

Internalization of Whiteness and White Dominant Culture <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>

Racism is perpetuated by deeming whiteness as superior and other racial and ethnic groups as inferior. The prevalence of white dominant culture and racism leads to an internalized racial superiority for those who adhere to it. This **internalized dominance** "describes the experience and attitudes of those who are members of the dominant, privileged, or powerful identity groups. Members of the [dominant] group accept their group's socially superior status as normal and deserved." [as defined by [CARED: Calgary Anti-Racism Education](#)]

When people of a nondominant group (people of color) are discriminated against, targeted or oppressed over time, they often believe the myths and misinformation about their group. Known as **internalized racism**, it happens when an oppressed group believes the racial views that society communicates are true, and they act as if they were true.

Stop and Think!

How does white dominant culture leave others out?

Reflect

What are some of the disadvantages of not being sensitive or supportive of cultures and lifestyles of different ethnic and racial groups?

How can we begin to normalize cultural practices that are not related to white-dominant culture?

Confronting Whiteness

If you identify as white, acknowledging your white racial identity and its privileges is a crucial step to help end racism. Facing your whiteness is hard and can result in feelings of guilt, sadness, confusion, defensiveness, or fear. Dr. Robin DiAngelo coined the term **white fragility** to describe these feelings as "a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves." Since white people "live in a social environment that insulates them from race-based stress," whites are rarely challenged and have less of a tolerance to race-based stress.

For those of us who work to raise the racial consciousness of whites, simply getting whites to acknowledge that our race gives us advantages is a major effort. The defensiveness, denial, and resistance are deep.

ROBIN DIANGELO "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism"

The feelings associated with white fragility often derail conversations about race and serve to support white supremacy. While these feelings are natural human reactions, staying stuck in any of them hurts the process of creating a more equitable society. The defensiveness, guilt, or denial gets in the way of addressing the racism experienced by people of color.

For white people doing anti-racist and social justice work, the first meaningful step should be to recognize their fragility around racial issues and build their emotional stamina. ["White Fragility" author Robin DiAngelo breaks it down.](#)

Besides your own internal reflection, processing, and daily commitment to anti-racist work, try participating in affinity groups, or caucuses. [These groups are people sharing common interests,](#) backgrounds, or experiences, coming together to support each other.

Take a moment to reflect



Let's Think

Read

- ["White Power Ideology': Why El Paso Is Part of a Growing Global Threat"](#) by Lois Beckett and Jason Wilson, to learn more about

the violent and overt ways white supremacy still exists in the U.S.

- ["The Sneaky Language Today's Politicians Use to Get Away With Racism"](#) by German Lopez

Reflect

- How does the concept of white supremacy relate to white privilege?
- What are the dangers of politicians' frequent use of racially coded language?
- **For Educators:** An overwhelming majority of the nation's teachers are white. To learn about the impact of whiteness in the classroom and why this is troublesome to black students, read: ["Why Diversity Matters: 5 Things We Know About How Black Students Benefit From Having Black Teachers."](#)



Let's Talk

1. **For Concerned Citizens:** Whiteness operates in covert and overt ways that affect all of us. It can appear as practices within an institution or accepted social norms. Since whiteness works almost invisibly, we may not always be aware of how it manifests in our daily lives. Thinking critically about your social conditioning and the values you have adopted as fact, ask yourself:
 - What are some aspects of whiteness you've internalized?
 - How can these be hurtful to you and others?
 - What are some ways you plan on combating them?



Let's Act

- **For Parents:** How often do you talk to your child(ren) about the noticeable racial differences in society as well as your own race? To learn more on how to teach your child about the ways whiteness is prevalent in society, watch this video with concrete examples and suggestions: