

What's Racism Got to Do With It?!

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

SH.8.CC.11 - Define racism and intersectionality and describe their impacts on sexual health

TARGET GRADE: Grade 8

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Computer with PowerPoint and Internet (or video saved offline)
- Projector, Screen, and Speakers
- **PowerPoint Presentation:** [What's Racism Got to Do With It?](#)
- Newsprint and/or white board
- Newsprint titled, "Racism"
- Markers (for dry or flip chart)
- Masking tape
- AMAZE's [Intersectionality Video](#)
- Homework (options below)
- Teacher Resource - one per teacher

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Recognize at least two forms of racism [Knowledge]
2. Define intersectionality [Knowledge]
3. State at least two ways sexual health can be affected by racism [Knowledge]

LESSON RATIONALE:

Race is a social construct; however, that doesn't negate the very real, harmful impact racism has on people of color, particularly Black, brown, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC). This lesson teaches students that racism is not only individual and interpersonal but also systemic - the institutions and structures that use racial prejudice to uphold policies and procedures that benefit the privileged and oppresses communities of color. While this lesson is beneficial, it is important to infuse discussions of race and racial justice within daily instruction. Understanding how racism impacts sexual health and wellness - particularly for racialized people - is paramount to providing inclusive and affirming sex education. Sex education has a history of centering white, cisgender, heterosexual people, which can promote harm and/or erasure of everyone else. One size does not fit all. Not only do we all come to our classrooms with different lived experiences, it is undeniable that perceptions and biases can affect said experiences. As educators, we have the power and privilege to empower and educate young people, honor their identities, and model what equity can look like.

ADVANCED PREPARATION:

- Display class ground rules
- Please read the lesson plan in its entirety and decide if you will use PPT slides or prep newsprint ahead of time
- Please watch the AMAZE video beforehand - both to prepare for facilitation and to confirm your comfort with the content
- It is in your best interest to do additional research outside of this activity. Please see the resource materials attached to the lesson. Even if you are well versed in racial justice, you need to understand the importance of keeping current with examples and shifting language. We have an amazing responsibility!

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- Although this is a stand-alone lesson, planning context behind placement would provide opportunities to weave in previously covered topics; it could also help with time management.

That way, conversations can focus on understanding racism rather than clarifying sexuality-specific content. Some questions to reflect on when planning this lesson:

- Has race, racism, and/or oppression been mentioned previously?
- Would this lesson be most effective at the beginning of your class as part of the foundation? Between certain lessons that provide helpful context?
- What lessons would best equip participants to be present with this content while applying what they've previously learned about sex(uality)?
- What would the impact be if I facilitated this lesson at the end of our time together?

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1:

Start by letting the students know that today's lesson is going to be about racism and sexual health. Say, **“These topics can be challenging or can make us feel a variety of emotions so we're going to set the stage, remind ourselves of our group agreements (or ‘how we treat each other’ if agreements are not used) and how important it is to also take care of yourself.”**

Note to the Teacher: Remember to use trauma-informed strategies in the classroom. For example, informing the students of potential activating or triggering content. Below are a few resources

- Cardea's [Guide to Trauma-Informed Sex Education \(PDF\)](#)
- Advocates For Youth's [Trauma Informed Approaches When Teaching Sex Education \(YouTube\)](#)

This is also a perfect opportunity for you to reinforce that our culture, backgrounds, community, etc. inform the way we live our lives - race and sexuality included.

Let your students know if you will be taking questions throughout or waiting until an allotted Q&A time (and set a time for that). Another option is to have students submit their questions at the end of class so you can commit to answering them the next time you meet (set aside 5 minutes for this).

Say, **“Before we can discuss racism in sexual health, let's break down what racism is. What comes up for you when you hear the word racism?”** Write responses on board or separate newsprint titled, “Racism.” Leave room next to or around each response for later.

