Who Has Trauma

YOU HAVE TRAUMA



Objective:

Learn how trauma can invade the body and how symptoms of chronic trauma can affect individuals.





White Supremacy as a Trauma Response

For the past three decades, we've earnestly tried to address white supremacy with reason, principles, and ideas — using dialogue, forums, discussions, education, and mental training. Clearly, this isn't working as we'll as we'd expected.

Our bodies have a form of knowledge that is different from our cognitive brains. This knowledge is typically experienced as a felt sense of constriction or expansion, pain or ease, energy or numbness. Often this knowledge is stored in our bodies as wordless stories about what is safe and what is dangerous.

White supremacy — and all the claims, accusations, excuses, and dodges that surround it are a trauma response. This response lives not inside psyches, but deep within bodies. (In fact, a more accurate term for the affliction is *white-body supremacy*, since it elevates the white body above all other bodies. The white body is the apparent supreme standard against which other bodies' humanity is measured.)

The attitudes, convictions, and beliefs of white-body supremacy are reflexive cognitive side effects, like the belief of a claustrophobe that the walls are closing in. These ideas have been reinforced through institutions as practice, procedures, and standards.

White Legacy Trauma

White bodies have inherited a different legacy of trauma. This trauma goes back centuries, passed down from one white body to another for many generations.

White bodies have traumatized each other for centuries. Way before coming into contact with Black and Indigenous bodies.

This trauma and carnage profoundly effected white bodies and the expression of their DNA.

This historical trauma is closely linked to the white body supremacy in America.



Living Legacy of Trauma

The living legacy of trauma describes the way in which past traumatic events do not just leave scars upon victims that clearly have been inflicted in the past.

Trauma leaves behind a living legacy of emotions (fear, <u>shame</u>, anger) and physical responses (startling, impulses to run or hide or fight, even against one's own body) that continue to be stimulated by the subtlest of cues in people's day to day lives. Trauma doesn't feel like a past event when its effects are constantly stimulated by normal everyday things.

Some examples of living legacy trauma are racism, *slavery,war, poverty, gaslighting, genocide, and colonialism.* A majority of people who experience this type of trauma have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

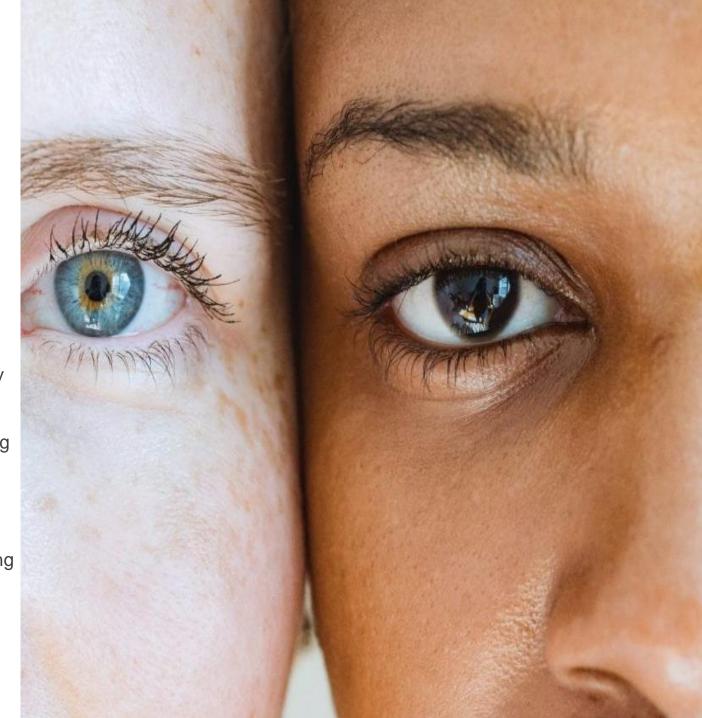


White Ways of Being –vs-Whiteness

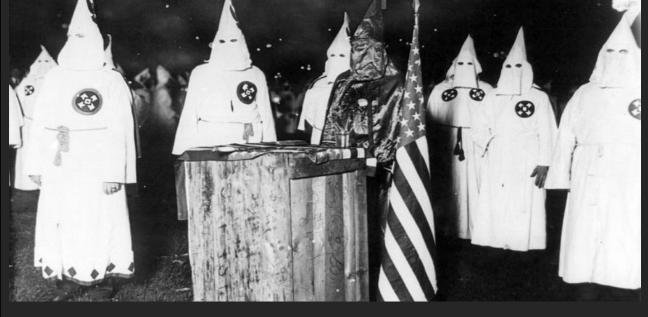
Naming whiteness and white ways of being and differentiating them from what it means to be a human being is a necessity, especially in the presence of white folks who conflate the two so much so that they appear indistinguishable.

White supremacy insidiously tricks white people not only into believing that they are supreme simply because we are white, but also that the end of white supremacy would mean an end to their survival.

