



Key Definitions

Definitions provided by Dialogue on Race Louisiana.

Racial Prejudice

Racial prejudice is a preconceived judgment or opinion against an individual based on their color without just grounds or sufficient knowledge. Anyone can be racially prejudiced; they can carry positive or negative stereotypes of others based on racial characteristics.

Words such as racism, prejudice and stereotype are often used interchangeably, while definitions of these terms overlap, they actually mean different things, racial prejudice typically arises from race-based stereotype and have their dangers, it is racism that has the power to determine the degree of institutional access a person has.

White Privilege

White privilege is a set of unearned advantages and/or immunities that white people benefit from on a daily basis beyond those common to all others. The biggest problem with white privilege is the invisibility it provides to those who benefit from it most. It is the invisibility that helps maintain the racial hierarchy in this country.

The definition is significant in that often people see how race puts people of color at a disadvantage but seldom see the corollary of white skin advantage. "If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtue of their own." Peggy McIntosh

Institutions

Institutions can be either private or public, but all are interconnected through their common task of helping our society to function. Therefore every government agency, state, federal or local; every business, industry large or small is an institution, whether factory, office or retail store. Within the communications industry, each newspaper, radio, TV station, magazine or computer network is an institution. Every school and university, sports team and franchise, every art gallery, dance studio and thousands more groups are institutions. In America, the power to run our society is given to institutions and they then have the power to grant or deny access to various members of society.

What is Institutional Racism?

Institutional racism is a system that created race categories for people based on their color, backed by a broad range of laws and policies for unequal distribution of resources that empowered institutions to keep the practice in place. In other words, these laws excluded people of color from eating, sleeping, residing, walking, riding, working, playing, worshiping, voting or doing virtually anything at the same time or place in which white people were doing these same things. Often called Jim Crow Laws, these laws lasted from 1877 – 1954.

Racism although legally banned in the mid 20th Century still operates in America today. It is more subtle, less visible, and less identifiable, yet its barriers still limit access to people of color.

Racial Prejudice + Institutional Power = Racism