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Spring 2021

## Not Racist Is Not Enough: Actionable Antiracism for White People

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### Recommended Citation

Shields, Cora M., "Not Racist Is Not Enough: Actionable Antiracism for White People" (2021). *WWU Honors Program Senior Projects*. 492.

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# *Not Racist Is Not Enough: Actionable Antiracism for White People*

A guidebook by Cora M. Shields  
Project advised by Brett Russell Coleman, PhD



[Author's note (AN): This presentation was originally given on June 8, 2021, at 11AM, over Zoom. I decided to upload a copy of my presentation instead of a copy of my guidebook because, at the time of submission, the guidebook was still a work in progress and had incomplete information on the topics addressed. Additionally, the date of completion was uncertain, and I did not know if sharing a draft or a copy of the guidebook would interfere with future publishing/copyright capabilities. For these reasons, I believe the presentation will be more useful for those accessing the CEDAR archives. If you would like to know where the project is now, see contact information on slide 27, "Moving forward."]

[AN: The raised fist clipart used at the bottom of this presentation was created by Brandi Lyon Photography, and can be found at <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-vector/black-lives-matter-power-pride-fists-1754878406>.]

## About the author

- I am a White, queer, mostly able-bodied woman from a lower middle class background
- College-educated; B.A. in Human Services and Honors Interdisciplinary Studies + other minors



First, I want to tell you all a little bit about myself, because when dealing with issues of social justice or topics that might be sensitive for some audience members, a writer's positionality--their background and where they're coming from--becomes really important.

I am a White, queer, mostly able-bodied woman from a lower middle class background. I say "mostly able-bodied" because I am severely near-sighted and struggle with various minor auto-immune issues and seasonal depression, which all impact my ability to function in society on a day-to-day basis. However, with a few small aids (e.g., glasses), I am not impaired by these conditions. As a result, although I'm not 100% able-bodied, I'm far from disabled. Additionally, I am college-educated; I will be graduating this Saturday with a B.A. in Human Services, which is similar to social work, and minors in Honors Interdisciplinary Studies, Psychology, and Spanish.

## About the project

- Motivated by my own antiracist journey
- Goals and intentions
- Title inspiration



Next, a little bit more about the project. Throughout the past couple of quarters, I've been working on a guidebook titled *Not Racist Is Not Enough: Actionable Antiracism for White People*. It was **borne out of my own struggles in my antiracism journey** and the recognition that a lot of other White people experience the same struggles and roadblocks I had been dealing with. Human Services is a social justice and service oriented major, so over the course of my education here, I've learned a lot about race and racism in the U.S. and how racism has harmed and continues to harm BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and their communities. But I was frustrated and exhausted by that education too--so much of it felt repetitive, like here's one way that White People have screwed over BIPOC and here's another and here's another, and what little there was about what we, as students, could do to help make things better was centered on what we could do once we were practicing Human Services Professionals. I wanted to do something, but I kept running into the wall of **"But what can I do about it?"**

I shared this concern with one of my professors at the time, who would later become my Capstone advisor, and he helped me realize that this was a really common thing for a lot of White folks learning about antiracism, and encouraged me to put that frustration to use and figure out the answer to my own question. And eventually, I landed on the idea of creating a guidebook to help other White folks through the process and give them a list of concrete things they could do to make a difference. **My big three goals for the guidebook** are to interrupt readers' ability to use "But what can I do about it?" as an excuse; to help demystify the topics of race, racism, and antiracism because these aren't things we White

folks are really taught about growing up; and to get more White folks involved, because as the people who hold privilege and have greater access to sociopolitical and economic power, we are an important part of the fight against racism.

**The title of this book** comes from a quote by Angela Y. Davis, a Black political activist, scholar, and author, on antiracism: “In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist; we must be anti-racist.” There’s this narrative among white folks that we can just kinda . . . opt out of racism. That we can ignore it, because racism isn’t a real issue anymore or if it is it’s not our problem, and just being “not racist” is good enough. In truth, it makes us bystanders, who either see that something is wrong with our nation and refuse to do something about it, or else who refuse to see there’s a problem in the first place. It makes us complicit. And I don’t know about you, but **as a White person, I’m not okay with that.** I don’t want to be part of that. And **the only way to not be part of the whole racist machine is to join BIPOC in *fighting* it.** In other words, **the only way to truly not be racist is to be *antiracist.***

## *The research and writing process*

- Fall quarter solidifying ideas
  - Capstone prep course
  - People with White Privilege discussion group
- Winter quarter research
- Spring quarter writing
  - Five chapters: Antiracism 101, The Origins of Race and Racism, Myths and Misconceptions, Intersectionality and Global Issues, and Actionable Antiracism
  - COVID time and underestimation of verbosity



This project has been, and continues to be, a labor of love. In **Fall quarter**, I started brainstorming and figuring out what shape I wanted my Capstone to take and who would be the best advisor during the Capstone Prep course with Dr. Tristan Goldman. I also joined Dr. Hope Corbin's People with White Privilege discussion group, where we worked through Layla F. Saad's *Me and White Supremacy* together over the course of the whole school year, which was a really eye-opening and wonderful experience.

