

## ANTI-RACISM TOOLKIT

# Anti-racism: Take action to confront and reject racism

It is not enough to say that you are not racist or that you are against racism. To actively fight social inequality, you must behave as an anti-racist and stand up and reject racist behaviors and policies. This guide will help you better understand anti-racism and the steps you can take as an individual to confront and reject racism.

*“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”* Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### What is it

Anti-racism involves “taking stock of and eradicating policies that are racist, that have racist outcomes, and making sure that ultimately, we’re working towards a much more egalitarian, emancipatory society.”

Source: Malini Ranganathan, from the Antiracist Research and Policy Center

“In a society that privileges white people and [whiteness](#), racist ideas are considered normal throughout our media, culture, social systems, and institutions. Historically, racist views justified the unfair treatment and oppression of people of color (including enslavement, segregation, internment, etc.). We can be led to believe that racism is only about individual mindsets and actions, yet racist policies also contribute to our polarization. While individual choices are damaging, racist ideas in policy have a widespread impact by threatening the equity of our systems and the fairness of our institutions. To create an equal society, we must commit to making unbiased choices and being anti-racist in all aspects of our lives.”

Source: [Being Anti-Racist](#), from the National Museum on African American History and Culture

### Why do it

Taking action to confront and reject racism and discrimination is a critical role for all of us, and especially for those in management and leadership roles.

As people managers, you play a critical role in moving toward an environment where “diversity of thought, experience and approach is represented in all sectors of our education and research enterprise; all members of the campus community feel they belong and are supported regardless of their background, identity, or affiliations; and all members of the campus community have broad access to the opportunities and benefits of Stanford.” Source: [Stanford Diversity Statement](#)

So why work to be actively anti-racist? Because it’s a core value of being a member of the Stanford community, and your role puts you in a key position to embrace these ideals and take action in practical ways.

The work of anti-racism can’t stop next month, next year, or when the news cycle moves on. Furthermore, your work as an anti-racist can begin now. Anti-racism can’t be something people think about only when it’s convenient or newsworthy. It has to be a commitment that you make to act differently and consistently to end oppression. Source: [How to be an antiracist: Anti Racism, explained](#)

### How to do it

In his book, [How to Be an Antiracist](#), Dr. Ibram X. Kendi states: “I wanted to convey that this sort of striving to be anti-racist is an ongoing journey.”



## How to do it *continued*

Examining your place in a racist society can be overwhelming. The above chart may help you gauge where you might be on your journey towards becoming an Anti-Racist. Source: [Anti-Racism and Social Justice @ Pitt Libraries: Where to Start](#); this chart was adapted by Andrew M. Ibrahim MD, MSc from "Who Do I Want to Be During COVID-19" chart (original author unknown) and is re-used from [Black Life Matters: Anti-Racism Resources for Social Workers and Therapists](#), June 2020

Moving from the **Fear Zone** to the **Learning Zone** requires you to grow your awareness of racial injustice and inequality. Rather than just acknowledge the existence of racial inequality, you must seek to understand the personal role you may have played in perpetuating it. This act of awakening is not a one time issue. To be anti anti-racist, you must understand the different ways in which you have benefited from systemic racism. To grow as an anti-racist, you must learn about these issues not to do better in a debate or "say the right things," but rather to inform how you look at society with a critical eye to understand just how deep white privilege runs. This education requires that you listen to the voices of Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples.

Moving through the Fear and Learning Zones and into the **Growth Zone** is often difficult and uncomfortable. It requires you to self-interrogate, looking inward to review the various ways in which you have participated or are currently participating in perpetuating racism. After acknowledging your own role, you are more able to let go of the defensiveness and begin focusing on ways to hold yourself and others accountable. It is when you are in the Growth Zone – once you are deeply aware of racial injustice, have educated yourself about the role of White privilege in society, and acknowledged your own role in perpetuating it – it is in this zone that you are able to take meaningful action.

