



KINDNESS AND RACIAL JUSTICE

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eliminating racism
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Kindness and Racial Justice: How Are They Connected?

Recent events across our country can serve to remind us that we are not living in a “post-racial society,” as some would like to believe. Now more than ever, we must all take consistent action to dismantle the ongoing inequalities that exist. Consider the following:

- ✿ Though African Americans and Hispanics make up approximately 32% of the U.S. population, they comprised 56% of all incarcerated people in 2015.
- ✿ The Hispanic population has a poverty rate of 23.2%, about 9% higher than the overall U.S. rate.
- ✿ African Americans now constitute almost 1/2 of the 2.3 million prison/jail population; they are incarcerated at a rate nearly 6 times that of Whites.
- ✿ African-American women were incarcerated at a rate almost 3 times that of White women.
- ✿ Native American women are 3.5 times more likely to raped or sexually assaulted than women of other races.
 - ✿ All races: 2 assaults per 1,000. Native Americans: 7 assaults per 1,000.
- ✿ Over 80% of violence experienced by Native Americans is committed by persons not of the same race ... this is substantially higher than for Whites or Blacks.
- ✿ About 6 in 10 Americans say the country needs to continue making changes to assure that Blacks have equal rights with Whites.
- ✿ According to a study by the U.S. Department of Education, in 2012 Black girls were 6 times as likely to be suspended as their White counterparts.
- ✿ The Alliance for Excellent Education Report shows that a single ninth-grade suspension doubles the risk that a student will drop out of high school.

How Kindness Can Help Us Take Care of Ourselves As Advocates for Racial Justice

Conversations around race and racism are not always easy. Being kind to yourself and taking time to center yourself in your breath can go a long way toward not being triggered and reacting from a place of fear, rather responding from a place of growth and understanding. Before engaging in difficult conversations, take a moment and take 3-4 deep belly breaths. Then, take a moment to express internal gratitude to yourself. When you decide to engage in these conversations, keep these ideas in mind:

- ✿ **Breathe** - Ground yourself. If it is helpful, think to yourself about this person’s hurtful remark, and where they might be coming from.
- ✿ **Name the behavior** - Call out the remark, not the person. Naming a comment as racist is difficult; it counters our social conditioning to fit in and to please. Instead, try this: “Because of racism/sexism/homophobia, people often think ...”
- ✿ **Name how the behavior makes you feel OR describe the impact of the behavior** - It helps the relationship and the interaction to name your feelings. Talk about the assumptions that underlie the comment, and why the comment is racist.



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- ✿ **Give a Direction** - Ask for the person to reconsider their comment, to avoid making such comments in the future, etc.
- ✿ **Stay** - Depending on the nature of your relationship (is the person a close friend, or someone you've just met?), be willing to stay in the conversation, keep engaging in the email conversation, or pursue the conversation later.

Developing Awareness Around Kindness and Racial Justice

In order to combat racism and bias to create a more inclusive community, we must push ourselves to learn new ideas and thought processes different from our own.

- ✿ We can never stop learning. Read and seek out thinkers, writers, and artists who are different from you.
- ✿ Consider what media you are listening to and learning from—acknowledge bias.
- ✿ We build community by building relationships of trust, compassion, and care.
- ✿ Show up for folks who don't look like you.

Kindness and Racial Justice Activities

These activities can be added to your repertoire to help ease yourself, your colleagues, and your students down the path to greater understanding and empathy around race and discussions of racism. The YWCA is here to help! Call us (520-884-7810) for advice or to set up a workshop.

Table Conversation - First memory of race: What is your first memory of race? This activity is designed as a table conversation, which invites participation from all members of the group.

Tips on how to facilitate:

- ✿ Assign one facilitator to each group
- ✿ Set the “ground rules” of the discussion, such as:

One person talks at a time

Mutual respect for all participants.

Conversational voices only

Use “I” statements

- ✿ If no one answers ... be ready to “plant a seed” with your own thoughts and/or experiences.

Remind your participants that this is an open place for discussion and to be respectful to one another.

Across the Line for Kids: Little Flower Yoga has an impactful activity that teachers can do with their students at <http://littlefloweryoga.com/blog/crossing-the-line-a-connecting-activity>. From elementary through high school, this activity encourages students to acknowledge and validate the ways they are alike, while also building a positive and inclusive community in your class, group, or club.

Teaching Tolerance has many online resources to support classroom lessons, teaching strategies, and professional development with colleagues. Utilize the skill building activities to bring ideas and concepts of inclusion into your classroom through <https://www.tolerance.org>.



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Want to Know More About Kindness and Racial Justice?

Creating spaces in which we can talk about racial justice requires kindness, vulnerability, and a willingness to show up and participate. Resources to support your efforts include:

- ✿ Calling In-Calling Out - <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in/>
- ✿ 10 Things Everyone Should Know About Race - <http://www.newsreel.org/guides/race/10things.htm>
- ✿ YWCA Book Club Race to Justice list (*Discussion questions available contact: lhernandez@ywcatucson.org*)
 - Michelle Alexander: *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press)
 - James Baldwin: *The Fire Next Time* (Vintage)
 - Ta-Nehisi Coates: *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel & Grau)
 - Jesmyn Ward: *The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks About Race* (Scribner)
 - Audre Lorde: *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (The Crossing Press)
 - Carol Anderson: *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (Bloomsbury USA)
 - Junot Diaz: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Riverhead Books)
 - Jeff Chang: *We Gon' Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation* (Picador)
 - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Americanah* (Anchor)
 - J.D. Vance: *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (Harper)
 - Ana Castillo: *Black Dove: Mamá, Mi'jo, and Me* (The Feminist Press at CUNY)
 - Walidah Imarisha and Adrienne Maree Brown: *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* (AK Press)
 - Angela Y. Davis: *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Haymarket Books)