

DISMANTLING RACIAL

TRAUMA

Helping Leaders, Organizations, and Communities
Move from Intention to Action

TOOLKIT

Introduction

"Much of what we see today is the result of history, unaddressed, repeating itself. That is why people need to know the history, to truly confront it and heal from what has gone before us."

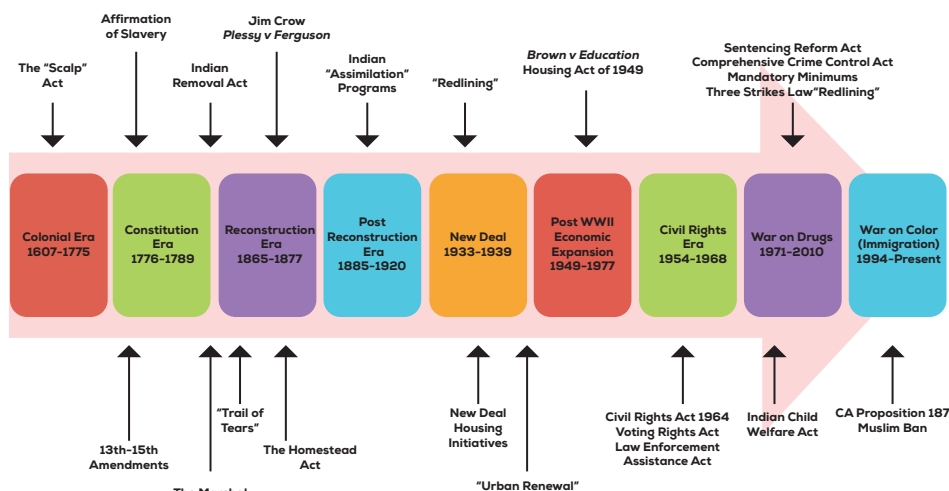
Isabel Wilkerson

Is Racial Trauma Real?

Racial trauma is a term used to describe the physical and psychological symptoms that people of color often experience after being exposed to stressful experiences of racism (Carter, 2007). Like survivors of other types of trauma (e.g. sexual assault survivors), people of color often experience fear and hypervigilance, headaches, insomnia, body aches, memory difficulty, confusion, shame, and guilt after experiencing racism (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005, Carter, 2007, Carlson, 1997; Helms, & Green, 2010).

What is Historical Trauma?

Historical trauma refers to cumulative emotional and psychological wounding of a community caused by traumatic group experiences. This form of trauma is transmitted across generations within the affected community (SAMHSA, 2016; Yehuda et al., 2016).



Significant U.S. Social & Criminal Policies Over Time

Ellis, Wendy. "Trauma and Equity." *Center Community Resilience 2020*, ccr.publichealth.gwu.edu/tools-resources/trauma-and-equity.



In the United States, this type of trauma is often associated with racial and ethnic population groups who have suffered major intergenerational losses and assaults on their culture and well-being.

The plights of African Americans who endured enslavement, of Native Americans who were displaced, and of Jews who lived through the Holocaust all have lasting effects that have been transferred to current descendants of these groups and others. The result is traumatic stress experienced across generations by people of color, their families, and their communities. The consequences come from not only to what has happened in the past, but also from what is still happening in the present (Evans-Campbell, 2008), particularly as it relates to Americans with African ancestry.

Traumatic events that occur as a result of witnessing or experiencing racism, discrimination, or structural prejudice (also known as institutional racism) can have a profound effect on the mental health of individuals exposed to these events.

Not every person of color who experiences racial challenges will develop racial trauma or race-based stress; however, a lack of recognition of the trauma that people of color suffer from in this country can intensify their suffering.

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Living Hope, Practicing Faith, and Seeking Justice for All

By Alliance For Greater Works Staff: Sherrye Willis, Angela Johnson, Comfort Brown, Ginny Chandler, Christie Dobbins, Jada Spruill and Michelle Uzoh

Alliance for Greater Works is a 19-year-old Christian intermediary organization committed to dismantling the root causes of injustices. Our foundation is built on a Biblical worldview. We believe all people are created in the image of God and all are his image-bearers who are called to fill the earth. The Alliance values, honors, and respects all human life. We envision a world where every person is empowered to be all that they were created to be, regardless of the zip code in which they happen to live or the color of their skin.