**Winter quarter** was the research phase, which involved a lot of reading and some note taking, and finally, **this Spring**, I began the process of actually sitting down to write it. I divided the work into five chapters: **Antiracism 101, The Origins of Race and Racism, Myths and Misconceptions, Intersectionality and Global Issues, and Actionable Antiracism**. My original intent was to finish writing the guidebook completely by the time of my presentation, but unfortunately, the writing process has taken a while longer than anticipated for two main reasons. Time has been passing by super quickly since the pandemic started, and I've also been busy with work and an internship, so I was having a hard time sticking to any sort of writing schedule. Moreover, when I did get to writing, I consistently found that I had a whole lot more to say on each subject than I thought I did when I made my outline.

So I don't quite have a finished product yet, but I would like to walk you all through the material for each chapter in the hopes that these summaries will be useful for your personal antiracism journeys too.

# *Chapter one: Antiracism 101*



So without further ado, we'll start with Chapter one: Antiracism 101.

## What is antiracism?

**Antiracism:** Activism focused on dismantling racism within the institutions, structures, and systems that make up society to make them more equitable for all people, regardless of race and ethnicity.

### Why is antiracism necessary?

- Moving goalposts and the myth of linear progress
  - The 13th Amendment loophole: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted**, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."
- Racism is *deeply embedded* in our society



**So what is antiracism anyway?** In the guidebook, I define it as “Activism focused on dismantling racism within the institutions, structures, and systems that make up society to make them more equitable for all people, regardless of race and ethnicity. In simpler terms, **antiracism is activism that fights racism.**”

**And why is it necessary?** As we talked about a little bit earlier, we have this cultural narrative that, at least in the U.S., we solved racism back in the last century with the Civil Rights Movement. **But racism is still thriving here and abroad**--and part of the reason for that there's unfortunately a lot of people invested in keeping things the way they are because it keeps them in power, and when antiracists make progress in one area, **people in power will often move the goalposts or set things back in another area to compensate.** One crucial example of this is **the 13th Amendment**, which, you may remember from civics classes, banned slavery. . . . Except, there's a loophole. Looking at the text here, slavery is illegal—**“except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.”** In other words, slavery is illegal, unless you're a prisoner. And because prison populations are disproportionately made up of Black and brown folks, this is kinda just a sneaky way to allow the mostly white people in charge of prisons to have Black and brown slaves again. So now the problem isn't the institution of slavery, but the justice system itself, covering everything from policing to court procedures and sentencing to the way prisons are run to laws and prejudices making life harder for those with a criminal record. **The goalposts moved.**

These kinds of loopholes and goalpost moving tactics have been part of America since colonial times. **Racism is *deeply embedded* in our society**, right down to the foundation, which makes it a very difficult problem to tackle that will require a lot of time, effort, and people.



## Why is “not racist” not enough?

**Individual racism:** “The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways.” (NMAAHC)

- Racist soup and cultural osmosis
- Individual racists don't exist in a vacuum

**Systemic racism:** “The overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society.” (NMAAHC)

- Structural racism and institutional racism
- Perpetuated by greed, individual racism, and white apathy/ignorance
- You can't opt out of society



**On the flip side, why is “not racist” not enough?** To put it briefly, it's because **“not racist” isn't really a genuinely achievable position.** Calling yourself “not racist” is kinda like having your cake and eating it too: You get to be on the “right side” by acknowledging that racism is bad, without actually doing any of the work necessary to fight racism--but it doesn't actually work like that. Even if you aren't actively participating in racism, you're still passively participating in it, and the reasons why has to do with the different kinds of racism.

