

WEEK 14: Anti-Racism (What Exactly is White Supremacy?) December 15, 2021

This week's question to consider:

Isn't white supremacy an old, outdated idea that isn't around anymore, except in extreme situations and KKK and that sort of thing? What does this have to do with systemic racism?

Pro tip: The default in this world is that white skin is better than every other skin. This has been true for so long, and in so many places, that systems created in those times perpetuate this belief. They enforce those ideas with or without our participation in any antiracist work.

Say we all woke up tomorrow as antiracists,
hooray! Would systemic racism still exist?

Unfortunately, yes.

Changing of beliefs and minds are important. These are initial steps in an ongoing battle for justice. But there exist **systems** that disproportionately benefit those who are white.

Photography has its roots in white supremacy. Grammar has its roots in white supremacy. Residential schools have their roots in white supremacy. Being afraid of a group of Black teenage boys has its roots in white supremacy. Arab people as the bad guys in action movies has its roots in white supremacy. The ease with which white men are believed and given the benefit of the doubt in every social situation imaginable... has its roots in patriarchal white supremacy. To chop this metaphoric tree down, we must first understand that there are many systems in place that disproportionately affect BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour).

We see the results in representation. The lack of positive representation of BIPOC (e.g.: management positions in large companies, the heroes in Canadian stories) and the overrepresentation of BIPOC in negative contexts (e.g.: percentage of BIPOC in prison vs general population, bad guys in movies).



If you are white, as is the case for the majority in our school district, how often have you thought about it? That fact, I mean. That you are white. How often have you *had* to think about it? Is it uncomfortable to hear that you are a white person? Is it uncomfortable to say it out loud? Ask yourself why that might be.

To talk about antiracism is to talk about dismantling white supremacy, and the systems that uphold it. Antiracist work is the fight against white supremacy. Before we can fight though, we need a common understanding of exactly what we are fighting.

Black American activist Marie Beech explained white supremacy beautifully, as follows:

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White supremacy doesn't just look like white robes and burning crosses.

White supremacy is you thinking that our hair is yours to touch in exchange for a compliment. White supremacy [is] thinking that our time, energy, and attention is yours because you have questions you don't feel like googling. White supremacy is feeling entitled to pick my brain just because you woke up this morning and felt like it.

[...]

White supremacy is associating whiteness with goodness. **White supremacy equates kind with anti-racist.** White supremacy is ignoring race, because you think we're the problem, and ignoring racism because it doesn't affect you.

White supremacy only makes space for anti-racism work that prioritizes white comfort and white feelings. White supremacy says that doing anti-racism work is accommodating for us, dealing with us and our Blackness, when really, we're dealing with you and your whiteness. This is on you. **White supremacy is seeing white as the default, and everyone else as other.**

[...] White supremacy reduces our lived experiences, perspective, and existence to a trend. White supremacy calls our traumas "interesting." White supremacy expects us to sacrifice our well-being to get out of this mess you created. White supremacy watches our murders when they're filmed, but ignores all of the things killing us slowly.

White supremacy is insidious. **White supremacy is anything and everything that upholds white as the standard, the norm, or the ideal.** White supremacy is the idea that we're here to serve white people. That we are *for* white people.

Don't assume yourself innocent. Look inward.

””

*Marie Beech in an Instagram caption, 2020/21.
[Note: text that has been bolded is my emphasis.]*

Keep learning, beautiful people. We're on our way to better as long as we keep learning.

Recommended Resources:

TED Talk by B. Thurston, Video [16:40] | [How to Deconstruct Racism, One Headline At A Time](#)
CBC News, July 2020, Video [9:55] | [What Systemic Racism in Canada Looks Like](#)

With affection and intention,

Your friendly neighbourhood Anti-Racism & Equity Coach
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