

EDUCATION JUSTICE

Breaking Down Myths



MYTH: SYSTEMIC RACISM IS NOT REAL

Systemic racism **is** real! We are still reckoning with the negative effects of colonialism, slavery, Jim Crow, discrimination, and a nation built on notions of racial hierarchy. Systemic racism is the legacy of hundreds of years of laws, policies and customs that have combined to advantage whites to the detriment of people of color, including Black, Latino, Indigenous, East Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander and Arab, among others. Although many people point to examples of successful people of color as proof that systemic racism is not real, the fact is that they are statistical outliers. On the whole, racial disparities persist and are plainly evident in the unequal outcomes of our systems and institutions, including in healthcare, housing, education, employment and criminal justice. Systemic racism puts people at a cumulative disadvantage resulting in individuals being underemployed, with less wealth, more prone to disease, with shorter life spans, less education and more likely to be entangled in the criminal justice system.

MYTH: OREGON'S CURRICULUM IS RADICAL/TEACHING CRT AND SYSTEMIC RACISM

Critical Race Theory is not taught in our school district and is not a curriculum. CRT is an academic framework with origins in US law schools, used to study systemic racism in graduate level courses and law schools. CRT has been weaponized by right-wing groups and is being used as part of a disinformation campaign to attack inclusive curriculum such as Oregon's Ethnic Studies curriculum, which was mandated by HB 2845 for K-12 students. The curriculum, far from being radical, simply requires that the history, contributions, and perspectives of individuals who are Indigenous or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, or Middle Eastern descent are included in an age-appropriate way. It also includes the histories, contributions, and perspectives of women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and people who identify as LGBTQ.

MYTH: TEACHING ABOUT SYSTEMIC RACISM DIVIDES, DISEMPOWERS/MAKES FOR VICTIM MENTALITY

The shift to a more inclusive curriculum is not only more accurate and comprehensive, but it is also empowering. Truth equips people to act and best navigate within our systems and institutions. In addition, the Ethnic Studies curriculum is designed to empower students by focusing on the agency and capabilities of people who have been historically marginalized. Censoring history will not change the past or do anything to address the current inequities, oppression and structural racism that we still need to overcome as a nation. Teaching truth, even though it may be uncomfortable, actually gives our children the tools necessary to work together, and to understand each other and the systems of power still at work in our country today. If the mere act of including these voices in the curriculum exposes the racism inherent in our systems, that should serve as a wakeup call indicating we still have a lot of work to do before we achieve an equitable society.

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To better understand systemic racism and the legacy of exclusionary policies and practices in action, we can look at virtually every facet of American life.

EMPLOYMENT, WEALTH AND HOUSING

Black and Latinos are far less likely to get approved for a home loan and when approved pay higher interest rates.

Homes owned by Latinos and African Americans are routinely appraised below market value.

African Americans are less likely to get interviews and jobs if their name is perceived as "African American".

~30% of Latinos report discrimination in the housing and job markets.

WAGE GAP, HEALTH

Black men make less than equally qualified white men.

Latinas are paid 55 cents for every dollar paid to White, non-Hispanic men.

Food deserts across similar poverty levels disproportionately affect communities of color.

African Americans are more prone to serious disease and premature death. Black, Hispanic and Indigenous communities have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Latinos are 44% more likely to be convicted than whites when convicted of property crimes and 53% more likely to be convicted than whites for drug crimes.

Police are twice as likely to use force on Hispanic or Black people than whites.

EDUCATION

Schools with 90% or more students of color spend \$733 less per student per year than schools with 90% or more white students.

Black and Latino students are twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension for their first offenses than white students.

Black students are 3 times more likely to be suspended than white students for similar violations.

In a study including 68,930 teachers, 77% demonstrated implicit bias. Bias levels directly correspond to poor student outcomes.