

# IDENTIFYING, NAVIGATING & TRANSFORMING RACIAL HARM

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“Restorative justice risks losing relevance if we, as practitioners, do not become more skillful at identifying, navigating, and transforming racial harm... Given the nation’s changing demographics and persistent, if not deepening, racial disparities, a restorative justice approach that ignores these inequities will be perceived as uninformed and uncaring, if not irrelevant and racist.”

- Fania Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice*

## OBJECTIVE

Participants will recognize that restorative justice exists within and is informed by racist structures, institutions, and individual bias. Participants will discuss the role and impacts of interpersonal, institutional, and systemic racism in a given crime or conflict scenario and will engage in an honest discussions about racism in their community and lives. Participants’ understanding of their responsibility as restorative justice facilitators will expand as they seek to address the root causes that perpetuate harm, crime, and conflict.

## MATERIALS

Fania Davis’ *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation* (Skyhorse, 2019).

Copies of pages 32-34, including Figure 1., “3 Types of Racism.” An adaptation of Figure 1 from the book is included at the end of this packet.

## NOTES (PLEASE READ)

1. This activity is intended for experienced restorative justice facilitators. Learning about racism and racial justice should be introduced early in restorative justice facilitator training, but most facilitators will likely need some experience working on cases before they can dive more deeply into this material and apply it to restorative justice case studies.
2. This activity is intended to be used in groups that already have established relationships and developed trust. Refer to the “Building Relationships” section of [www.RestorativeTeachingTools.com](http://www.RestorativeTeachingTools.com) for games and activities that will aid in building the trust and relationships necessary for this activity to be successful.

3. You will be asking learners to take a significant amount of risk to participate in this activity. Please read Chapter 5 from *The Little Book of Restorative Teaching Tools* to prepare for facilitating if you are new to working with this kind of material. If possible, consider asking a trusted associate to help you co-facilitate so that you can debrief the activity together and shed light on each other's blind spots.

4. If you are working with a group of learners who are primarily white, consider scaffolding learners' readiness to participate in anti-racist work responsibly by facilitating the activity *Exploring Our Reactions: Deepening Learning* from DiAngelo's *White Fragility* prior to facilitating this activity.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Required prior to the activity: Participants read Chapter 3 "Integrating Racial Justice and Restorative Justice" of Fania Davis' *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice*. (Reading the whole book is strongly encouraged, but not required for the activity.)

Review Davis' model of 3 Types of Racism together and explain that in order to deepen our understanding of the 3 types of racism, we will now take the next step of analyzing a real-life case through the lens of each form of racism.

Read the case example out loud before dividing participants into 3 groups of 2-4 people each. Assign each group a type of racism (structural, institutional, or individual). Each group is responsible for examining how their type of racism is impacting the people in the case. If you are working with a group that is larger than 15 people, consider utilizing two different case studies so that groups aren't too large.

Ask each group to be sure that every person has a chance to speak. Give the groups at least 10 minutes for open discussion, then shift their focus towards the questions listed below. Provide 15 minutes for the groups to work through questions 1-4. Ask the groups to assign one scribe, or decide as a group how they will track and share back their thoughts with the larger group. Spread the groups out to support respectful speaking and listening.

Acknowledge that this is an exercise. Because the individuals involved in the case are not in the room with us, a lot of what is identified will be hypothetical. The goal is to expand our thinking about the case and to better understand the three types of racism through applying them to an incident from our community.

After 25 minutes, or when you have the sense the groups are wrapping up, bring everyone back together. Ask each group to report back on the following questions.

1. How is the type of racism your group was assigned evident in this case?  
Name 2-3 ways.
2. How might a facilitator ask questions to surface how this form of racism is a force at play in this case?
3. How might community representatives be prepared to speak to impacts/harms resulting from this type of racism?
4. What could repair look like for the impacts from this type of racism?

After all three groups have shared, pose this question to all participants: Where you do see the overlap or interplay of the 3 forms of racism influencing this incident?

