

AMERICA INDIVISIBLE

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# ALLYSHIP TO BLACK COMMUNITIES

THROUGH EDUCATION AND  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



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FEBURARY 2021

SILENCE  
IS  
COMPLIANCE

# INTRODUCTION

The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, Tony McDade, Elijah McClain, and countless more Black Americans have reignited a national movement for racial justice and social equity. In this moment, many non-Black individuals may be wondering how they can stand in solidarity with their Black friends, family, and neighbors and meaningfully contribute to anti-racist efforts.

**The intention of this toolkit is to provide a starting point for non-Black individuals to understand the importance of allyship and how they can best serve themselves and their communities as allies to the Black community.**

An **ally** is a person who is not a member of a marginalized group but wants to help end the discrimination and violence that group faces, according to Isaac Sabat, Professor of Organizational Psychology. There is no one blueprint for allyship; effective allyship will take various forms for different people. However, one overarching point to remember is that your role as an ally is to try and support an ongoing movement. Being an ally is about listening more than speaking, uplifting the voices of others, and taking responsibility for your own education. We offer this toolkit as a blueprint for how you can begin to educate yourself, interrogate your own biases and privileges, and take action in your communities to help create change.



# EDUCATING YOURSELF

## UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY OF RACISM IN THE US

An important first step towards addressing racism in your community is to learn more about the history of racism in America. This goes beyond simply reading up on the current situation; it requires dedicating time to learning how our country's racism shaped so many of our institutions. This education should be thought of as an ongoing learning process rather than a one-time task. It is important for each of us to take responsibility for our own education rather than relying on Black friends, family, community members, or colleagues to educate us. With the invention of the internet, the information is literally at the palms of our hands, and there is a wealth of resources to help guide this process. Let's begin.

Many Americans grew up learning that President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves and the Civil Rights Movement ended Jim Crow, creating a society where race was no longer an important factor. In reality, that's far from the truth. Racism is still alive today but in a form that wasn't necessarily taught to us in our history classes. At the end of this toolkit, we have included a list of articles, books, and films that we hope can serve as a starting point in a long-term effort to understand the broader context of systemic racism in our society.

## WHAT IS SYSTEMIC RACISM?

Derrick Johnson, President of the NAACP, defines **systemic racism** as "systems and structures that have procedures and processes that disadvantage African Americans." This process of creating societal structures that are implicitly racist has a long history in this country.

For example, the post-World War II federal mortgage program played an important role in helping American families buy homes. However, federal policy would intentionally devalue homes if a Black resident lived in the area, making it virtually impossible for Black families to borrow money as White families could. This was devastating for Black communities because home ownership is one of the principal ways in which Americans amass wealth to pass onto future generations. Fast forward to today, where **the Black-White economic divide is as bad as it was in the 1960s**. Today, the typical White middle-class family holds \$149,703 in wealth, whereas the typical Black middle-class family holds only \$13,024. And to make matters worse, this gap is actually larger than it was in 1968.

Examples like these are only the tip of the iceberg. Areas such as education, criminal justice, healthcare, and so many more are defined by racist systems that create unequal outcomes for Black Americans. That is why the process of constantly educating yourself about racism in America is so important because it takes so many different forms.

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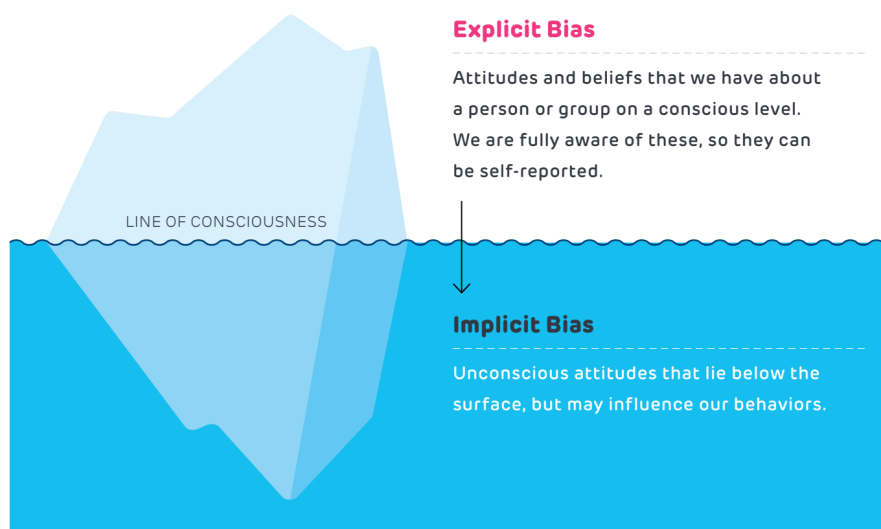
# EDUCATING YOURSELF

