

World Conference Against Racism • Durban, South Africa • 2001



I M A G I N E

... a world
BEYOND
Racism

WORKBOOK
on Race and Racism

Imagine a World ...



I M A G I N E

Imagine no possessions,
I wonder if you can,
No need for greed or hunger,
A brotherhood of man,
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world...
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one,
I hope some day you'll join us,
And the world will live as one.

—John Lennon

WORKBOOK

ON RACE AND RACISM

Youth Summit • *United Nations World Conference Against Racism*
Durban, South Africa • 2001

Our Aims

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF) is a public charity based in Atlanta, Georgia USA. Founded in 1867, SEF works to promote equity and excellence in education, primarily in the American South. For information about SEF, please visit our website at www.sefatl.org.

Since 1995, SEF has conducted an investigation into race relations in Brazil, South Africa and the United States and identified ways of reducing racism, poverty and inequality. This project, called *The Comparative Human Relations Initiative*, has published a series of *Beyond Racism* books and reports about racism, poverty, sexism and other linked forms of discrimination in these nations. Most of the information set forth in this report is drawn from our work in these three countries, but the lessons are of general application. For wherever racism and discrimination are found-no matter the form-the consequences are the same: wasted lives, social tension, low productivity, high crime, an underdeveloped consumer base, over-incarceration, and human suffering. In moral, spiritual and material ways, racism hurts both victim and victimizer.

Copies of Comparative Human Relations Initiative reports and other materials may be obtained free of charge from the Initiative's website at www.beyondracism.org.

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Table of Contents

You are Never Too Young	5
Come to Terms	11
Remember the Past	17
Look at the Present	23
Imagine the Future	27
What Will You Do	36

**The moral arc of the universe
is long, but it bends toward
justice.**

— *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*





You are Never Too Young

Young people have always been leaders of social change. Maybe it is because they are able to see not just what is-but to imagine what can be.

An individual has not started living until he [or she] can rise above the narrow confines of ... individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity. ... Like life, racial understanding is not something that we find but something we must create.

— *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Everything now, we must assume, is in our hands: we have no right to assume otherwise. If we ... do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and ... change the history of the world.

— *James Baldwin*

This workbook is an invitation to young people to imagine a world beyond racism, where respect for human rights is a reality and where unity and fairness rule. More than that, it is a challenge to young people to help take the world beyond racism.

You may not have created the problem of racism. You may think it is not your problem. But if you don't believe in racism and don't want it to continue, you have an obligation to combat it. Racism hurts everyone. If you are not part of the solution, you really will be part of the problem.

Can you imagine a world beyond racism? Will you work to make it so? You are never too young to do what is right or to care.

Racism and its frequent companions, poverty and inequality, has devastating effects, not just on adults, but especially on children and young people. Consider this:

The world's population tripled during the 20th century. Today, the young are the largest group of people on earth. Unfortunately, many young people, especially children of African descent or appearance in Brazil, South Africa and the United States, are exploited. There is a growing trade in children as laborers. Others are being abused sexually.

In many countries, child prostitution is a significant industry. More than 2 million children have died and 6 million were seriously injured in the world's armed conflicts during the last decade. Over half of the millions of people affected by AIDS are under the age of 25. Domestic abuse, police violence, suicide, drugs, AIDS-the litany of problems to be overcome is long. Those who are the most vulnerable and need help the most are victims of poverty, racism and inequality.

It may seem that such problems are so overwhelming, that no one person or no group of dedicated people can have an impact. But that is defeatist thinking and wrong. All of us have ways-large and small-to help combat racism at home or abroad. We may not be able to solve the big systemic problems of the world through individual action, but we can make a difference where we are. And, if we each do our part, over time, together, we can make an enormous contribution to making the world a better place.

Your contribution may involve making friends with someone who looks different from how you see yourself due to color or race. It may involve telling your classmates who make negative remarks about someone's color, race or other superficial characteristics that they are doing something wrong, harmful and offensive. It may involve participating



in efforts to raise monies for worthy causes or volunteering time to help people less fortunate than yourself. It may involve supporting and voting for candidates who are concerned about racism or getting involved in antipoverty and antidiscrimination programs. It may mean participating in demonstrations, lobbying for public policies, asking questions, or writing articles. There are thousands of ways in which you can become involved in the global struggle against racism. The only unacceptable action is to withdraw and do nothing. Martin Luther King, Jr., the great African American civil rights leader, framed the challenge this way:

Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.

