

Racial Justice Actions for White Folks

1. **Listen to Black Voices.** Do not argue with them. Do not minimize them. Do not ask them to share their experiences, opinions, and stories in a different way than they are offering them. Listen. Even when it is uncomfortable. Especially when it is comfortable. Retreating from hard news about Black lives is a White privilege, and you will be more motivated to work against racism if you refuse to participate in it.
2. **Learn from Black speakers.** Follow Black activists, artists, authors, political leaders, teachers, students, parents, everyone on your social media outlets. Click and read the articles they share. Look at the images they share. Learn about Black culture, Black perspective. Learn that there is no One Black Voice. Black lives are varied and valuable. By exposing yourself to many Black speakers you will learn many perspectives very different from White voices.
3. **Read books by Black authors.** Read Black history books. Take Black history classes. It has been an unearned privilege for you to read books, take classes, and be a student of teachings that strongly and inequitably represented your race, culture, and history. What you know is incomplete. Be willing to admit that and learn more.
4. **Consume Black-positive media.** Social research shows that our opinions and behavior are very strongly influenced by the media we take in. Mainstream media portrays Whites more often and more favorably than Blacks and reinforces racist stereotypes in our minds. If we only consume media that has a racist bias, we WILL have a racist bias. Learn about the positive work, accomplishments, successes, and achievements of Black people currently and throughout history to work against unconscious racist bias.
5. **Seek Black role models.** Same as above - notice, observe, respect, and appreciate Black community members, globally and locally, current and historically, who engage/ have engaged in positive work.
6. **While actively listening to the Black Voices that are being shared with you, do not ask Black individuals to speak on behalf of their race.** It is a White privilege to be able to offer an opinion without your singular voice being used to represent all White people. Black individuals are often asked to speak on behalf of "Black People" and this is an undue burden. Process your feelings, questions, and concerns about racism with public sources of information, with White allies, with friends, with representatives of racial justice organizations. Do not turn to Black individuals to get support for working against racism. Dismantling racist power structures is the work of those who put it in place, enforce it, and benefit from it, which is White people. Yes, none of us personally or individually created racist power structures, but our inaction to change those structures reinforces them. We need to take ownership for our responsibility in making change in White culture.
7. **Allow the narrative about racial injustice to remain about Black lives and restoring racial justice, not about you.** Racism is not about you. Truly, it is not. Yes, you may harbor unintended racist attitudes, and if your words or actions are called into question as possibly racist, *this is a crucial time to listen*, not react. It can feel very painful to have your actions pointed out as an example of racism, but if you take that moment to let your emotions overwhelm you then you are no longer in an open-minded space to learn how to change this part of yourself and you, once again, you make the issues focused on the needs of a White person. If you argue in defense of yourself or another White person when racism is called out or race-related conversations get heated, you are making it about yourself. If you make a scene about not being "that kind of White person," or attempt to justify an action as "not racist," then you are letting your needs come to the forefront of the dialogue. Stop. Listen. Learn. Breathe. Get support. You have and will make

mistakes, we all will. Change happens when we are committed to learning from them, even when we are uncomfortable. Be willing to be uncomfortable.

