

# Responding to Racism



Adapted , with permission, for non-church schools from a document originally created by Coventry Diocesan Board of Education

## What Staff can do as Educators:

- Listen to what voices from the Black community are saying
- Read books on how to be anti-racist & educate yourself about Black history in the UK
- Confront racial injustices when you see them, even when it is uncomfortable
- Approach what you are teaching thoughtfully, looking for ways in which you can amplify Black voices and celebrate Black history

## What to Teach Pupils:

- Teach pupils about what white privilege is and how they can become more aware of it.
- Use visuals such as the White Supremacy Pyramid or Allport Scale of Prejudice in Society to help pupils understand how bias, stereotypes and prejudice can lead to racist words and actions, leading to physical harm and death.
- Explain how to have difficult conversations about race and racism and share feelings and frustrations about racism in a safe space.
- Teach the truth about Britain's history with regards to slavery and racism.
- Teach justice, using the Bible as a key source.
- Explain how to engage in social action that supports those who are discriminated against by policies and structures that support racist ideas.
- Explain how to channel responses creatively, such as through art and music.
- Teach how to use social media responsibly and in a way that protects mental health/well-being.
- Resist the temptation to teach there is no colour, instead help pupils to see where People of Colour are treated differently due to racist ideas.

## Next Steps: Audit Tool

- Use the accompanying audit tool to begin evaluating what your school's response might be to the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Use the outcome of the audit to review resources and curriculum as needed.
- Consider how your school vision supports the response to racism which you wish to cultivate in staff and pupils.
- Consider using prayer/reflection spaces to support pupils in reflecting on their thoughts and feelings.

## What Schools can do:

- Talk about racism and your anti-racist response within the context of your school vision and ethos.
- Allow pupils to ask questions and exercise their curiosity with regards to the issue of racism.
- Evaluate your curriculum- where and how are you educating pupils about Black history, the British slave trade and celebrating Black lives and achievements?
- Look at your resources- are you celebrating Black lives and ensuring pupils encounter the breadth of diversity in modern Britain?
- Consider your school environment- are you making use of Black images in posters and other visuals around the school?
- Educate pupils on what white privilege is and how they can identify it, using it to amplify Black voices where appropriate.
- Invite visitors to school that can help pupils to understand Black experiences, to include speakers, poets, artists, authors, as well as members of Black churches.
- Include opportunities for pupils to study and be inspired by Black poets, writers, artists and musicians.
- Invest in craft supplies that represent a range of skin tones & use clipart in school-made resources that reflect diversity.
- Purchase RE resources that represent a range of cultures.
- Celebrate heroes of faith from Black culture and other nationalities so pupils can more fully appreciate the diversity of religions.
- Use Black History month as a focus but don't consider that to be enough.

## What Families can do:

- Speak up when family members make racist or stereotypical remarks or jokes.
- Teach children to celebrate diversity and difference.
- Talk about white privilege and acknowledge it, talking about your biases.
- Read books and watch films with diverse characters and by diverse authors.
- Learn about Black History together. Listen to Black voices and discuss what they say.

# Talking to Children and Young People About Racism



Locally, Coventry Cathedral carries a message of peace and reconciliation. Schools can talk to pupils about race and prejudice and teach ways to be anti-racist within this context of the cathedral's message.

Racism is a sensitive and messy issue and each school and family's context will vary. But it is important not to avoid talking about it, despite the difficult nature of the topic.

Children and young people *do* notice difference. They notice skin colour. Not talking about race issues can cause harmful and inaccurate conclusions to be formed by children and young people.

Try not to simplify the message to 'we are all equal', as if racism were a thing of the past and fully resolved. This can lead children and young people to conclude that the inequalities they do see are earned or justified in some way. Without adults, children often fill in these 'data gaps' themselves and they don't always use reliable sources.

Acknowledge difference but remind pupils that all people share a common humanity and many religions teach that we are all made in the image of God and contain a divine spark.

It is through our diversity that the full expression of creation can be seen. Black lives matter, and not only matter but are valued, beloved and needed.

The visual image of light shining in darkness is a common metaphor for meeting hate with love, an idea picked up by Martin Luther King Jr himself.



The LIGHT shines in the darkness  
and the darkness has not overpowered it

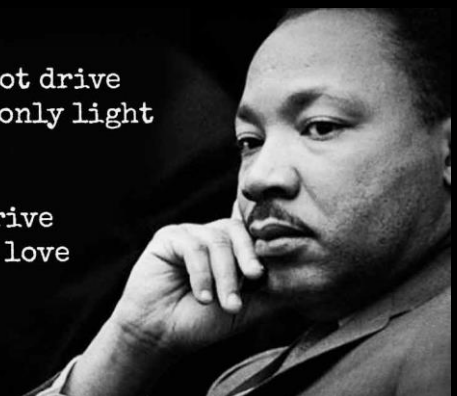
John 1:5

Knowing-Jesus.com

Darkness cannot drive  
out darkness; only light  
can do that.