Now is the time for your involvement - for a new wave of youth activism and leadership!

This workbook is not about the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism. It is about the issues and possibilities arising from this important event. We ask that you think hard and long about what you understand about race and racism. Even more important, we ask you to decide what you can and will do --now and in the future -- to make

a better world. We think that it is time to put the antiquated ideas sustaining racism on the scrap heap of history and move on! Don't you?

At the World Conference, governments, organizations and individuals will be debating the values, principles and strategies needed to combat racism, sexism and inequality at home and abroad. The official documents that will be issued by the United Nations will set a baseline that can be used to hold our governments, international institutions, global businesses -- all of us --accountable for concrete steps to combat racism. The official documents will describe values and principles that should be honored and measures that should be undertaken.

These pronouncements and plans are needed. They will focus attention on the problems of using "race" to disadvantage some people and benefit others. And, although the United Nations does not have much power to enforce the plans adopted, it can set a standard by which we all can measure progress. The plans will create a horizon toward which we all can move. After all, if you don't know where you want to go, how will you know when you get there?

The World Conference is an important milestone in the struggle for human rights, but the real work will begin after we all go home.



We hope this workbook will help all of us prepare for the work that lies ahead. This book offers questions as well as answers -- as much space for your writing and your own words and thoughts as ours. We hope it helps you come to a better understanding -- a basic, personal understanding -- of some of the issues on which the World Conference will focus and to develop your own agenda for how to make a difference.

Along with others across the world, you can become among the “handful” James Baldwin beckoned -the handful that can change the history of the world.

IMAGINE, IMAGINE, IMAGINE ... WHAT YOU CAN DO!

--- **Lynn Huntley and Steve Suitts**
The Comparative Human Relations Initiative
The Southern Education Foundation
August 2001



Come to Terms

Most of us make judgments every day about others based on shorthand cues like “race.” But few of us could, if asked, give a scientifically grounded definition of what the term means. We are not aware that racial classifications are neither uniform nor static across time or place.

In fact, all human beings have multiple identities-as members of nations, communities, families, schools, and professions. We are male or female, rich, middle class, or poor, and we have “racial identities” and appearances associated with people indigenous to different parts of the world-Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia. These identities, whether we like them or not, may be imposed on us by others. Or we may generate and accept them for ourselves. Racial identities have force and influence in our lives.

Race is an idea that early European “scientists” used to describe differences in appearance in peoples living in other parts of the world distant from their own. Race began as a geographically derived idea. Later, some scientists speculated about whether some groups were “inferior” or “superior” to others. Whether due to conscious or unconscious bias, ignorance, faulty methods or chauvinism, many Europeans concluded that they were “superior” to all others. The notion of European or “White” supremacy furnished a ready excuse or justification for imperialism, colonialism and the enslavement of peoples of African descent.

Often people use race and appearance as a means to separate themselves from others and to gain or maintain advantages for themselves and “their kind.” They may feel an “affinity” with those who resemble themselves. They may fear those who look differently or come from different cultures or parts of the world. Worse, they may hoard social benefits and opportunities for members of their “in-group” and exclude people who appear to be different from sharing equally in society’s privileges, benefits and rights.

So let’s start with the basics.

What is Race? Race is a “social concept” more than a scientific fact. In truth, modern science teaches that there is only one race --- the human race --- and that race has no relationship to human worth or ability.

In 1994, a science journal in the United States summarized recent findings on “race” and genetics. It reports “race accounts for only a minuscule .012 percent [less than 1/50 of one percent] in our genetic material... There are no traits that are inherently, inevitably associated with one another.” Each human being is “one person’s variation on the theme of humanity.” Put simply, regardless of “race,” all human beings are much more alike than different.

What do you think?



- How would you define “race?”
- Do you believe that no group of human beings is inherently inferior or superior to another, regardless of appearance or descent?
- Why do some people think that they are “better” than or “inferior” to others because of perceived differences in “race”?

