Going though the materials for this unit, I thought they gave a thorough understanding for how the idea of race has impacted society over time. I think understanding the history behind race is especially important for understanding race as a mechanism invented with the specific intention of creating a hierarchy. As we’ve previously discussed, history plays an integral part in the sociological imagination of a society. Generations of entrenched racism have created a constant undercurrent of racial tensions, even when people are unaware of it. For a long time, scientific racism was a way for people to justify the stratification of society into racial groups, and although it’s less obviously present in our current society, I think it’s really important to continue to consider new rationalizations for racism. In my own experience, the argument I’ve come across from white people most often is to the effect of “I pulled myself up by own bootstraps, it’s their fault if they can’t do the same.” “They” being in reference to impoverished people of color. Of course, this argument completely neglects the profound obstacle that de jure systemic racism has on the opportunities available to people of color in America, from poorer school districts, to discriminatory lending and home ownership policies as described in “Race – the Power of Illusion” episode 3, to the earning gap between the wages of white versus black Americans. Even health insurance and medical care are unfairly inaccessible to people of color in America. Social determinants of health, including socioeconomic status, access to nutrition, safe neighborhoods, and just day to day stress, put many people of color at disproportionately higher risk for health issues, making them more expensive to ensure. Then when they do seek medical care, studies have shown that black Americans, and black women especially, are more often misdiagnosed, less likely to be prescribed pain medication when necessary, and black women are three times more likely to die during childbirth than white women. This goes to show how deeply racial bias has penetrated every aspect of American society, even areas that are considered to be fair or objective, like medicine and academia.

All that said, how should we move forward with addressing racism? As discussed in “Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race” racism as it is seen today originates from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, which created the basis for pretty much all American economics, which over time has played a role in our current global economic system. European imperialism also perpetuated racism across the world while also cementing capitalism as our primal global economic system. Racism is so inherent to capitalism that it feels like truly addressing the roots of racism would require a complete geopolitical and economic reformation. In the meantime, I think the best path to progress is educating every member of future generations about the mistruths that underlie racism and taking major actions, like the reparations that have been suggested by some scholars, to try to begin to right the deep damage done by systemic racism.