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**HOW TO DIALOGUE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT  
RACE AND RACISM**

The goal of this initiative is to promote age-appropriate dialogue between adults and young people about race, so that racism will not be transmitted through the generations. By creating healthy racial identities young people will reject the roles of victim and oppressor, and the societal system of superiority and inferiority. We aim to educate parents, counselors, and educators so that adults will be prepared to be proactive and appropriate for a child's cognitive and psycho-social development, and to build young leaders who will challenge racism in all its forms.

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Other contributors to the development of this initiative include Rebecca Williams and Jocelyn Smith.

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## **Working Definition of Race**

A socially constructed, non-scientific categorization of people

1. Categorization of people into status groups based on certain physical characteristics (primarily skin color)
  - Blacks, People of Color, Whites
2. Categorization of people based on ancestral continent of origin
  - People of African, Asian, European, Latin American or Native American descent

## **Working Definition of Racism**

1. Belief that Whites are superior.
2. Systematic oppression of people of color which limits access to privilege, resources and opportunities
3. Prejudice plus power

## **Working Definition of Internalized Racism**

For People of Color: Internalization of victim role (internalized oppression)

For Whites: Internalization of the oppressor role (internalized racist)

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Ten Dialogue Guidelines

1. Children need to have a positive personal identity that includes their racial identity.
2. Children of all races need to be taught about their racial identity from a perspective of pride. Emphasize continent of origin, heritage and ancestry. Affirm their phenotype.
3. Whenever possible, children should learn about their racial identity before learning about racism to prevent the internalization of the victim and oppressor roles.
4. Emphasize liberation rather than subjugation in order to prevent shame. Focus on taking responsibility and social change activism rather than guilt. This can be accomplished through age-appropriate conversations and activities.
5. Partner with children in making decisions affected by race and racism. Do not assume that your experience is, or will be their experience.
6. Give children enough information to make sense of the world as they experience it, including their encounters with racism. Listen to their thoughts and feelings, and answer questions at age-appropriate level.
7. Children need to see that adults are engaging in on-going self-education about race, and that they themselves try to model anti-racist attitudes and behaviors.
8. Take action in support of children who have been involved in a racist situation (as injured party, insensitive actor or by-stander.)
9. Make it clear that interpersonal racism is about a person's behavior and attitudes, not the person (racist attitudes, rather than racist person.) Racism can be unlearned. Allow for the possibility of change.
10. Educate children about the historic roots of ideological and institutionalized racism. Assure children that adults are working to end racism.