Racism 101: America’s Racial Legacy

**Race is a social construct, NOT a biological truth**

* Racism is the product of white supremacy & capitalism *{Ibram X. Kendi: How to Be an Antiracist}*

America was founded upon:

* The attempted genocide of the indigenous people of this land *{I say attempted b/c the indigenous people of this land continue to be a presence throughout this occupied land}*
* Being given blankets infected with small pox
* Outright violence
* Outright theft of land & pretense of treaties not honored
* The enslavement of Africans
* Breeding & selling of Africans

Other crimes against humanity in the name of religious freedom, scientific racism, progress, profit & the comfort of the whiteness

**1600-1800s African Enslavement:**

* In the 18th century Science joined the justification brigade when a German scientist made up the concept of genetic differences based on race. When comparing skulls of individuals from different regions, “Blue-man-bach” deems the European skull to be the best *(DeGruy, 2017)*. From here a snowball effect took place throughout Europe. Placing the white race @ the top & the African race @ the bottom laying the framework for scientific racism. It has been proven through genetics that regardless of race humans are 99.9% the same.
* Through the manipulation of religion & science people of African descent were deemed as inherently and immutably debased. Stating “No amount of training, education, or good treatment could make him the equal of a white man.”
* Dr. Samuel Cartwright a southern physician practicing in Louisiana in 1858 taught that slavery improved the morals of Black people by ‘arousing them from natural indolence.…stating…they [Negros] needed government in everything or they would run to excess”.
  + **What current stereotype does this mimic about Black people today  {that we are lazy & many of us are on welfare, that we aren’t educated or smart [was actually told this by a future nursing student when sharing her bias], that we lack self-control}?**
* Harvard Ph.D. graduate Theodore Lothrop Stoddard, a highly publicized advocate of eugenics & scientific racism argued “We know that our America is a White America...And the overwhelming weight of both historical and scientific evidence shows that only so long as the American people remain White will its institutions, ideals, and culture continue to fit the temperament of its inhabitants - and hence continue to endure.”  I want to point out for Theodore it wasn’t just a black & white issue his thoughts applied to all people of color & anyone else that does not fit into the inner circle on the wheel in front of you.
* **When it comes to our systems & institutions whose ideals & values have been & are still used to establish policy?**
* **Whose story is centered when it comes to social norms? Who sets the standard for what is “normal” behaviors, education practices, style of communication, methods of greeting, medical recommendations & interventions?**
* **When you watch the news who are the people frequently blamed for any given situation?**

**1600-1871 Treaty Making Era:**

* As the story of this land continues amidst the background of enslavement which thanks to religious & scientific justification helped to ease any cognitive dissonance that arose as a result of witnessing the inhumane treatment of Africans. There was a simultaneous effort to acquire land & build community for white settlers.
* The British rule released ownership of Turtle Island to the colonizers of this land based on the Doctrine of Discovery which is rooted in religious bias & racism. And then within a colonizer-based legal system made it “legal” to continue to use the premise of discovery to obtain land in the future.
* **How can you transfer ownership of something you never truly owned in the first place?**
* **Whose definition of what is lawful is centered? Who is left out of this process? Why?**
* **To who’s benefit were these actions taken? Why?**
* **What message does this seen to the Indigenous People of this land as well as white settlers?**

**1830-1850 Reservation Era:**

All illusions of niceties were thrown out the window and it was simply a snatch & grab for settlers resulting in the “Trail of Tears” for the Indigenous People of this occupied land

**1860-1880s Asian Immigration Era & Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882:**

During this time in history: Indigenous People were being forced off their lands into reservations, African Americans & abolitionists are protesting slavery, & here comes the American civil war 1861-1865, emancipation proclamation went to effect Jan 1, 1863, and the last slaves were freed June 19, 1865, aka Juneteenth.

