Structural versus Individual Inequities

Julie Reid, Ph.D.

Learning Objectives

1. Clarify the definition of racism and differentiate between racist, non-racist, and anti-racist

2. Examine how social inequities are based on societal structure rather than on individuals

3. Consider the significance of intersectionality as it relates to race, class, gender, and other identities

4. Explore the legacy of racism and the connection between historical and current oppression

5. Compare transformative and transactional change

Introduction

Thinking about problems and their *causes* ...

Example: Flint, MI

- Environmental (in)justice
- Spatial inequality

Intersection of class & race
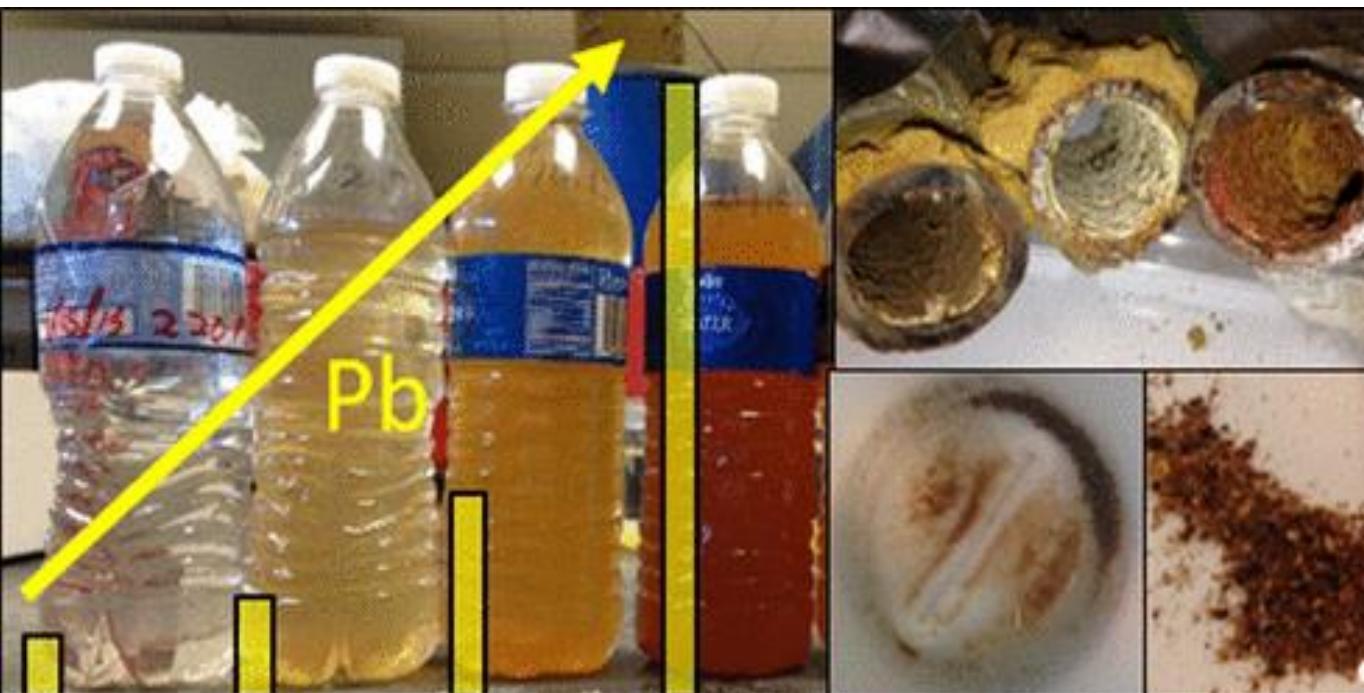
A *national pattern …*

FORTUNE

HEALTH · POLLUTION

If You're a Minority and Poor, You're More Likely to Live Near a Toxic Waste Site

BY **ERIK SHERMAN**
February 4, 2016 5:05 AM CST

Economic Policy

Pollution is segregated, too

Battling Dumpsites in Poor Neighborhoods

Alabama
## 'We're not a dump' - poor Alabama towns struggle under the stench of toxic landfills

Imports of waste from across the country have turned parts of the state into 'a toilet bowl' – and residents are fighting back

water as activists protest outside of City Hall to protest Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder's handling of the water

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAKE MAY AP

Relationship between society and individuals

SOCIETY – STRUCTURE*
social institutions, macro-level

Collective actions maintain or change society

Structure shapes individuals' experiences in a systematic way

INDIVIDUAL – AGENCY*
human behavior, micro-level
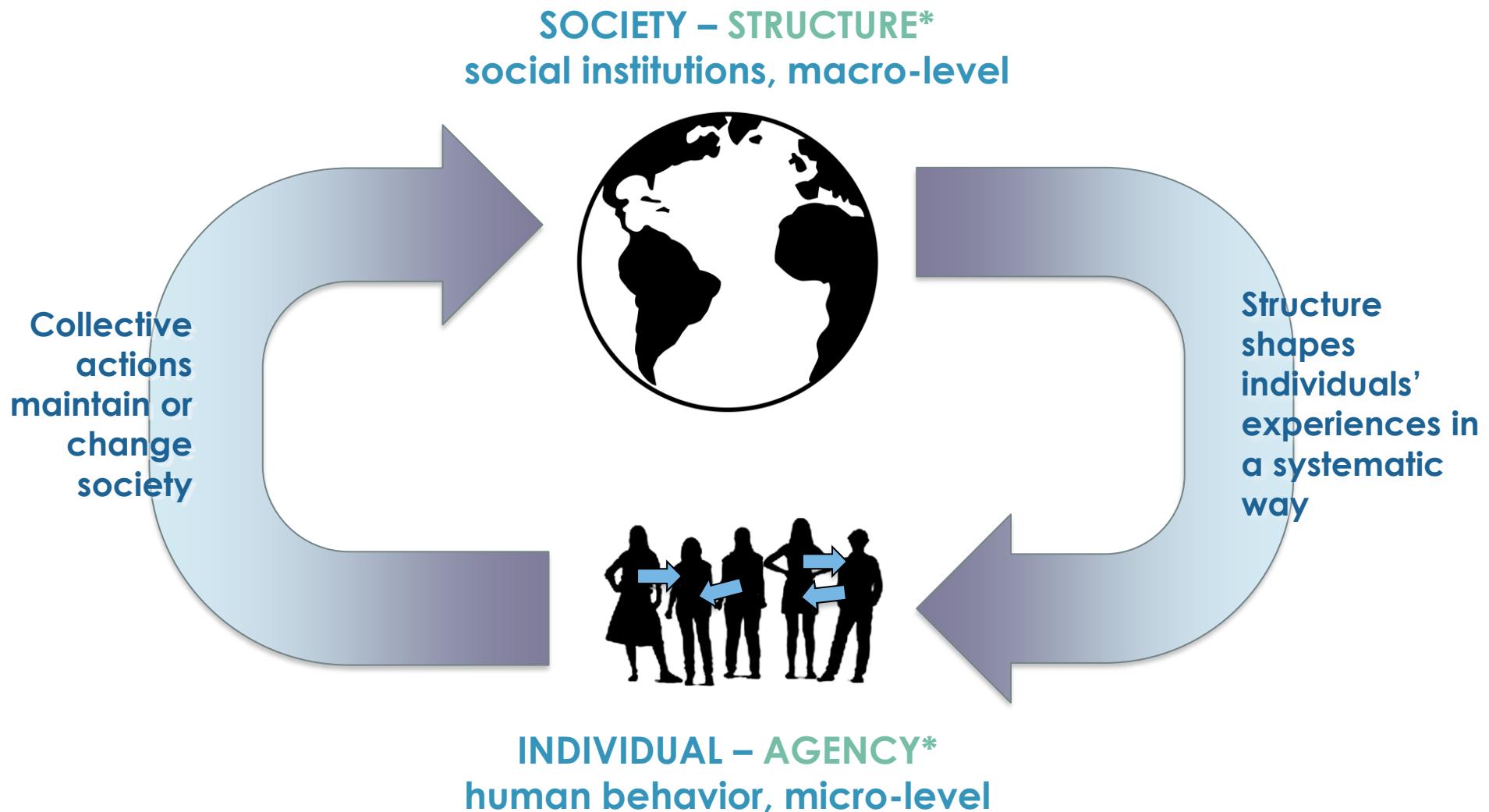
Intersecting identities