Often a huge step in the process of facing whiteness is being able to distinguish one's spiritual self from one's socialized self, understanding that one's social self will continue to operate, but that there is a deeper, human self under the calcification of our hearts longing to remember that we are connected, we are One.







Many people still visualize white supremacists as hood-wearing, torchbearers who are outspoken advocates of oppressing Black Indigenous People of Color (BIOPC). While this is certainty still the case, white supremacy has shapeshifted since the United States' inception.

Holding on to this outdated version of white supremacy and using it as a prototype is one of the reasons why dismantling and deconstructing white supremacy has remain a challenge.

What it less commonly known and understood is how a system based on white supremacy harm not only BIPOC, but also WHITE people.

1. Teaching white children from an early age to disconnect from people of color, distance ourselves, understand ourselves as "better than" thereby distorting and putting out of reach real human connection with most of humanity.

Growing up in rural, predominantly white Northeastern Pennsylvania, my parents would take me and my brother on trips to New York and Philadelphia. On the way there they would always prep us about how dangerous those cities were and ingrained in me an association between cities, Black and Brown people, and crime.







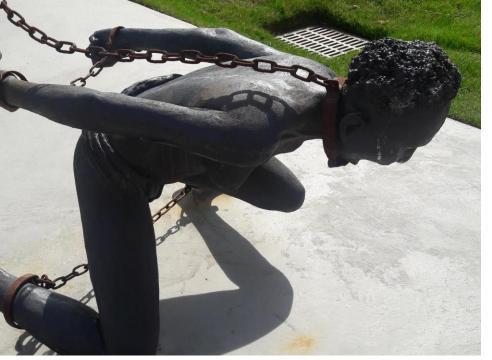
2. Learning to admire colonizers, rapists, slave-owners, misogynists, liars, thieves, and those who committed acts of genocide because history is only taught from the perspective of white supremacy which portrays those acts not only as defensible but also as "necessary evils."

William Penn was ingrained in my mind as a sort of "benevolent colonizer," with tales of his fairness to the Lenape, his refusal to have an army, his religious tolerance, etc. I didn't even know he was a slaveholder until adulthood.

3. Living on this land with no connection or understanding of the land we are on or knowledge of the indigenous peoples it was stolen from.

The house I grew up in, on the corner of a relatively busy street in my little town, always felt more like a Hollywood movie set than an actual place in the world – arbitrary, fabricated, and divorced from the landscape. And no one ever talked about the specific tribes whose land we were on – not once.







4. Refusing to acknowledge America's "original sin" of racial, chattel slavery and genocide and a refusal to understand reparations as a spiritual and material necessity for addressing those traumas.

When I was a teenager, I asked my Dad if anyone in our family ever owned slaves, and he gave me a saddened, defensive look and said that he didn't think so. As an adult, I have come to understand that this was a misguided question: my ancestors didn't need to be slaveholders in order to benefit from the enslavement of African people.







5. Forcing people of European descent to erase our culture in order to conform to whiteness and white, dominant culture.

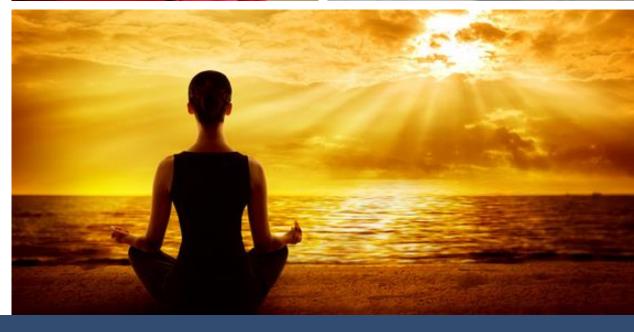
Both sides of my family have been in the United States since before the American Revolution, and I have zero tangible connection to the cultures and customs of my ancestors. The flip side of this was being raised in a white, middle class American family that had no understanding of itself as having a culture at all.

6. Instructing white people to dissociate from our bodies and revere 'thinking' over feeling, intimacy, or paying attention to the information/wisdom our bodies give to us.

This shows up for me especially in romantic relationships where it can take hours or even days to identify what I'm actually feeling instead of numbing out or intellectualizing. My parents also once said to me, "We don't have any friends we can talk to about our feelings." That was shocking to me but normal to them.







7. Ingraining in white people the values of dominance, greed, and simplistic notions of "winners" and "losers," and rewarding those who display those qualities with ever increasing access to wealth and power and admiring them for their dominance.

Clarks Summit was the wealthier suburb of Scranton next door to Factoryville where I grew up, which was more working class. I remember visiting friends' houses in Clarks Summit and being in awe of their wealth and possessions and had the feeling that I was missing out on things like big TVs, big couches, big houses, big everything. The flip side of this is that I looked down on the poorer, even more rural school district in the other direction and was pleased that I was not like them.