What is Racism? What is Racial Discrimination?

We define “racism” as “actions or inactions by persons, institutions or societies that create or preserve unequal conditions and relationships between racial groups.” The United Nations’ treaties and declarations use this definition to describe racial discrimination:

Any distinction, exclusion, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, and any other field of public life.*

These are careful definitions, but the ideas that each conveys are basic. Let’s say what they mean in simpler language.

Some people have a personal dislike for others who look different from themselves and intentionally treat the others unfairly and unequally. They disregard the human feelings or human rights of those who are not members of

* Article I of the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Convention was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 21, 1965.

their “in-group.” They prejudge others (hence the term “prejudice”) without taking the time or effort to get to know them.

But racism is not solely a matter of personal prejudice or attitude. Over generations, racist attitudes become embedded in social mores, culture, laws, customs, behaviors, and the way institutions operate. Racism, therefore, is not just a habit of the heart. It can be a habit of industry or a pattern of behavior by people, government, or institutions. Left unchallenged and unchanged, these bad habits hurt people as much as overt, intentional racism.

Institutional racism-patterns and practices that advantage some groups or individuals over others, even unintentionally-is just as unfair to its victims, who are treated unequally, as intentional acts of discrimination. Let’s consider an example: suppose only Whites and not Blacks have high school degrees. An employer wants to hire people to dig ditches. He decides to hire only people with high school degrees, although there is no evidence that a person with a high school degree can dig a ditch better than someone who is not a high school graduate. The result of the practice keeps Blacks from getting jobs with that employer, even though the employer may not have considered the effect of this



policy on Black job seekers. The unintended consequence of the policy is to exclude Blacks from working for this employer.

In many societies, racial discrimination is against the law. But that does not mean that it just goes away. Laws have to be enforced and respected to change behaviors and practices. And that usually takes time.

In Brazil, South Africa and the United States, Black people have long been excluded from full participation in society. As a group, they have been enslaved, subjected to racial discrimination or apartheid, or denied voting rights, jobs or access to a quality education because those with power disliked Blacks or were indifferent to their needs.

Even if discrimination is unlawful, the effects of past exclusion due to race linger on. A former president of the United States described the problem this way: You cannot tie a man to a chair and let his leg muscles grow weak and then untie him and tell him to go run a race with others who have been training for the event. Although all the runners begin the race from the same starting line and are, in that sense, equal, the one who has been tied to the chair comes to the start line with real disadvantages. The race looks fair, but it is not.

What do you think?

- What do you make of this statement: “I have friends of other races. I can’t be a racist?” Is that right?

- Think about “unequal conditions” between racial groups” in your country. Do you know how and when they were created or are now preserved?
- Are there instances that you can point to in your country or elsewhere when Black people have been “tied to a chair?”
- If every worker of African descent was paid \$3.00 per hour less than every White worker of Swedish descent at a technology plant and workers from both groups had the same qualifications for doing the same job, would that be racial discrimination?



Remember the Past

There is an old expression: “The person who knows not the past is doomed to repeat it.” This means that our present world is shaped by the behaviors of those who lived before us. Today’s world is our inheritance from the past. By looking back, we can learn a lot about how we got to where we are today-the forces that created our present circumstances-and what we need to do to change things we do not like.

Let’s look at the broad outlines of our recent past. At the beginning of the 20th century, most of the world was gripped by imperialism and racial domination. In fact, the 2001 World Conference convenes in the land where a hundred years ago the British Empire was at war with White Afrikaners (Boer’s War) in a bloody battle over which White group would control the diamonds, gold, and Black human beings in the land we know today as the new South Africa.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, imperial nations uprooted the existing order to build civilizations in their own images. There were few international organizations and treaties to qualify or question any nation’s external or internal actions. The idea of “human rights” had not been invented as a real standard by which to judge the conduct of governments, individuals and groups. Peace and reconciliation were little more than the vain hope of the defeated. Few of the world’s small number of democracies permitted a majority of their adult citizens-especially women or people of African

lineage-to vote. Africans were being exported around the world to work as slaves under the gun. Empires celebrated their domination and conquest as a “divine right” or as their “manifest destiny,” falsely believing in their “inherent racial superiority.” Structures of power based on race and nationality grew around the world.

The 20th century was a time of stunning transformation and enormous calamity. There was rapid and harsh industrialization in the West and the beginnings of post-industrialization. Colonial rule rose and fell. There were two World Wars, many smaller but devastating wars, and the Holocaust. Communism rose and fell. The world experienced a “green revolution” in agriculture. The “Cold War” ended. AIDS and other diseases ravaged many of the world’s peoples, while advances in life saving drugs and technologies extended the life span of others. And there was a rapid expansion of far reaching technologies, giving rise to a new global economy and era of growing global interdependence.

Throughout all of this time, there were always some people who had a higher and different vision of what the world should be. They believed in the equality of all human beings and worked to combat racism, broaden opportunity and promote respect for the dignity of all peoples.



**“History with all its
unending pain cannot be,
cannot be un-lived.
But faced with courage
need not be lived again.”**

— Maya Angelou

Against the odds, over time, their efforts shifted the tide of popular opinion and thinking. There was a dramatic movement around the world away from the idea of racial superiority and toward the simple ideal that all human beings should be treated fairly due to shared humanity. The seemingly infinite capacity of human beings to engage in evil acts began to be counterbalanced by global efforts to recognize the fundamental equality and human rights of each person.

Courageous, ordinary men and women - young and old -- joined together to achieve extraordinary deeds:

- People in Africa fought and freed themselves from colonial rule and inequality and began to move toward democratic governance. Many Africans lost their lives in the struggle for freedom from apartheid. After 27 years of imprisonment, Nelson Mandela was freed in South Africa, and a new democratic government dedicated to human rights took office. The government has now begun to rebuild South Africa based on principles of fairness and human rights, but inequality lingers. It will take a long time to overcome the problems that apartheid left.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and others led African Americans in protest against racial segregation and second-class citizenship. Although both were assassinated, the civil rights movements they led in the United States succeeded in overturning legal discrimination and the denial of voting rights based on race. Today, more African Americans are in

public office and a part of the United States' middle class than ever before.

- Brazil's Abdias do Nascimento raised his voice countless times against the conspiracy of silence in a country that perpetuated the “myth of the great racial democracy.” Today, with the end of military dictatorship, for the first time in Brazilian history, the president of Brazil has admitted that racism exists and pledged efforts to reduce disadvantages suffered by the Black and Brown population.

National organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the African National Congress (ANC), and the Afro-Brazilian Front stand out in the historical record of these three countries. But they are only the most visible sign of a continuing human and civil rights movement in which thousands of ordinary women and men across the globe work to diminish the legitimacy and effects of racism. These people, young and old, represent the diversity of humanity. People of African descent have always had allies of other “races” and ethnicities who have worked with them side-by-side to combat discrimination. In each nation, religious and civic leaders -- White, Black, and Brown -- have awakened broad opposition to racial domination.



Racism also has begun to decline because of international events and developments that have prompted nations to confront racism and do something about it. Black South African leaders relied on an international boycott and the international human rights movement over several decades to add external pressure to end apartheid. In Brazil, after an international incident that prompted the nation's first anti-discrimination law, United Nations' reports in the 1950s played a key role in exposing racism in Brazil.

Still racism continues today and at any time can retrofit its worst mischief to modern life. Why? The reasons are many: selfishness, ignorance, fear of the unknown, meanness and indifference. In Brazil, South Africa and the United States, racism also persists because of people and institutions that seek to preserve their unfair economic, social and political advantages over Blacks. They may do this actively or simply by failing to support measures to bring about reform.

Despite progress, racism still flourishes in the economic and social arenas where people of African descent are disproportionately poor and lack access to adequate care and quality educational opportunities. It also remains present in the political arena where many people of African descent lack resources to run for office or lobby effectively for their own needs. It is in the aesthetic sphere where White appearance remains more valued than Black appearance. Racism has become a dynamic part of prevailing ideologies and cultures.

What do you think?

