

# All Together Now: A Lesson Plan on Racism

## Come Together

Start with the [People Sort Activity](#). Don't rush through this. Take time at the end to debrief about why we view skin color differently than other differences, such as eye color or hair color.

## Hear It

Racism is a part of our society. We would like to say that we are "color blind" but in truth all people have biases to some degree. These can be due to our instinctive desire to associate with people like ourselves, or due to messages we see daily in the media, or from the family environment we were raised in. In order to confront racism, we must first be able to look at ourselves and recognize that biases are part of our nature.

However, that doesn't mean we need to act on those biases. In fact, through awareness of our own bias we can learn to recognize when we are acting unfairly or stereotyping others just based on skin color or ethnicity.

Individual racism is when a person feels superior to another person due to the color of his or her skin. White supremacy is an example of this. Using racial slurs is another example. Hopefully most of us know this is wrong and would not take part in this type of blatant personal racism. However, if we are unaware of our own biases, we can unconsciously make snap judgments about people who are different than us and even act based on those judgments. This is more subtle and something to watch out for.

Institutional racism is a different matter. This is where the majority class (whites) enact rules and constructs in society which favor themselves at the expense of others. And even when these rules are changed or dismantled, their impact can last much longer. (Show [The Disturbing History of the Suburbs](#) here).

So why should this be a concern to us? We did not enact these laws.

In 1 Corinthians 12:26 we hear

If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

As Christians, we are called to share in the suffering and joys of all of our brothers and sisters. We do not exist independently of each other. We are all connected and called to walk together. This is called solidarity.

St. John Paul II said

Solidarity "is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes

of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all"

So when any members of society are hurting, we are called to improve the situation, even if we are not personally responsible for their situation. Consider this quote from DOCAT, the social justice companion to YOUCAT, which is the youth catechism of the Catholic Church:

103. For a believer, what is the most radical reason to practice solidarity? The solidarity of Jesus. No one ever practiced greater solidarity than Jesus. Jesus was sent as the living sign of God's solidarity with mankind, which cannot help itself. The Son of God not only declares his solidarity with all mankind; he even lays down his life for us. This definitive self-giving for the sake of others represents the highest possible love and solidarity and should become the standard for Christian action.

Jesus gave us the perfect example of solidarity in the incarnation. He humbled himself to take our form. So we need to look at ourselves in humility and consider how we can help our brothers and sisters who are not offered equal resources.

It is clear from Church teaching that we have a responsibility to do what we can to level the playing field. Structures in our society over a long period of time have resulted in discrimination and deep prejudice, resulting in advantages for the majority over the minority. It will take a long time to dismantle these racist structures, but every little thing we can do is good and pleasing to our loving Father.

At this point, do a [Privilege Walk](#).

## **Discuss It**

Break into small groups and discuss as time permits. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Are you aware of your own biases? Do you ever make snap judgments when you see someone based on the color of their skin or how they are dressed?
- How do you react when you make a judgment? Do you try not to think about it or are you able to take a deeper look to see where it came from?
- Think of a situation when you were obviously in the minority? How did that make you feel. Did you seek out people you felt more comfortable with? Why?
- Have you ever experienced an incident of racism? How did it make you feel?
- Can you think of any examples of institutional racism? What might you personally be able to do to change these structures?
- When you are with people who are a different than you and that puts them at a disadvantage, do you think they would be better off if they were more like you? Why? Have you considered that perhaps they shouldn't have to change the way they dress or act to have the same advantages as you.
- How can you practice solidarity with people in your community?
- What can you learn from the solidarity practiced by Jesus? How can your faith life help

with some of the issues we have been discussing?

- What is something positive this group can do to recognize all people as God's beloved sons and daughters?

### **Pray About It**

Gather together and pray the [Prayer for an End to Racism](#) or another appropriate prayer. Let each youth offer his or her own intentions. You can suggest they focus their intentions on unfairness, whether related to racism or some other cause..

### **Go Forth**

- Send the teens out with a reminder to be aware of their own biases and to consider how those can impact their actions.
- Also, look for opportunities to speak up for equality or just to know that we often can't understand what people who are different than us have experienced. But if they are hurting, then we are called to walk with them in solidarity and not to judge how they express their pain.
- Finally, consider if there is an action step you can take. Perhaps you can join in an appropriate civil rights activity in your area. Check with the social justice office in your local diocese.