Hate cannot drive  
out hate; only love  
can do that.

Martin Luther King Jr.



## 1. Set an example to children and young people

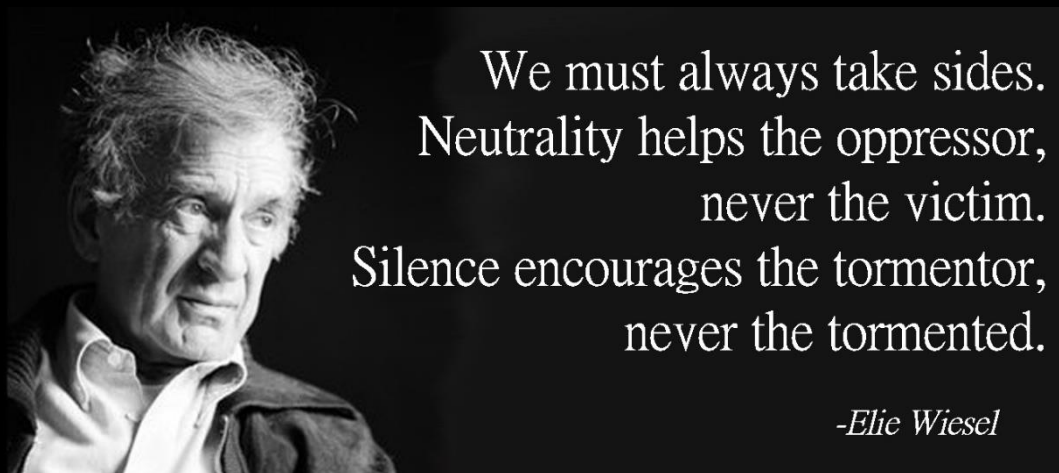
- Learn more yourself- books, articles and documentaries (see list below)
- Make sincere connections with a variety of individuals and cultivate diverse friendships to avoid stereotypes
- Access other people's stories as much as possible so that your responses can be empathic and lead to bridge-building that can benefit children and young people
- Remember, children and young people are watching for our response- 'actions speak louder than words'

## 2. Curiosity

- Children ask questions, let them. Allow children and young people to be 'respectfully curious'. Racial issues should not be a taboo subject.
- Don't shut down conversations about difference as this will give the message that difference is wrong. If you feel nervous about opening up the conversation, start with something simple like a silent debate <https://www.tidegloballearning.net/resources/silent-debate#:~:text=A%20silent%20debate,to%20respond%20to%20a%20stimulus.>
- Ask follow up questions so you can better understand where children's questions and comments are coming from. A good question to ask is 'What makes you think that?'
- It's ok for you, as the adult, to not know the answer. Express your intention to learn together and draw on resources and people that will help you.
- Encourage children to channel their questions about race, difference and diversity towards safe adults, at home and at school.

## 3. Unfairness

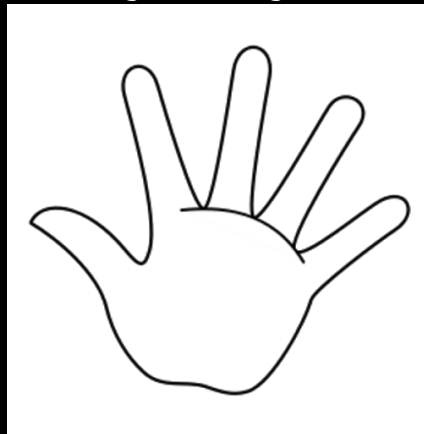
- All children understand the concept of unfairness. Use this as a starting point.
- The 'Spider Web' activity: *"Give children balls of string and ask them to move around the room unraveling their balls of string to make a very tangled web. Once they are finished, ask them to untangle it. They will soon find that it is much more difficult to untangle the web than it was to create it in the first place. Then explain that working to make society fair is a lot like untangling this web."* Dr Erin Winkler
- Remember:



- Tell children and young people that racism *is* possible to untangle and that they can be part of the solution. Kindle hope instead of hopelessness.
- Teach pupils about justice and what this means. Cornel West famously said: *"Justice is what love looks like in public"*.

