Impact of Racism & Your Next Steps

Wauwatosa Public Library
February 12, 2020
Tonight’s Plan

- Context
- Implicit Bias
- Definitions
- Group Discussion
- Wrap-up
Just Mercy

▪ Bryan Stevenson’s book & movie
▪ Provides context to our understanding of the criminal justice system
▪ Important reminders about humanity
Racial Context

▪ What is race? Bias?
▪ What is racism?
▪ How are we impacted?
▪ What can you do?
Implicit Bias Defined

- An **implicit bias** is a positive or negative mental attitude towards a person, thing, or group that a person holds at an **unconscious** level.
- In contrast, an **explicit bias** is an attitude that somebody is **consciously** aware of having.
- Research has found that our implicit and explicit biases often diverge.
- We are hard-wired to categorize people in groups, soft-wired for meaning associated.
Bias & Our Brain

- **Pre-frontal cortex**, where rational thought is contained, processes information slowly.
- The **amygdala**, in our limbic system, processes emotions, sometimes threats, rapidly. Fight / flight response.
- Bias is **social**.
Layers of Bias

1. **Individual Bias**: Pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

2. **Institutional Bias**: Policies, practices, and procedures that work to the benefit of certain people and to the detriment of others, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

3. **Structural Bias**: A history and current reality of institutional bias across all institutions. This combines a system that negatively impacts people.
Personal Example

- I am not racist. I have Black friends! (explicit)
- You are fearful to attend an event with your friends that is predominantly Black. (implicit)
Criminal Justice Example

Law enforcement

- I’m colorblind when it comes to traffic stops. (explicit)
- A Stanford study found that Black and Latino drivers are searched based on less evidence and more likely to be arrested. (implicit)
- A ProPublica investigation found that young black men are shot dead by police at 21 times the rate of young white men. (implicit)
Medical Example

Physician

- I take an **oath** to do no harm (explicit).
- Yet, when my patient is in pain, I’ll give stronger **narcotics** to whites over people of color. (implicit)
Education Example

Teacher

- I love children. All children can learn. (explicit)
- I do not have high expectations that my children of color can learn or succeed in the classroom. (implicit)
Historical Construction of Race

- Race is **not biological**, it’s socially constructed
- Race is **not binary** – black vs. white
- Any **racial identity**, given our social construct, is not inherently evil or bad
Definitions

- **Racism**: Race-based **prejudice** + skin-color **privilege** + **power** to discriminate / oppress
  - **Prejudice**: A negative preconceived opinion formed without knowledge or reason.
  - **Privilege**: A benefit enjoyed by a person or group beyond the advantages of most.
  - **Power**: In analyzing race issues, it is important to think about the locus of power or who has social power in the situation.
Another Privilege Definition

- Right or advantage gained by birth, social position, effort, or concession. It can have either legal or personal sanction *(privilege of paying half fare; the privileges of a free people)*

*(dictionary.com)*
White Privilege

- Whiteness / white privilege studies are evolving
  - White privilege, as a construct, will continue to be defined, refined and studied
- Internalizing whiteness and white privilege
  - How have you internalized messages of being better or superior to others?
Structural Racism

“A structural racism lens allows us to see:

▪ the racial **legacy** of our past;
▪ how racism **persists** in our national policies, institutional practices, and cultural representations;
▪ how racism is **transmitted** and either **amplified** or **mitigated** through public, private, and community institutions;
▪ how individuals **internalize** and respond to racialized structures.”  *Aspen Institute*
Structural Racism’s Impact
the production of racialized outcomes

The Context: The Dominant Consensus on Race

White Privilege
National Values
Contemporary Culture

The Current Manifestations: Social and Institutional Dynamics

Processes that Maintain Racial Hierarchies
Racialized Public Policies and Institutionalized Practices

The Outcomes: Racial Disparities

Racial Inequalities in Current Levels of Well-Being
Capacity for Individual and Community Improvement is Undermined

ONGOING RACIAL INEQUITIES

Source: The Aspen Roundtable on Community Change

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Tosa Racial Covenants

- The first **racial restriction** in Wauwatosa was placed on the Washington Highlands Subdivision in 1919.
- The **deeds** stated that these restrictions would run with the land until January 1, 1950, with automatic renewal for 20 year terms unless five years prior to a term's expiration the owners of 60% of the acreage executed an agreement releasing the land.
- After World War II, **black families** were excluded from seven subdivisions developed from 1945-1949. Two additions created in the 1950's, six years after the Supreme Court's ruling against government enforcement of racially restrictive covenants, still provided 20-year prohibitions against black ownership or occupancy of homes in their subdivisions.

https://dc.uwm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1177&context=eti_pubs
Racial Covenant’s Impact

- **Zeddie Quitman Hyler**, the first person of color to move into Wauwatosa
  - 113th Street Ranch house. Vandals. Next day set fire to the frame.
Listening Pairs

Take turns listening with attention. Suspend judgment and desire to comment, give advice, or critique. Listen with a pleasant look on your face. Equal time for you to talk and to listen.
Listening Pairs

- Pick who will be “A” and “B”
- One will talk for 3 minutes, other listens.
- The timer will go off.
- I’ll ask you to switch roles.

Question is:
How do issues of race and racism impact your life?
Processing Listening

- How was it to be the **listener**?
- How was it to be the **speaker**?
- Any **insights** you want to share?
Addressing Bias & Racism

“You don’t have to see the whole staircase; just take the first step.” MLK Jr.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead.
Group Discussion

- In thinking about your life and the intersection of race / racism, how will you personally address bias and racial equity?
- How will that transfer to your interactions with neighbors and family?
Reminders

Addressing racism and bias means committing to:

- Things you want to **learn** in the coming weeks
- Actions / **commitments** you’ll make
- Sharing information in your **sphere of influence**
- Becoming comfortable being **challenged** on biases & racism

*We will be known forever by the tracks we leave.* – Dakota
Closing

- Share one thing you've learned or appreciated that you will take away and apply in your life.
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References

- https://dc.uwm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1177&context=eti_pubs