Race

Ability

Ethnicity (Culture)

Age

Gender

Religion

Sexual Orientation

Social Class
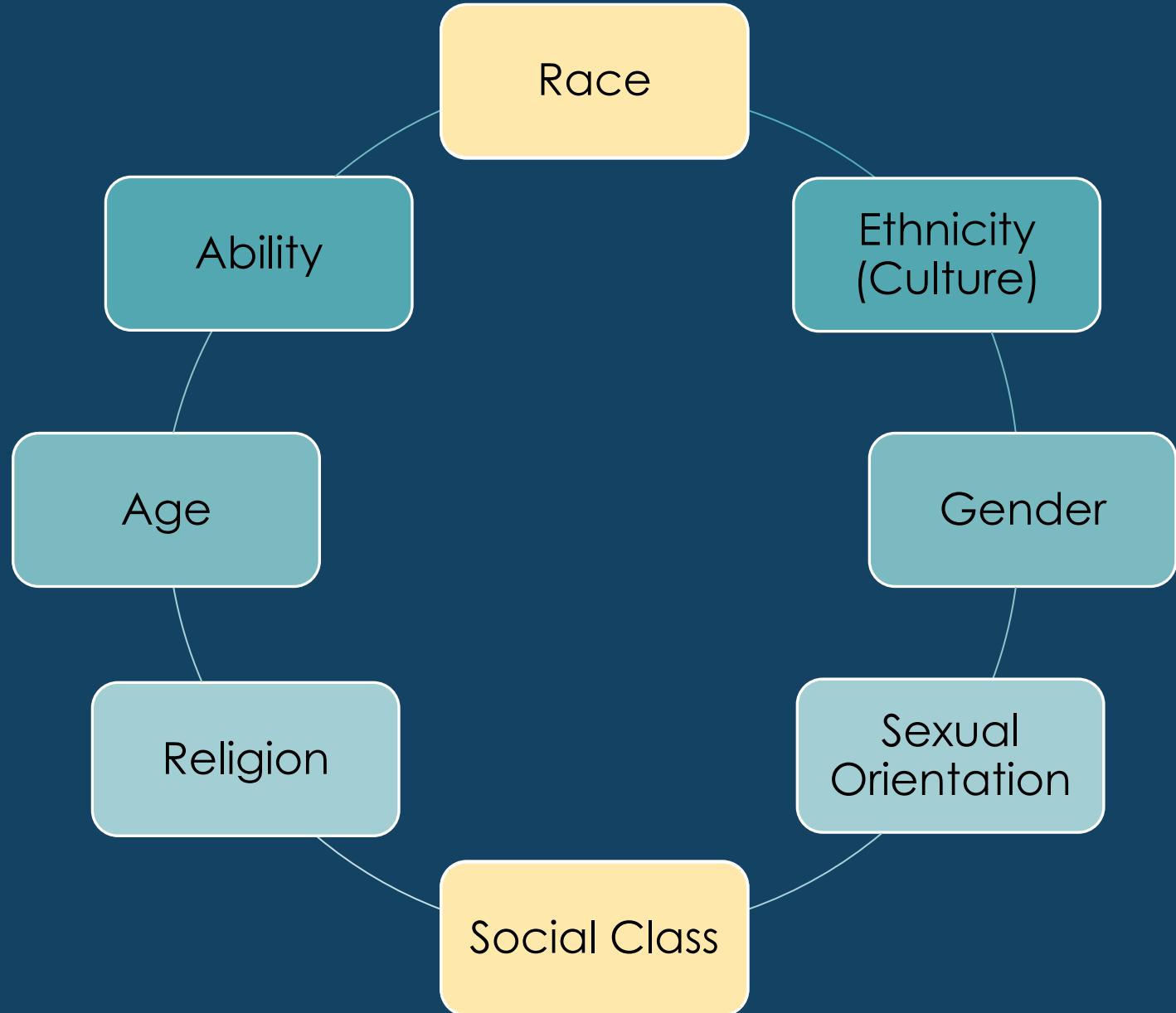
"Big Eight" Identities

Intersectionality wheel

Privilege / Society normatives

Non-disabled mental good health
Credentialed
Young
Attractive
Wealth / financial stability
Disablism
Ageism
Upper and Upper-Middle Class
Educationalism
Heterosexual
Wealthism
Politics of appearance
Anglophones
Heterosexism
Classism
European heritage
Eurocentrism
Language bias
Light, pale skinned
White
Racism
Colourism
Gentile Non-Jew
Male
Sexism / Androcentrism
Anti-semitism
Male and masculine
Female and feminine
Genderism
Pro-natalism
Fertile

Domination   Domination

Infertile
Gender "deviance"
Jews
Female
Dark skinned
Black Minority Ethnic people
English as additional language
Non-European origin
Working Class
LGBTQ*
Unattractive
Poor / financially insecure people
Old
Non-literate
Disabled people
Mentally ill people

Oppression / Resistance

Differences in *life chances* due to access to:

▶ Power/ influence

▶ Advantage

▶ Status

The processes related to structural inequities are similar and intersectional.

- ➡ racism
- ➡ sexism
- ➡ heterosexism
- ➡ classism
- ➡ and other "isms"

What is "racism"?

What is racism?

- Based on groups that have been categorized as distinct based on certain characteristics that have been socially constructed as relevant.

- A form of structural inequity, not just individual-level.
  - Socially constructed, hierarchy of groups in society of systemic *relative* advantage or disadvantage
  - Defines the normal or ordinary operations of society.
  - Historically formed and passes advantage & disadvantage from one generation to the next.
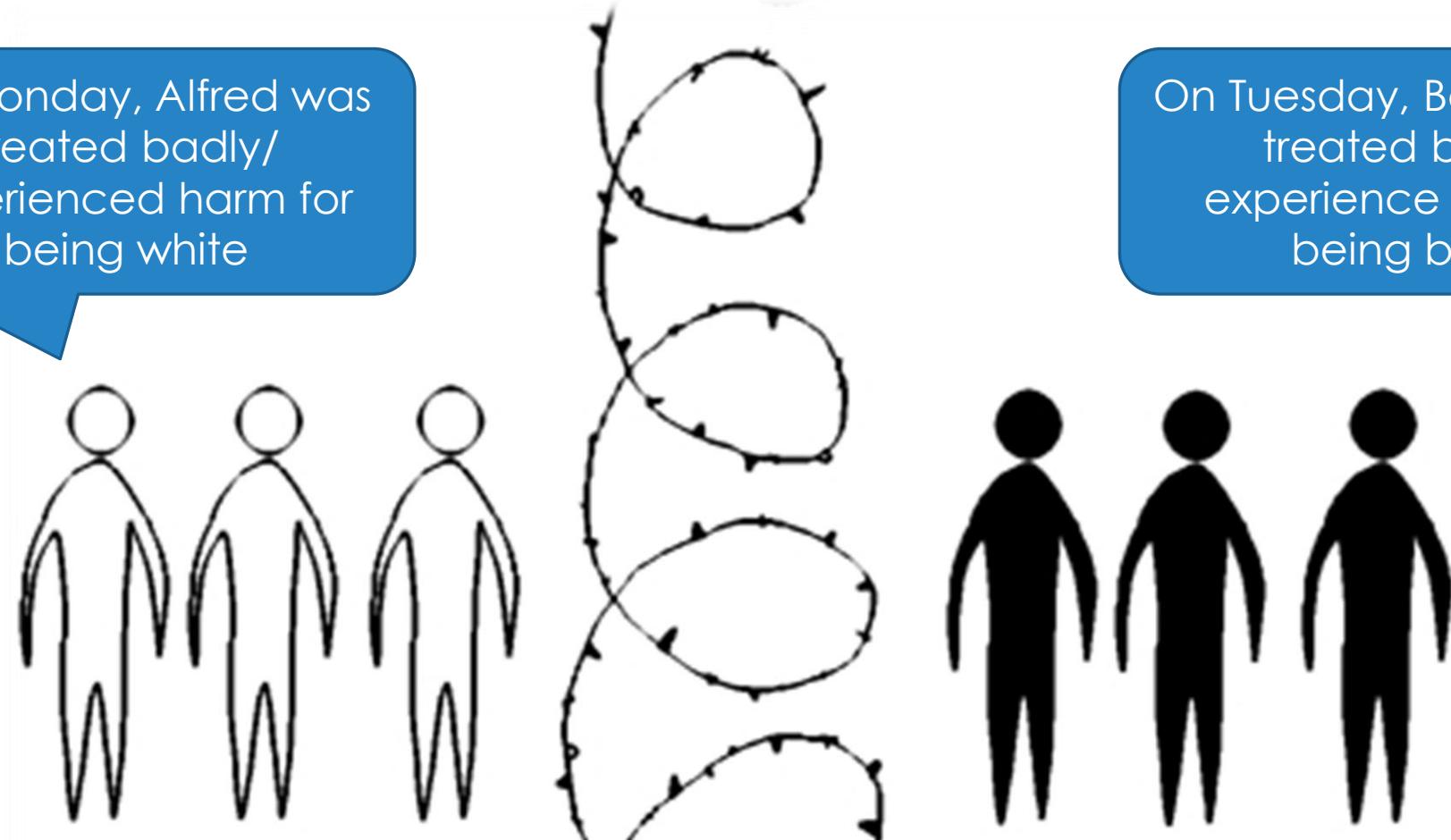
Cumulative impact of systemic inequity ...