* **Here in Seattle:** here is a Local example of the impact of colonizer occupation that continues today: In the treaty of Point Elliott The Duwamish Tribe was legit enough to be able to sign the treaty that resulted in the loss of 54,000 acres of land but not legit enough to be a federally recognized tribe AFTER the land had been taken.
* **1886:** Here in Seattle:  people of Chinese descent were driven out & those who returned were expected to work as servants in the homes of wealthy white people.
* **Why do you think only people of Asian descent were the focus of this ban when only 22 years before they were freely allowed to not only immigrate but also work?**
* **Does this remind you of any current political patterns?**

**1865-1866 Black Codes:**

I want to highlight that although Black Codes were deemed too harsh they were simply replaced by a set of codes that were more palatable helping to ease the cognitive dissonance of white & yet just as oppressive for Blacks.

**1887-1930s Assimilation Era & Indian Citizen Act:**

Starting with the Indian Civilization Act of 1819, the US enacted laws and policies to establish and support Indian boarding schools across the country. For more than 150 years, Indigenous children were taken from their communities and forced into boarding schools that focused on assimilation.

* US interior secretary, Deb Haaland talked about the federal government’s attempt to wipe out tribal identity, language, and culture and how that past has continued to manifest itself through long-standing trauma, cycles of violence and abuse, premature deaths, mental disorders, and substance abuse.
* National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, which reported that by 1926, more than 80% of Indigenous school-age children were attending boarding schools that were run either by the federal government or religious organizations. *{I want to pause & point out that this just ended 91 years ago, my great grandmother who I knew until she passed away when I was 12 was surviving her own traumas as a WOC during these times.}*

**Again, I ask**

* **When it comes to our systems & institutions whose ideals & values are used to establish policy?**
* **Whose story is centered when it comes to social norms?**
* **Who sets the standard for what is “normal” behaviors, education practices, style of communication, methods of greeting, medical recommendations & interventions?**
* **Who does this force to assimilate?**

**1890-1900s Jim Crow Laws:**

Jim Crow Laws replaced Black Codes: Jim Crow laws remained in place until the Civil Rights Movement of the ’60s

**Here in Seattle Jim Crow laws meant:**

* For most of its history, Seattle was a segregated city, as committed to white supremacy as any location in America. People of color were excluded from most **jobs**, most **neighborhoods** and **schools**, and many **stores,** **restaurants, hotels**, and other commercial establishments, **even hospitals**. As in other western states, the system of severe racial discrimination in Seattle targeted not just African Americans but also Native Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, people of Mexican ancestry, and also, at times, Jews.
* Local hospitals that participated in Jim Crow policies include: Swedish, Virginia Mason, & Providence Hospital. This means these hospitals would not serve African Americans & Asian Americans people in need of health care.
* Cross burning wasn’t restricted to the south, in 1958 in the University District a couple of mix race provided boarding to African Americans students who were denied housing and as a result one night found a cross burning in their front yard when other fear tactics didn’t make them adhere to the social norms of the time.
* There were also Sundown rules 1964-65: African Americans were not allowed to be in “white neighborhoods” after dark, Black men in particular would be stopped & questioned. **Does this sound familiar?** Although sundown rules have been stricken from law the mindset that allowed for the creation & enforcement of these laws clearly still exists.

**1914-1918 Guest Worker Program:**

We join in WWI taking men away to fight, the Chinese Exclusion act which didn’t end until 1943 is still in effect preventing immigrants from China from coming to this occupied land & during the time of both images African Americans were fighting for basic human rights. And the Indigenous People of this land had been exiled to reservations where they were legally per the colonizer’s laws prohibited from engaging in any cultural practices native to their customs. So we welcome immigrant workers from Mexico.

* **To who’s benefit were these actions taken? Why?**

**1942 Japanese American Internment Camps:**

During the time of this slide Indigenous people were being forced to assimilate to white Christian culture, African Americans were fighting against oppressive Jim Crow laws & for basic human rights, Chinese immigrants were being banned, Mexicans were being used as the current labor source & we gather together all people of Japanese origin on the West Coast & Midwest & incarcerated them in internment camps. Any land that was owned or resided upon was burned or stolen. **Here in Seattle,** 60 families, who worked the land in Bellevue for decades lost everything. Before the war, Japanese Americans supplied 75% of produce grown in the region.