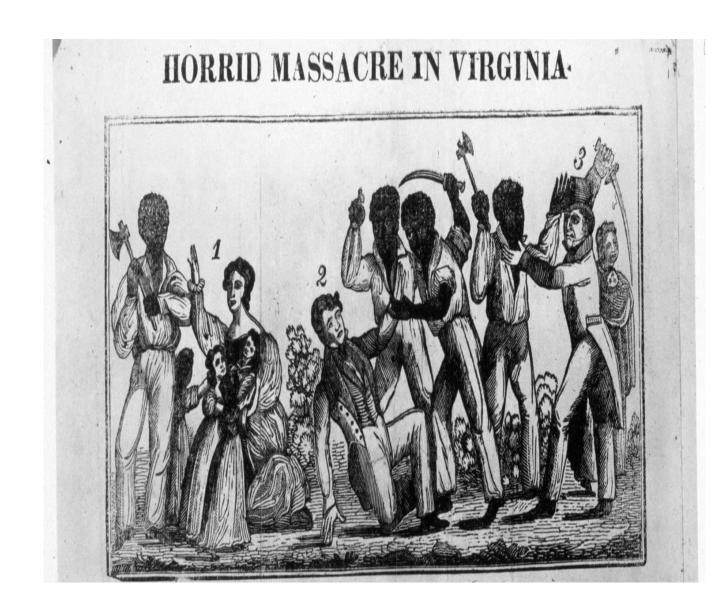






8. Fostering a sense that people of color are always interested in vengeance for the harms white people have perpetrated, creating a sublimated, constant anxiety about one's status and an inability to envision a world based on equity and human connection.

As a white person, it is hard for me to hear verbal expressions of Black anger and rage at the realities of white supremacy as anything but an indication of that person's desire to commit physical violence against white people.



9. Distorting white people's perception of truth by portraying white, racist lies as fact and portraying the real, lived experiences of people of color as false or exaggerated.

Growing up in the nineties, the white, middleclass, progressive adults around me (including my parents) told me that racism was largely a thing of the past and that our society was generally good and legitimate and only needed a few changes to right itself. The beating of Rodney King was perceived as a tragic aberration, not a daily lived experience of Black people in America.











10. Instilling in white people a scarcity mentality, making such things as neoliberal capitalism, mass incarceration, xenophobia, continued fossil fuel extraction, and the neverending "War on Terror" appear defensible and even necessary.

Being raised white and middle class, I feel this embedded deep inside me. I am generally resistant to taking personal risks in order to challenge these indefensible realities because I am afraid of giving up my white comfort and safety. My parents taught me, "Get a good, middle-class salary, save money, and play it safe." That voice has seemingly permanent residency in a corner of my mind.

American Psychology Association

The American Psychology Association defines trauma as and "emotional response to a terrible event or events" and an estimated 70% of adults in the United States have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their life.

Even when memories of the trauma is hidden from a person's awareness, there are signs that will become noticeable in his of her daily life.

Let's look at some traumas less talked about.





Less talked about traumas 1-3

- 1. **Sibling Abuse-** "Sibling abuse. Too many people believe it's normal or just sibling rivalry. If you talk about it some think you're being oversensitive or dramatic." Julia L.
- 2. **Verbal abuse-** "Verbal abuse. Everyone assumes being hit is so bad, but my verbal abuse led me to believe that I'm the nothingness I feel in my soul." Becky P.
- 3. **Hospitalizations gone wrong-** "Inpatient hospitalization is not often dealt with, but a psych hospital can be very traumatic. I experienced PTSD and felt alone after discharge. I had a hard time transitioning back to 'normal' life." Amy B.
- "Being in a psychiatric hospital. People automatically assume that a hospital makes you better and improves your life, but it can give you a lot of trauma. You never get the sound of panic alarms out of your head... It isn't a nice environment to be in and you never forget the things you see and hear there." Phoebe G.





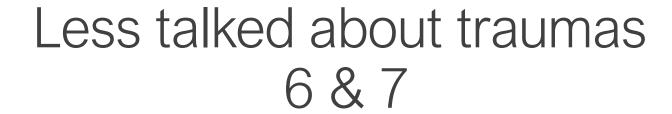


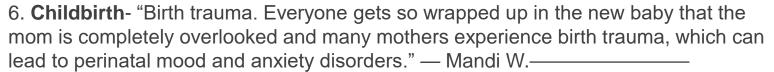
Less talked about traumas 4 & 5

- 4. **Mental health provider-** "Therapy trauma! Sometimes therapists cause a lot of trauma in their behavior. They treat you horribly, invalidate your experiences, deny you, drop you as a client, etc. It can be very traumatic to be in that 'helping' relationship but suffer more harm from them." Josie S.
- 5. **Years of being misdiagnosed-** "The trauma of misdiagnosis. No one realizes how pervasive the damage of misdiagnosis can be. I have Asperger's but until I was 24, I was told it was depression, had anxiety, bipolar, schizoaffective and BPD. I did have BPD, but it was likely from a lifetime of invalidation and pain caused by the misdiagnosis and subsequent treatment for disorders I didn't even have." Niki G.
- "Misdiagnosis, being prescribed the wrong medication from the misdiagnosis, and being overly medicated at a young age." Traci L.