Trends in life expectancy at birth by race & ethnicity: 1980–2020.

- Impact of Covid-19 follows the pattern
- Note: Data before 2006 treated Latinos as ethnic group, independent of race

Andrasfay, Goldman, Davis. PNAS. 2021.
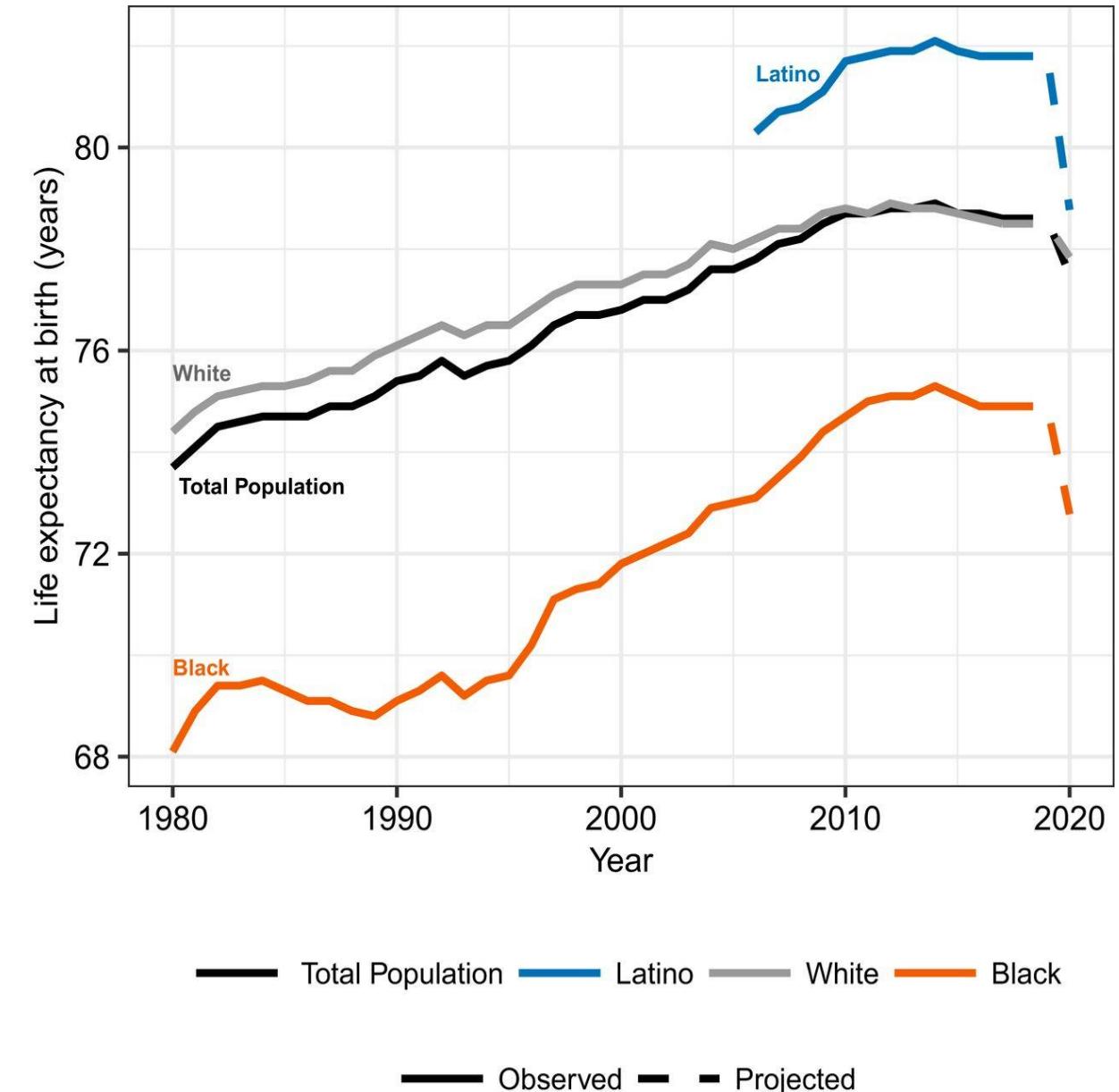
Risk for COVID-19
Infection, Hospitalization, and Death by Race/Ethnicity

Rate ratios compared to White, Non-Hispanic persons	American Indian or Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic persons	Asian, Non-Hispanic persons	Black or African American, Non-Hispanic persons	Hispanic or Latino persons
Cases[1]	1.6 x	0.7 x	1.1 x	2.0 x
Hospitalization[2]	3.3 x	1.0 x	2.9 x	2.8 x
Death[3]	2.4 x	1.0 x	2.0 x	2.3 x

Source: CDC, Updated June 17, 2021

Structural violence

➡ Form of violence in which social structures or institutions harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs.

  ➡ Deadliest form of violence through excess deaths—those that would not have occurred in more equal societies.

  ➡ Based in societal inequities of race, class, and gender; manifested in disparities of health, economics, and more.

  ➡ Interdependent with forms of *direct violence, such as* domestic violence, suicides, homicides, war.

➡ Typically overlooked as simply the hardships of life because they are part of our social structures.

➡ Roadmap: How does the concept of structural violence help us to recognize solutions towards peace rather than simply the reduction of violence?

Lee, Bandy X., 2019. Violence: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Causes, Consequences, and Cures. (Wiley Online Library)

What's the difference between non-racist and anti-racist?
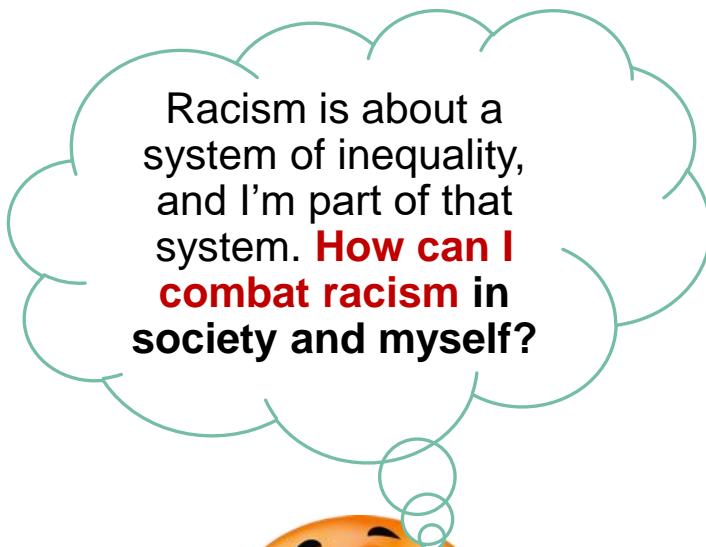
Robin DiAngelo

➡ Racism has been *simplified and misconstrued* such that people think it is ...