8. **Educate yourself about racism.** Explore sociological research that demonstrates the ways racism has been identified and documented in our society, government, legal and health care systems, businesses, and social structures. Understand concepts like White privilege, microaggression, institutionalized racism, and race related stress. You must understand what racism is so that when you notice it within yourself or witness it being played out, you are able to take action against it.
9. **Speak & act against racist words, behaviors, and actions every time you witness them. Every. Time.** Yes, you may need to assess safety (though remember it is your privilege to already be safe in the social context of our society, Black people do not have that same privilege), and you will need to learn how to confront racism effectively. But imagine a world in which a White person spoke out or took action EVERY time a racist act occurred, from acts of invisibility, such as your company not including diverse images in your marketing materials, to racial slurs and racist jokes at a party, to racist violence. How long would these behaviors be able to continue if we always worked to stop them?
10. **Engage in direct social action.** What events are happening in your area? Racial justice rallies, vigils, sit-ins are happening everywhere. Join in. If you do not see action happening, plan and create an action of your own in conjunction with other White allies. Racial justice working groups and non-profit organizations always need more volunteers, more organizers, more fundraising. Get involved. Stay involved. Invite others to be involved.
11. **Support Black businesses and organizations.** What businesses in your community are Black-owned? What organizations are doing good work to increase racial justice? Spend your money there - shop, donate, start crowdsourcing campaigns when injustice has occurred to support those who are negatively impacted. Support cooperatively owned businesses with a large number of Black members. And learn about the social and political leaning and spending of any corporations you might support - and STOP supporting those who use your dollar to work against your values.
12. **Vote for and support the candidacies of Black politicians.** Learn about local political races and support candidates of color who share your values. Remember that NO candidate will share all of your values. You make exceptions to vote for White candidates all the time. Notice resistance to Black candidates - is it really about values or is it about race?
13. **Talk to the owners and proprietors of the businesses you support and work for about being more inclusive.** Let them know that you actively seek diversity in your workplace and social settings. Explore what attitudes and infrastructure are present in businesses that are not welcoming to diverse communities. Offer to post a Black Lives Matter sign visibly at the business. Engage in discussion about it, offer education if resistance is met.
14. **Talk to and teach children in your life about racism and racial justice.** Especially if your kids attend segregated schools and if you live in majority White neighborhoods - make race visible to kids. Share books, movies and TV shows, toys and dolls that represent Black and Brown children and lives. Provide positive imagery of Black lives. Actively talk about what racism in society looks like, in a developmentally appropriate way for their age. Teach them assertive communication skills and how to speak up when they witness racist behavior.
15. **Use your body language to support Black community members.** One of the insidious aspects of racism is that people of color are silently judged in nearly every public space. How do you show through your body language that you are an ally? Smile, make eye contact, say hello, keep a relaxed body posture, be willing to get (appropriately) physically close (like sharing a seat on the bus), even when you feel confused or unsure. Is there a group of young Black kids nearby? Notice what thoughts come up for you as you witness their youthful behavior. Notice what happens if you smile

at those kids and say hello - you are brought out of your bias and irrational fear and return to feeling human connection. Make the world welcoming for Black lives.

16. **Consider intersectionality.** Oppression occurs in many ways across many groups - sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ethnocentrism, ableism, religious and socio-economic prejudice, and other forms of oppression are real, and they do not occur in a vacuum. Be aware that conversations about racial justice will always relate to other forms of oppression and that many people of color experience multiple forms of oppression. *It is crucial never to minimize one's experience of racial oppression just because other forms of oppression are real*, and it is necessary to also take into consideration the complexity of experiencing and working against interconnected but varying forms of oppression.
17. **Get social support from other White folks engaging in racial justice actions.** You cannot do this alone. In fact, you need to create networks so that more and more and more people are acting in solidarity with the Black community. But you cannot get so depleted, angry, or overwhelmed that you shut down. Talk to your friends and loved ones about your sadness, stress, and fear regarding racism, and stay active, rather than withdrawing because the challenge feels too big.
18. **Engage in self-care.** Same as above. If you become hopeless and burned out, you cannot work to save others' lives. You have the privilege of NOT having to live with racism working against you and your family at every turn, therefore you must keep up your strength to fight against racism.
19. **Do your personal work.** You are not a bad person because you learned racism from a racist culture. You are human and imperfect and all people absorb unwanted teachings from their culture. You are capable of growth and change. If you seek to work against racism you must learn where racist tendencies and ideology exist within you and be willing to face it head on, even if it's uncomfortable. It WILL be uncomfortable. But nothing you must face within yourself is as uncomfortable as living every day of your life as a person of color in a racist society that causes you stress, limits your options, and puts you and your loved ones in *direct risk of harm every single day*. Use that reminder to give you strength to get through the uncomfortable places as you look within yourself.
20. **Understand what Black Lives Matter really means.** Read the Guiding Principles of the Black Lives Matter movement. How do those concepts resonate with you? If you support those principles, then you support Black Lives Matter. Do not let media misinformation and biased articles influence your perception of a valuable movement. Look deeper. Go to the source. Get clear perspective on why the slogan "All Lives Matter" is a way of diminishing support for the racial justice movement, even though it is certainly true that all lives matter. We need a rallying cry in support of Black lives because in our current system so deeply entrenched with institutional racism Black lives are disproportionately at risk compared to others, and Black Lives Matter is that cry. Please, let it stand as a valuable statement on its own.