"Childbirth trauma. Many women lose their babies, come close to it, suffer injury or near-death experiences. Sometimes the loss of control is enough to traumatize a woman, too, and that's valid. Because birth is a common occurrence and generally a happy moment for people, they are less able to relate and will go as far as to distance and silence women by saying things like, 'You're going to scare people with your story. That's so rare.' It takes away validity and isolates the person. Speaking from experience, it's terrible." — Megan S.

7. "**Teacher/educator**. A large amount of the beginning of my mental health problems were made infinitely worse by horrible people in teaching positions. The teachers are often much worse than the actual bullies in school, but because they're in a position of authority and it's their word against yours, or they couldn't possibly be doing something wrong because of their job, nothing ever changes." — Cheyenne L.







Less talked about traumas 8 & 9

- 8. **Homelessness** "Being homeless can be traumatic rather you living outside or couch surfing. Besides, one can lose their dignity during this time, going through things to keep safe, and watching every step-in order to survive for the next day. On top of it, doing what one can in order to have a home again. It can be a long process to go through, trying to not just make ends meet, but the reality of having to accept it all, even after the fact." Tatauq M.
- 9. **Religious Upbringing-** "Trauma from growing up in an oppressive and fear-based church. I wish this was recognized! It has been easier to recognize other parts of my life as traumatic, but for the longest time I felt silly thinking that a Christian church could cause me so much trauma. Looking back however, it makes sense how it spiraled me and put me in vulnerable situations where I experienced more trauma. I'm just afraid no one will believe me when I say it had a devastating psychological impact that has severely exacerbated my mental health issues and chronic pain." Lily N.

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Less talked about traumas 10 & 11

- 10. **Gaslighting** "The effects of psychological abuse/gaslighting. The long-term effects, like the overwhelming sense of confusion and bewilderment. And the effect it has on your mental well-being, like repressed memories, experiences and emotions, and the severe traumatization it causes when it starts to unravel." Lulu B.
- 11. **Vicarious** "Exposure to others' trauma. I ended up having flashbacks from things that didn't happen to me... in such vivid detail. This was likely because it was a loved one, but it seems like I'm 'being dramatic' or 'feeling too much.' I think it's never talked about because it seems 'crazy' or 'irrational."— Eddie E.

"Witness trauma- a soldier returns home form war with PTSD, living with a family member with mental illness, watching some get injured or killed rather in person on social media, watching parents fight, being an auto accident ect. Too many assume that you have to be directly in the line of fire to be traumatized. — Kae-jo W.



Less talked about traumas 12 & 13

12. **Medical**- "Medical procedures that happen to kids who are too young to understand what is happening and why." — Rebecca G.

"Trauma after multiple surgeries. Medical malpractice trauma. Being sick/pain with no answers." — Christie M.

"Medical. I have so many problems just getting myself to go to a doctor or a hospital if I need help because I have had such negative hospital experiences." — Erica W.

13. Surviving a suicidal attempt- "Post-suicide attempt trauma. No one talks about how traumatic it is to survive a suicide attempt." — Outsarters A.

"Surviving a suicide attempt that no one knows about." — Reid R.



Less talked about traumas 14

14. Neglect- "Neglect. The trauma of not being cared for by those who are supposed to. Whether it be intentionally being left alone, or not having enough food or adequate shelter, or the neglect of not feeling loved. From my experience, people don't treat neglect as a form of trauma, but it impacts people, especially children, just as must as physical harm do. It creates long term anxiety about having enough, being provided for, being cared for, etc, and certainly affects a person's sense of safety and security." — Emma S.

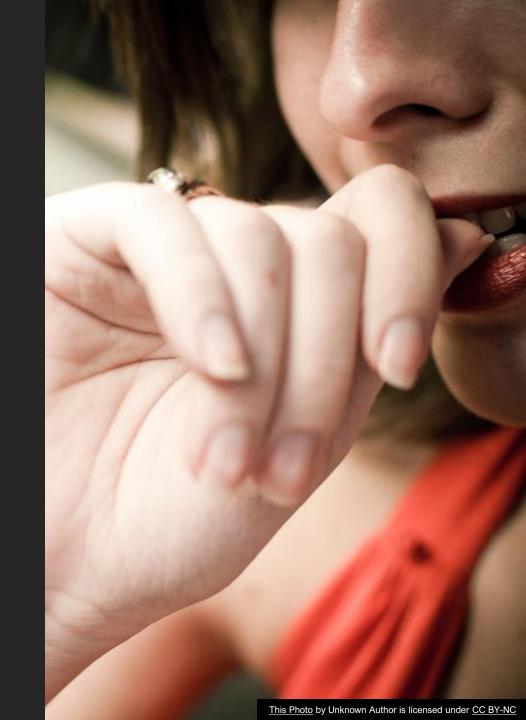




Acute Trauma

Acute trauma results from one disturbing event, an accident, abuse, or natural disaster. That terrible event creates a lasting impression on the person's mind. It causes harm to them, even to the extent of threatening their emotional and physical well-being and creates a whole change in the person's behavioral pattern.