(5 minutes)

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STEP 2:

Begin your PowerPoint presentation (unless transferred to newsprint). **People can have prejudiced views based on a number of social identities.** Provide the definition of racial prejudice either on newsprint or Slide 2.

Then, proceed to explain the definition of racism on Slide 3 .

Racism = Racial Prejudice + Social and Institutional Power

Discuss the definition of social and institutional power on slides 4 and 5. Say, **“Often, when we talk about racism, we focus on the stereotypes we believe about ourselves and each other. These are forms of *individual racism*.”** Move on to slide 6. Say something like, **“However, when we talk about racism and how it impacts sexual health, it is important to highlight the institutions and structures that uphold policies and procedures that unjustly target and discriminate against Black, brown, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC). This is called systemic racism.”** Proceed to Slide 7 .

Note to the Teacher: At times, racism can be misinterpreted as racial prejudice, particularly when it comes to discrimination against dominant social identities (i.e. white people). If an example is mentioned on the list or in discussion, such as the mythical concept of “reverse racism” (i.e. the belief that Black people can be racist to white people), this is a great time to have that teachable moment. You can also use the space around the shared examples to confirm and clarify.

(10 minutes)

STEP 3:

Move on to slide 8 to discuss how racism is connected to sexual health. Say, **“Racism can affect the overall wellness of communities of color. That means our sexual health too!”** Go over slides, ask the class which type of racism each example is, and their reasons behind their answer. Reveal the answer in the subsequent slide and expand on the racist attitude and how it has to do with sex(uality).

Slide 9 is an example of Structural racism because it involves multiple schools across a district. **Redlining** is a historically common practice in US history and, in this instance, affected this young person’s ability to receive comprehensive sex ed.

Slide 11 is an example of interpersonal racism because the nurse stereotyped the only student of color in her class, assumed she was on birth control and didn’t ask anyone else. The nurse demonstrated that she believes in the stereotype that young people of color -particularly Black girls - are more likely to be on birth control which may also be connected to hypersexualization.

Slide 13 is an example of institutional racism because the organization that ran the blood drive denied the couple’s blood because they were Black gay men. Blood drives have a **history of restricting donations**, particularly with cisgender men who have sex with cisgender men, due to HIV/AIDS stigma.

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Slide 15 is an example of internalized racism because initially, they loved their hair until they started to believe what they were hearing at home, school, and their relationship. Even though the guidance counselor might've meant well, this was a microaggression that perpetuates harmful generalizations about hair - this is called **texturism**. It can also be considered an example of anti-Black racism.

Ask the students to share their thoughts and feelings. If the students are quiet, give them that moment to process the information as well as get comfortable with silence.

Note to the Teacher: A great classroom and time management tip is to ask for a set number of students to share (i.e. "I'd like 3 students to share").

(10 minutes)

STEP 4:

Say, **"This country has a history of racism and it affects us all in very different ways. Black, brown, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) are often discriminated against because of their race. There are many rules and regulations upheld to benefit the privilege while oppressing others. Let's break this down."**

Take newsprint or write on the board in two columns the words, "privileged" and "oppressed." Ask the students which social identities they think are considered privileged in this country and which are oppressed. The lists may include:

Privileged: white, cisgender, heterosexual, wealthy, able-bodied, thin, man, documented, Christian, English speaking, masculine, college graduate, degreed, light-skinned, straight hair

Oppressed: Black, brown, people of color, trans, nonbinary, queer, disabled, lower SES, fat, over 65, non-Abrahamic religions/spiritualities, English language learners, undocumented, feminine, no higher education, dark-skinned, kinky hair

Note to the Teacher: There may be a moment where young people may feel "othered." This may be an opportunity to hold space for oppressed young people and course-correct those with dominant identities (which is its own form of holding space). Assigning homework may be helpful (see options at the end).

You can conclude this portion at any time and simply inform them that this is not an exhaustive list. Conclude this section by revisiting what privilege and oppression mean. Say, "we all experience these privileges and oppressions differently, especially when so many of us exist at the intersections. This is why understanding the next term is so important! Let's watch this clip."