## CHALLENGING YOUR OWN BIASES AND PRIVILEGES

An important part of educating yourself about systemic racism is looking inward to try and identify any racist attitudes or biases that you may hold. Because racism is so widespread in our society, racist attitudes can take many subtle forms that we may not even realize. Before we dive into racist attitudes, here are some questions to ask yourself: **“when have I been silent when I could’ve spoken up?”**, **“have I noticed the racial makeup of my personal and professional spaces?”**, **“what does my privilege look like?”**

One example of a common racist attitude that many people may hold is **colorism**. Author and activist Alice Walker, who is often credited with coining the term, defines colorism as **the prejudicial treatment of those with darker skin, often present within minority communities**. Colorism is often discussed in the context of media representation and beauty standards, but its full impact stretches across many facets of daily life, especially for Black Americans. Black Americans with darker skin face lower wages, more frequent school suspensions, longer prison sentences, lower perceptions of intelligence, and higher rates of microaggressions than their lighter-skinned counterparts; these all contribute to worse physical and mental health for darker-skinned Black people in this country.

Another example of a racist attitude that it is important to consider is that of **implicit racial bias**, or **attitudes or stereotypes that unconsciously shape our perceptions and actions**. These forms of bias can be difficult to address because they operate in subtle manners, but they are important to identify and address because they do meaningfully shape our behavior. One helpful tool is the **Implicit Association Test**, created by university researchers to measure implicit bias in terms of race, gender identity, ability, etc. Tests such as this one can be a useful first step to begin the process of consciously identifying and correcting for these biases as you see them manifest themselves in your daily life.



# EDUCATING YOURSELF

## CHALLENGING YOUR OWN BIASES AND PRIVILEGES

Beyond racist attitudes, an important part of educating yourself is to understand the ways in which **you may passively benefit from systems of oppression**, even if you yourself don't hold any racist attitudes. One example to consider is **policing**: when you see a cop car or when the police are called into a situation, do you feel safer? Because of the disproportionate rate at which police officers in this country profile and brutalize Black people, about 60% of Black Americans feel less safe when they see a police officer, compared to only 22% of White Americans according to a recent survey. Reflecting on the ways in which you passively benefit from racist systems is important because it gives you insight into how your lived experiences may differ widely from those in the Black community, and this insight may help you understand and ultimately support ongoing movements for racial equality.



# TAKE ACTION

## JUMP START THE CONVERSATION

The first step to engaging your community is beginning a conversation about race and racism in America. We often avoid these topics because they can make us uncomfortable; nonetheless, they are a critical first step to encourage learning and build common understanding. Ijeoma Oluo, author of New York Times bestseller *So You Want to Talk About Race*, offers a few great tips for how non-black allies can engage in these difficult conversations:

- 1 Start from your own ignorance:** instead of judging others, acknowledge that you may have once misunderstood this issue. Sharing how your own thinking has evolved can help encourage others to engage in a similar journey.
- 2 Begin with a common goal:** openly state what your goal is for the discussion, and get others to sign on. If the conversation steers off course or people begin to get defensive, remind them of this goal to recenter the conversation on common ground.
- 3 Avoid an overly confrontational approach:** in general, being overly confrontational is usually not the best approach to change people's minds or to gain their support.
- 4 Patience and persistence:** remember that people may not change their views with one conversation, but they will slowly begin to see your point of view through sustained dialogue.