Some common symptoms of acute trauma include panic, anxiety, confused state of mind, irritation, irregular and inadequate sleep, lack of focus, and the inability to trust anyone.



Overlooked aspects of small 't' traumas

One of the most overlooked aspects of small 't' traumas is their accumulated effect. While one small 't' trauma may not lead to significant distress, multiple compounded small 't' traumas, particularly in a short span of time, are more likely to lead to an increase in distress and trouble with emotional functioning.

In fact, it is likely that the reason many individuals present for <u>psychotherapy</u> is due to an accumulation of small 't' traumas. These traumas may have occurred over the course of one's life or condensed in the recent past.



Small 't' traumas Disruptions

Small 't' traumas are events that exceed our capacity to cope and cause a disruption in emotional functioning.

Small 't' traumas tend to be overlooked by the individual who has experienced the difficulty. This is sometimes due to the tendency to rationalize the experience as common and therefore cognitively shame oneself for any reaction that could be construed as an over-reaction or being "dramatic."

This reaction is a form of avoidance, albeit a much less pronounced form. Other times, the individual does not recognize just how disturbed they are by the event or situation.

Perhaps surprisingly, sometimes these events are also overlooked or dismissed by a therapist. This usually does not happen due to the therapist lacking empathy, but rather it occurs due to a lack of understanding about the importance of these experiences for a person's functioning



Common signs of from unresolve trauma 1-8

- 1. Anxiety or panic attacks that occur in what would be considered normal situation
- 2. A feeling of shame; an innate feeling that they are bad, worthless, or without importance
- 3. Chronic ongoing depression
- 4. Avoid people, places, and thing that may be related to the traumatic event; this can also include an avoidance of unpleasant emotions
- 5. Flashbacks, nightmares, and body memories regarding the traumatic event
- Addictions of all types
- 7. Sleep issues
- 8. Dissociations from conversations and situations

Common signs of from unresolve trauma 9-15

- 9. Hypervigilance
- 10. Suicidal thought or actions
- 11. Uncontrollable anger; acting on it
- 12. Self-harm, cutting, and mutilation
- 13. Not being able to tolerate conflicts
- 14. Unexplained or irrational fear of people, places, or things
- 15. Feeling dead inside (this sign is most devastating because it creates a feeling of loneliness and isolation).



Recovery From Trauma

Recovery from trauma is much more than remembering what happened and disclosing it to a witness, as so many therapists were taught to believe in the 90s. We now know that recovery includes waking up the prefrontal cortex with psychoeducational and <u>mindfulness</u> techniques so that the body and <u>nervous system</u> become calmer.

It includes learning to recognize the implicit nonverbal feeling and body memories as <u>memory</u>, rather than as signs of alarm, to work with the bodily and nervous system effects of the trauma, and to understand impulsive or self-destructive behavior as driven by trauma responses.

Last but certainly not least, recovery must include acceptance of what has happened and acceptance of oneself—letting go of the shame and beliefs in unworthiness and welcoming the child we all once were as young and innocent, hurt rather than damaged.



Time and Healing

Healing and growth takes time.

Healing starts by acknowledgment and to be able to sit in our discomfort.

We don't need to explore, or recreate the trauma, we just need to be aware of our bias, actions, and impact.

With practice over time, it will allow us to be more curious and aware of our power and privileges while building a tolerance for emotional discomfort.

We need to ground ourselves and touch the pain of our collective trauma.



Allyship

"How should white people understand and think about their/our role in racial justice movements?" This goes beyond encouraging white folks to take action, though that is essential. Instead, it's about creating a collective understanding of how and why it is in the shared interest of white folks to end white supremacy and racism.

This is NOT to say that white people should focus on ourselves and our supposed struggles as white people – white supremacy is, first and foremost, a system of oppressing and controlling Black and Brown people. Instead, it is necessary to call out the ways in which white supremacy is not in the best interest of anyone, including white folks, forcing us to trade in our humanity for power and privilege.



Mutual Interest

We use the term 'mutual interest' to help us move from the idea of helping others, or just thinking about what is good for us, to understanding that our own liberation as white people, our own humanity, is intertwined with racial justice. Mutual interest means we cannot overcome the challenges we face unless we work for racial justice. It means our own freedom is bound up in the freedom of people of color.