(10 minutes)

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STEP 5:

Play [AMAZE's Intersectionality Video](#). A few points to weave into the conversation:

- coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Black Legal Scholar and Civil Rights Advocate
- created initially to highlight the specific oppression experienced by Black women, living at the intersections of at least sexism (different by that experienced by white women) and racism (different by that experienced by Black men)
- we have individual identities that intersect in ways that impact how we are viewed, understood, and treated
- Useful quotes:
 - *"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."* — Audre Lorde, *Zami*
 - *"... the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. The theory suggests that—and seeks to examine how—various biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age, and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. The theory proposes that we should think of each element or trait of a person as inextricably linked with all of the other elements in order to fully understand one's identity."* — Sonya Renee Taylor explaining Intersectionality, **The Body is Not an Apology**

Note to the Teacher: Additional resources to discuss Intersectionality can be found in the [Teacher's Guide](#).

Conclude with a brief discussion either with the entire class, as a think-pair-share, or anonymously (i.e. Annotate on Zoom, Google Jamboard, Padlet, index cards with the entire class participating).

Questions to consider:

- What message are you taking home with you?
- What is something new you learned?
- What is something you will still think about after today's class?
- What is one thing you think that could be helpful to challenge racism in sexual health?
- What is one thing you can think of to better support the people in the examples mentioned?

(10 minutes)

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RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Step 2 is designed to address the first learning objective; Steps 4 and 5 address the second learning objective; and Step 3 addresses the third learning objective.

HOMEWORK:

Below are optional examples:

- A crossword puzzle could be created with the key terms such as: racism, the different types of racism, sexual health, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality. There are several puzzle makers online (i.e. Discover Education)
- A reflection assignment. Some options are:
 - Choose a character from your favorite show or book. How does racism affect/not affect them? What other identities are impacted? What sexual health issues (or issues in general) could they have? What privileges do they have and how would their sexual health benefit?
 - We all come from a variety of identities, experiences, and history that make us who we are. What are your social identities? How have they affected how you are viewed, understood, and treated?
 - What is one sexual health resource you go to? How do they express their support for different identities? Which? Do they talk about racism and sexual health? Intersectionality? How so?

Note to the Teacher: The homework options can also be a great opportunity to invite students to have these conversations with a trusted adult. For example, they can reflect on their social identities and/or search for resources together.

[Written by Cindy Lee Alves for Advocates for Youth.]

Teacher Resources About Racism and Sexual Health

- Not Intended to be Distributed to Students

The following resources will help prepare educators to effectively implement this lesson particularly the PowerPoint presentation.

RESOURCES FOR SLIDE 9

[A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America](#)

[Contract Buying Robbed Black Families In Chicago Of Billions](#)

[The Legacy of Redlining - Resources](#)

RESOURCES FOR SLIDE 11

[Ain't Nobody Got Time for That: Anti-Black Girl Violence in the Era of #SayHerName](#)

[Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood](#)

[Hollywood Played a Role in Hypersexualizing Asian Women](#)

[Patient perspective: I experienced racial bias in my postpartum care](#)

[Provider Bias in Long-Acting Reversible Contraception \(LARC\) Promotion and Removal: Perceptions of Young Adult Women](#)

RESOURCES FOR SLIDE 13

[FDA considers lifting restrictions on blood donations by gay and bi men](#)

[ban the ban: an argument against the 12 month blood donation deferral for men who have sex with men](#)

[Science Or Stigma: Potential Challenges To The Fda's Ban On Gay Blood](#)

RESOURCES FOR SLIDE 15

[Call It What It Is: Anti-Blackness](#)

[How hair discrimination impacts Black Americans in their personal lives and the workplace](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ABOUT INTERSECTIONALITY

[Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics](#) by Kimberlé Crenshaw

[Kimberlé Crenshaw: The urgency of intersectionality](#)

[Intersectionality, explained: meet Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term](#)