First off is **individual racism**, which the National Museum of African American History and Culture defines as **“The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways.”** This is the kind that a lot of White people tend to think of when they talking about racism, or saying that they “aren't racist.” But the *unconscious* part of that definition is really important: As one of my college professors put it, in the U.S. and other White-majority nations, we live in a sort of **“racist soup,”** if you will. The way we're taught about the world and about history, the way the news and advertisements and entertainment present issues of race and characterize BIPOC—virtually all of it is tainted by the narratives of white superiority, and the omnipresence of those narratives makes them unavoidable. Like it or not, **you've been exposed to a lot of racist ideas, and because of the degree of exposure, some of that has, unavoidably, sunk in.** Even if you consciously believe in the inherent value of all people regardless of race, you likely still harbor unconscious beliefs about the inferiority of non-white folks.

Moreover, individual racists don't exist in a vacuum. We also have to confront the issue of **systemic racism**, which the NMAAHC defines as **"The overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society."** This breaks down into two main types: **Structural racism**, referring to cultural, political, and socioeconomic norms and structures that disadvantage BIPOC, like the racist soup and poverty; and **institutional racism**, referring to the system of policies and practices instituted by governments, schools, workplaces, and other organizations that create and sustain inequitable outcomes for BIPOC compared to White folks. Systemic racism is **kept in place by greed, individual racists, and the apathy and ignorance of white bystanders**. It's everywhere, and because it's *everywhere*, **you can't really opt out of it, even if you want to**.

In summary, "not racist" is not enough for the same reasons that antiracism is necessary: **Racism still exists, it is deeply embedded in our society, and it's killing people.**

## What is white privilege, and do you have it?

"Once I began to recognize how much of my success is a consequence of unfair advantage, I cannot help but begin to seek ways to make amends. This does not mean that I am not smart nor does it mean that I have not worked hard—I have worked very hard in my life to accomplish my goals—but it does mean that I recognize that there are others equally smart who worked equally hard and who have a great deal less to show for it simply because they are not white." ~ Paula Rothenberg

- White privilege
  - Unearned, unasked for, often unwanted, nonetheless possessed
  - Having other marginalized identities ≠ exemption
  - Easier, not *easy*



An important facet of systemic racism is **white privilege**. And I really like this quote from Paula Rothenberg, a white professor and antiracist and feminist activist, on the topic: "Once I began to recognize how much of my success is a consequence of unfair advantage, I cannot help but begin to seek ways to make amends. **This does not mean that I am not smart nor does it mean that I have not worked hard**—I have worked very hard in my life to accomplish my goals—but it does mean that I recognize that **there are others equally smart who worked equally hard and who have a great deal less to show for it simply because they are not white.**"

Just as systemic racism works to unfairly disadvantage BIPOC, it also works to unfairly advantage white people. That unfair advantage is known as **white privilege**. It's an unearned advantage, that most white people today **didn't ask for and don't want**, but it's **something we have nonetheless**. And even if other aspects of our identity, such as our gender or economic status, are marginalized, we're still white, which means **we still have white privilege**.

As Rothenberg's quote highlights, the important thing here is that white privilege *does not mean* your life was easy. It means **your life is easier than it would be for someone exactly like you in every way but race, and the reason it's easier is because you are White.**

## What is white privilege, and do you have it? (cont.)

- Peggy McIntosh - "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"
  - When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
  - I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
  - I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
  - I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
  - I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
  - If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.



In her now famous essay "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Peggy McIntosh lists out some of the ways that life is easier for white people. I won't list them all (you can find the full essay at The National SEED Project's website), but here's a few to get you thinking:

- When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that **people of my color made it what it is.**
- I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
- I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, **without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.**
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, **my race will not work against me.**
- If my day, week, or year is going badly, **I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.**

One of the biggest through-lines of all of these is that **race just isn't something white people are made to think about a lot**--we often walk through the world as if we are raceless, as if race is just something other people have and we're exempt from the whole deal. Not having to think about our race all the time is a huge burden off our shoulders, and just something as simple as that makes it **easier to deal with the problems we do have in our lives.**

# *Chapter two: The Origins of Race and Racism*



Basics covered, we'll move on to Chapter two: The Origins of Race and Racism.

*Race is real because we have made it real.*



The big idea of this section is that **race is not a natural way to divide humans into different groups**--it has no basis in biology. Instead, it's something artificial, that nonetheless has a huge social and political impact on real people's real lives. **It's real, because we've made it real.** In other words, it's a **social construct**.

## What does it mean to say “race” is a social construct?

- The Human Genome Project:
  - 99.9% the same
- In-group vs out-group
- Ancient and medieval people: culture > appearance
- Biological reality vs. sociopolitical reality



So what does that actually mean?

**The Human Genome Project**, a joint effort by privately and publicly funded scientists to catalogue all the genes in human DNA, found that overall, we humans share 99.9% of our DNA with each other. ***Across race lines, we are all 99.9% genetically the same.*** So there’s no way to look at someone’s DNA and tell what race they are based on genetic information alone.