While that is, of course, true, the cost of white privilege and white supremacy for white people is nothing short of trading in humanity for the illusion of comfort. In order to cash in on the privileges and benefits of white supremacy, white people must fear, disown, demean, ignore, dehumanize, exoticize, murder, incarcerate, and segregate ourselves from the majority of humanity.

Naming the ways in which white supremacy wounds white people is a way to move past the "helping" or "service" model to become "co-conspirators" and "comrades" in the movement for racial justice.



None Are Free Until All Are Free

"Perfectionism is white supremacy by another name." For white supremacy to thrive there must always be a subordinate cast to oppress.

Any person at any time can become part of a marginalized community through not fault of their own.

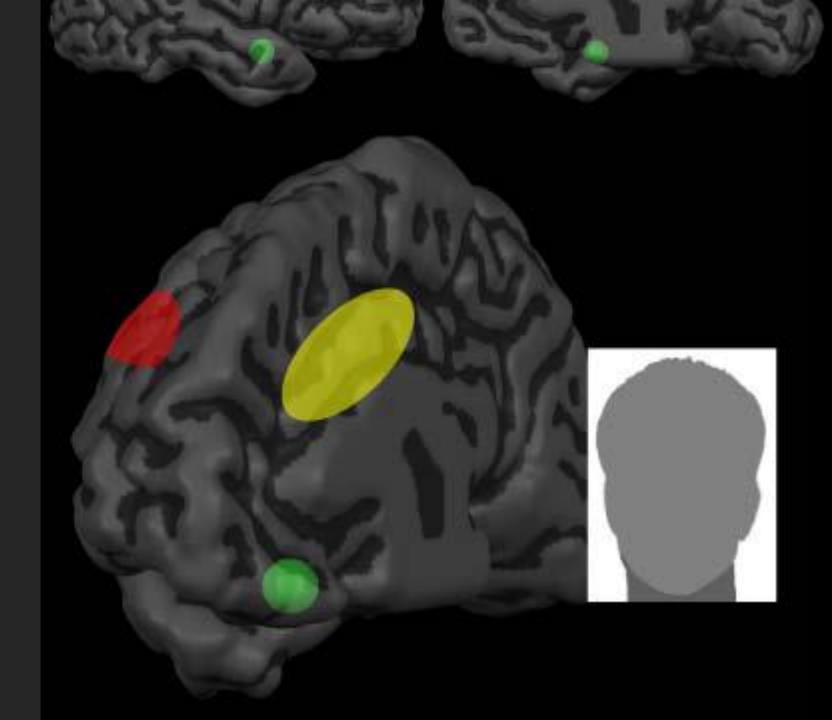
White people who do not fit the picture of perfection that is deemed the prototype of whiteness are at risk of being castigated and banished from white supremacy society

The Neural Basis of Implicit Attitudes

Amygdala involved in automatic evaluation of socially relevant stimuli

Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC) = <u>Detects</u> stimuli

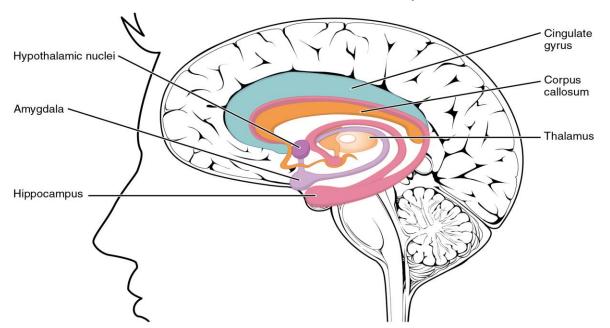
Prefrontal cortex = <u>regulates the</u> <u>amygdala's response</u>



Implicit & Explicit Bias

EXPLICIT BIAS

- Person is aware of their evaluation of a group
- Believes evaluation to be correct
- Explicit bias toward ethnic/racial groups has declined and now considered unacceptable

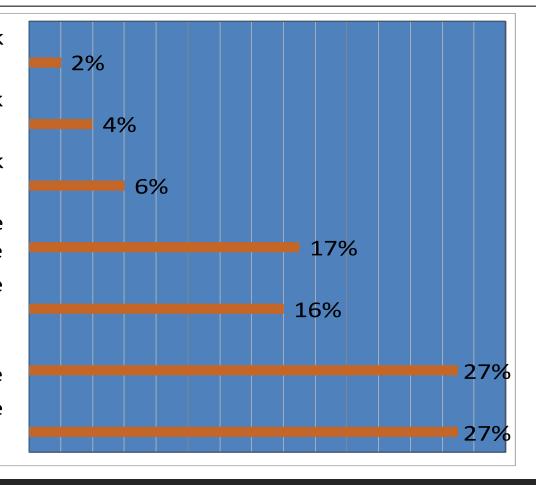


IMPLICIT ATTITUDES

- Automatically triggered
- Does not require any endorsement or attention for expression
- Operates in an unintentional, often unconscious manner
- •Can be activated quickly and unknowingly by situational cues (skin color, accent)
- •Influence behavior without awareness
- Common and persistent