*Optional:* When you bring the group back together, have the participants stand in concentric circles that reflect Davis' model of the 3 Types of Racism. This physical arrangement will reinforce how Individual Racism exists within a context of Institutional Racism, which is nested in Structural Racism.

Facilitator Notes:

- Reinforce learners' approaching this activity with a spirit of curiosity. Be prepared to reframe shaming/blaming comments that can derail learning.
- Validate expressions of sincere responsibility-taking and avoid allowing the group to spiral into minimizing or abdicating responsibility. Look for signs of students' justifying indicators of racism for the sake of avoiding their own discomfort.
- Be ready to intervene if the group begins to lean heavily on participants who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color in the group to do all the educating (Based on your relationship with students, you could consider taking a break to inquire if these individuals would like to use their voices and experiences in this way.)

## CASE EXAMPLE

We have provided one case example below, but this activity will be most relevant if you select a case that has actually been referred to Restorative Justice in your community and involves at least one person who is Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color. Alternatively, you could create a case study around a personal experience of someone in the group, if they request it and give permission for the group to discuss their story. (Speak to this person privately to explain the activity and confirm their consent.) Or, you could select a current event to analyze. In either of the latter options, frame the activity through the lens of “what if this were referred to Restorative Justice.”

### **Example Case:**

Three young men, 15-16 years old, all Latinx, broke into an unoccupied house late at night in December. They had marijuana and a few bongos and pipes and were hanging out looking for a place to smoke that was out of the frigid cold. A neighbor saw movement in the house and called the police. Multiple officers arrived at the scene, and the three teens ran. Each boy was dressed in dark colors, each was wearing a hoodie, black or red, with the hoods up. Two boys evaded the police and got back to their homes. They were later identified and contacted by police in their homes. One boy, Alex, hid in the snow as a patrol car passed. He later shared that it was so cold that he decided to start walking. The patrol car circled back and pulled up alongside Alex and he paused. As the officer started talking, Alex took off running at a sprint away from the officer. The officer stopped the car, got out, and shouted orders for Alex to stop. According to Alex, as he ran, he was concerned about his beanie falling out of his pocket, so he was pushing his hand in and out of his pocket as he ran. According to the officer, it looked like Alex could be reaching for a gun or other weapon in his pocket. The officer released his K9. The K9 caught up to Alex and bit his backpack, close to Alex’s shoulder, but without biting his body, and brought Alex down to the ground.

The officer chose to refer Alex and the two other teens directly to Community Restorative Justice. Alex took responsibility for Second Degree Burglary, Obstructing a Peace Officer, Possession of Drug Paraphernalia and Underage Possession of Marijuana. The other two teens took responsibility for Second Degree Burglary and Obstructing a Peace Officer. (Of note: two of the three boys had been referred to Restorative Justice for different cases 4-6 years prior to this incident. They each completed their reparative contracts successfully in those cases.)

## DEBRIEF

How did this deeper exploration of the 3 types of racism change your view of this case? How will the awareness you gained in this activity inform your facilitation of future cases?

How did this activity affect your view of your life and community?

## LESSON

As restorative justice practitioners, we each have a responsibility to develop an expansive view of every case to understand how structural and institutional forces are at play (in addition to the individual, interpersonal dynamics). As a movement, restorative justice runs the risk of inadvertently perpetuating the harms of the systems it seeks to transform if racial justice is not central in our work.

