

Next Steps LEARN session summary

By Rebecca Lustig

The second LEARN session of the 2019-20 [Next Steps](#) series was held on Jan. 28 at Haven Middle School, facilitated by St. Xavier Professor of Sociology and Nichols' parent Jacqueline Battalora. This year, the series is grounded in the book *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.

This was the second of three LEARN sessions as part of the series. The next LEARN session is **March 25, 6:30-8:30 pm at Chute Middle School**. In the meantime, there are GROW sessions the first Tuesday of every month to dive deep into chapters of the book. There are also ACT sessions specific to individual District 65 schools. View the [calendar](#) for meeting times.

The concept of the second session was "Groundwork: Structural Racism and Intersectionality." Jackie focused particularly on structural racism based upon how whiteness was established through the law.

Big Ideas

- Sexism
 - Sexism maintains systematic gender inequality often through patriarchal social structures and reinforcement of historically prescribed gender roles
 - Power differentials between men and women in society often cause great harm
- Racism
 - Racism maintains systematic racial inequality often through structural advantage for whites and reinforcement of historically prescribed racial stations
 - Whites and people of indigenous, African, Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Island descent can endorse racist beliefs about each other and themselves
 - Power differentials between people of color and white people in society often cause great harm
- Inequality manifestations today
 - Gender Inequality
 - Pay inequality
 - Few in stem, accounting, professional sports
 - Few partners in firms, management, CEOs, congress
 - Never had a female President of United States
 - High rates of sexual assault, sexual harassment in workplace
 - Race Inequality
 - Pay inequality
 - Few in stem, accounting, professional sports

- Few partners in firms, management, CEOs, congress
 - High rates of death/violence by law enforcement
 - Roots in European Christianity
 - Sexism
 - Law of Coverture
 - Structured relations between men and women from British Common Law
 - Established through the institution of marriage
 - “Men and women are one and the one is the man”
 - Women had zero recognizable claim in a court of law
 - Helped shape how women were viewed generally in society
 - Made women need relations to a man to operate in society
 - Location of power
 - Gender roles
 - Racism
 - Whiteness laws
 - Colonial America: From 1600-1680 there is no reference to a group of people called “white people” in law
 - For sixty of those years, indentured servants worked side-by-side with people of African descent on plantations and were treated with the same conditions
 - It was not uncommon to have free persons of African descent - they had the same rights under law as free persons of English descent of the same class
 - First “whiteness law” was that people of African descent could not testify against white people
 - Did not clarify exactly who “white people” were
 - This one law asserted that the law aligns with white people
 - Aimed to create a middle status of laborers
 - White people became managers to protect the interest of the white ruling elite
 - Additional whiteness laws throughout history mentioned
 - After the end of Mexican-American war, many territories acquired from Mexico passed laws preventing Mexicans from testifying against white people, even though legal treaties considered Mexican people white
 - Anti-miscegenation law prevented white people from marrying Chinese people
 - From 1790-1952 the United States required people to be white in order to become a naturalized citizen
 - Location of power
 - Racial stations

What is whiteness?

- Sociologist Rath Frankenberg defines whiteness as
 - 1) A location of structural advantage
 - 2) A standpoint place- How white people view themselves, others, and the world
 - 3) Cultural practices
- “Whiteness” has been recategorized throughout history
 - Irish Catholics initially were not viewed as white and discriminated against as such; Irish Catholics had to “win” their whiteness
 - Book recommendation- *How the Irish Became White* by Noel Ignatiev
 - Book recommendation- *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* by Ian Haney Lopez
- Activity: The room was divided into 5 groups
 - Each group was given a different sheet of paper, divided by time period (e.g. 1896-1924), with examples of whiteness laws
 - People talked with others in their group to discuss how these laws likely shaped white people’s expectations
 - Groups shared that whiteness laws provided white people with expectations of:
 - Whiteness is the norm
 - People who are excluded from whiteness are expected to conform from whiteness
 - The land of opportunity
 - God ordains whiteness
 - Non-white groups are “other”
 - Non-white people are less than human
 - Disenfranchisement and pain of people of color should be invisible
 - White people need to be protected from non-whites
 - Violence is justified
 - White people expect to define what is valued
 - White people will be the “winners” (it’s a zero-sum game: win or lose)
 - White property, neighborhoods and wealth are protected by the law
 - White people expect to pass on generational wealth
 - Exclusion is a valid means to protect economic advantage
 - The structures that create white expectations continue to persist
 - White people’s expectations continue, even if white people don’t realize it
 - Laws are supposed to be race neutral
 - We can only buy that truth if we are ignorant
 - Whiteness has taken the humanity from white people
- Expanding on the activity: Small group discussions on connections between white expectations and how they dictate our schools today
 - Curriculum
 - Subjects
 - Organization of the school day
 - Testing

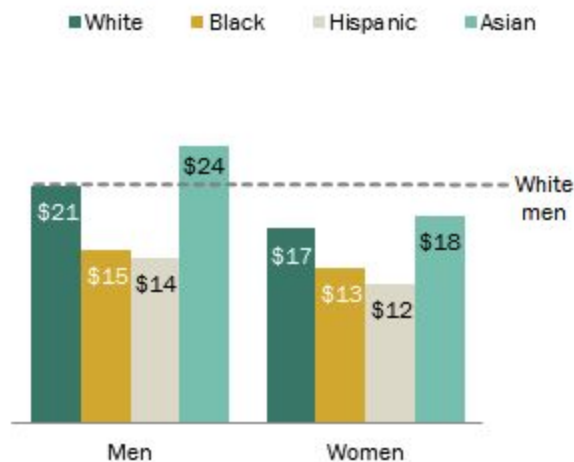
- Structure of school
- Teachers
- Pedagogies
- Discipline/Punishment

Intersectionality

- TedTalk recommendation- ["The urgency of intersectionality" Kimberlé Crenshaw](#)
- Economics
 - Median hourly wages between white and black people vary by a few dollars
 - The difference in median household income is tens of thousands of dollars
 - The difference in median family net worth is hundreds of thousands of dollars
 - Pew Research Center 2015 wage earnings for different groups

White men had higher hourly earnings than all except Asian men in 2015

Median hourly earnings of men and women from each race/ethnicity



Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest dollar. Based on civilian, non-institutionalized, full- or part-time workers with positive earnings. Self-employed workers are excluded. Hispanics are of any race. Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Asians include Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of 2015 Current Population Survey data.

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- Kendi highlights intersectionality through terms such as queer racism/ queer anti-racism
- Discussion Question: What if black girls were our primary concern and focus? How would this change our schools? What would the following areas look like?
 - Curriculum

- Subjects
- Organization of the school day
- Testing
- Structure of school
- Teachers
- Pedagogies
- Discipline/Punishment