732,881 IAT Scores for Race Task July 2000 – May 2006

Strong Automatic preference for Black people compared to White people Moderate Automatic preference for Black people compared to White people Slight automatic preference for Black people compared to White people Little to no automatic preference between Black and White people Slight automatic preference for White people compared to Black people Moderate Automatic preference for White people compared to Black people Strong Automatic preference for White people compared to Black people



Impact of Implicit Bias

- •70% of people in the US display an anti-Black bias using the IAT (Nosek, Greenwald, Banaji, 2005)
- Individuals with a stronger Anti-Black bias reported greater explicit prejudice against Blacks and had greater negative interactions with a Black experimenter (McConnell & Liebold, 2001)
- Implicit Bias is not altered by wanting to look good for others (social desirability bias, Nosek, Greenwald & Banaji, 2005) or extraneous variables (self-perception, political viewpoints, Nosek, Banaji & Greenwald, 2002)



Different Types of Racism

Historical racism-is America's culture that started <u>at the conception of American culture.</u> The term was used infrequently before the 1500s, was used to identify groups of people with kindship or group connection. The modern-day use of the term "race" is a human invention.

Institutional racism also known as systematic racism- is defined as policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization that results in and support a continued and unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on "race" or ethnic "group."

Interpersonal racism- occurs between individuals. This is the bias that occurs when individuals interact with others and their personal racial beliefs affect their public interactions.



Different Types of Racism

Internalized racism- the perpetuation of <u>discrimination</u> on the basis of "<u>race</u>" by political, economic, or legal institutions and systems.

Structural racism- Cumulative and compounding effects of history, culture, ideology and institutional policies that systemically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color; antiblackness

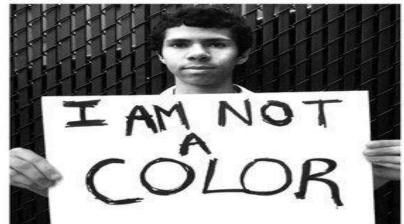






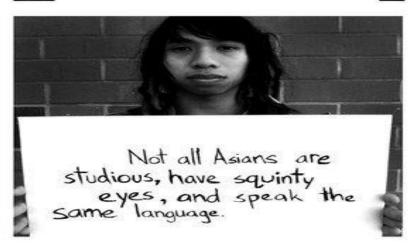




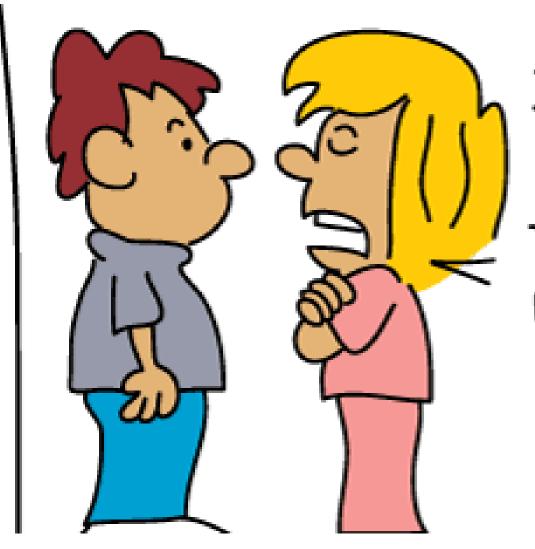












I'M DECIDING WHETHER TO BUILD YOU UP TODAY OR TEAR YOU DOWN.

Lack of understanding = Lack of meaningful relationships

Judging is Easier than Understanding

Lack of Understanding Creates Barriers

Barriers Reenforce Ignorance

And Ignorant of the Cycle, We Perpetuate It



Time For A Change

We must change what we are looking for within self and others so we can change what we see

We can't dive into our greatness until we touch the depth of our suffering

Healing and change takes place within relationships, not policies or laws

We will never be able to see others until we are able to see ourselves

Once we began to see others, then we will be able to appreciate different worldviews with less judgement



Henry Ford

Coming together is a beginning

Keeping together is progress

Working together is SUCCESS



Bias can cause people to vote against their own best interest.

Let's look at government programs.

Government Program Affordable Care Act

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statics reports that white people are the largest beneficiaries when it comes to government assistance program.

Without government assistance programs that were designed to aid the working class, white people would be severely disadvantaged.

According to one report 8.2 million whites, 2.8 million Blacks, 6.2 million Hispanics benefited from the Affordable Care Act.

Opposing the Affordable Care Act has actually been harmful to white people.



Government Program Affirmative Action

Affirmative action is viewed as POC getting unearned privileges.

Even if that was true, Affirmative Action only got POC in the door. They had to prove themselves if they wanted to stay.