1. **Individual** (committed by a person, not a system)

2. **Conscious** (doesn't like another group)

3. **Intentional** (seeks to be mean to them)

➡ So, being accused of being racist implies being a bad or immoral person that requires defending one's character.

➡ But, discrimination is structural and can happen without a clear single perpetrator or victim.

"A NECESSARY BOOK FOR ALL PEOPLE INVESTED IN SOCIETAL CHANGE." —CLAUDIA RANKINE

WHITE FRAGILITY

New York Times BESTSELLER

WHY IT'S SO HARD FOR **WHITE PEOPLE** TO **TALK ABOUT RACISM**

ROBIN DIANGELO

FOREWORD BY **MICHAEL ERIC DYSON**
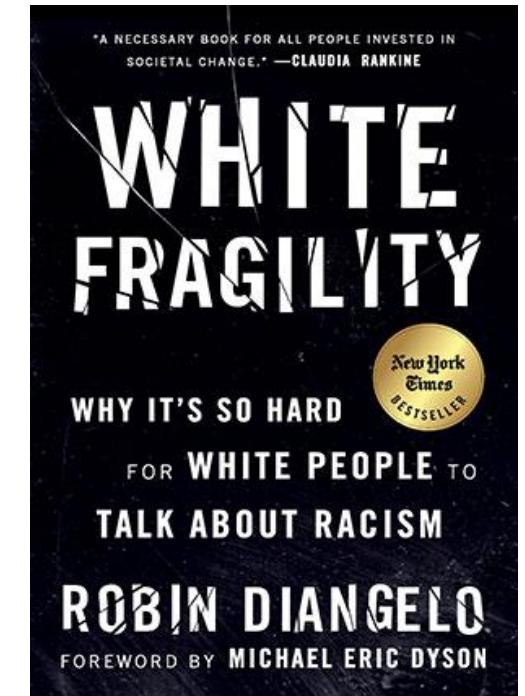
"Racial transformers"

➡ *Structural* approach to understanding race and inequality.

Racial Transformers **don't fixate on who's a racist** or whether someone intends animus.

For they know that the deepest racism lies not just in the hearts and minds of individuals, but in the **roles and rules of big institutions**—like schools, courtrooms and corporations.

That's their primary focus of change—these familiar systems of power, churning out deep and deadly racial inequities by the day.

What does *systemic* inequity look like?

Why is this different from individual bias, prejudice?

Intersectionality

- What happened?
- What kind of (intersectional) group identities were at play?
  - During the incident
  - After the incident
- What is the relevant context?
  - Current societal
  - Historical

How is the past relevant to today?

Understanding the mechanisms of institutionalized racism

Social class:
Completely *aside from your race*, how has your income/wealth level been affected by your parents' level?

That is, imagine if your parents were very rich or very poor, how would that affect your chances to be rich or poor yourself?

Intergenerational social mobility

- Does your parents' economic situation affect your economic *chances*?

- How can the money your parents earned 10 years before your birth affect *your* circumstances 40 years later when you are an adult?

Wealth mobility (*separate from race*):
Outflow from parents to young adults, %

Parents Household Rank	Adult Son's and Daughter's Household Rank					
	Bottom Fifth	Second Fifth	Middle Fifth	Fourth Fifth	Top Fifth	*Total*
Bottom Fifth	**45**	27	11	9	8	*100*
Second Fifth	24	**35**	20	14	7	*100*
Middle Fifth	11	20	**35**	21	13	*100*
Fourth Fifth	7	11	23	**33**	25	*100*
Top Fifth	5	6	9	25	**55**	*100*

Summary:	**Up**	**Stable**	**Down**	*Total*	
	31	41	28	*100*	

SOURCE: Gilbert 2011 (Modified from Table 2.10 in Keister 2005:57)

U.S. Intergenerational social mobility (separate from race)

Average income

Poor: 20% of average income

INCOME PROGRESSION IN A TYPICAL POOR AMERICAN FAMILY

AVERAGE INCOME

80% of Average			
60			
40			
20			
0			
GENERATION 1	GENERATION 2	GENERATION 3	GENERATION 4
1950	1970	1995	2020
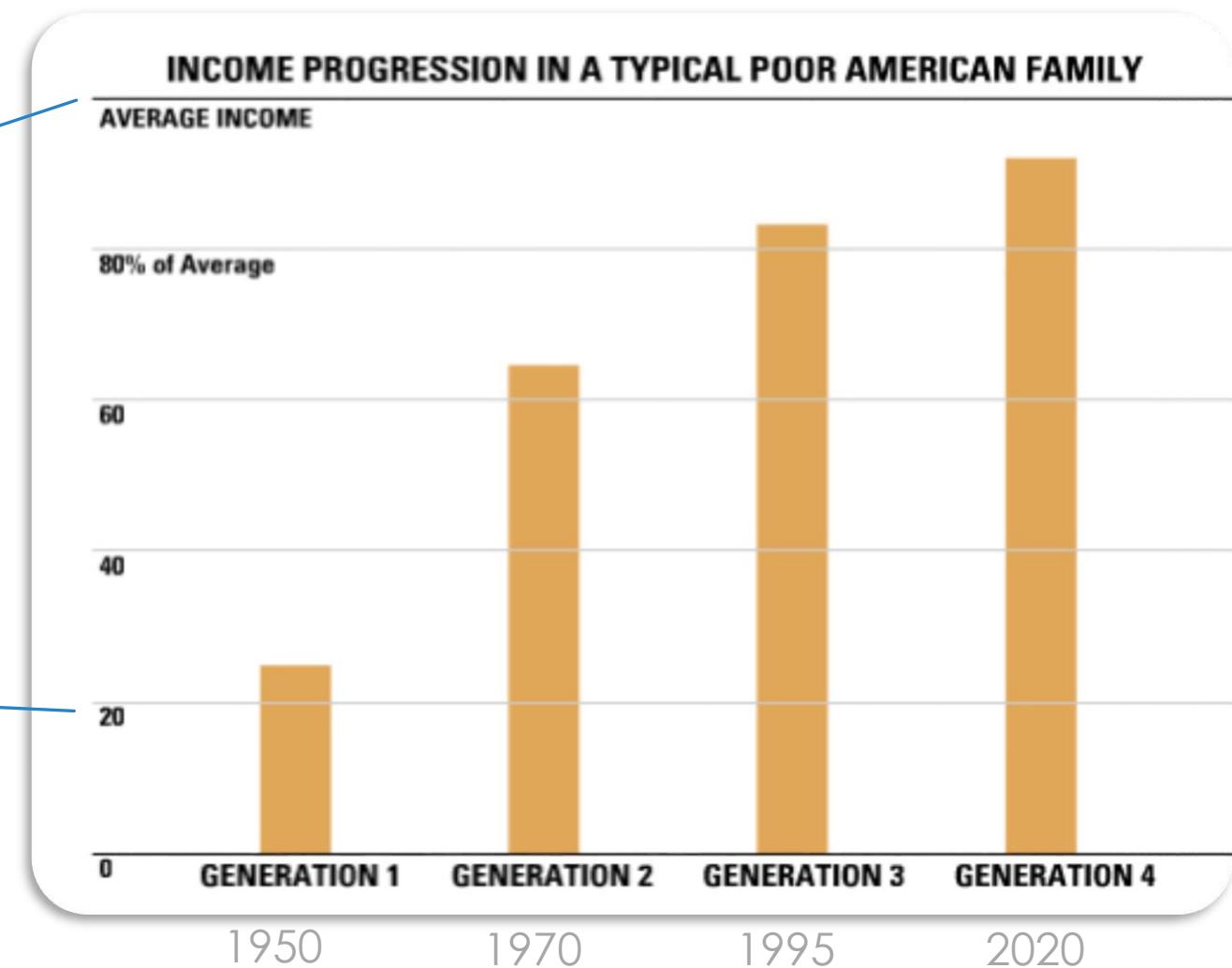
Intersection: class x race