#### 4. Mistakes are allowed

- Offence is often borne out of differences of experience. What one finds offensive can be a mystery to another.
- Encourage pupils to say 'Tell me more' when they have caused offence. The hope is that this can lead to open and honest conversations in which the offence is made obvious and more about racism is understood.
- Teachers should take every opportunity to educate on racial issues and support pupils in nurturing anti-racist responses.
- When pupils say wrong things, take the first step of listening to understand, before leading them to a better understanding of what racism is and how they can act differently.
- Encourage pupils to say sorry when they unintentionally cause offence on racial grounds and to ask 'How do I not make this mistake again?' The whole class can learn from commonly made errors.
- Leave 'perfect' behind. Take ownership of mistakes and commit to learning from them collectively, seeing every error as an opportunity for growth and learning- 'I don't fully understand about racism *yet*, but I will continue to listen and to learn.'
- Putting things in their historical context through studying of the past will help children and young people to better understand why some things are offensive.
- Teach about bias. We each have bias, both conscious and unconscious. Examine it and acknowledge that it exists and be curious about why it is there. A simple visualisation exercise is to imagine your bias and prejudices on the palm of your hand. What does it look like? What colour is it? What shape is it? Who put it there? Owning our bias and prejudices without judgement is our first step towards doing something about them.



- Teach pupils about white privilege. Learn about what it is, how it helps to perpetuate racist systems, how to recognise it in our own lives and experiences and what to do about it.
  - 🧩 White Privilege doesn't mean your life has been easy, it just means the colour of your skin isn't one of the things making it harder!
  - 🧩 Other privileges exist: socio-economic, male, heterosexual, cisgender, Christian (not in all countries), able-bodied. White privilege is perhaps the most enduring throughout history.
  - 🧩 White privilege exists because of historic and continuous racism, bias and policies and practices that are designed to oppress People of Colour.

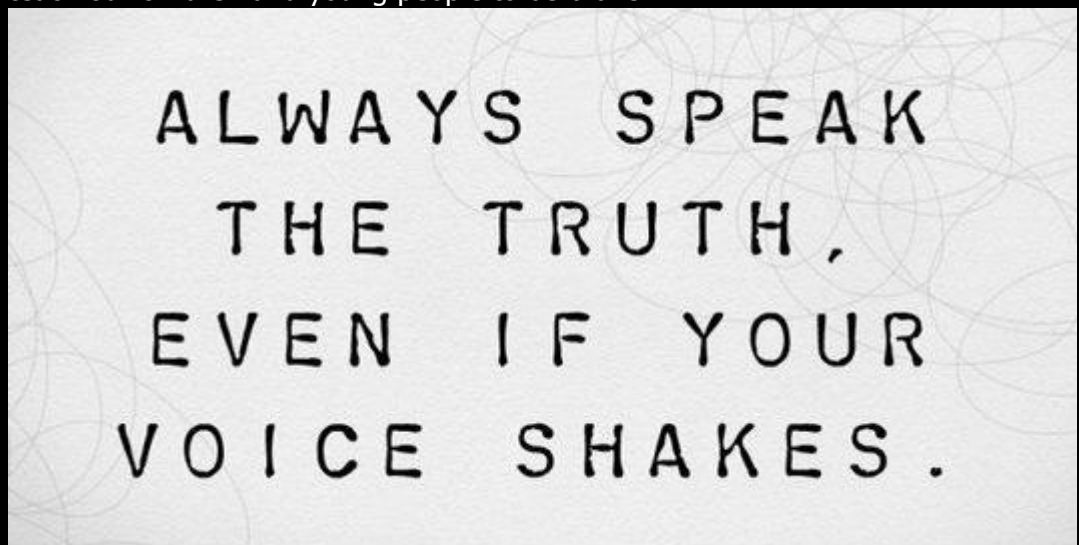


🧩 You may not choose it, but white privilege means you actually benefit from the systematic oppression of People of Colour through racist policies and practice. Some things that are true of white privilege:

- You are the dominant representation on all media
- No one questions your citizenship
- People in your context look mostly like you
- You don't get harassed just for existing in public places
- You may have inherited power and wealth
- Your actions aren't perceived to be those of your entire race

🧩 Systemic racism exists in inequalities of wealth, education, employment, housing and health.