**1942-1964 Bracero Program:**

Now remember we just incarcerated an entire population of people who were working in the areas of agriculture & the railway. We have been fighting in WW2, the formal civil rights movement starts in 1954, there is an ongoing effort to Indigenous People to assimilate. The eugenics movement made it legal to force sterilization of POC, criminals, unmarried mothers, & people with disabilities 1907-1963. We were fighting terrorism & oppression overseas while engaging in oppression & terrorism against the people living on this land.

* Simultaneously going on was “ICE” similar tactics to deport undocumented workers citing low wages and social ills on undocumented immigrants.
* **Does this sound familiar? How so?**

**1945-1961 Termination Era:**

During this time, the eugenics movement is law in many states, WW2 ends in 1945, Japanese Americans are released from internment camps in 1946, African Americans continue their fight for human rights & to be free of oppression, formal Civil Rights movement starts in 1954, The Chinese exclusion act ended in 1943. And for Indigenous People it begins the:

* Termination era where actions were shaped by a series of laws and policies with the intent of assimilating Native Americans into mainstream American society. Assimilation was not new since the belief that indigenous people should abandon their traditional lives and become what the government considers "civilized" had been the basis of policy for centuries. However, what was new was the sense of urgency, that with or without consent, tribes must be terminated and begin to live "as Americans."[2] Because the forced assimilation schools weren’t enough.
* To that end, Congress set about ending the special relationship between tribes and the federal government. the policy ended the federal government's recognition of sovereignty of tribes, trusteeship over Indian reservations, and the exclusion of state law's applicability to Native persons. So much for those treaties.
* And, Remember that loophole of “continuous occupation”, here it is being used to the advantage of colonizers.
* **Whose culture is being centered?**
* **Whose definition of what is lawful is centered? Who is left out of this process? Why?**
* **To who’s benefit were these actions taken? Why?**

**Here in Seattle:**

* From the 1910s through the 1960s, many Seattle neighborhoods and King County suburbs practiced overt and total racial exclusion. White-only clauses and other restrictions (which sometimes excluded Jews as well as people of color) can be found today in property deeds for many neighborhoods. This made it illegal to sell to people who were of African American or Asian American descent. Preventing racial minorities from purchasing homes in specific King County neighborhoods, segregating Seattle, and shaping its racial demography.
* Some of the most notorious neighborhoods include: Blue Ridge, Capitol Hill, Clyde Hill, Innis Arden, View Ridge, Wedgewood, Broadmoor, Mount Baker, Sandy Point,
* Unlike in the South Seattle schools were not segregated by law but as a result of residential segregation. In 1966 there were 9 “black schools” in the Central District & nearly 100 “white schools” in other parts of the city.
* In 1964, Seattle voted 2 to 1 against banning discrimination in housing. It wasn’t until 1968 when the federal government passed a law banning housing discrimination that Seattle under the pressure of protestors that a law was finally passed.
* It wasn’t until the 1980’s that desegregation become noticeable in neighborhoods. And even today North Seattle remains 75% white while non-white populations have moved South.
* A 2014 fair housing test found discriminatory behavior connected to either race, national organs, gender or sexual orientation in 66% of rental properties tested
* **How is this history of discrimination & oppression show up in your schools today?**
* **How does it affect the resources & support that is available to the students we serve?**

During our walk through hx as we neared the last 100 yrs, I pointed out the generational connection because I want you to see that “legal freedom” for the BIPOC community has only existed for 2 generations, which means if you are in your early 40’s like me two generations back is your grandparents and as we have witnesses legal freedom is not the same as equity nor is it liberation. For 4 generations before that segregation was the law of the land and for 13 generations before that slavery & genocide were a daily reality. Hostile acts of genocide & enslavement continue to be a daily reality for many through policy & practices that center on “whiteness” & ongoing disregard for the lives of black & brown people.

* Theft of land – oil pipeline at standing rock, destruction of indigenous lands through logging & other pipeline projects.
* The legal enslavement of African Americans & Latinx Americans– through mass incarceration
* Immigration laws that unjustly target black & brown bodies