Source: Adapted from [The Antiracism Starter Kit](#) by L. Glenise Pike

Below are steps you can take through these different zones, on your journey to become an anti-racist:

1. **Learn to recognize and understand your own privilege.** One of the first steps to eliminating racial discrimination is learning to recognize and understand your own privilege. Racial privilege plays out across social, political, economic, and cultural environments. Checking your privilege and using your privilege to dismantle systemic racism are two ways to begin this complex process.

2. **Examine your own biases and consider where they may have originated.** What messages did you receive as a child about people who are different from you? What was the racial and/or ethnic makeup of your neighborhood, school, or religious community? Why do you think that was the case? These experiences produce and reinforce bias, stereotypes, and prejudice, which can lead to discrimination. Examining our own biases can help us work to ensure equality for all.
3. **Challenge the "colorblind" ideology.** It is a pervasive myth that we live in a "post-racial" society where people "don't see color." Perpetuating a "colorblind" ideology actually contributes to racism. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described his hope for living in a colorblind world, he did not mean that we should ignore race. It is impossible to eliminate racism without first acknowledging race. Being "colorblind" ignores a significant part of a person's identity and dismisses the real injustices that many people face as a result of race. We must see color in order to work together for equity and equality.
4. **Stop saying "I'm not racist":** It's not enough to say, "I'm not racist," and often it's a self-serving sentiment. Kendi says people constantly change the definition of what's racist so it doesn't apply to them. We are all racist by virtue of our unconscious and conscious biases. By reflexively defining yourself as not racist, or beyond racism's firm grip, you're making it impossible to see how your own ideas, thoughts, and actions could be indeed racist. Moreover, being anti-racist means moving beyond the "not racist" defense and instead embracing and articulating decidedly anti-racist views and beliefs.
5. **Identify racial inequities and disparities.** Racism yields racial inequities and disparities in every sector of private and public life. That includes in politics, health care, criminal justice, education, income, employment, and home ownership. Being anti-racist means learning about and identifying inequities and disparities that give, in particular, white people, or any racial group, material advantages over people of color.

How to do it *continued*

6. **Champion anti-racist ideas and policies.** One cannot strive to be anti-racist without action, and Kendi says that one way to act is by supporting organizations in your community that are fighting policies that create racial disparities. Kendi recommends using one's power or getting into a position of power to change racist policies in any setting where they exist — school, work, government, etc. Commit to some form of action that has the potential to change racist policies.

In addition to becoming anti-racist, as leaders we have an obligation to stand up and reject racism. Here are five ways you can speak up *and act* against racism and discrimination in the workplace.

1. **Reject visible and invisible signs that others are “Not Welcome Here”:** As a leader, you set the tone for your team. Do you have a clearly stated zero tolerance policy against racism, and other acts of intolerance (i.e., sexual misconduct and discrimination)? As the saying goes, ‘What you allow is what will continue.’ Marginalizing others can be too easy; teamwork only comes with clear guidance and role modeling. Does everyone know where you stand, and why?
2. **Ensure “Do No Harm”:** As a leader, you need to role model anti-racism, which includes actively “calling out” and rejecting racist or discriminatory speech or actions. What happens when someone says something that is out of line? How will you respond when the actions of the group (or an individual) are racist, sexist, or hurtful? It is just as important to respond to and reject microaggressions, which are statements, actions, or incidents that are indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of marginalized groups. (This article includes practical strategies and tips: [How to Respond to Microaggressions](#).)
3. **Refuse to let silence condone racism.** When we let our discomfort with this topic lead to silence or inaction, we are in effect allowing the people who look to us for guidance to interpret our silence and inaction as not caring or agreeing with the racist or discriminatory words being communicated. When faced with inappropriate speech or behavior, the time for action is immediate: Don't let inaction condone racism or discrimination. Tolerating intolerance lets the problem spread. How quickly will you speak up when you see behavior that is tearing people down and destroying your team?
4. **Remember that “Free Speech Doesn't Mean Free Reign”:** Take someone aside to call them on their racist speech. In a private forum, there is a method for expressing yourself in a way that is not intended to incite conflict. Begin in the first person: “When I heard what you said...” or “When I saw what you did...” and explain what it meant to you in a way that's calm and even-handed. Discrimination is a difficult topic, but don't avoid it. Depending on the circumstances, and your role, don't go it alone. Consider who could (and should) join you for this dialogue. The conversation must be a dispassionate retelling of the facts, followed by a first-person discussion of the impact. The conversation isn't a debate, but an understanding that actions have consequences. Share your feelings, and (if you can) the feelings of the team.
5. **Be prepared to take needed action:** Confronting racism at work and at home can mean a difficult dialogue, one that it might feel like we'd rather avoid than have to deal with disagreement and tension. But this is exactly why it's important to learn how to have these difficult conversations and approach them as an opportunity for growth. Here are some actions for you to take as you prepare:
  - Consider carefully the scope of your conversation. Do you wish to convert or change the thinking of a racially insensitive person? That's a tall order. A more realistic goal: reaching understanding and encouraging new behavior. Understanding how words (and actions) can do harm – even unintentionally – can shed a non-confrontational light on unwanted actions. Maybe you can't change minds, but you can close lips. And curb behavior.
  - If you believe the person had malicious or harmful intent (i.e., what they said or did was unambiguously racist, the conversation needs to include HR or senior leadership. Remember that beyond the moral implications of racism, racist remarks foster a hostile and offensive work environment. Be prepared to take disciplinary action.