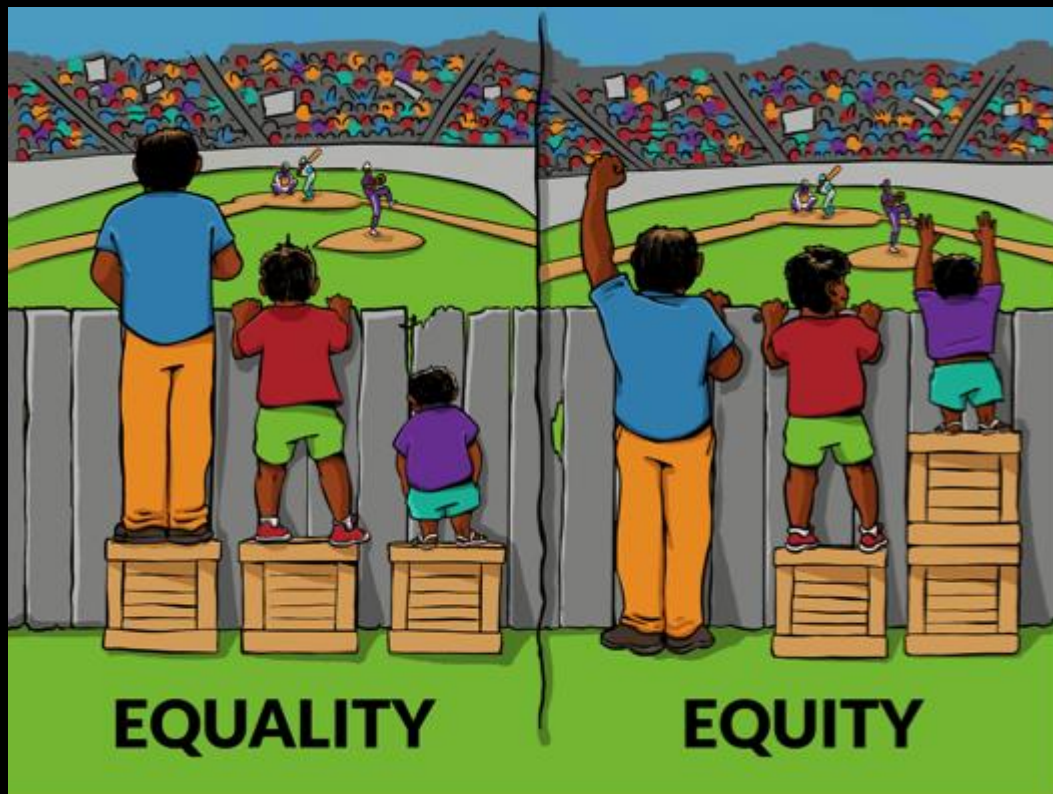
🧩 To combat white privilege, keep learning about what it is, amplify the voices of People of Colour, be more than just 'not racist' but actively 'anti-racist' and confront racial injustices even when it feels uncomfortable. It takes courage to do this, so we must teach our children and young people to be brave.



## 5. Advocacy

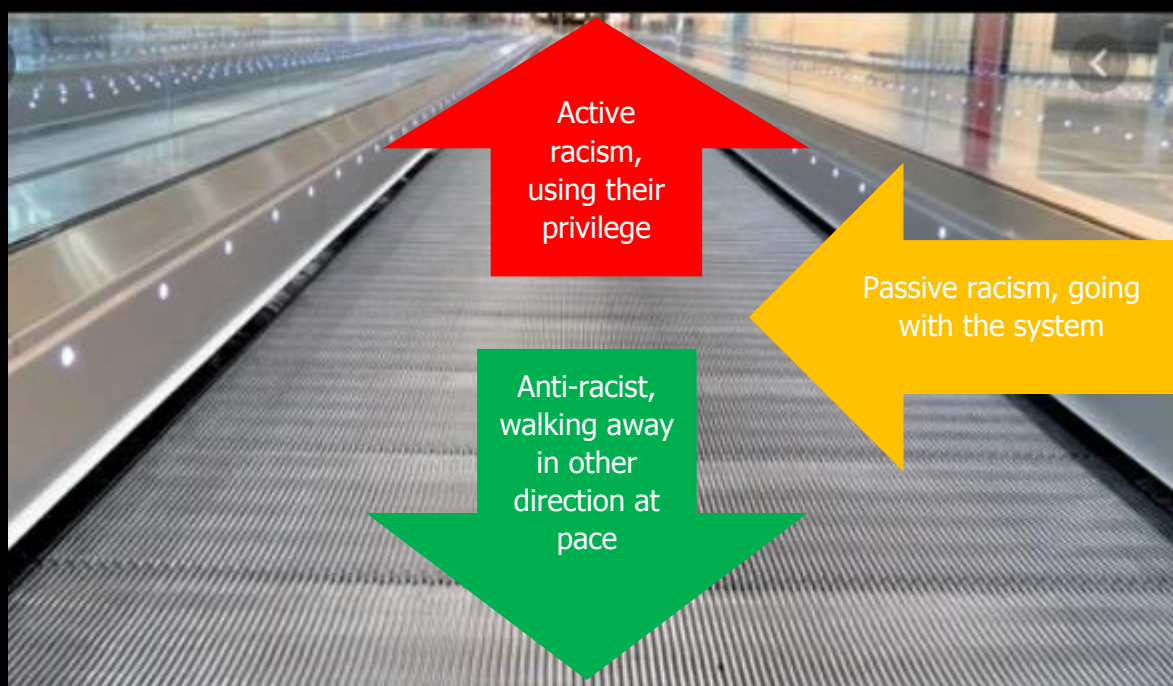
- "With advocacy, you want to allow people to speak for themselves, but you're also supporting them when they need assistance." Amber Coleman-Mortley
- Discuss with children and young people when it is time for them to speak up and when it is time to sit down and listen to what Black people are telling us.
- Discuss the difference between equity and equality. The visual below may be helpful:





