



Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

1.19 Seeing Racism as Systematized

Objectives

Explore the concept of racism as systematized rather than random or individual.

Discuss ways to challenge racism, including making it visible.

Materials needed

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack by Peggy McIntosh, available from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley MA 02181.

Copies of the handout

Time needed

Ten to twenty minutes

Instructor directions

Supply your students with a copy of Peggy McIntosh's article. Have them read it before class and come prepared to discuss in small groups.

Have them discuss how they have been affected by the conditions McIntosh lists in the article and examine the statement that racism is not "individual acts of meanness," but "invisible systems conferring dominance on [a] group."

Variation

Ask your students to examine sexism in light of McIntosh's concept of "invisible systems."



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Directions

Describe how you have been affected by two or three of the conditions McIntosh lists in the article.

Examine the statement that racism is not “individual acts of meanness,” but “invisible systems conferring dominance on [a] group.”

Answer the following questions:

How is racism perpetuated by the idea that it consists of random or unusual acts?

How can we begin to challenge racism once we begin to perceive it as systematized?

How can that perception help us make racism visible?

How can “visibility” contribute to change?

Variation

Examine sexism in light of McIntosh's concept of "invisible systems."