Remember that these conversations also don't need to be limited to one area of your life. Each one of us is engaged in multiple communities, whether it be your **friends and family, your place of worship, your workplace, your neighborhood, and more.** You should feel free to think creatively about how you can best engage your own communities in these conversations. **Here are just few examples of ways you can get started:**

- Informal conversations with family and friends
- Beginning a dialogue series in your community
- Start a book club focusing on works by Black authors
- Host teach-in's, an informal lecture or seminar, led by yourself or activists/experts in your community
- Workplace conversations about diversity and racial justice

# TAKE ACTION

## SPEAK UP AGAINST INJUSTICE

An important part of being an ally is speaking up when you witness racism in your community, no matter what form it takes. This goes beyond addressing blatant racist slurs or language; it also includes more subtle forms of stereotyping, microaggressions, and seemingly benign “jokes” that carry racist meanings. One helpful example from the Anti-Defamation League is the “Pyramid of Hate,” which helps illustrate the importance of speaking out even when the language seems relatively “harmless.”

### EXAMPLES OF HATE

#### GENOCIDE

The act or intent to deliberately and systematically annihilate an entire people

#### BIAS MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Murder, Rape, Assault, Arson Terrorism, Vandalism, Desecration, Threats

#### DISCRIMINATION

Economic discrimination, Political discrimination, Education discrimination, Employment discrimination, Housing discrimination & segregation,

#### ACTS OF BIAS

Bullying, Ridicule, Name-calling, Slurs/Epithets, Social Avoidance, De-humanization, Biased/Belittling joke

#### BIASED ATTITUDES

Stereotyping, Insensitive Remarks, Fear of Differences, Non-inclusive Language, Microaggressions, Justifying biases by seeking out like-minded people, Accepting negative or misinformation/screening out positive information

The principle behind this pyramid is that as we begin to accept more subtle forms of racism and bigotry as “normal,” it forms the basis for more explicit and violent forms of hate. In this context, this means that if we don’t speak out against stereotypes, microaggressions, or jokes about Black people, these all form the basis for discrimination and violence against the Black community. One important way to be an effective ally is to speak out against all racism when we see it, no matter how subtle or harmless it may seem in the moment.

# TAKE ACTION

## SPEAK UP AGAINST INJUSTICE

### HOW TO ADDRESS RACIST COMMENTS?

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While a lot of people may understand and recognize when racist comments are made, many still choose to be silent when it happens because they aren't sure how to best address these comments in a productive way. Derald Wing Sue, Professor of Psychology and Education at Columbia University, offers a few general tips:

- **Explain the issue:** many people may not recognize why the comment they made is racist, especially in the case of microaggressions
- **Impact over intention:** focus on explaining why the comment is hurtful rather than focusing on the speaker's intentions behind saying it.
- **Disarm the conversation:** clearly steer the conversation away from the comment in the moment. This communicates to others that these comments are offensive and will not be tolerated.

# TAKE ACTION

## ENCOURAGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Discussions are a critical part of this process, but they are only a first step. As people begin to understand the issues being discussed, it is also important to think about ways to take action to combat racism. The best place to start is in your own community, so a great starting point is to think of the various ways in which you can influence your community, whether it's sitting on a school board, attending city council meetings, or donating money to certain initiatives. Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you get started:

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# TIPS FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

## Tip #1 - Lend your mic to uplift Black voices



As allies, conversations about race and racism are important, but it's just as important to center the voices that are being directly impacted by systemic oppression. This means two things. *First, remember that the role of an ally is primarily to listen.* The lived experiences of Black people are more insightful in these conversations than your own understanding, even if you've worked to try and educate yourself. *Second, make a conscious effort to share articles, books, videos, and social media posts from Black authors and activists.* Part of being an ally is recognizing that you're trying to aid a movement led by those in the Black community.

## Tip #2 - Each one, bring one



An important part of allyship is bridging divides within your communities, so get your friends, family, and neighbors in on the action! Next time you're planning on attending a public meeting to advocate for racial justice, bring along a friend or neighbor who may be impacted by racism in your community. The same goes for protests, dialogues, and any other community events geared towards racial justice. This one step can create a ripple effect that will draw more people in and engage more people in your community.

## Tip #3 - Make Space



Look around the spaces that you're involved in to make sure that all voices within your community are being represented. Whether it's your school's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or the board of a local organization, find ways to make sure that a diverse set of perspectives is represented. Share information about how to get involved with your neighbors and internally advocate for the need to prioritize diversity in your organizations.