INCOME PROGRESSION IN A TYPICAL POOR AMERICAN FAMILY

AVERAGE INCOME

80% of Average

60

40

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0

GENERATION 1   GENERATION 2   GENERATION 3   GENERATION 4

1950   1970   1995   **2020**
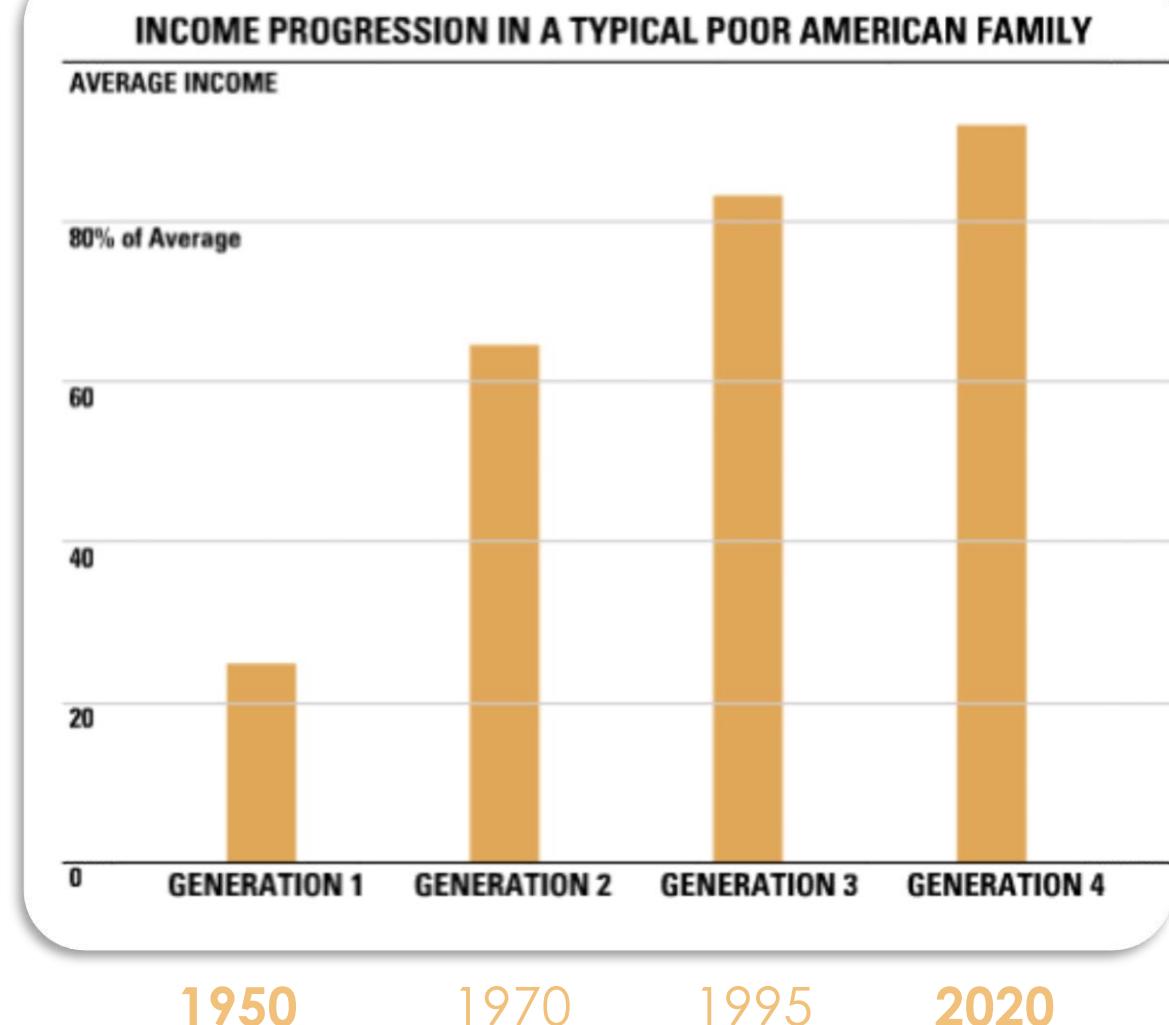
Processes of social inequality: discrimination

Apply to many different types of inequities

Cumulative impact of *discrimination across time and generations* on a person

PAST Discrimination **+**

- Poorer health care
- Inferior schooling
- Weak cultural and social capital
- Encumbrance by need to care for relatives
- Poor job-record
- Lack of inherited wealth
- Inherited debt

CURRENT Discrimination **=**

- Biased hiring practices & promotion practices
- Inadequate or lack of health insurance
- Bias in lending, housing
- Unequitable education policies
- Health inequities
- Political inequity

CUMMULATIVE IMPACT of Discrimination

Also known as:

- Legacy of racism
- "Racism on cruise control"

If there was lots of active past discrimination but no active current discrimination, what would total cumulative impact today be?

Would this hiring policy discriminate (unfairly)?

➡ Imagine that on a job application, you see the following questions that will determine if you get the job or not:

➡ What was your family's household income when you were born?

➡ Did your mother go to college?

➡ Did your grandfather own real estate?

➡ What race were your grandparents?

World War II veterans and other students at the University of Iowa in 1947. That year, due to federal assistance from the GI Bill, 60 percent of the school's enrollment was made up of veterans.
*Margaret Bourke-White/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images*

Institutionalized racism/classism built into the "normal operations of society"

Examples:

▶ **Education:** Standardized exam scores (e.g. SAT, GRE) can be improved through training & repeated exam taking. Some colleges only require sending your highest score.

▶ **Income:** Higher level jobs select applicants with college degrees and/or many years of professional experience.

▶ **Wealth:** Housing loans favor people who already have money/down payment. (Wealth is needed to make wealth; wealth determines your neighborhood.)

▶ **Healthcare:** Heath insurance usually has a deductible and is provided through full-time employment.

▶ **Political rights:** Felony disenfranchisement
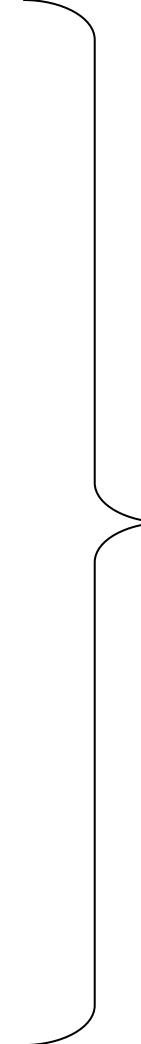
All of these *normal* practices *systematically* advantage some groups over others

3. An unfair game

Half-way through the game, its discovered that the team that is far in the lead has been playing unfairly with 2 extra players on the court. What should be done now?