- What primary “legacies” relating to racism in the 20th century do you see?
- When we mention “struggles” against racism, what do you think of? What struggles against racism do you know something about?
- “My ancestors never owned slaves. I’ve never been rich and privileged. I don’t have anything to do with racism against Blacks.” — What would you say in response to this claim?
- What do you think are the primary barriers to efforts to rid the world of racism and discrimination?
- Can you think of any time when you thought or acted like a racist? How did you feel?



Look at the Present

**Well, my soul checked out
missing as I sat listening
to the hours and minutes
tickin' away.
Yeah, just sittin' around waitin'
for my life to begin
while it was all just slippin'
away.**

—Bruce Springsteen

What is the state of racism today in your school or community? Around the world? That question rarely gets one answer or much agreement across racial groups. (That's one reason why governments had such a difficult time preparing the World Conference declaration and plan of action.) Perhaps, we should recall the old Native American saying, "we need to walk in each other's moccasins" in order to understand fully another's feelings and experiences.

What are the barriers to overcoming racism? Our study of Brazil, South Africa, and the United States leads us to offer the following observations:

Invisibility

A large number of privileged people seem unable or unwilling to admit that racism exists in their countries. As South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "It is difficult to awake a man pretending to be asleep." Sometimes, it is easier to pretend not to see suffering or the maltreatment of others than it is to oppose popular opinion or peer groups.

Lingering Beliefs in White Superiority and Black Inferiority

Some people still believe that Whites are "superior" to Blacks. This is so even though the idea that Black-skinned people are inherently inferior to White people in intelligence and character has no scientific basis. This falsehood is broadcast on the World Wide Web by hate groups and debated at some

academic conferences, in magazines, newspapers, and books. This is ignorance that should be challenged and corrected.

Confusing the Disadvantages of Poverty with Race

Black people in Brazil, South Africa and the United States are heavily concentrated among the poor. This is also true worldwide. On average, Blacks tend to go to schools where there are fewer resources and teachers are not as well trained as in schools for privileged and predominantly White student bodies. Blacks, on average, live in households with fewer books and computers than their White counterparts. Blacks suffer from poorer health and nutrition and live in racially segregated communities more often than their White counterparts in these countries. Violence and crime walk the streets in many poor, Black neighborhoods. Some people confuse these disadvantages of poverty with racial inferiority, even though most poor Whites suffer from limitations similar to those experienced by Blacks.

Confusing acknowledgment of “race” with the evils of racism

For most of the 20th century, Brazil’s prevailing public creed has been that recognizing “race” is an act of racism. Many Brazilians and others in the United



States and South Africa assert that we should just ignore race, be “colorblind.” Then, everyone would be treated fairly and equally.

By denying the recognition of “race” over decades, the powerful people in Brazil have been able to assert that there is no racism. How can there be racism where there is no “race?” Over time, the law and government became silent, cordial partners in a larger societal scheme that blinded many White and even some Black people to the existence of racism.

Brazilians may not have been “race” conscious, but they are very color and appearance conscious. This is a form of racism, too. In recent years, Brazil has begun slowly to recognize the existence of both “race” and racism.

There is a big difference between building a nation by disadvantaging people due to “race” and using racial identities to aim help to groups suffering from racism. Pretending that race doesn’t exist and asserting a belief in colorblindness does not meet the needs of racism’s victims. Colorblindness is not an action plan. Our eyes see different colors and shapes. We cannot pretend otherwise. The question is what use should we make of the differences in appearance we see. The problem is not race. It is racism.

What do you think?

- Most public opinion polls reveal that Whites in Brazil, South Africa and the United States don’t think that racism is as serious a problem as Black people? Why do you think

this is so? How do you think there could be more agreement across racial lines?

- Who do you think has a better understanding of how often Blacks are ignored or subjected to discrimination—a Black or a White person. Why?
- Think for a few minutes. Then, list the number of books, movies, songs, videos, computer games, or comments you remember which suggest that one racial group is inherently inferior to another.