Guidelines for Teaching Racial Justice and Racism Related Concepts through Developmentally Appropriate Steps and Stages

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0-4 years old

- Simplicity and concrete concepts are most appropriate for very young children.
- Teach that there are many different kinds of people and practices in the world (physical and cultural). Explore differences and similarities.
- Expose kids to many different kinds of culture - share books that strongly represent people of color, explore music, food, movies/shows, and events from different racial and ethnic groups.
- Explore behaviors that demonstrate kindness and respect.
- Explore what “bad choices” are, such as any type of disrespectful behavior. (Being taught that “There are no bad people, only bad choices” helps children to maintain a positive sense of self when they make mistakes and helps them understand that other people can make mistakes and be capable of learning and changing, too.)
- Help children learn their voices and opinions matter and that other people’s do, too, setting the stage for them to speak up in a difficult situation to advocate for themselves or friends and to listen to learn more about differing opinions and perspectives.
- Very young children have no filters and will openly express their confusion or questions about people who appear different from them. Relax when they say these things and resist the urge to feel embarrassed or that you need to quiet them. It is healthy and normal for them to talk about such things with you, and your calm response will help them to understand that it is OK to talk about differences. Respond positively to their observations, “Yes, that child does have darker skin than you. I like seeing how many different kinds of people there are in the world.” Introduce the idea that the best way to be kind to people is to acknowledge their actions rather than their appearances.

4-6 years old

- Moving into school years creates need for more explicit discussion of the Racial and Cultural groups in your community and attitudes toward those groups. This age may seem young, but children are in a strong formative stage of their moral development at these ages and will be exposed to many different attitudes as they move more into the community, so guiding them in how to celebrate diversity is critical at this time.
- Introduce simple examples of racism in the culture, for example that some people use hurtful names for some people because of their color, clothing, or religion or that some schools may not allow children of color to attend, and teach that you and your family do not believe in being hurtful or excluding people just because they look differently. These are forms of racism that kids may be exposed to very early on and they need you to have set the tone for how to feel about them when that happens. When exploring topics like this, help children relate to the other children by emphasizing similarities - “These are kids like you who have mommies and daddies and like to play outside/watch shows like you/play the same sports as you/etc. How would you feel if someone called you a name because of your skin color or how you dressed?”
- Help kids to understand that opinions change over time and that we are working toward greater equality in our culture. You can use historic examples of cultural change that has happened, i.e. at one time young children were expected to work like adults, but now we understand it is better for children to be able to go to school and have time to play when they are young. This allows them to integrate why some people are hurtful to others and allows them to remain focused on the necessary change being possible and that they can help create that change.
- Teach children about present day and historical heroes of color. These examples are not strongly present in mainstream media or most school curricula and many cultural representation of people of color introduce and reinforce negative stereotypes. Kids need to see that Black and Brown people are doctors, scientists, engineers, teachers, firefighters, movie stars, musicians, freedom fighters to help diminish the risk that they will develop implicit racial biases that are harmful to a diverse community.
- Have family celebrations that explore other traditions different from your own, such as including practices from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and other traditions during the winter holiday season. These activities help children feel open minded to different traditions and to see the beauty and many types of cultures.

7-9 years old

- Help kids develop compassion, which is a deepening of their understanding that everyone has experienced life differently than they have and that other people's experiences shape who they are, so that when someone does something you do not understand or approve of, it is important not to judge the person for it, but to be curious to learn more.
- In learning about compassion it is also important to learn about healthy boundaries. Even as we attempt to understand someone who is different from us and seek not to judge them, we can and should also have limits on what we accept. Help kids learn what feel like healthy boundaries for them and what to do when those boundaries are crossed. These leads naturally to...
- Help children strategize what to do if they witness racist behavior in a friend, classmate, or acquaintance. Guide them in the kind of language that will be supportive and non-escalating and/or how to get support from an adult in that type of situation. Invite kids to ALWAYS share with you stories of uncomfortable situations so they know they have a safe place to process, be heard, and learn how best to address a similar future situation.
- Create family norms for language, i.e. explain origins of racist, sexist, discriminatory language that are normalized in the culture (such as "That's lame" or "That's gay," "You hit like a girl," "That's very White of you," "Indian giver," and unfortunately we are seeing that the "N" word has not disappeared from use), and teach ways to use language that is accurate, inclusive, supportive, and avoids intentional insulting of others.