## Tip #4 - Sustained Engagement



As we begin to take action, it is important for us to think of ways that we can continue making progress even when these issues are not on the nightly news or trending on social media. Social change doesn't happen overnight, so we need to plan for how our efforts can be sustained in the long-term. One example of sustained engagement is setting up recurring donations to local organizations; another way to stay engaged is to set up regular dialogues in your community.

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# TAKE ACTION

## STEPS TO SUPPORT ONGOING EFFORTS

### REGISTER TO VOTE

One critical way that you can help create change is to register to vote if you are eligible. Once you are registered, you're able to vote in primary and general elections for candidates who best represent your values and ideals. To learn how to register or to review your current status, please check out this amazing, user-friendly [tool](#). If you want to take the next step, consider donating to or volunteering for the campaign of a candidate whom you support.

### CONTACT YOUR LOCAL OFFICIALS

While working to elect better candidates is important, it is also crucial to hold our current public officials accountable. One great way to do this is contacting your local officials by phone and email to express your opinions. To find your federal, state, and local officials, check out the [My Reps Project](#), which provides you with a list of your representatives at every level of government. Another great resource is the [ACLU Take Action tab](#), where you can easily send pre-written messages to your representatives on important racial justice initiatives.

### DONATE TO ORGANIZATIONS

To support ongoing work to achieve racial justice, consider donating to national and local organizations. Check out these lists from [Black Lives Matter](#) and [New York Magazine](#) for a few reputable national organizations. For local organizations, this tool from the [Racial Equity Resource Guide](#) to find organizations in your state. Wherever you choose to donate, make sure you're checking that the organization is legitimate. A [report](#) from NBC News recommends using websites such as [Charity Watch](#), [GuideStar](#), and [Charity Navigator](#) to confirm that the organization is a registered nonprofit.



# TAKE ACTION

## STEPS TO SUPPORT ONGOING EFFORTS

### SIGN PETITIONS

Another great way to help hold our public officials accountable is by signing petitions. You can find plenty of petitions circulating on social media, websites such as [organizefor.org](https://www.organizefor.org), the ACLU Take Action tab mentioned above, and the [Black Lives Matter petition list](#).

### USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO RAISE AWARENESS

Make sure to consciously think about how you're using social media to make sure your posts are purposeful, not performative. Rather than just posting a hashtag or sharing your own take, consider sharing content from Black authors and activists, petitions, donation links, protest tips, and other helpful resources.

### ATTEND A PROTEST

Protests are a well-established tool for expressing public opinion and pressuring officials to enact change. To find protests in your area, you can monitor social media, check your local news stations, or follow [local BLM chapters](#) to learn details. If you do decide to join a protest, check out these great resources on [knowing your rights](#) and [how to protest safely](#).

### SUPPORT BLACK BUSINESSES

By supporting Black businesses, you can use your purchasing power to help bring jobs to Black communities, shrink the racial wealth gap, slow gentrification, and strengthen local Black economies overall. Check out [Support Black Owned](#), [Eat Okra](#), and [WeBuyBlack](#) to find Black businesses in your area.

## CONTINUE LEARNING

This toolkit is *just the beginning* of your commitment to being anti-racist and how to become an effective ally to the Black community. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including yourself. **Please check out MuslimARC's trainings [here](#) and check out some more resources on the next page to continue your lifetime work as an anti-racist.**

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# CLICKABLE RESOURCES

## ONLINE ARTICLES



[The 1619 Project](#)



[Civil-Rights Protests Have Never Been Popular](#)



[The Movement for Black Lives Must Include Black Women](#)



[Racism in America: Resources to Understand America's Long History of Injustice and Inequality](#)



[The Systemic Racism Black Americans Face, Explained in 9 Charts](#)



[Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates](#)



[Freedom is a Constant Struggle by Angela Davis](#)



[How to be Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi](#)



[The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander](#)



[When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele](#)

## BOOKS

## MOVIES



[13th — Netflix](#)



[I Am Not Your Negro — Amazon](#)



[Rest In Power: The Trayvon Martin Story — Rent](#)



[Whose Streets? — Hulu](#)



[When They See Us — Netflix](#)