

## Creating Inclusive and Equitable Communities – A Call to Action

*Understanding the origins and impact of bigotry in the  
U.S. today and what we can do about it*

### **Lesson 12: Responding to Racism – Individual Action**

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## Introduction

All members of society have a shared responsibility to challenge racism and counter prejudice and discrimination when it occurs. When people witness acts of bigotry they can either take action or remain silent out of fear, discomfort, or lack of experience. This lesson calls upon students to identify and apply strategies to counter racism as individuals in their personal sphere, whether at home, at school, with friends, or in society at large.

**Theme:** Social Movements and Equity

**Disciplinary Area:** General Ethnic Studies

**Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment:** 1, 5, 6

## Relevant Curriculum Standards

California's [Literacy in History/Social Studies Standards](#):

- **Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies: RH.11.12.7**
  - Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- **Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: WHST.9.10.4; 9.10.10**
  - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
  - Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## Background Information for Educators

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests following the death of George Floyd, the concept of individual responsibility for racism in society has come to the fore. The term “allyship” has taken on a new meaning which goes beyond social media posts in support of racial justice. There are a number of steps which have been suggested for becoming a true ally in the struggle against racism. They include recognizing one’s own privilege; educating oneself about the history and current issues faced by marginalized communities; amplifying marginalized voices; engaging in difficult conversations about race and racism in our homes, schools, and with friends; and, of course, joining in protests and other large-scale activities that magnify the message.<sup>1</sup> The goal of allyship is not to “save” anyone but to achieve greater equity and inclusion in society.<sup>2</sup> When members of society who do not suffer the impact of racism are equally invested in countering it, true change can occur.

## Learning Objectives

**Identity:** *How will my instruction help students learn something about themselves and/or others?*

- Students will be able to acknowledge and address their own racism and biases.
- Students will be able to learn techniques for encouraging others to address racism.

**Skills:** *How will my instruction build students’ skills relating to the content?*

- Students will be able to identify strategies to counter racism individually.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Jeon, “How to Be an Ally to the Black Lives Matter Movement, Now and Moving Forward,” *Good Housekeeping*, June 23, 2020, <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/a32854303/what-is-allyship/>

<sup>2</sup> Michelle Kim, “Allyship (& Accomplice): The What, Why, and How,” *Awaken*, November 10, 2019, <https://medium.com/awaken-blog/allyship-vs-accomplice-the-what-why-and-how-f3da767d48cc>.

- Students will be able to develop personalized action plans that they can implement in their daily lives.

**Intellect:** *How will my instruction build students' knowledge and mental powers?*

- Students will be able to recognize and challenge racist thought patterns in themselves and others.
- Students will be able to explain the importance of personal commitment to combatting prejudice and racism.

**Criticality:** *How will my instruction inform students' views of power and equity and the disruption of oppression?*

- Students will be able to identify structures that perpetuate inequities.
- Students will be able to strategize ways to disrupt racism and oppression.

## Guiding Questions

1. How can people overcome and challenge racist beliefs about various marginalized groups in society?
2. How can individuals stand up to racism and bigotry when they witness it?
3. What are useful strategies to challenge racism individually?

## Key Concepts and Terminology

- **Recognizing personal biases** - acknowledging the existence of your own attitude of favor or disfavor toward something or someone.
- **Combating implicit bias** - taking action to reduce or prevent unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that impact our actions.
- **Allyship** - the state or condition of being an ally; supportive association with members of a marginalized group to which one does not belong.
- **Upstander** - a person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied.
- **Accountability** - the fact or condition of being accountable or responsible.
- **Commitment** - the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause.

## In-Class Activities

1. **The Hook** – Brainstorm as a class or in small groups various ways to counter bias, racism and bigotry first in yourself and secondly when you encounter it. Make a list of the most popular suggestions for the class to see. (See suggested steps on page 6.)
2. **Main Activity** - Show the Ted Talk [How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them.](#) Ask students to take notes using the Cornell Notes Worksheet (page 7).

3. **Class Discussion** – Have students break into small groups (3 or 4 students) to discuss the following questions about the Ted Talk.
  - What are some examples that she mentions that you have experienced towards another group (not only towards Blacks but towards any marginalized group)?
  - What situations that she mentions have you experienced yourself as either a marginalized or non-marginalized person?
  - What does she suggest that people do instead of denying that they have negative associations towards Black people?
  - How does she suggest that people overcome their fears of people who are different?
  - What does she instruct people to do to be good allies even within their own families?

Next, have students independently write their responses to the following questions:

- What resonated with you in the talk?
  - What made you feel uncomfortable?
  - What aspect(s) of her talk do you plan to put into action?
4. **Reflection** – Lead the class through a reflective discussion using the Discussion Questions (below).
  5. **Extension Activities** - Here are some ideas for further student exploration:
    - Students reflect upon their own group of friends and commit to expanding their circle if it is not very diverse.
    - Students read [“Speak Up!”](#) and then write about their own experience with bias directed at them or at another person and how they responded.
    - Students role play responding as an ally when they witness racial or ethnic slurs.
    - Students discuss strategies for responding appropriately when they witness elders, including family members, making racist statements.

## Discussion Questions

1. How can we challenge our own biases?
2. Have you ever experienced or witnessed bias? If so, how did it make you feel?
3. Have you felt bias towards others? If so, did you act on the bias? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever stood up against bigotry towards yourself or others?
5. How successful were you? What worked and what didn't?
6. What is the role of education in countering racism and stereotypes?

## Homework

**Option 1:** Students write a reflective piece on time(s) they said something or witnessed someone

else saying or acting in a biased manner. Ask them to describe what they learned from their own experiences and how they might respond differently today.

**Option 2:** Students create their own “commitment to personal action” list of actions that they will take to combat prejudice and bigotry. Assign them to keep a record for a month (template on page 8) and then bring it to class to share their progress with other students. They can refer to ING’s Strategies & Tools for Countering Bias, Racism and Bigotry sheet (page 6) for actions they can take and use the worksheet below for help filling it out. Have them write about and share how they felt when they countered bigotry.

## Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

- Refer to steps 3-4 of the In-Class Activities section

## Additional Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, “Speak Up!” - <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/speak-up>
- Teaching Tolerance, “Test Yourself for Hidden Bias” - <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>
- Teaching Tolerance, “How to Respond to Coronavirus Racism” - <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/how-to-respond-to-coronavirus-racism> -
- Tedx, “How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly towards them” - [https://www.ted.com/talks/verna\\_myers\\_how\\_to\\_overcome\\_our\\_biases\\_walk\\_boldly\\_toward\\_them?referrer=playlist-talks\\_to\\_help\\_you\\_understand\\_r](https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_r)
- Islamic Networks Group, Intercultural Speakers Bureau (ICSB) Calls to Action to Counter Bigotry - [https://ing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ING\\_ICSB\\_Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_Resource.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0EDNABISeh\\_mEBTHcD1EyENm6O3mzhIR9Ok2ceWn0CCniuGBSH7bdIVz4](https://ing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ING_ICSB_Calls_to_Action_Resource.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0EDNABISeh_mEBTHcD1EyENm6O3mzhIR9Ok2ceWn0CCniuGBSH7bdIVz4)

## Student Worksheets

### Strategies & Tools for Countering Bias, Racism and Bigotry

- Begin with yourselves by undoing your own biases:
  - Recognize that every human being has biases towards others.
  - Challenge your instinctive thoughts and assumptions.
  - Strive and take initiative to overcome your biases.
  - Repeat to make these steps habitual.
- Be open to criticism:
  - Listen.
  - Apologize when appropriate.
  - Avoid making excuses for yourself.
  - Hold yourself accountable.
- Call out bias when you see it and name it for what it is.
- Be an upstander: speak up when you hear or witness bigotry
  - Don't allow the critique that you are oversensitive to faze you.
  - Practice calling out yourself and your friends despite concern about their comfort level.
- Check in with classmates/co-workers experiencing bullying/bigotry.
  - Ask if they need support and in what form, but don't make assumptions.
- Intentionally engage with people who are different and seek to include them in your circle of friends.
- Join community spaces to heal from the impact of bigotry.
- Volunteer for community organizations that counter bigotry.
- Continue educating yourself about these topics and share what you learn with family and friends.

## Cornell Notetaking Sheet

**Lesson:** Responding to Racism: Individual Action

**Class:**

**Date:**

<u><b>Key Words</b></u>	<u><b>Notes</b></u>
<u><b>Questions</b></u>	<u><b>Key Takeaways</b></u>



## Commitment to Personal Action

Students can use this worksheet to fill out actions that they have taken towards fulfilling their personal commitment to countering prejudice and bigotry over the next month.

Date	Place	Incident	Action taken	Outcome