## How to do it *continued*

### 5. **Be prepared to take needed action** *continued*

Align behavior to your expectations with a conversation that invites appropriate actions—or an appropriate departure, if needed. As a leader, you must share that offensive remarks are counter-productive ... or even dangerous.

### Think about ...

- As I think about racism and anti-racist behaviors, do my behaviors accurately reflect my goal of becoming anti-racist?
- Am I willing to commit to the actions needed to becoming anti-racist?
- Does my team reflect the anti-racist values I am promoting?
- Is this a one-off event or activity for me or am I willing to commit to ongoing dialogues and work needed for racial justice at Stanford?
- Do I have a game plan and understand what I need to do to stand up and reject racism when I see it?

### Talk about ...

A commitment to being anti-racist manifests in our choices. When we encounter interpersonal racism, whether obvious or covert, there are ways to respond and interrupt it. Asking questions is a powerful tool to seek clarity or offer a new perspective. Below are some suggestions to use in conversations when racist behavior occurs:

- Seek clarity: “Tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Offer an alternative perspective: “Have you ever considered \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Speak your truth: “I don’t see it the way you do. I see it as \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Find common ground: “We don’t agree on \_\_\_\_\_ but we can agree on \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Give yourself the time and space you need: “Could we revisit the conversation about \_\_\_\_\_ tomorrow.”
- Set boundaries. “Please do not say \_\_\_\_\_ again to me or around me.”

Source: From the National Museum of African American History and Culture, “Talking about Race” ([Being Anti Racist](#))

## Additional Resources



- [Between the World and Me](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- [How to Be an Antiracist](#) by Ibram X. Kendi (Related: [An Antiracist Reading List](#) from the *New York Times*)
- [So You Want to Talk about Race](#) by Ijeoma Uluo
- [White Fragility](#) by Robin DiAngelo
- [Gather at the Table: The Healing Journey of a Daughter of Slavery and a Son of the Slave Trade](#), by Thomas Norman DeWolf and Sharon Morgan



- *Harvard Business Review*: [Confronting Racism at Work: A Reading List](#)
- [The Antiracism Starter Kit](#) by L. Glenise Pike:
- [Anti-racism resources for white people](#) by Alyssa Klein
- [Teaching about Race, Racism, and Police Violence](#), Teaching Tolerance
- [How to be an anti-racist](#) (mashable.com)
- [How to build an actively anti-racist workplace – Quartz at Work](#)
- [4 Steps That I and Other White People Can Take to Fight Racism](#)



- [5 Podcasts To Listen To If You Really Want To Know About Race In America](#) (WBUR)
- Intersectionality Matters (Kimberlé Crenshaw): <https://aapf.org/podcast>



- [Ted.com: The difference between being not racist and anti-racist](#)
- PBS documentary, [Race: The Power of Illusion](#), which tackles the social construct of race in the United States