Race in America, Part 1: How Did We Get Here?

Please share this information with the participants from today’s session:

1. The History Eileen read follows.

2. A Reading list is attached: Stamped from the Beginning by Ibram X Kendi (also available as an audiobook for free from the library), Color of Law by Richard Rothstein, New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander and three of the best books on the list for deepening understanding about the history that has led to this point

3. Video Links- These are the links that were shared during today's session:

   Conversation with White People on Race: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXow7oIFyIM

   Dr. Joy's Trip to the Grocery Store: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf9QBnPK6Yg

   Jane Elliott's Being Black Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf9QBnPK6Yg

4. Follow Up: If you want to dig deeper into today's history, please watch this piece prior to next week's session.

   Race: The Power of an Illusion is a 3-part series produced by PBS
   Part 3: The House We Live In does a deep dive into how the wealth gap was created https://vimeo.com/133506632
400 years ago white people brought black people to the United States, Caribbean and South America and enslaved them. And sold them. And treated them as less than human. For 250 years. In the USA, while white men built the country and created its laws and its systems of government, 10, 15 generations of white families got to grow and flourish and make choices that could make their lives better. Enslaved persons were forced to build homes, government and private buildings, till land, manage the livestock, cook the food, and look after and wet nurse children with no compensation, while living and working in horrid conditions. It was against the law for any enslaved person to read, write or be educated and Black women were used as breeding tools to bare more enslaved persons often by the very people who enslaved them. This was also the birth of colorism as we know it. Lighter black people were given more privilege and worked in the house and darker black people were given less privilege and made to work in harder conditions – a practice used to create division between black people as a mechanism to control uprisings and rebellion.

And then 150 years ago white people "freed" black people from slavery with conditions. There were laws created that made it impossible for them to vote. Or to own land. Or to have the same constitutional rights as white people. To intimidate and assert control, lynchings began in the 1880’s. Someone was lynched, on average, every four days from 1889 to 1929.

And then monuments were erected all across the country glorifying people who actively had fought to keep them enslaved. All the while another 5, 10 generations of white families got to grow and accumulate wealth and gain land and get an education.

During the Great Depression, the New Deal provided many benefits to help people who were struggling. Social Security was enacted to provide a safety net. However, sharecroppers and domestic workers were not eligible for social security benefits. The majority of Black workers in the South worked as sharecroppers or domestic workers in the century after slavery. As a result, many Black workers did not get to take part in the economic recovery brought on by the New Deal.

When the United States entered World War II, over 1 million Black GI’s joined the military to serve their country despite not receiving many of the rights the country promised. Upon returning from the war, the GI bill allowed for soldiers to earn money for education, buy homes, and secure jobs. Over 100,000 black GI’s tried to access the GI bill to enroll in college, but only 20,000 were able to enroll in school due to segregation policies. Between 1934 and 1962, the federal government underwrote 120 billion dollars in new housing. Less than 2% went to non-whites.

And then 60 years ago with the Voting Rights Act, we made it "legal" for black people to vote and be "free" from discrimination - nominally. But many people still fought to keep schools segregated. And closed off neighborhoods to white people only. And made it harder for black people to get bank loans, or get quality education or health care, or even to marry a white person. All while another 2-3 generations of white families got to grow and pass their wealth down to their children and their children's children.

And then we entered an age where we had the technology to make public the things that were already happening in private-- the beatings, the stop and frisk laws, the unequal distribution of
justice, the police brutality (policing began in America as slave patrols designed to catch runaway
slaves). And only now, after 400+ years and 20+ generations of a white head start, are we STARTING
to truly have a dialog about what it means to be black.

Understand that white privilege doesn't mean you haven't suffered or fought or worked hard. It
doesn't mean white people are responsible for the sins of our ancestors. It doesn’t mean you can’t
be proud of who you are.

It does mean that we need to acknowledge that the system our ancestors created is built FOR white
people. And it does mean that black people are disadvantaged because of the color of our skin and
it does mean that we owe it to our neighbors-- of all colors-- to acknowledge that and work to make
our world more equitable.
**Racial Equity Reading List**

**Books**

How To Be An Antiracist – Ibram X. Kendi

“Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” - Beverly Daniel Tatum

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness – Michelle Alexander

White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of our Racial Divide – Carol Anderson

Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America – Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome – Dr. Joy Degruy

We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know: White Teachers, Multicultural Schools – Gary Howard

Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America – Ibram X. Kendi

The Color of Law – Richard Rothstein


Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence – Derald Wing Sue

So You Want To Talk About Race – Ijeoma Oluo

**Racial Equity Websites**

Racial Equity Tools - www.racialequitytools.org


Racial Equity Institute – www.racialequityinstitute.com

Putting Racism on the Table – www.puttingracismonthetable.org

Policy Link – www.policylink.org

**Podcasts**

Seeing White – 14 part series exploring whiteness - sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/

Code Switch Podcast – https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/

Intersectionality Matters – https://aapf.org/podcast

**Contact Intersections**

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