If the game was changed to be fair for all the second half, will "equity" have been achieved? What would be a more "equitable" solution?
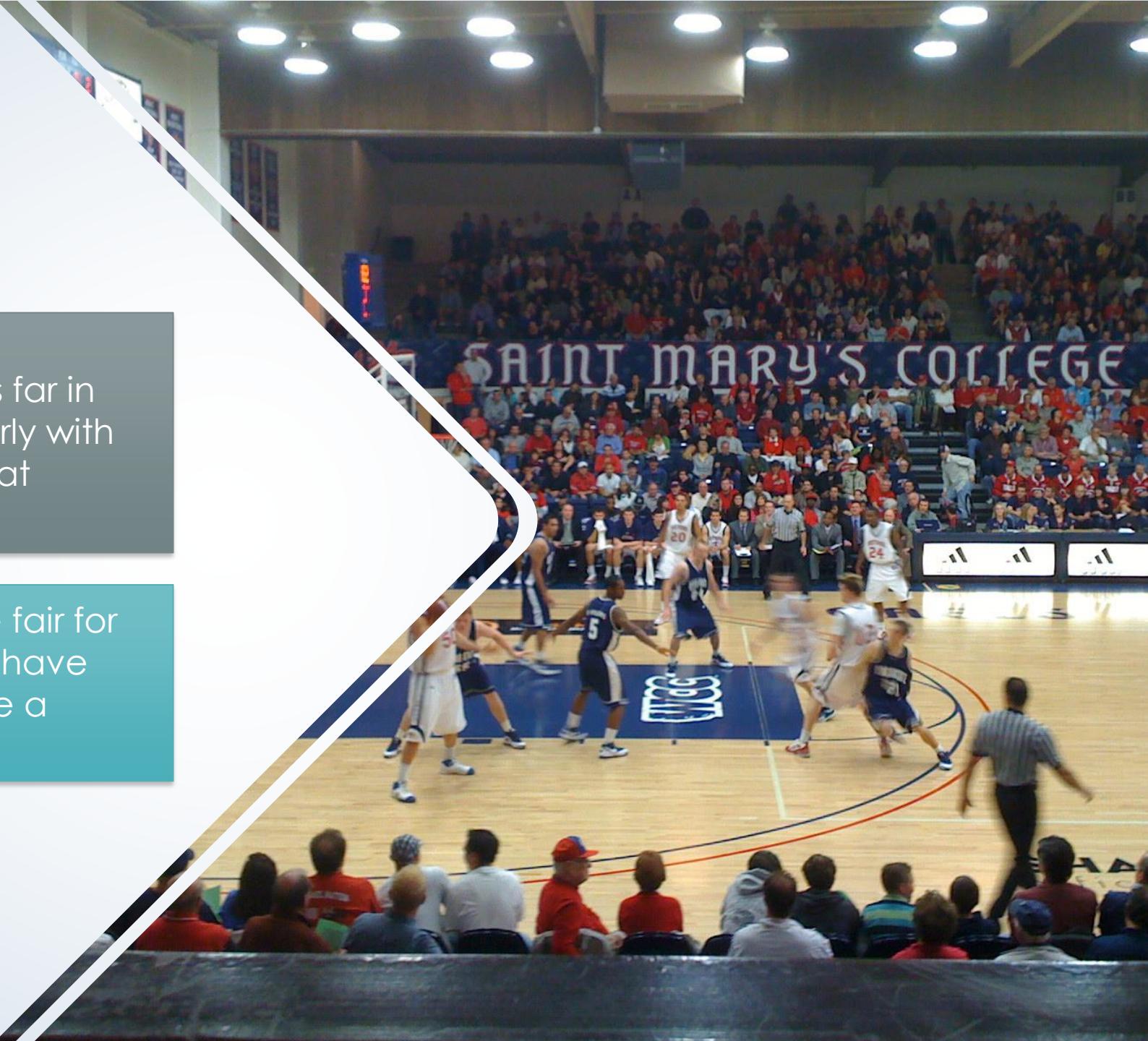
End points and start points
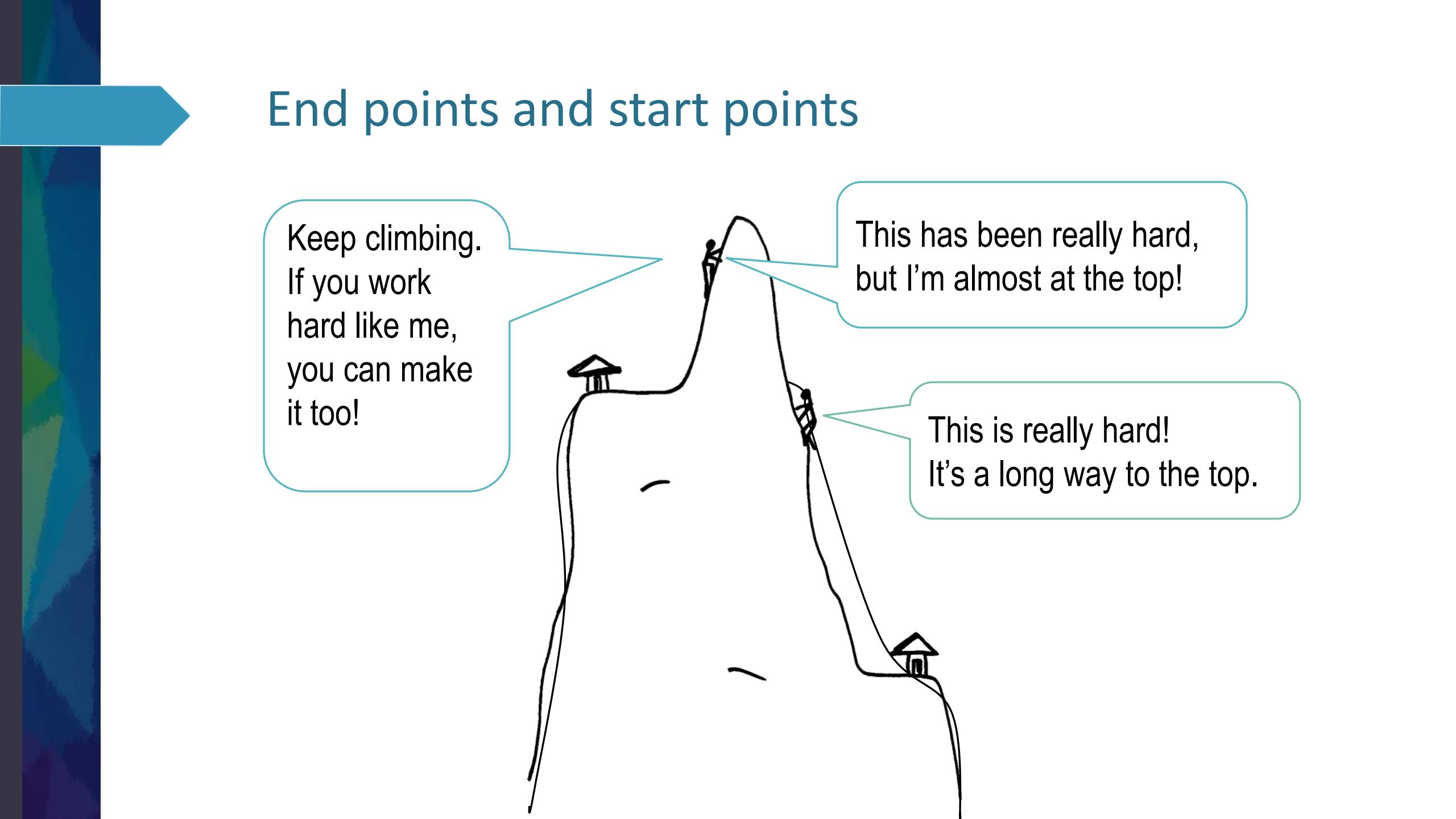
"Privilege" and "disadvantage"

➡ Not being disadvantaged is a *relative* privilege

➡ Who is likely to be systemically "advantaged" by other people's racism?

10 applicants for a job, housing, etc.
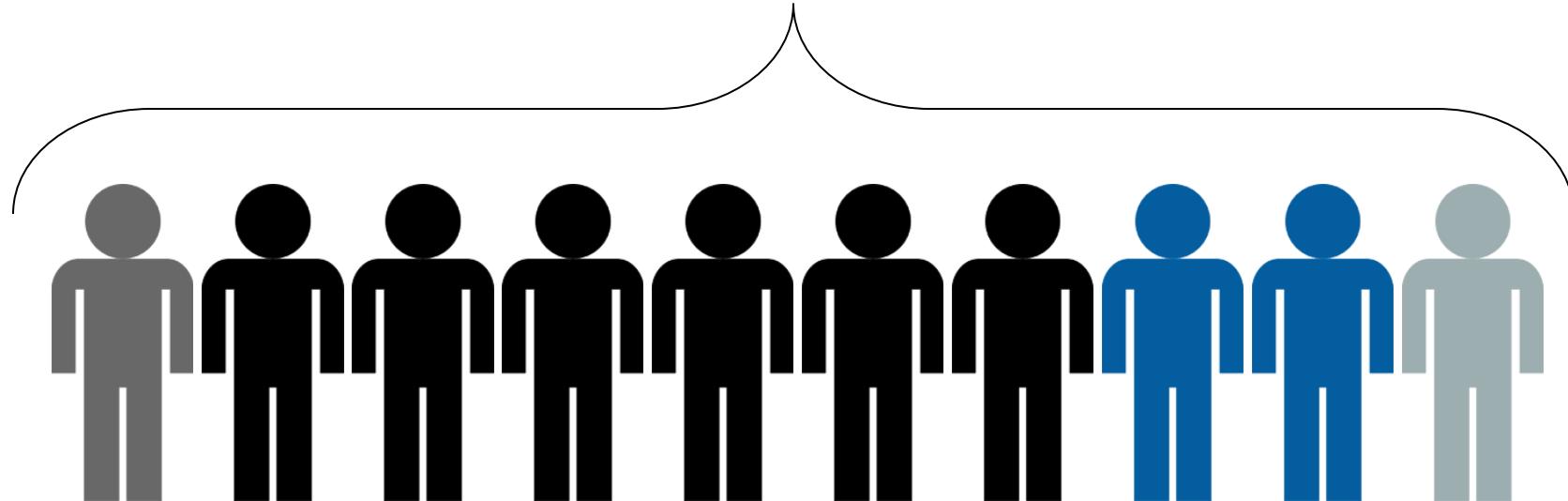
Privilege …