Moreover, **race isn’t even a concept that we’ve always had.** Although humans have always made distinctions between in-groups, the people we think of as us, and out-groups, people we think of as them, **ancient and medieval people made those distinctions based on culture and geography rather than physical appearance.** In other words, they distinguished groups based on *ethnicity* rather than race. It’s important to note that ancient and medieval people *did* notice physical differences, and they also discriminated against out-groups in sometimes violent ways; but people were targeted because of cultural differences, not physical ones.

All this is to say that **race isn’t real biologically or genetically speaking,** and it hasn’t even always been real socially and politically speaking. But looking around at the modern world, it’s hard to deny the widespread effects that race has on individuals, communities, business and law and government and art and virtually all aspects of life. **Race absolutely is real in a sociopolitical sense.** So how did we get here?

## The invention of Blackness

- Ancient and medieval slavery
- Gomes de Zurara's biography of Prince Henry the Navigator
  - Lumped together all sub-Saharan Africans into one inferior Black race
- Rhetoric spread: Portugal → other European Imperial powers → American colonies
- Definition and refinement through legal cases and laws
  - John Punch (1640)



**We start with the invention of Blackness.** This is a really nuanced history, and I'm not going to be able to do it justice during this presentation in the interest of time, but here's some highlights:

Slavery has existed for a *loooooong* time, but in the ancient and medieval world, slaves were usually prisoners of war, in debt to their masters, or the descendents of war prisoners or debtors. And **slaves could be of any ethnicity**; in fact, it was not unusual for ancient Greeks and Romans to have Greek and Roman slaves. This is notably different from chattel slavery, the kind we learn about in school, which was heavily tied to race.

The shift from multiethnic slaves of war and debt to sub-Saharan African slaves bought and sold and treated like livestock begins with a book. In 1453, the king of Portugal hired a man named **Gomes de Zurara** to write a biography of his uncle, Prince Henry the Navigator, who was **"the first major slave trader to exclusively enslave and trade in African people."** [quote Ibram X. Kendi, in *Scene on Radio: Season 2, Seeing White*] In describing the captives Prince Henry took, who represented a wide variety of sub-Saharan ethnicities and varied widely in skin tone and appearance, Zurara lumped them all together into one inferior race that "needed to be saved" from their bestial, lazy, sinful lives. And slavery, which could be used to convert captives to Christianity, was a perfect way to "save" them. By lumping all sub-Saharan Africans into one group like this, **Zurara effectively invented the Black race.**

This rhetoric quickly spread through the upper class in Portugal, and then throughout other European Imperial powers as the exclusive trade of sub-Saharan African slaves



became more common. From there, **it was brought to the American colonies, where it thrived.**

**The institution of slavery and the construct of Blackness were defined and refined over decades of laws and court cases in the American colonies and, eventually, states.** The first such case was that of John Punch, a Black indentured servant who, in 1640, escaped from his master, alongside two other indentured servants who were of European descent. **All three got caught,** and while the other two indentured servants were only sentenced to four additional years of servitude, Punch received perpetual servitude to his master as punishment. This was **the first time a legal distinction had been made between African and European indentured servants, and the first time that perpetual servitude had been codified by law,** although it had been an unofficial practice already.

## *The invention of Whiteness*

- Implicit invention of the superior race
- Multiracial working poor in the colonies and workers' uprisings
- Whiteness as a wedge issue
  - Changing allegiances from class-based to race-based
- Definition and refinement through legal cases and laws
- Intra-racial hierarchies and the "wrong kind of White"



One of the other key pieces of this puzzle is **the invention of Whiteness**.

Whiteness was born, implicitly, at the same time as Blackness, as its direct opposite, because **in order to have an inferior people, you must also have a superior people**, and naturally, that would be the slaveholders. However, whiteness wouldn't really be codified until much later, chiefly in the U.S.

In the early days of the colonies and states, the vast majority of the population were poor workers of a variety of colors and ethnicities, **upon whose labor rich people's wealth depended**. But when there was a problem with working conditions or politics, those workers would band together and rise up, interrupting rich people's ability to keep profiting. So they had to find a good wedge issue to keep workers from banding together so often, and **race became a perfect wedge**.

Around the time of the case of John Punch, rich landowners and their allies in politics began **habitually feeding the poor people who looked like them**—people who would come to be known as White—**small advantages over people of African descent and Native people**. This shifted the allegiance of poor folks of European descent away from poor folks of non-European descent and instead allied them with middle class and wealthy folks of European descent. So **we moved from class-based alliances**, with poor people allied together against the rich, **to race-based ones**, with white people allied against everyone else, and that tendency still holds strong today, nearly 400 years later.