Imagine the Future

The old order is breaking down. There are new ways of doing things and new ways of understanding our own best interests. In the past, most efforts to combat racism and discrimination focused on national governments and the peoples within nations. For the foreseeable future, that will still be the best way to change racist practices, policies and attitudes. But in the new global era, we must also take steps to use international institutions, forums and events as well. Above all, we must recognize the global changes that can make racism costly to everyone and put anti-racism on everyone's agenda.

Let's briefly look at some of the forces that are shaping our future.

Globalization

The revolution in technology is creating a world where national boundaries no longer limit the flow of capital, innovation, and ideas. It is a world that is growing "smaller" due to increased trade, investment, international institutions and multinational businesses that operate worldwide. These global institutions are increasingly difficult for national governments to regulate or direct.

The movement of money for investment and businesses can help some countries and their people generate jobs and improvements in the quality of life. But other countries are losing employment and falling further behind. Gaps between rich and poor people and between developed and

developing nations are growing in many places. In fact, disparities in income between rich and poor people in Brazil and South Africa are currently among the widest in the world.

Many societies now recognize that racism keeps many of their residents from developing their talents and contributing fully to national productivity. Many employers now need people with higher levels of skill and training than ever before. Brazil, South Africa and the United States have lost an enormous part of their economic capacity because of the under-investment in and underdevelopment of Black people due to discrimination.

In short, because of new information technologies, it is no longer in the economic interest of any nation that is competing with others for business and investment to have large numbers of poorly trained, undereducated, unhealthy workers who have no money to buy goods and services. This is quite a change from the time not too long ago when having large numbers of poor people to work on farms or in factories was considered an asset.

This change, of course, does not mean that nations and businesses will automatically recognize the new imperative. Those of us who combat discrimination, at home or abroad, face many challenges



in making this imperative real. What if a business based in the United States with factories in Brazil or South Africa is tempted to use “slave labor” or to discriminate based on race and appearance abroad? How can we ensure that the businesses do not make this mistake? How do we assure they do not take a short-term profit that does long-term damage to the environment? How do we get accurate information and leverage on international institutions and developments that set up rules? What types of aid should we urge resourceful governments to provide to poorer governments and their peoples that are in everyone’s best interests? For what purposes?

The future is full of challenges and opportunities in the economic arena. If we don’t want to live in a world divided by race or color, where some starve while others advance, we must help to develop new institutions, new approaches and new thinking about the new economic self interest all of us have in developing the talents and skills of all people.

What do you think?

- When people talk about globalization, what types of developments do you think of?
- From your own perspective, can you think of examples of how technology is creating the need for nations to invest in combating racism and improving the skills of people affected by discrimination? What are ways you might also use technology in anti-racism work?

- What do you think the United Nations or your government should do to keep international institutions or businesses from engaging in racial discrimination? In combating its effects?

Demographic Changes

Global migration and national population trends are creating a more interconnected world. As the populations of nations become more diverse, it is more important than ever to find better ways to improve inter-group relations.

Today approximately 100 million people live in countries where they were not born. A fifth of the globe's migrants are refugees from political repression and natural catastrophes. As in the past, the vast majority of migrants are simply seeking a better life.

Think about this: the earth is now home to more than six billion people. It took almost 4000 years for the world to produce the first billion people. It took only 12 years to add the most recent billion. The worldwide rate of population growth has begun to slow, but it remains almost twice as high in developing nations as in European and North American countries. The birth rate of the earth's poor remains much higher than that of the economically well off. The world's people of color have a much higher birth rate than do people of European descent.



Trends in migration and population will re-order our future. In many nations, people of European descent will no longer be the numerical majority. As the numbers of poor people (including those of African descent) grow, many nations' industries will have to depend more and more on non-Whites for income, production, and growth while aging Whites will need to depend upon non-White workers to pay the taxes that finance retirement pensions. Everyone's future will increasingly be dependent upon everyone else's productivity, values and well being.

These developments may seem distant and unimportant to you today, but think again. Today's social investments shape the future. No man or woman is an island. No group is an island. All of us are coming into increasing contact with people with diverse backgrounds, perspectives and interests. Combating racism is in everyone's enlightened self-interest.

What do you think?

- Why are global migration and differences in birthrates among racial groups making it more important to combat racism?
- Can you explain why people within nations-rich and poor, Black, Brown, and White-are becoming more interdependent? Examples?
- Describe the diversity that you see among people who go to your school or live in your community and country. How is it affecting you or your friends?