10-12 years old

- Introduce the concept White Privilege. It is necessary for all people to understand that racism exists not only at the expense of some groups, but also to the benefit of others. This is an uncomfortable concept to learn at any age, but teaching it young will allow children to become more aware of it as they grow and learn. Questions to help children at this age to understand what White Privilege is include: When you watch TV or go to school/park/grocery store/movies/church how likely is it that you will see other people that are the same color as you? What would it feel like if you went to one of those places and you were the only White person there or there were no White people in the movie or TV show? Has anyone ever asked you how you feel about or something and expected that your answer would speak for all the White people in the country? Has anyone ever commented on how well (or not well) you do something and expressed that you represented all White people through your actions?
- Be aware of how your child may be learning about current events. What type of access does s/he have to social media, TV news, newspapers, magazines, and what is being discussed in school? Make it part of family routine to talk about current events so you can assess what stories your child has heard and if s/he has questions/concerns about events. Use current events to deepen children's understanding of the different ways racism can be played out in culture and how to address it as a person concerned about racial justice.
- Watch developmentally appropriate movies with racial justice related themes with kids with time to have discussion during and after. Here is a great list to check out: <http://www.workingmother.com/18-great-kids-movies-about-african-american-experience>

13-15 years old

- Introduce and expand understanding of Institutional Racism. Help youth to see that racism is significantly more complex than some individuals being hurtful to people of color and that issues like disparities in education, hiring, and socio-economic advantages are real and an integral part of how racism hurts people. This is an important to share more and more information on how they can be active in changing institutional racism, by supporting Black-owned businesses and avoiding business that have racial imbalance in their working practices, letter writing, fundraising for racial justice organizations, and other ways of being active in their community.
- Keep the lines of communication very open with your child as they enter these years that are more likely to withdraw from parents/adults. Continue to do fun activities together and use any opportunity to talk about racial injustices you notice
- Consider doing a racial justice workshop or class together with your child at this age or just a little older (Asheville's Building Bridges has a good program that is developmentally appropriate for mature teens.)
- Be prepared to support possible emotional reactivity as youth become more aware of injustices in the world. Allow them the space to grieve and to feel the anger and confusion about why society has failed at justice for so many people for so long, and help them to avoid despondency and hopelessness by facilitating their understanding of the social progress that has been made and the ways in which families like yours and many others are continuing to create more positive change.

16-18 years old

- Introduce the concept of “intersectionality,” which examines the ways that people who belong to multiple groups of people who experience oppression, such as people of color who are also women, who identify as LGBTQ, who are physically differently abled or neurodiverse, and/or belong to a non-mainstream religious community (and other possibilities) experience a compounding of bias and that different types of oppression interact with and feed into the others.
- Introduce the concept of “meritocracy” which is the (false) concept that all people will be rewarded equally for the behavior and actions in our society. Meritocracy is often used to dismiss the existence of institutional racism by promoting the idea that people who are socially or economically disadvantaged are in those positions because of their own personal failings and not because they have experienced actual cultural oppression that has limited their potential for growth and success.
- Help kids reaching maturity and independence to explore how they can make choices for their future that will increase their culturally diverse experiences and in what ways they want to be active in the work toward racial justice. Explore colleges that are racially and ethnically diverse and possible career fields that will allow them to work toward greater social justice.
- Help young voters explore how to best support diverse political candidates and candidates who support the best policies to have a healthy, just, and diverse community.

All Ages

- Increase the diversity of your own social circles and community and expand your own vistas and education related to racial and cultural diversity, so that you are sharing this community and awareness with children in your life.
- Always create a climate in which it is safe to discuss any topic.
- Continually expose kids of all ages to developmentally appropriate media that is free from racial bias and fairly represents people of color and diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Children of all ages will look to you as a role model; in situations that are tense due to racism or other injustices your response will make a lasting impression. Therefore, it is important to never tolerate racist or culturally insulting comments or behavior being made in front of you or your children, and being prepared to calmly address any affront will be important.

Resources

Discussing Race, Racism, and Other Difficult Topics with Students by Teaching Tolerance

<http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20Difficult%20Conversations%20web.pdf>

Racial Justice Actions for White Folks by Clover Heart Concepts

<http://www.cloverheartconcepts.com/journal/2016/7/28/racial-justice-actions-for-white-folks>

White Privilege - Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack by Peggy

<https://www.deanza.edu/faculty/lewisjulie/White%20Privilege%20Unpacking%20the%20Invisible%20Knapsack.pdf>

How to Speak Up Against Racism in Action by Clover Heart Concepts

<http://bit.ly/2gSfXoY>

Multicultural Book List

<http://multiculturalchildrensbookday.com/multicultural-reading-resources/diversity-book-lists-for-kids/seeing-yourself-in-childrens-books/african-american-books-for-kids-of-all-ages/>

Black Lives Matter <http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/>