Additionally, in much the same way that Blackness was constructed and tied to slavery through laws and court cases, Whiteness also came to be defined by decades of laws and

court cases and tied to freedom and citizenship. **This linkage was explicit:** The Naturalization Act of 1790 declared that in order to be a citizen of the U.S., you had to be white. This means that **if you wanted to vote, own land, start or own a business, run for office, serve on a jury, sue someone, or receive due process when accused of a crime, you had to be white.**

Nowadays, it's starting to become more common knowledge that **not all white people were treated equally.** The racial hierarchy wasn't--and isn't--cut and dry. Due to a issues like colorism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and anti-Catholicism, certain white ethincities, like Jews, the Irish, Italians, white Hispanics, and Eastern Europeans, have historically been discriminated against by other White folks. But the fact of the matter remains, when you look at the issue of citizenship, it's clear that **even though these groups were the "wrong kind" of white, they were still white.** They could still become citizens and have access to the rights and responsibilities granted by citizenship, which is more than could be said of BIPOC for far too long.

# *Chapter three: Myths and Misconceptions*



Next up, we have Chapter three: Myths and Misconceptions.

## *Why do White people know so little about racism?*

- Epistemologies of ignorance
    - Lack of opportunity to learn about racism
    - Sociopolitically encouraged apathy
    - Desire to maintain a positive *White* self-identity
    - Belief in meritocracy
- } White ignorance and apathy



First, I want to address why these myths and misconceptions exist.

Critical whiteness scholars have developed a theory called **epistemologies of ignorance**, the basic idea of which is that due to a variety of factors, White people routinely deny, ignore, or misperceive the existence of racism in modern society. The major factors for this include that: 1) **we simply aren't taught about racism**, 2) systemic white supremacy **encourages us not to care** about racism, 3) **we want to distance ourselves** from the racism of other white people (including our ancestors) in order to maintain a positive self-identity, and 4) we often like to believe that we live in a meritocracy and that the world is fair, and **the existence of systemic racism challenges that belief**.

## How can language and rhetoric be misleading?

- Colorblindness and race-neutral language
  - Colorblindness ignores the lived experiences of BIPOC
  - Interactions between legislation and existing structures of inequality → Inequitable outcomes for different racial groups
  - Voter ID laws, Funding public schools through income taxes, Criminalization of specific drugs
- Rhetorical spin
  - Whataboutism; News stations focusing on property damage, inconvenience to traffic during BLM protests instead of the injustices being protested



We can also be **tricked by misleading language and rhetoric** into believing false information.

Two of the chief offenders here are **colorblindness** and **race-neutral language**, which, even though they sound like positive things, can actually obscure or cover up systemic racism. While the premise of colorblindness is to treat all people equally, this usually results in **treating everyone as though they're white**, ignoring or dismissing the ways that **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color's lived experiences are shaped by their race**. This makes it incredibly difficult to recognize issues of systemic racism, much less do something about it.

Race-neutral language is primarily problematic in policy-making and legislation, as **policies and laws often interact with existing structures of inequality in ways that lead to inequitable outcomes for different racial groups**. As such, policies and laws that use race-neutral language often fail to adequately address racialized problems, like poverty, and can deepen existing gaps. Sometimes this is accidental, but far too often, it's on purpose. Notable examples of race-neutral language that cause inequitable outcomes for BIPOC include **voter ID laws, the funding of public schools through property taxes, and the way some drugs are criminalized**.

The other heavy hitter here is **rhetorical spin**. Rhetorical spin is a strategy that emphasizes what the speaker wants the audience to focus on, which is certainly useful in arguments, but also has the tendency to **derail conversations about race, racism, and social justice overall**. Notable examples of this include **Whataboutism**, or the practice of avoiding difficult topics or questions by bringing up counter-accusations or unrelated topics; and the way **many news stations focused on property damage or traffic blockages caused during BLM protests instead of the injustices being protested**.

## *How can we avoid getting tricked by misleading information?*

- Critically evaluate sources of information by asking questions
  - Consider the source in context
  - Consider the position
  - Consider their sources



**So how do we avoid getting tricked?** The best way to do this is to **start critically evaluating sources of information** by asking questions about their validity, accuracy, and reliability. In evaluating a source, it's important to:

- **Consider the source in context:** Who / What organization created it? What are their credentials and motivations? When was the source created? What kind of source is it? Is it sponsored content? Whose voices are represented, and **whose are missing**?
- **Consider the position:** What is the creator trying to convey? What are they conveying **unintentionally**? What conclusions do they draw, and how do they arrive at those conclusions? Is there enough support to back them up?
- **Consider their sources:** Where did the information come from? How reliable are their sources? Were there any studies involved, and if so, do they meet the golden standards of research?

## Are all White people racist?

### Yes:

- In a racist society, participation in racism is unavoidable
  - Racist soup and cultural osmosis
- This does not mean you are a bad person

### No:

- White antiracism has existed for as long as White racism
  - Aiding abolitionist, Reconstruction, and Civil Rights movements



Finally, since we spent a fair amount of time here on why myths and misconceptions exist and how to start seeing through it, I'm only going to discuss one of the actual myths and misconceptions that I'll go into in the guidebook, and that's this kind of **cultural narrative that all White people are racist**, or that we were all racist *before* the Civil Rights movement but most of us aren't anymore. And it's kind of a complicated answer, because it depends on how you're looking at **what it means to be racist**. If we're talking in a systemic sense, about White people as a group, then the answer is pretty much **yes**, because of the influence of systemic racism and white privilege. Think back to the slide about why "not racist" is not enough: The **racist soup and cultural osmosis** make it next to impossible for White people in White-dominated, multiracial countries not to hold any racist beliefs or attitudes, consciously or unconsciously. This **doesn't make you a bad person**, but it's okay if it makes you uncomfortable. In fact, it's probably a good thing if it makes you uncomfortable, because you can **turn that discomfort into motivation** to start doing something about it.

Which brings us to the arguments for **no**: If we're talking about White people at an individual level, about individual White persons, there are *so many* counterexamples of White people who were antiracists. **As long as White people being racist have existed, so too have White people engaging in antiracism**. In his book *How to Be Antiracist*, Ibram X. Kendi talks about how racism and antiracism aren't permanent states of being--you're not stuck being either a racist or an antiracist forever; you can change. **Whether you're a racist or not isn't about who you are, but what you do**. There were White people involved in abolitionist efforts, the Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights movements. And there are White people involved in antiracist work today with groups like Black Lives Matter, the Racial Equity Institute, and the Equal Justice Initiative. White antiracism is not some



untrodden path--it's one many of our ancestors have walked before, and **it's a path we can join them on.**

Whatever you choose to do, it's important to keep in mind that even if you aren't actively participating in racism, even if you're actively fighting racism, the unfortunate fact is that, **as a White person, you're still benefiting from white privilege and systemic racism.** Being aware of this in your daily life can help you dismantle the impacts that racism has on your thought processes and interactions with BIPOC, in casual, professional, and activist settings.

# *Chapter four: Intersectionality and Global Issues*



Next, we'll dive into Chapter four: Intersectionality and Global Issues.

## What is intersectionality and why does it matter?

- Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the way that women of color experience a unique form of discrimination and violence that is shaped by both racism and sexism
- Every person is more than their race
- Key areas of intersectionality:
  - Race
  - Gender, sex
  - Socioeconomic status (Class)
  - Ability / Neurodivergence
  - Sexuality
  - Age



The first section of this chapter focuses on Intersectionality, which has become a really important framework for social justice.

The term **intersectionality** was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the way women of color, especially poor women of color, experience discrimination and violence in a unique manner that is **shaped by both racism and sexism**, as well as **neglect by singularly focused activism** like white feminism and androcentric antiracism. Her intersectionality work builds from a civil lawsuit she brought on behalf of a group of Black women against a company that **employed white women and Black men**, but **refused to hire any Black women**. The term has since been expanded to refer to the way **all people with multiple marginalized identities experience discrimination and violence in a manner unique from those who have only one marginalized identity**.

The big idea here is that **everyone is more than their race**. The way we think of ourselves, the way we interact with the world, the way we are affected by the world, are all impacted by each and every aspect of our identity, for better or worse. Some of the key aspects relevant to discussions of intersectionality and social justice are **race, gender and sex, socioeconomic status or class, ability and neurodivergence, sexuality, and age**.

## *How does race impact global issues?*

- Poverty in the Global South
- Neglected tropical diseases
- Differential impacts of climate change
- Health disparities in multiracial, wealthy nations



The other section of this chapter focuses on the way that **race intersects with global issues**. And this is another section where I'm not really going to be able to do the issues justice, because each one is big enough by itself that people can and have written entire papers and books about them, and we don't really have that time. That said, I want to give you all a brief idea of just how broad and globalized the impact of racism and colonialism has been.

