

Racism

Racism: The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people.

Also related are the definitions of Race and Systemic Racism.

Race: Refers to the categories into which society places individuals on the basis of physical characteristics (such as skin color, hair type, facial form and eye shape). Though many believe that race is determined by biology, it is now widely accepted that this classification system was in fact created for social and political reasons. There are actually more genetic and biological differences within the racial groups defined by society than between different groups.

Systemic Racism: A combination of systems, institutions and factors that advantage white people and for people of color, cause widespread harm and disadvantages in access and opportunity. One person or even one group of people did not create systemic racism, rather it: (1) is grounded in the history of our laws and institutions which were created on a foundation of white supremacy;* (2) exists in the institutions and policies that advantage white people and disadvantage people of color; and (3) takes places in interpersonal communication and behavior (e.g., slurs, bullying, offensive language) that maintains and supports systemic inequities and systemic racism.

* In the above definition, the term “white supremacy” refers to the systematic marginalization or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed

racial hierarchy that privileges people who identify as white. It does not refer to extremist ideologies which believe that white people are genetically or culturally superior to non-whites and/or that white people should live in a whites-only society.

--Last updated July 2020