Affirmative Action is viewed as reverse racism

Affirmative Action was about equity

Have you ever thought about why such laws are necessary

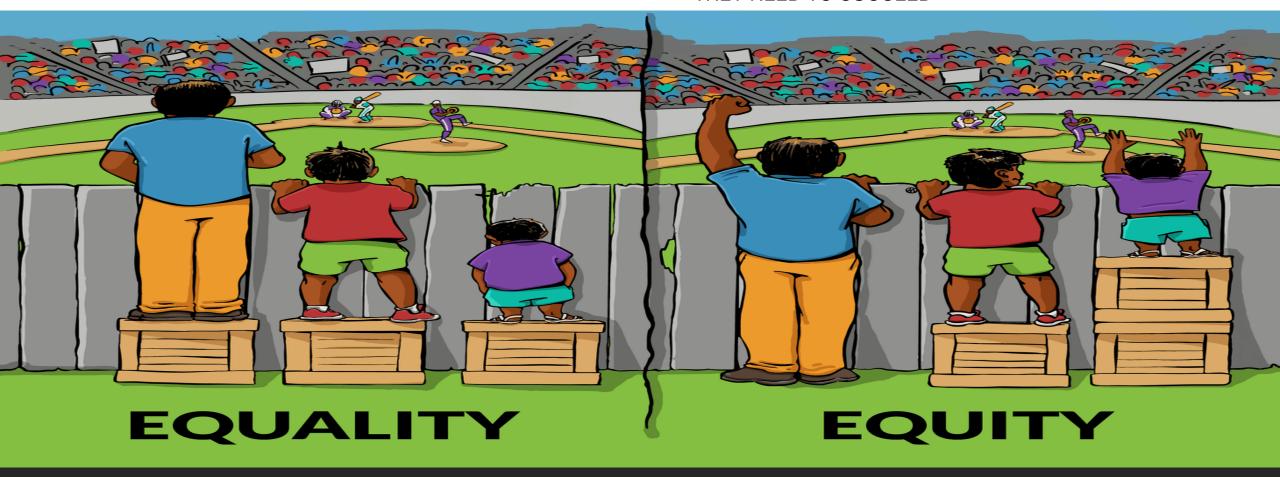
Voting down Affirmative Action hurt white women more than any other geographic. It has been reported that white women were the main beneficiary of Affirmative Action



Which Do You Think Supports White Supremacy?

EQUALITY-EVERYONE IS TREATED THE SAME EXACT WAY, REGARDLESS OF DIFFERENCES

<u>EQUITY-EVERYONE IS PROVIDED WITH WHAT</u>
THEY NEED TO SUCCEED



Environmental Justice

Environmental racism is the disproportionate impact of environmental hazard in the BIPOC communities.

You can't have climate change without sacrifice zones; you can't have sacrifice zones without disposable people, you can't have disposable people without racism.

What many fail to realize is that what is done to BIPOC communities from the Flint water crisis to fracking on Indigenous land has a deleterious effect on everyone.

Upholding white supremacy will ultimately deteriorate the earth that we all share and is therefore harmful to us all.



Stifled Innovations "Diversify"

There is wealth of evidence that indicates that diversity enhance creativity and allow for greater innovation.

Research from McKinsey found that racial and ethnic diversity also led to greater financial returns for corporations.

When there is no diversity within a group, the same ideas, thoughts and beliefs create an echo chamber.

Refusing to hire people of different racial backgrounds will disadvantage companies, no matter how successful they've been in the past.





White Supremacy & Trauma

White Supremacy is traumatic for all of us. It creates expectations and standards to live by, that are unattainable for most. When we come up short, we either blame ourselves or look outside ourselves for someone or something to blame, creating a divisions between our shared humanity and predicaments. White supremacy strips us of our humanity and true connection to others

Naydya

Illusions Created by Awareness

 We believe that we can control more about ourselves and our universe than we actually can

We believe that we know WHAT our preferences are and WHY we have them

However...

- Human behavior is the result of both implicit and explicit attitudes
- The more we avoid, ignore, or deny, something the more we are to believe that we have mastery over it!
- The reality is.....it's just one more thing stored in your nervous system

Interventions that Work

Kleinman's 8 Questions

- 1. What do you call the problem?
- 2. What do you think has caused the problem?
- 3. Why do you think it started when it did?
- 4. What do you think the sickness does? How does it work?
- 5. How severe is the sickness? Will it have a long or a short course?
- 6. What kind of treatment do you think the patient should receive?
- 7. What are the chief problems the sickness has caused?
- 8. What do you fear most about the sickness?











In Conclusion

"I am ready to stop resisting, and to start existing, as my full and authentic self...

The truth is, I am what the world looks like, you are what the world looks like.

Collectively, WE are what the world looks like.

like.

And in order for our systems to reflect that, they don't have to create a new reality... they just have to accept the one we already live in."