<https://publichealthonline.gwu.edu/blog/equity-vs-equality/>

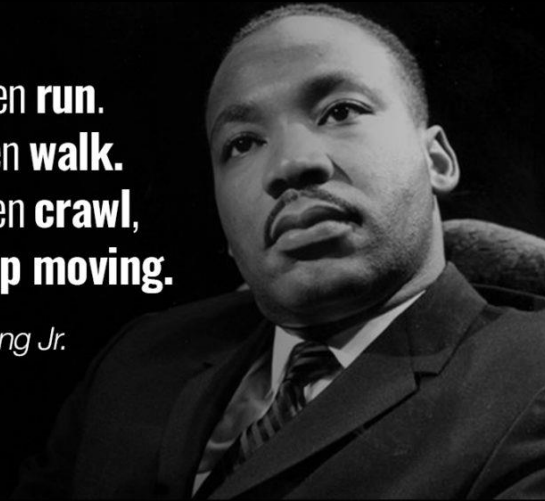
- Act on issues of equity in your own context and encourage pupils to be active in this also as part of your work on 'courageous advocacy' (see SIAMS Schedule).
- Author Beverly Tatum explains the concept of racism versus "antiracism" in her book, *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*, by comparing it to a moving walkway in an airport. Some people are walking fast on the travellerator, actively engaging with racism, moving forwards at the expense of others and exploiting their privilege. Some are standing on the moving walkway and therefore engaging in passive racism as they go with the system. Some people are walking faster in the opposite direction than the walkway is moving, pursuing anti-racist responses and seeking to dismantle racist structures, policies and systems.



- Being anti-racist can start small and build up as education and understanding increases. Martin Luther King encouraged people to do what they could:

If you can't fly, then **run**.  
If you can't run, then **walk**.  
If you can't walk, then **crawl**,  
but by all means, **keep moving**.

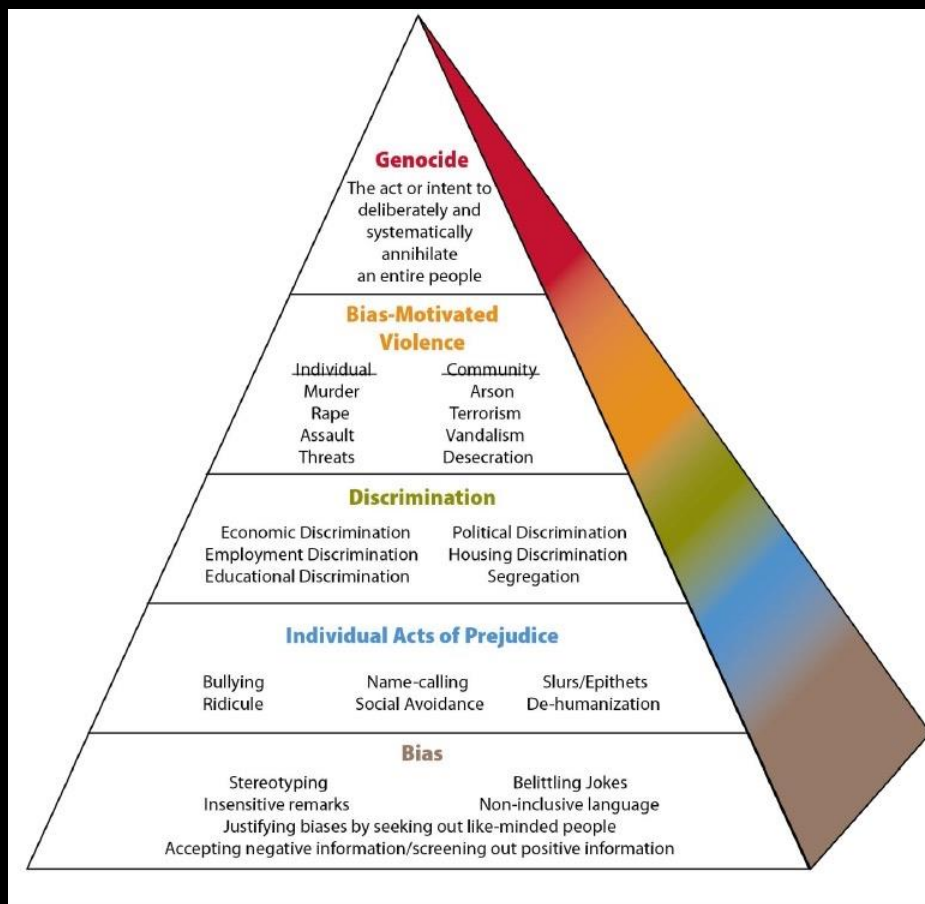
- Martin Luther King Jr.

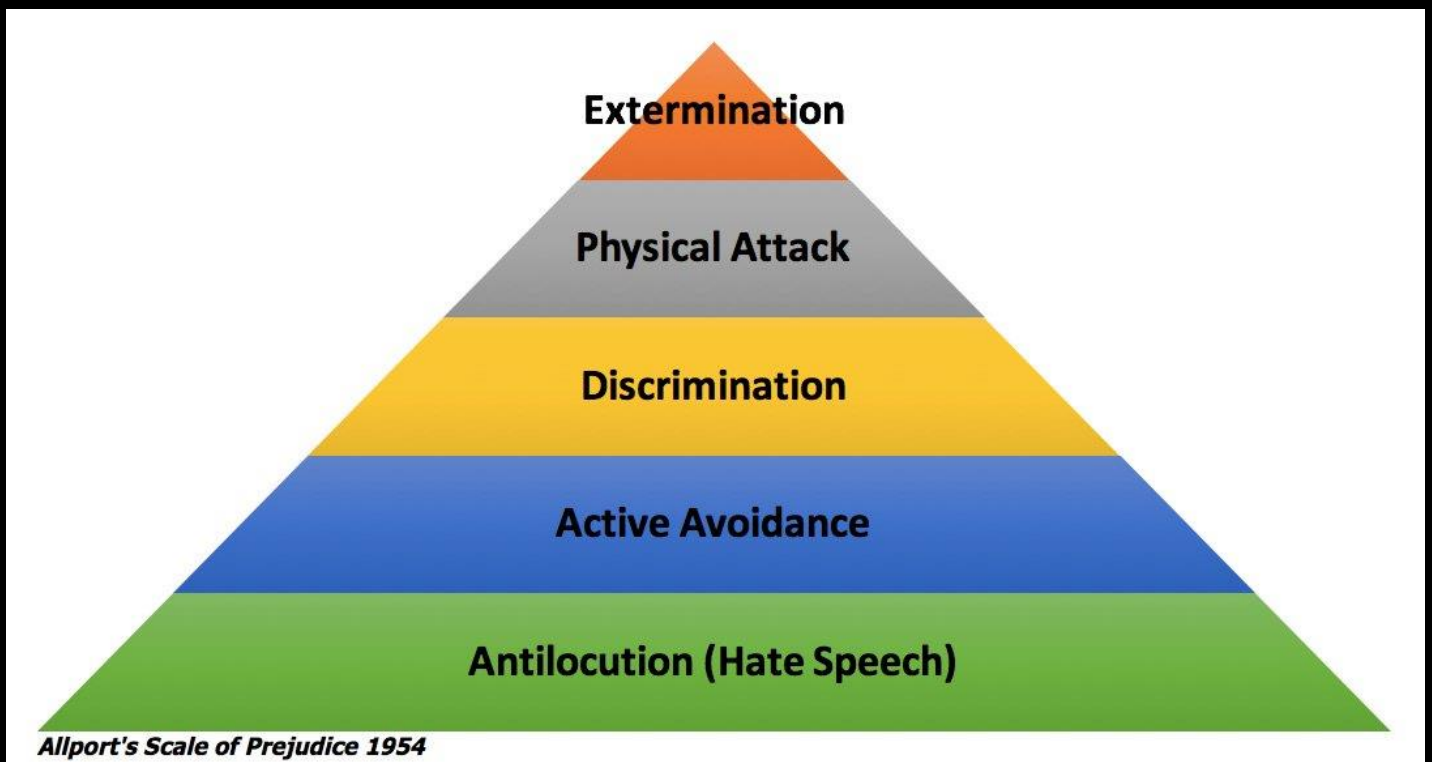
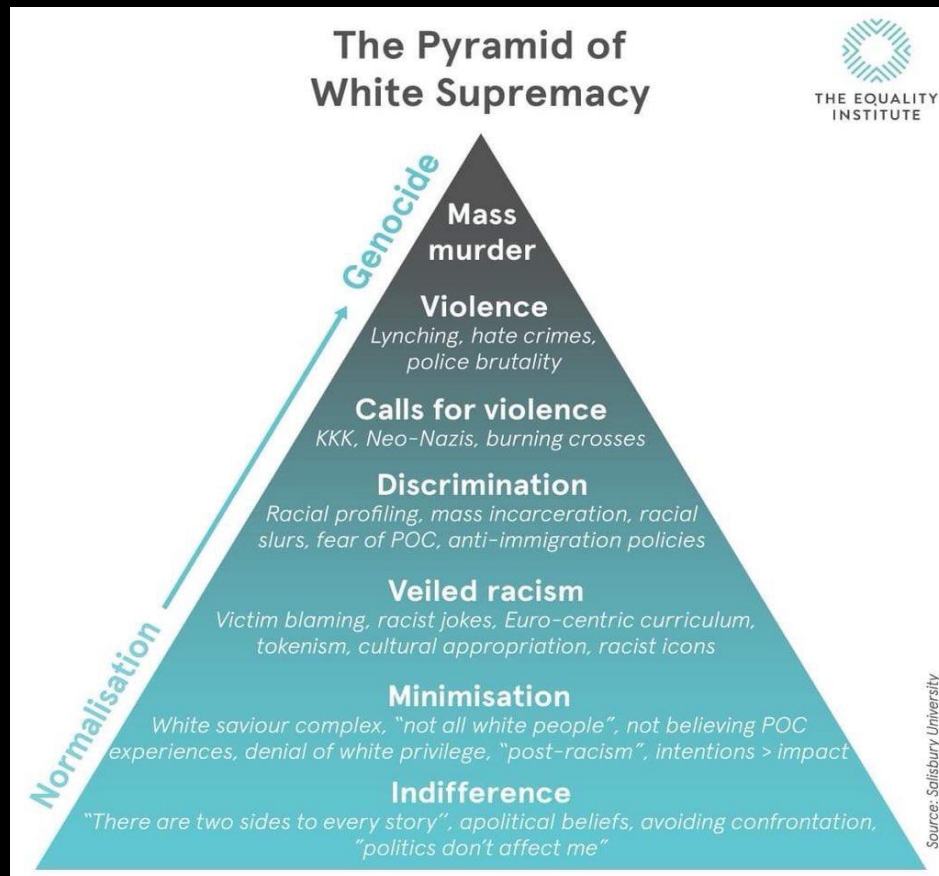