- Is relative: advantages based on one's group *compared* to those in other groups.
- It is not …
  - Saying someone had it easy or didn't work hard to be where they are.
  - About one's own perception or feeling.
  - Asked for, and not something to feel guilty about merely because one possesses it.
- Being colorblind makes invisible both race and the impact of racism (whether oppression or privilege).

Seeking solutions

Personal, individual, organization, vs. structural change

# We "see" structure through patterns across individuals

Institutional discrimination is systematic and works in a *particular* direction

Collective actions maintain or change society

Structure shapes individuals' experiences in a systematic way
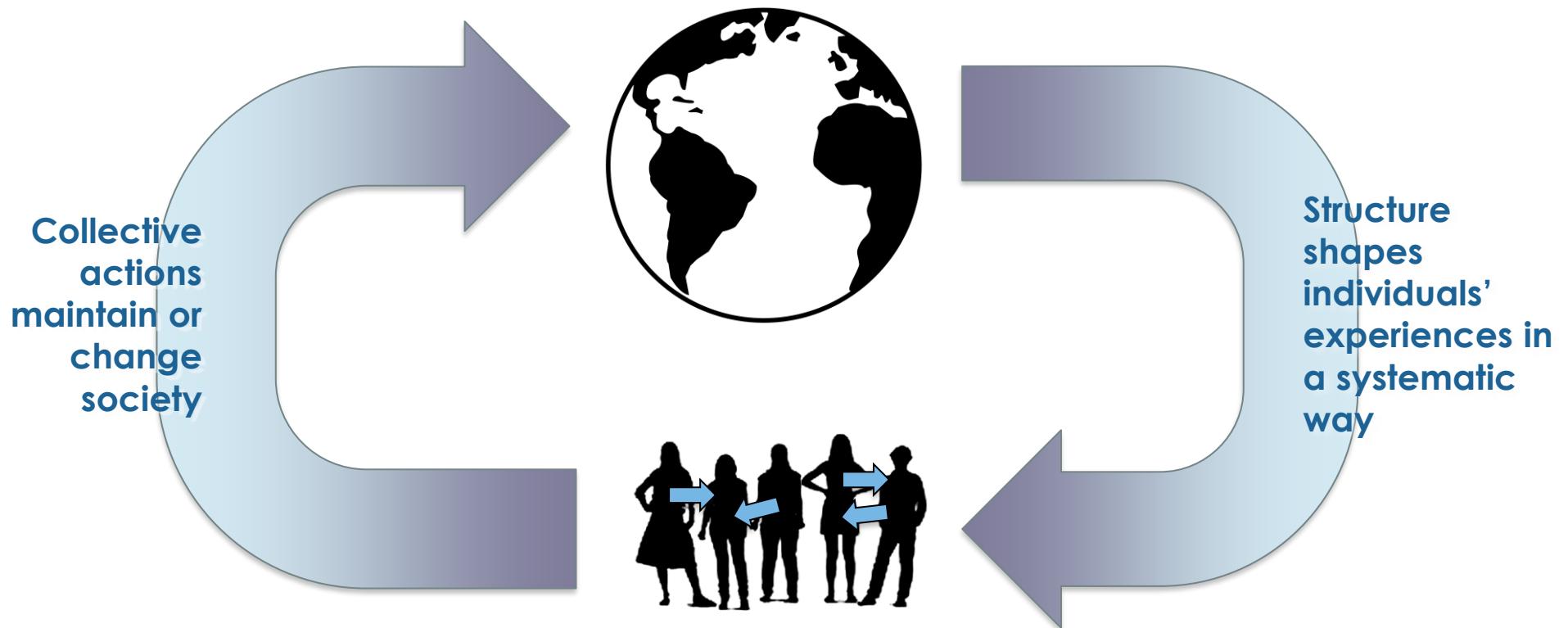
Individual bias/interpersonal discrimination can go in any direction.

Solutions?

➡ Where would these solutions be located on a scale from "treating symptoms" to "curing the disease"?

"Treating the symptoms"

vs.

"Curing the disease"

Improve health insurance

Improve distribution of clean water

Transactional and transformative change

- Transactional changes
    - Reform or eliminate a barrier within a structure to free groups to achieve the goal.
    - Mostly works within the existing institutional system and structure.
- Transformative changes
    - Fundamental change or restructuring or the system itself rather than rearrange or reform relationships within the existing structure.

- While these two types of changes are different, both have value and are important in impacting people in ways that are timely or substantial.
- Lines between transactional and transformative changes can blur

What are some steps towards practicing anti-racism?

1. Personal
   a. Honestly self-reflect and be introspective
   b. Educate yourself about social inequities and systemic racism
   c. Recognize and acknowledge your privileges
   d. Step out of your comfort zone
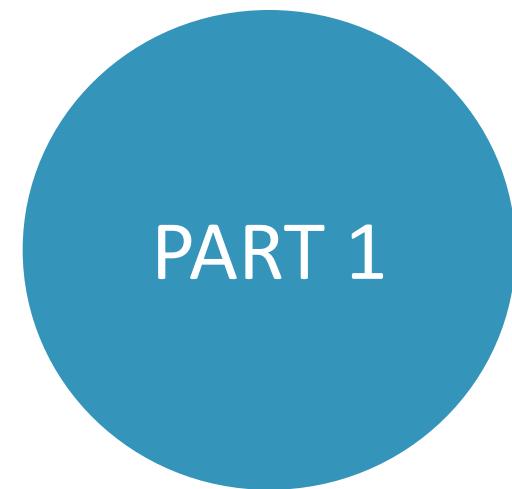
PART 1

What are some steps towards practicing anti-racism?

2. Take individual and small group-level steps:
   a. Teach through example
   b. Monitor your words:
      i. Avoid stereotypical language
      ii. Avoid contributing to racism as a joke
   c. Have conversations: inter-group AND intra-group

PART 2

What are some steps towards practicing anti-racism?

PART 3

3. Participate in creating systemic change in your community and society

   a. Make your voice heard

      i. Vote

      ii. Contact your political representatives

   b. Join organizations and social movements focused on change

   c. Put your money where your values are

# National Institute on Minority Health and Heath Disparities Research Framework

|		**Levels of Influence***			
		Individual	**Interpersonal**	**Community**	**Societal**
Domains of Influence *(Over the Lifecourse)*	**Biological**	Biological Vulnerability and Mechanisms	Caregiver–Child Interaction Family Microbiome	Community Illness Exposure Herd Immunity	Sanitation Immunization Pathogen Exposure
	Behavioral	Health Behaviors Coping Strategies	Family Functioning School/Work Functioning	Community Functioning	Policies and Laws
	Physical/Built Environment	Personal Environment	Household Environment School/Work Environment	Community Environment Community Resources	Societal Structure
	Sociocultural Environment	Sociodemographics Limited English Cultural Identity Response to Discrimination	Social Networks Family/Peer Norms Interpersonal Discrimination	Community Norms Local Structural Discrimination	Social Norms Societal Structural Discrimination
	Health Care System	Insurance Coverage Health Literacy Treatment Preferences	Patient–Clinician Relationship Medical Decision-Making	Availability of Services Safety Net Services	Quality of Care Health Care Policies
Health Outcomes		Individual Health	Family/ Organizational Health	Community Health	Population Health
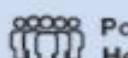
National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2018
*Health Disparity Populations: Race/Ethnicity, Low SES, Rural, Sexual and Gender Minority
Other Fundamental Characteristics: Sex and Gender, Disability, Geographic Region