International Human Rights Movements

Human rights has become “the defining idea of our time,” perhaps the only political and moral principle with general acceptance almost everywhere. Racial discrimination and racism are violations of human rights. So as the international human rights movement gains force, the movement to combat racism and discrimination will grow stronger.

Today, people around the world are looking to each other for support in combating racial discrimination and linked forms of prejudice, such as sexism. Compliance with human rights standards plays an important part of trade and foreign relations among nations. Finding ways to strengthen both national civil rights and the international human rights movements is, therefore, important to all who wish to combat racism.

Women’s movements around the world are also becoming more powerful. Women come in all races, colors and nationalities. Women of African descent suffer from discrimination based on sex, as well as race. Efforts by women of all races to organize across national boundaries, to promote respect for their rights, and to demand equality of opportunity will continue to have a major impact on efforts to reduce racism. Race and gender are intertwined.



Societies where women of all “races” are treated unfairly and unequally tend to also treat women and men of African descent unfairly. Thus, if women of all races could come together to combat both racism and sexism, the interests of all women and all people of African descent would be served. Women are over half of the world’s people. If they could unite and overcome divisions based on race, half of the battle against racism would be won!

Human rights are for everyone. And it is everyone’s business.

What do you think?

- Can you think of activities undertaken by international human rights organizations in your country? Think about global human rights problems. Do they have issues or traits that are similar?
- Why do you think women of different races or classes have difficulty uniting to press for a common agenda?
- Are you involved in any women’s rights, civil rights, or international human rights activities in your country? If not, why not?

Global Movement for Democracy

A wave of democracy is sweeping across the nations of the world, as more and more people demand the right to elect officials of their choice and shape their own lives. The ultimate test of democratic values is whether the government is servant to all of the people. The core concept undergirding

democratic government is accountability to the governed. As democracy movements gain strength, people who have been racism's victims and their allies will have new opportunities to use governmental power and resources to combat racism. This is a hopeful development.

In most countries, getting young people to exercise the right to vote is difficult. Young people may feel that government is not interested in them or their needs. Or the government is corrupt and, therefore, there is no point in voting. But when they fail to vote, in effect, they are abandoning responsibility to help make the world a better place. Governmental power and resources are needed to combat racism and poverty and the problems from which young people and others suffer. As democratic governance takes root, it must have the active involvement of all people or it will never live up to its promise and will fail to make good and informed decisions.

Democratic governments, like all governments, have weaknesses and can be instruments of oppression, as well as opponents of racism. Yet, political participation in the broadest sense of the word is a primary way that young people can influence the type of society in which we live.



What do you think?

- Were you eligible to vote in the last election in your country?
Did you vote? If not, why not? When will you have an opportunity to vote next?
- Why do you think so many young people don't vote? Why do they fail to see the link between voting and antiracism activities?
- What will you tell your friends about why it is important to vote if they want to combat racism?

What Will You Do?

I have never lost hope that this great transformation would occur. Not only because of the great heroes ... but because of the courage of the ordinary men and women of my country. I always knew that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite...Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.

—Nelson Mandela



The United Nations World Conference Against Racism is an historic event. It marks the beginning of a new international era of work to combat racism. After all of the reports have been written and all of the speeches have been given, after you return home, what will you do?

We hope that you will think about this event and remember that it marks only a stopping off place for people of goodwill of all ages and races who want to make the world a better place. It is not an ending. It is a beginning.

We hope that you will go home with a sense that you are part of a much larger family of humankind whose members need each other and must work to help and protect each other. We hope that you will find concrete ways to help combat racism, sexism, discrimination and other conditions and practices that rob human beings of their dignity and a decent quality of life.

You may be young, but you have a heart and a mind that provide the chance, now and in the future, to use your life and your talent for good. Won't you join in imagining -- and working -- to help our neighbors, our countries, ourselves, and our whole world move beyond racism?

"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter. I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended."

— Nelson Mandela

IMAGINE, IMAGINE, IMAGINE ... WHAT YOU CAN DO!



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