesson about discrimination as part of a unit on immigration. She told the students that schools used to let only boys play sports, and asked the students if they thought that was fair. Of course the students said it wasn't and some of them giggled at what a silly idea that was.

Then she applied the same idea to the kind of discrimination that immigrants experienced historically. One of the ideas she taught was discrimination Asian immigrants experienced coming through Angel Island. Once students got the idea of what discrimination is, she then tried to help them understand that not everyone experienced the same discrimination all the time. She told me that helping students understand nuances was difficult, as they tended to want to apply an idea uniformly to everyone, once they grasped it.

Q. You have written about the difference between psychological explanations of racism that focus on individual prejudice, and institutional racism that is manifested in social, economic, and political structures. Why is it important to move toward an understanding of institutional racism?

Let's look at a particular school issue such as tracking. As a teacher, if I am individualizing racism then I am going to be figuring out how to make myself a less prejudiced, more accepting person. I think it's very good for people to do that kind of work. But if that's the only thing, it can lead to a point where the person is saying, "Now I'm a good white. I've expunged myself of racism and I am accepting of all people."

But you can be a "good white" and still be in a school in which kids are being rank-ordered based on estimates of their learning ability and where lower tracks are predominantly kids of color and/or low income kids. So the tracking system becomes an example of institutional racism, a way of sorting kids on the basis of both race and social class. It's essential that multiculturalism address these institutional inequities.

Q. What if a teacher says, "I'm not sorting kids on the basis of race. I hate to say it, but some kids work harder and have more support at home."

If you go into classrooms that are taught at the different track levels, very often you will see qualitatively different kinds of instruction, and that tends to perpetuate tracking. I have seen schools which have eliminated the bottom track and the teachers have said,

"My gosh, when you start expecting more out of the kids, the kids tend to rise to the level of expectation." Let me give you a classic example.

In the city of Salinas, there were some eighth grade kids a couple of years ago who were not promoted to high school because they weren't achieving. The presumption was that they weren't ready to survive academically in high school.

These kids were aware that the system doesn't do a very good job of keeping track of where kids go, so they enrolled in the high school anyway. They cut back on some of the behavior that caused them to be noticed in the first place and kind of blended in. Halfway through the school year, some of their previous eighth grade teachers asked, "Hey what happened to these kids, they're not still in the eighth grade." And they discovered them in the high school, doing fine academically. The kids had the capability to learn well and they knew that if they went on to a more challenging environment that they would do OK.

Oftentimes, we hold kids back by not expecting much out of them. I say that partly from having been a learning disabilities teacher in Seattle. I was trained to focus on what the kids couldn't do, rather than on what the kids could do. As I realized that the kids had a whole lot of capabilities that I wasn't aware of, my expectations went up markedly. My approach changed from trying to remediate what they didn't have to teaching to what they could do, which was actually quite considerable.

From that I started questioning the expectations we have for kids and how we teach to those expectations. The tracking system is built on presumptions about kids from low-income backgrounds and kids of color, that their parents don't care, that they have language deficits, that nobody is around to push them with their homework, that they lack a lot of those things. Then we build teaching around that presumption.

Q. Some white teachers say they are sensitive to students of color because they adopt a color-blind approach. They'll say, "I don't deal with this kid as a Black kid, I see a kid. I treat everyone equally." How would you respond?

In a color-blind approach, there is a whole lot about a student that you are not seeing. For example, if you take a kid who is of Mexican descent and you say, "I don't see a Mexican kid I just see a kid." you are preventing yourself from knowing something about that student's culture and community - and an important part of the student. Do you know much about where the kid's family came from? Do you know much about Mexican holidays and Mexican festivals that the kid may be participating in? Do you know much about church traditions or family celebrations that the kid is a part of? Do you know much about Mexican-American literature and stories that the kid is learning at home? If a teacher is insisting on being color blind, then the teacher is putting herself in a position of saying, "I don't know about the kid's background, I don't believe that's really important, and I'm not going to learn about it."

Q. You have argued that one can educate white teachers to death but that in the long run it's more important to increase the number of teachers of color so that schools do not remain institutions dominated by white people. Why?

I argue this on the basis of several different things. First, if you look at research on who are the best teachers of kids of color, generally they have come from the kids' communities. The study that shows this extremely well is Gloria Ladson-Billings work, *The Dream-keepers: On Successful Teachers of African-American Kids*. That's one of my arguments.

The second piece of my argument involves my work as a teacher/educator over the last 15 years, of trying to prepare predominantly white groups of students to teach in culturally diverse schools. Even though I think there is a lot that can be done to educate white teachers, when I see where they start and where they finish by the end of their teacher training, most end up with a superficial understanding of the issues - unless they go into settings where people are continuing to extensively work with them. I do not want to populate urban schools with people who are coming in with superficial understandings of multicultural education and of progressive education.

The third thing I draw on is my experience working in multiracial groups of adults. At California State University - Monterey Bay, where I teach, half the faculty are faculty of color. The discussions we have, the issues that are brought to the table, the connections to the community, the breadth of wisdom that comes into the discussions - these are all qualitatively different than when I have worked with predominantly white groups of educators.

Q. You deal mostly with teacher education, where would-be teachers tend to have at least some support for multiculturalism. Do you have any advice for a classroom teacher concerned about anti-racist education but who knows they can't do all this by themselves - and may feel isolated in their school or district?

I tell people to join a network or organization in which there are people who will give them support. Groups like the National Coalition of Education Activists quickly come to mind. I also tell people to subscribe to Rethinking Schools so they won't feel like they're out there by themselves, and I give them the "Teaching for Change" catalog from the Network of Educators on the Americas. I encourage them to join groups such as the National Association for Bilingual Education or the National Association for Multicultural Education. You need to also look around for local grassroots organizations, or local chapters of national groups. Feeling like you have to take on these issues all by yourself can be self defeating.

Q. Some people argue that multicultural education is being undermined by standardized testing, which rewards superficial knowledge about conventional aspects of the curriculum. On the other hand, some community groups, particularly in communities of color, argue that we need much more accountability because obviously the schools have underserved their children. How might people committed to multicultural curriculum and academic equity balance those two perspectives?

That's a very important question. I don't advocate just simply throwing out testing. Testing that's used to guide instruction is extremely important. We need to monitor how kids are doing because kids of color and low-income white kids have been under schooled historically. So I believe in testing to improve instruction.

But I don't believe in testing to rank-order kids and schools, and to give some schools a lot of money while other schools get less. With the extreme emphasis now on high-stakes testing, so much is getting lost in the process. Teachers are telling me that due to the amount of testing, science is going by the wayside, social studies is going by the wayside - so there's a certain amount of devastation that's being done even to the traditional curriculum.

We're also defining what kids learn in ways that leave out important forms of knowledge. Just take the question of reading. In California, it's the English reading score that counts, even for kids whose first language is Spanish or any other language except English.

They're not even thinking in terms of a child's reading ability, but only in terms of their ability to read in English. It's those kinds of issues that get lost in some of the discussion about raising test scores.

Q. In many urban areas, there is a lack of concern with segregation. How might that affect multicultural education, and what might be some strategies for moving forward?

School segregation is clearly linked to housing segregation. As long as housing segregation isn't actively on the agenda and we're only talking about school segregation, I don't know where you go with that. Back in the 1960s, we were addressing housing segregation. I don't hear much about that now.

There is nothing inherent in a predominately Black or predominately Latino school that makes it a bad school. The issue is access to resources. And that's clearly what is happening when you look at the resources gap between urban and suburban schools.

Winter 2000 / 2001

It's Good to Talk About Racism

An excerpt from Uprooting Racism, by Paul Kivel.

“Racism is an everyday influence in our lives. It has great power partly because we don’t talk about it. Talking about racism lessens its power and breaks the awful, uncomfortable silence we live within. Talking about it makes it less scary.

Talking about racism is an opportunity to learn about people of color and to reclaim our lives and true histories. We can ask questions, learn, and grow in exciting ways that have been denied us.

Racism is a gross injustice that kills people of color, damages democracy, and is linked to many of our social problems. Talking about it helps make our society safer for people of color and safe for us as well. Talking about racism keeps us from passing it on to our children. Talking about racism allows us to do something about it. Because it seems scary or confusing to talk about racism, we can forget that there are lots of good sound reasons for doing so. It is a useful group exercise to brainstorm the reasons it is good to talk about racism.

We actually all talk about race all the time, but we do it in code. Much of our discussions about economics, military issues, neighborhood affairs, public safety and welfare, education, sports and movies are about race. Some of the code words we use are “underclass”, “welfare mothers”, “inner city”, “illegal aliens”, “terrorist”, “politically correct”, “invasion” and “model minority”. These code words allow white people to speak about race or about people of color, whether in the United States or abroad, without having to admit to doing so. We don’t have to risk being accused of racism; we don’t have to worry about being accountable for what we say. We can count on a mutual (white) understanding of the implications of the words without having to specify that this comment is about race. In order to be allies of people of color, we need to break the code of silence and subterfuge between white people in our talk about racism. Dealing with racism is not just talking about it, but talking about it openly, intentionally with the goal of ending it. It calls us to demystify and analyze our code interactions.”