A popular image of "equality vs. equity" …

Is this the answer?
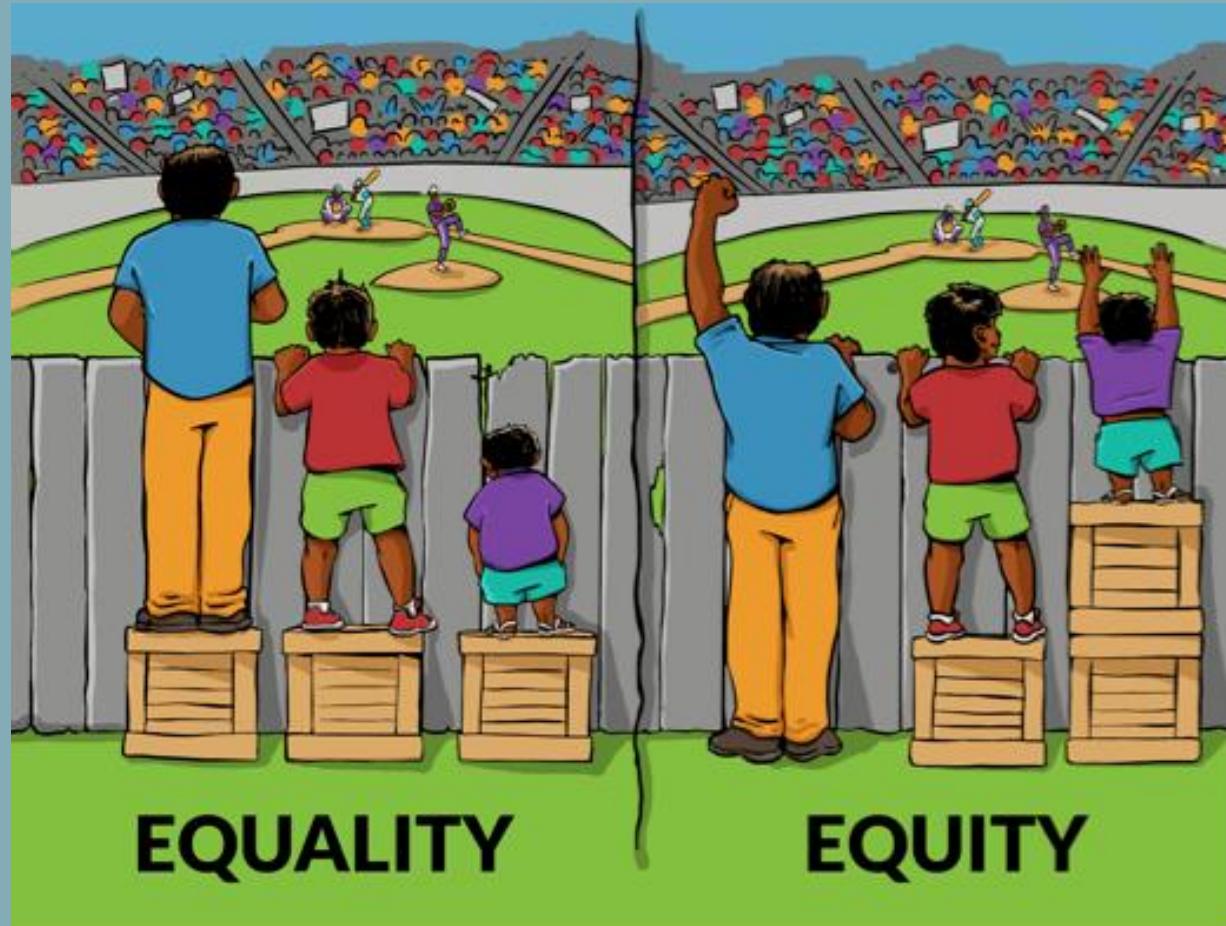
An updated representation …

EQUALITY   EQUITY   LIBERATION
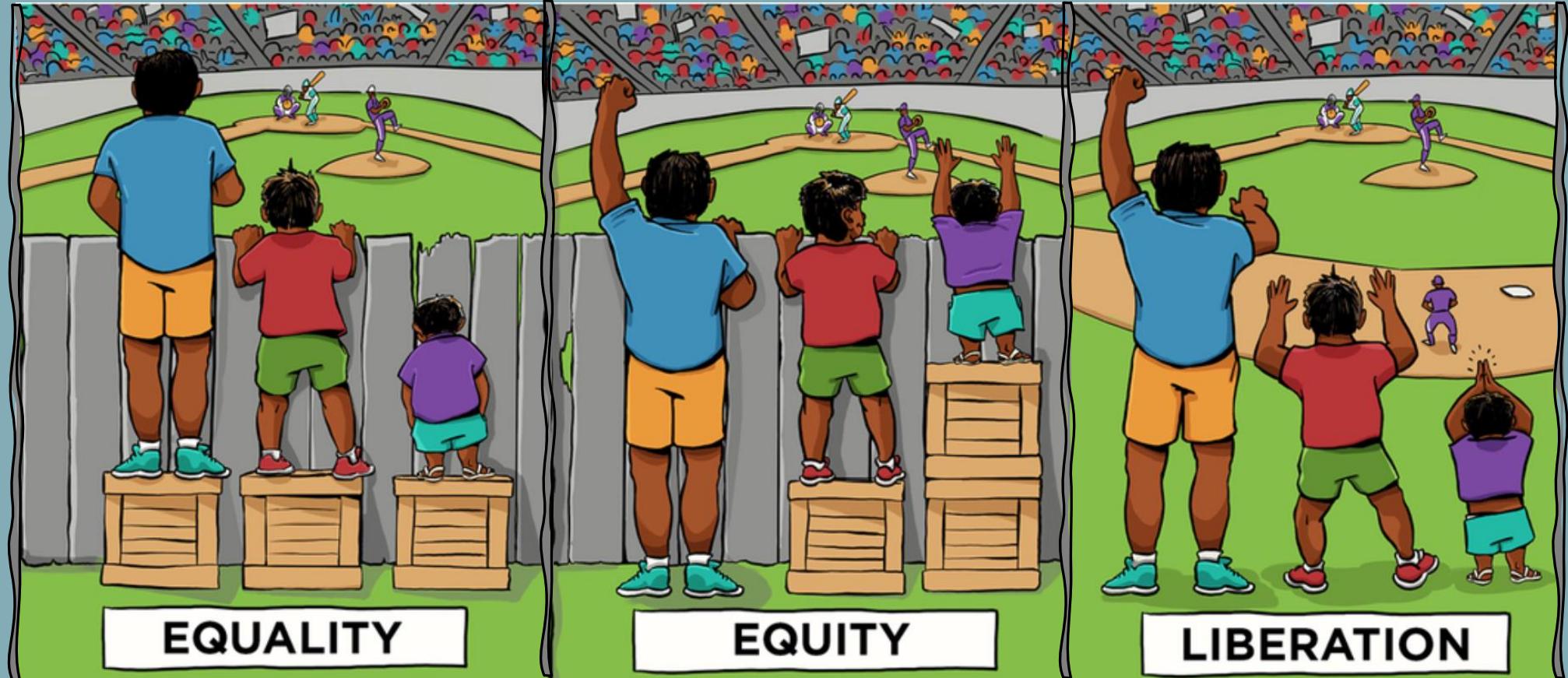
Sources

- Appalachian State University. The Big 8 Identities
- Arizona State University. The Humanities Project.
- DiAngelo, Robin. White Fragility.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Racism and Health
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. NIMHD Research Framework.
- The Winters Group, Inc. The Inclusion Solution.
- University of California, Berkeley, The Othering and Belonging Institute.
- University of Washington, College of the Environment. Glossary – DEI Concepts
- University of Wisconsin, The Writing Center

Thank you.