The world's **Global South**, or regions in Africa, southern Asian, and Latin America, have often faced **severe levels of poverty** on nationwide scales due to the **legacy of colonialism** and the **continued exploitation of their land, resources, and people by neocolonial powers**.

**Neglected tropical diseases** are diseases endemic to parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, esp. among poor communities in the tropics where access to clean water and safe waste disposal methods is limited. They're called neglected because they're **understudied**, and **research, prevention, and treatment efforts are underfunded**. This neglect primarily occurs because of how medicine and biomedical research are dominated by white capitalists who have little interest in diseases that a) don't usually affect white people, and b) aren't profitable to invest in.

**Climate change has a disproportionately heavy impact on already vulnerable communities**, including countries in the Global South and poor communities of color in certain parts of the Global North. These areas are subject to **more natural disasters** and resulting economic ruin, and because of their existing vulnerability, they're hit harder by those disasters and aren't able to recover as quickly. Additionally, people in these areas often have a harder time following advance warnings to leave the area.

There's also **dramatic health disparities** in wealthy, multiracial nations, **between White folks and BIPOC folks** of similar socioeconomic status, due to a variety of systemic factors,

including BIPOC's increased risk of exposure to substandard living conditions, increased rates of chronic or toxic stress, and decreased access to quality, affordable healthcare.

# *Chapter five: Actionable Antiracism*



On that cheery note, we finally come to Chapter five: Actionable Antiracism.

## What can you do to fight racism as a White person?

1. Self-education: Educate yourself about race and racism; don't rely on BIPOC to teach you
  - o Read, listen, and watch
  - o Do your own research
2. Self-reflection: Internalize what you've learned and relate it back to your own lived experience
  - o Keep a journal
  - o Ancestral investigation
3. Spread the word: Get other White people informed and involved
  - o Share resources
  - o Start or join a racial affinity group (like a book club!)
  - o Have conversations about race with other White people



### So what can *you*, as a White person, do to fight racism?

**1. Self-education:** Educate yourself about race and racism; and don't rely on BIPOC to teach you. **Read, listen, and watch** existing sources of information about these topics, and **do your own research**.

**2. Self-reflection:** Internalize what you've learned and relate it back to your own lived experience. One thing you can do here is **keep a journal** while working on self-education, where you can take notes and record your thought process as you keep learning new things. An activity that I started working on that's been really insightful for me is an **ancestral investigation**. The basic idea here is to **take a look at your family tree** and see what kinds of information you can find. Is all of your family white, or do you also have non-white ancestors? Were some of your ancestors the "wrong kind" of white? When did they come to live where you live now, and how? Were any of your ancestors slave owners or slave traders, or politicians or lawyers or judges involved in passing racist legislation or court rulings? Did any of your ancestors fight in wars against Native peoples, or otherwise benefit from the theft of their land? Did any of your ancestors participate in antiracist activism? **How have their legacies and racist or antiracist actions impacted your family's status or situation today?** Take time to reflect on these questions and what the answers mean to you, as a White person striving to be antiracist.

**3. Spread the word:** Get other White people informed and involved. The easiest way to do this is to **share the resources** you used in your own self-education efforts with other White people. You could also **start or join a racial affinity group**, like the People with White Privilege discussion group/book club I participated in this year, or even just **start having conversations about race with other White people**.

## What can you do to fight racism as a White person? (cont.)

4. Political support: Support the work BIPOC and White Antiracists are already doing
  - Vote!
  - Donate your time and/or money to antiracist causes, such as efforts to get antiracist legislation passed or campaigns to get more BIPOC into political office
  - Contact your government officials
5. Economic support: Put your money where your mouth is
  - Support BIPOC-owned businesses, restaurants
  - Support BIPOC artists
  - Support BIPOC causes
6. Emotional support: Make an effort to be an ally
  - Learn how to listen and elevate BIPOC voices instead of talking over them
  - Offer concrete help when your BIPOC loved ones/peers are affected by race-related crises
  - If you see something, say something



**4. Political support:** Support the work BIPOC and White Antiracists are already doing. The number one thing here is **voting**. It's so crucial to take voting seriously, because it can have a huge impact on the issues that matter to you, and part of that is being an informed voter, which self-education about race and racism can help with. Another great option is to **donate your time and/or money to antiracist causes**, such as efforts to get antiracist legislation passed or campaigns to get more BIPOC into political office. And if you're up to the task, you can **contact your government officials** via phone call, letter, or email. This goes for local, state, and federal officials. First, when doing this, you'll want to **figure out where your officials stand** on issues of race and racism, and on proposed legislation related to issues of race. Then, if you aren't satisfied with the answers you get, *keep contacting them* and don't let up. **Annoy them into improving their positions.**