Recently, there have been moments when we as U.S. citizens and women leaders have been shaken to the core because of what we are seeing in 2020; nevertheless, we stand firm in our faith.

We believe that God loves justice. At the beginning of each workday, the Alliance team prays for God's direction and renewal. We have had to be resolved not to stay hurt or angry or become bitter in view of recent events, but to trust God.

We continue to sow the seeds of compassion, patience, and love that we want to see grow in our communities. We continue to educate ourselves on history, even before slavery, because slavery is not the beginning of our story. We cannot give what we do not have, so we want to gain more knowledge and wisdom about who we are and where we come from so, we can share it with others.

We all share this history—our American history—not interpretations, opinions, or half-truths with missing information, but actual events. By following a specific narrative of these events, we can disable

Living Hope, Practicing Faith, and Seeking Justice for All (continued)

deceitful attempts to transform relatively recent history into mere ancient history or myth. This time last year, for example, Mitch McConnell declared that the election of a Black president may serve as reparations for the sin of slavery. Yet, slavery has been neither abolished nor atoned for; slavery has only been restructured.

Within the last week, two Black bodies have been found hanging from a tree in an apparent lynching. This was just last week, not the distant past. The plight of the African-American at the hands of racist aggressors began centuries ago and continues to this very day. We must share our personal experiences of this reality which can ultimately refute the lie that abolition was the end of racism.

We are angry, we are tired, and we are trying every day not to wake up bitter and in fear because of what we see and experience on a daily basis. We need our white brothers and sisters, especially of the Christian faith, to understand that many of us are weary of being at war with ourselves while simultaneously being at war with you just to grab hold of a little peace of mind. We beg you to hear our plea, gain wisdom and open your mind to new information so that we can achieve the freedom and equal standing that we have been begging you for.

In our conversation about what we as Black people have experienced, we use language deliberately, defining our words repeatedly, because what we say is so often distorted in a manipulative ploy to cast aspersions on our intentions. We start with shared values to bridge the gap between us and our detractors. We embed these discussions into our everyday lives at church, school, and work, so that those who are close to us can become more acquainted with what we endure. For those who have not experienced what we face, we need you to understand our concerns and articulate them to those close to you who need help relating to our cause.

Many of us have never been physically harmed, but the images and stories of Black people being murdered at the hands of racist officers and citizens year after year and often with no consequences motivates us to do something – anything – to stop this injustice.

Whenever a police officer is behind us as we drive, our hearts race and we pray that if we get pulled over, we will make it home safely. During road trips, we make conscious efforts to arrange itineraries so that we don't travel through rural, unknown areas at night. And perhaps most poignantly, the realities of being Black in America mean that when we consider having children, we must think critically about the possibility of having a son because the idea of raising a Black son in a world with a proclivity toward hostility toward him makes many of us anxious and fearful.

Living Hope, Practicing Faith, and Seeking Justice for All (continued)

As we reflect on the events following the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and too many more, we are torn between the never-ending pain of racism and the hope for a new day. Our temptation to shrink back in despair was interrupted by the unprecedented display of solidarity of people, not just Black people, around the world who collectively took a stand against systemic racism. The death of George Floyd was the tipping point for change. The peaceful protests, the demands for police reform, and even the rioting are the sound of a new unified voice among Black and white, rich and poor, Christian and non-Christian, who have come together with one mission: to eradicate racism.

If an authentic multiracial democracy is to exist in this country as we move forward, we will need to create a society that understands the nuanced ways capitalism and racism are inextricably woven together in our nation's history.

Our democracy must be antiracist and nondiscriminatory. Our democracy must be committed to the permanent eradication of poverty, prison labor, underemployment, and unemployment. And because there is not a single era in U.S. history in which the criminal justice system was not a force of violence, trauma, and injustice for people of color, we must commit to redirecting a portion of the \$250 billion spent annually to fund the criminal justice system, including the system of mass incarceration, towards those who have been traumatized by systemic racism. The \$14 trillion reparation plan of Robert Johnson, founder of Black Entertainment Television, is an excellent place to start. In so doing, heirs of the enslaved will begin the process of healing from the sin of slavery.