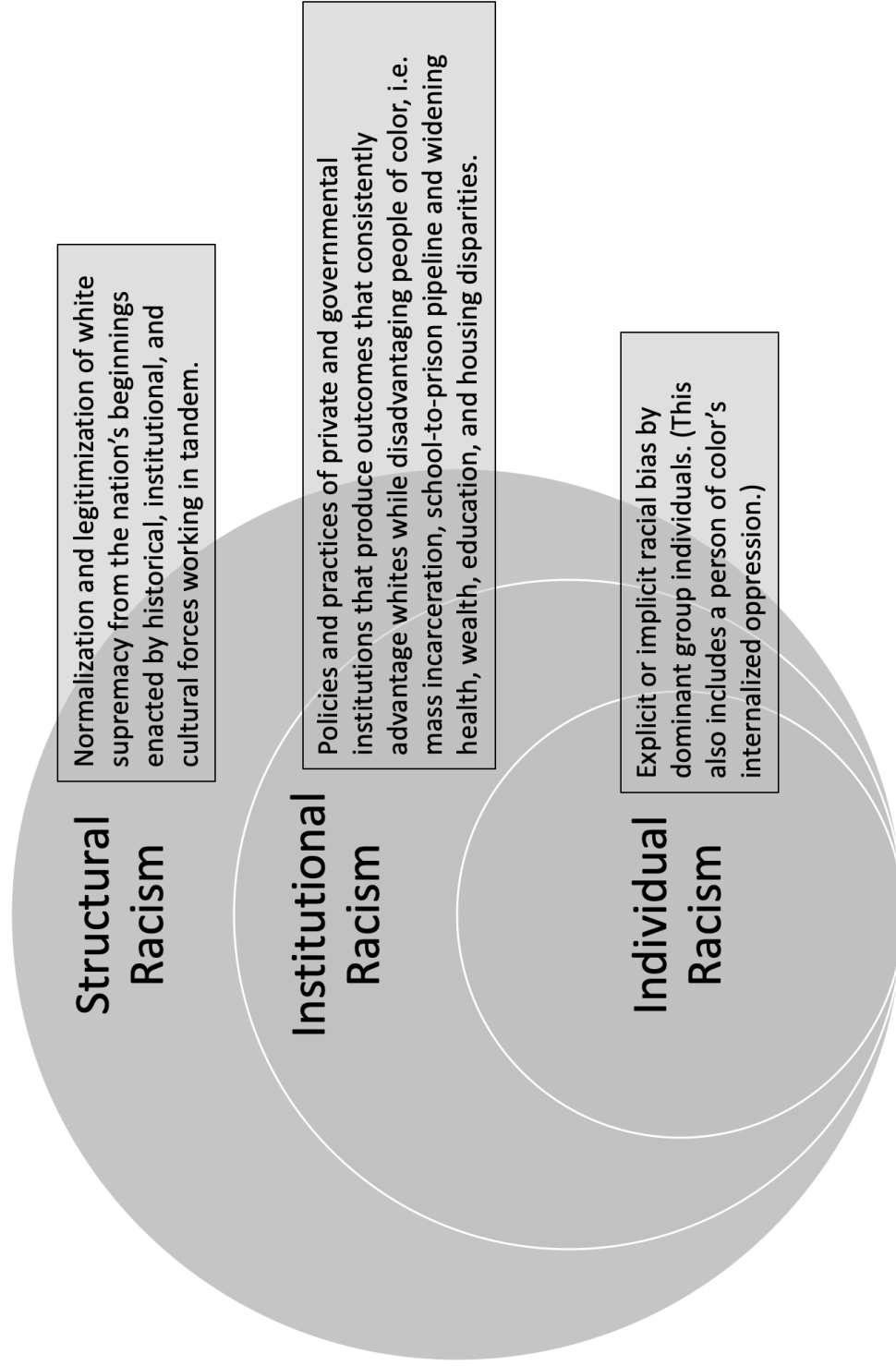
## ONLINE ADAPTATION

Students will most likely feel more able to take risks and speak honestly if this activity is done in person. If the group has strong relationships and is already experienced in grappling with challenging conversations, you can facilitate the activity online, using breakout rooms in Zoom. Send each group into a separate breakout room. Let them know how much time they will have in the breakout rooms and give “five more minutes” and “one more minute” warnings via the broadcast feature before bringing them back together.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Colorizing Restorative Justice: Voicing Our Realities*
- *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* by bell hooks
- Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (Organization founded by Fania Davis)

## 3 Types of Racism



Adapted from *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice* by Fania Davis.