**5. Economic support:** Put your money where your mouth is. **Support BIPOC-owned businesses and restaurants, support BIPOC artists, and support BIPOC causes.** If you're not sure how to identify them, do some digging. A lot of local newspapers published lists of BIPOC-owned businesses and restaurants following Black Lives Matter rallies last year, and Etsy has a section that highlights BIPOC creators. There's also tons of lists online regarding BIPOC musicians, writers, directors, and other creatives to check out, chain and international businesses with BIPOC leadership, and activist groups fighting for racial justice.

Last but not least, **6. Emotional support:** Make an effort to be an ally. **Learn how to listen and elevate BIPOC voices instead of talking over them. Offer concrete help when your BIPOC loved ones/peers are affected by race-related crises.** What I mean by this is, instead of asking "What can I do to help?" which can sometimes put pressure on someone to come up with the answers, **ask if you can do something specific for them**, like cook and



deliver a meal, listen to them rant, or have a movie night to help distract them. Finally, **if you see something, say something**. Don't stand idly by. If you notice an act of discrimination or violence against a person of color, try to check in with them to see how they're coping with it and if they'd like any support in filing a claim with HR or pressing charges. If a colleague or friend or family member says something racist, let them know it's not cool. And there's **no time limit on doing these** things either. If you realize something was wrong after the fact, or just didn't feel comfortable or like you had the time to bring it up immediately after it happened, you can still check in with someone who was wronged or someone who did something wrong and have a conversation with them about it.

# *Closing thoughts*



Before I end the presentation, I have a few closing thoughts I'd like to share with you all.

## Moving forward

- Finishing the first draft
  - Revisions and beta readers
- Self-publishing options?
- Possible collaboration with Brett's ongoing research
- Giving talks or leading workshops?
- Handouts!
- How to stay in touch if you're interested in following this project
  - Follow me on LinkedIn!
  - Send me an email at [coramshields@outlook.com](mailto:coramshields@outlook.com)



First off, as I mentioned in my intro, **I haven't quite finished the first draft**, but I intend to keep working on it and hopefully finish it by the end of the year. Once the draft is done, I'd like to **recruit some beta readers** to help guide my revision process and help check my work for **accuracy and sensitivity**. Sensitivity is really important to me because there's a lot of really painful and hard-to-digest material in the guidebook, and I want to make sure it's both sensitive to the memories of people wronged by racism and sensitive to the different locations of White readers in their antiracist journeys.

After I'm satisfied with how the guidebook looks and reads, I'd like to **self-publish it**. I haven't done a lot of research on this yet, so I am totally open to any suggestions y'all might have! Additionally, there's some really exciting **potential for collaboration** with my advisor's ongoing research on antiracist education for White folks, and if it's something people are interested in, I would be happy to try **giving talks or leading workshops** in line with my guidebook, or **help people start racial affinity groups**.

I also have a little **reference handout** that gathers some of the useful info from this presentation, like key terms, the information evaluation questions, the list of actionable antiracist activities, and a read/listen/watch list. I can post a link to that in the chat if anyone's interested. [AN: The link is [docs.google.com/document/d/1NrKHvRPFDF1sNrgOK7gZ2WCoyju0yHtu2b9wAxx0DbA/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NrKHvRPFDF1sNrgOK7gZ2WCoyju0yHtu2b9wAxx0DbA/edit?usp=sharing)]

If you're interested in any of that or in following this project, you can **follow me on LinkedIn as Cora Shields** or **send me an email at [coramshields@outlook.com](mailto:coramshields@outlook.com)**. [AN: If viewing this after September 2022, I will be getting married and changing my surname to Harper-Shields, so my LinkedIn profile and email will change to reflect that. Emails will be forwarded to an updated email address.]

"When you commit injustice against people, they get angry, and when they get sufficiently angry, they break things. The solution is not to police the breaking of things; the solution is to stop committing injustice." ~ Dr. Tristan Goldman



Finally, I wanted to share this quote with you all from a discussion I had with Goldman back in the Capstone prep course, as some food for thought: "When you commit injustice against people, they get angry, and when they get sufficiently angry, they break things. **The solution is not to police the breaking of things; the solution is to stop committing injustice.**"

*Thank you so much for  
coming!*



Thank you all so much for your support and for coming to my presentation!

# Questions, comments, or suggestions?



And if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, now is the time to share!

[AN: Sources of information for this presentation include:

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