The work ahead for us all will not be easy, and we will face criticism and hostility. But we have hope for the future. We find a profound call for urgency and to act now, for as the old adage reminds us, "yesterday is gone, and tomorrow is not promised."

Our hope is alive now more than ever. As we look at young people today, exercising their rights and calling for change, we are hopeful. There is still so much division, but we see a movement towards a shared vision of equality becoming real today more than ever before. We must keep this hope alive and this movement pressing forward for our children and our grandchildren.

It is hard work, daunting at times, but the future begins today.



A Call to Action to Dismantle Racial Trauma

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

Seven Steps You Can Take to Dismantle Racial Trauma:

1. Create Courageous Conversations with Co-workers, Friends, and Family.
2. Speak out against racism and injustice in your life.
3. Commit to learning more.
4. Support specific initiatives publicly and share them with your networks.
5. Give, whether it is monetary support, your time, or your talents, to organizations and causes that work to end racial disparity.
6. Be intentional to include diversity across all phases of collaborative approaches.
7. Be part of the change you are trying to create.

Where Do We Begin?

Silence is complicity for anyone who benefits from an unjust system. As we all move forward and continue to address the ways we have been affected by racism, we should be having difficult conversations within our social circles.

Four Questions to Ask:

1. How do we start productive, effective conversations about race?
2. How should we respond to resistance to these conversations?
3. Why do we need to talk about racism and racial trauma in 2020?
4. Who should be involved in these conversations? Should it be a diverse group? Which voices should lead?



DEFINITIONS

Racism

The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to another race or races.

Institutional Racism

A system of privileges or disadvantages placed on one group by another group supported by government institutions, laws, policies and other societal entities.

Discrimination

Action for or against an individual or group committed by an individual or group, based on group identity.

Bias

Preference for one thing, person, or group over another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

Privilege

A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people.

Inequities

Lack of fairness or injustice.

Stereotype

A real or imagined trait of an individual applied to a group.

Prejudice

A conscious or unconscious assignment of positive or negative value to the (perceived) traits of a group.

Glossary of EQUID (Equity, Inclusion and Diversity) Terms:

<https://environment.yale.edu/content/documents/00008167/Diversity-Glossary.pdf>

Merriam-Webster's dictionary (11th Ed.). (2016) Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.



RECOMMENDED EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES:

“(Re)Educate yourself about injustice, racism, privilege, laws, and policies that are woven into the history of our beloved country. To not tolerate something, you must know and recognize it.”

Alliance For Greater Works®

Emmanuel Acho – Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8jUA7JBkF4>

MOVIES:

<https://www.justmercyfilm.com> Warner Bros. is offering its film “Just Mercy,” the biopic on civil rights defense attorney Bryan Stevenson, starring Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx, for free rentals in the month of June in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

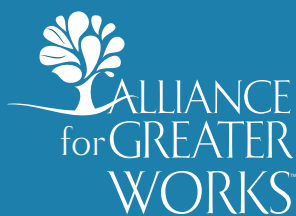
BOOKS & ARTICLES:

- *The Hidden Rules of Race: Barrier to An Inclusive Economy*, Andrea Flynn
- *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- *The Trumpet of Conscience*, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- *Unpacking White Privilege*, Peggy McIntosh
- *The Heart of Racial Justice*, Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil
- *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein
- *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson
- *Decolonizing Wealth*, Edgar Villaneuva
- *Biased : Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do*, Jennifer L. Eberhardt
- *Confronting Racism*, Robert T. Carter, Ph.D.
- *Measuring the Effects of Racism*, Robert T. Carter, Ph. D.
- *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*, Jennifer Nez Denetdale, Ph.D.
- *The Long Walk: The Forced Navajo Exile*, Jennifer Nez Denetdale, Ph.D.
- *Good Cop, Bad Cop and the Baltimore I knew*, Christina Edmondson
- *The Well of Life: Heal Your Pain, Satisfy Your Thirst, Live Your Purpose*, Dr. Nicolas Rowe and Sheila Wise Rowe
- *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience*, Sheila Wise Rowe



If you have been wounded by the trauma of racism, Alliance offers a free Trauma-Informed Training. Click Here for More Information.

<https://allianceforgreaterworks.org/programs/individual-skill-building/healing-youth-alliance/>



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Dismantling the root causes of Injustices affecting marginalized communities

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