- As Maya Angelou said, "*Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.*" If we don't educate children and young people on these important issues, they cannot know better or do better.

## Resources

Useful white supremacy and prejudice visuals:





## Books for adults:

*How to be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi

*White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo



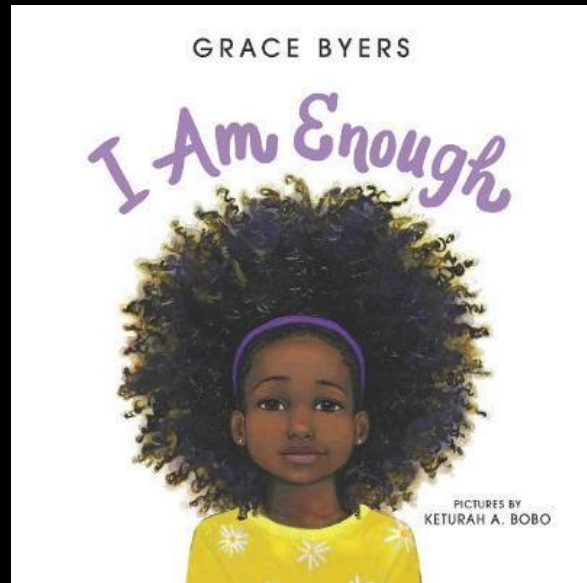
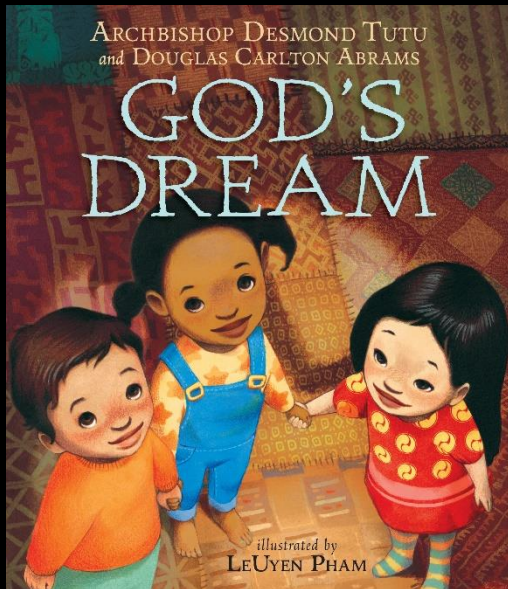
*Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge

For further reading, including a list of books and articles see:

<http://theglitterguide.com/2020/05/30/resource-guide-for-anti-racism-being-an-educated-ally-for-poc/> (US resource)

*So You Want to Talk About Race* talk by Ijeoma Oluo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnybJZRWigg>

### **Books for children:**



Beginning with *God's Dream* by Desmond Tutu is a good starting point.

*I Am Enough* by Grace Byers is also a beautiful book to get pupils thinking about respect and diversity.

Book Lists:

<https://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/books/1291947/childrens-books-about-race-anti-racism-black-lives-matter>

<https://www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk/books/DisplayBooklist.php?BookListID=372>

<https://www.amightygirl.com/blog?p=11056>

<https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/genre/div/Diverse-Voices.html>

<https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/books/best-childrens-books-diversity-a3974701.html>

### **Other resources for schools:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaltG5N8nE&fbclid=IwAR11T5hldSZQpRQmBfN1JeHNqHVNkX\\_LIGcTbqadZ5-jRvJtztDYsSgzq6o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaltG5N8nE&fbclid=IwAR11T5hldSZQpRQmBfN1JeHNqHVNkX_LIGcTbqadZ5-jRvJtztDYsSgzq6o) Video entitled '*A Kid's Book About Racism*'. US resource but with a universal message.

There are some great teaching ideas in the *Hope Not Hate* Education Pack:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/574451fe37013bd0515647ac/t/58aa1f39893fc06cb71a8fa0/1487544143086/no-place-for-hate-education-pack.pdf>

**For families:**

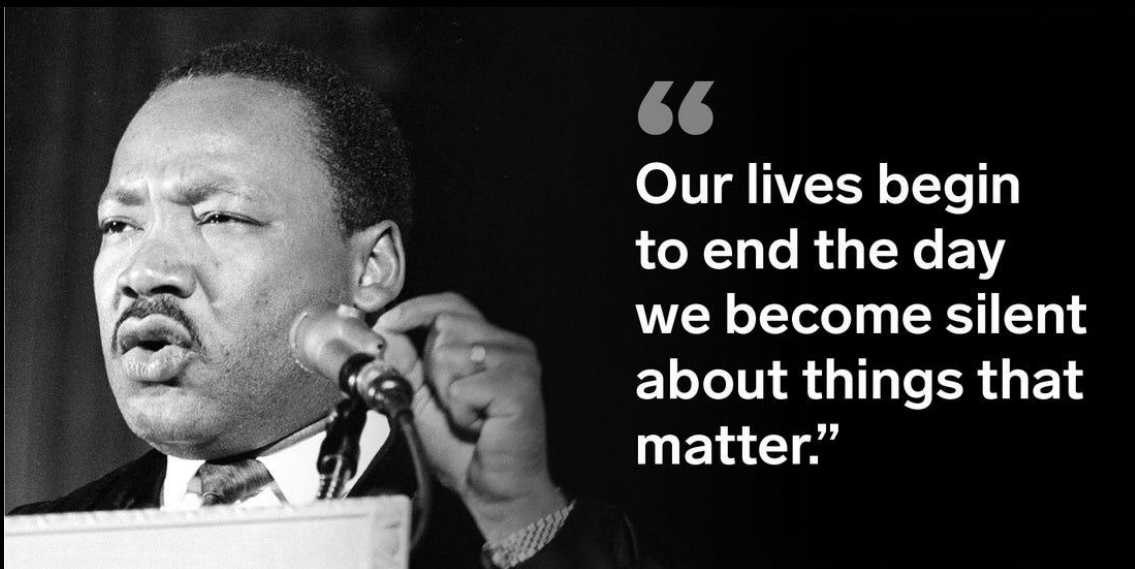
<https://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/books/1291947/childrens-books-about-race-anti-racism-black-lives-matter>

<https://uwm.edu/news/talk-children-race-uwm-researcher-offers-advice/>

A prayer from Marian Wright Edelman's book, *I Am Your Child God*:

*I pray for peace in myself, in my family, in my community, in my country, and in all the world. I pray that no one will hate, that no one will kill, that all will forgive and live in love.*

*Amen*



“  
Our lives begin  
to end the day  
we become silent  
about things that  
matter.”

“In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist. We must be anti-racist.” — Angela Davis

# Schools Anti-Racist Audit Tool

Aspect of Anti-Racist Practice in School			
The school vision supports anti-racism			
Pupils are encouraged to ask questions about difference and there are systems in place for them to be able to do so			
The curriculum supports the understanding of racism, racist structures and the celebration of black history, including the history of Britain's involvement in the slave trade and the acknowledgement of Black achievement			
Resources in school reflect the diversity of British society, including books, webpages and teaching resources (both bought and school-created)			
The school environment celebrates diversity, to include posters and signage used and in displays			
Pupils are given the opportunity for encounter with the lived experience of Black lives through visits and visitors			
White privilege is explained and frequently revisited			
The creativity within the Black community is celebrated and forms parts of study in areas of the curriculum such as art, music, writing and poetry, as well as achievements in maths and science			
Bibles and other Christian resources embrace an array of diverse representations of Jesus and Christianity			
Black heroes of the faith are encountered through Collective Worship and studied as part of RE and the wider curriculum			
The school's anti-racism work extends beyond just celebrating Black History Month			
White supremacy is studied as appropriate and visuals such as the white supremacy pyramid and the Allport Scale of Prejudice in Society are utilised to support pupil understanding			
A policy and guidance for teachers is in existence with regards to managing difficult conversations in the classroom			
Justice features in Collective Worship and is studied in areas of the curriculum, with links made to the Bible			
Support is given to parents on how they might support their children in discussing issues of race and racism			

## Next Steps: