

## **Next Steps LEARN session summary**

**By Rebecca Lustig**

The first meeting of the 2019-20 [Next Steps](#) series was held on Oct. 17 at Nichols Middle School, facilitated by Dr. John B. Diamond with approximately 200 participants. This year, the series is grounded in the book *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.

This was the first of three LEARN sessions as part of the series. The next LEARN session is **January 28, 6:30-8:30 pm at Haven 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](#) to find out meeting times.

There are two main ideas Next Steps is focusing on from *How to be an Antiracist*.

- 1) There is no such thing as “non-racist.” Everything is either racist or anti-racist; anything that is not anti-racist is racist.
- 2) Anti-racism work is changing policy.

- Outline of topics:

- 1) History in America
- 2) Applications in Education
- 3) Book

- Opening questions discussed in groups, then to crowd

- Why did you come here today? What would you like to leave with tonight? What do you hope to get out of the series overall?
- What people wanted
  - More active policy change in the community
  - How to identify and change specific policy practices
  - Connections to unfair bussing in Evanston, from segregation and assimilation

- Group discussion: What is race? Crowd thoughts

- Social construct
- Idea developed over time by people who benefited from it

### 1) History in America

- Race and white supremacy have gone together
  - “Race is a *social construction* that emerged to justify slavery, colonialism, settler colonialism, and genocide”
  - Categorization of race began in the 1400s
  - Race has no genetic basis
  - “Race is deeply intertwined with ideas about intelligence, moral worth, and criminality.”

- Relationship between race and white supremacy is codified into a “racialized social system”
- The social construction of race
  - 1) Defined Africans worthy of enslavement
  - 2) Racializing indigenous people, colonists began justifying genocide
  - 3) Defined black, red, yellow “races” having distinct characteristics
  - 4) Defined Black and white people with different characteristics to justify slavery
- Race embedded in foundation documents
  - Jefferson, a slave owner, “All men are created equal”
  - Constitution has the  $\frac{3}{5}$  clause
- Four phases of racism in America
  - Slavery
  - Jim Crow
  - Redlining
  - Mass Incarceration

## 2) Applications in Education

- Redlining in Evanston
  - Divides neighborhoods by race/ethnicity
  - Map shows areas around the lake and on the north side where it was easier to get loans in Evanston. Those areas are mostly white now
  - Impact now on bussing at Evanston schools
- Status Beliefs
  - Widely shared cultural beliefs that those who belong to one social group are more esteemed and competent than those who belong to another social group
  - Spread by watching people interact
  - Children are conscious of race at 3-4 years old, are aware of stereotypes at 8-9
  - Status beliefs are “constantly remade and reinforced”
- Contemporary impact
  - Employment
    - White people with criminal records are more likely to be called back for a job interview than Black or Latinx people without criminal records
  - Policies
    - When Chicago implemented Stop and Frisk, Black people made up 32% of the population in 2014, but [75% of people stopped](#)
    - The policy doesn’t say “stop Black people”
    - Look at the outcomes of policies; mitigate the negative impact
  - School/Discipline
    - In District 65 and District 202, there are disproportionate suspension rates for students of color

## 3) Book

- Important ideas
  - Racist policies + racist ideas --> racism that produces and normalizes racial inequalities
  - Racial inequity- When groups are not on equal footing

- Racist idea- Any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another.
  - Racist ideas justify racial inequality
- Anti-racist ideas- Racist policies and practices are the cause of racial inequalities
- Racist policy- Institutionalized racism
- Anti-Racist discrimination
  - A remedy to racial discrimination
  - A remedy to past discrimination is future discrimination (ie reparations)
- “Abstract liberalism” ignores the racist system in place
  - E.g. A zero-tolerance policy for the N-word gets a Black security guard [fired](#)
- Assimilation requires a hierarchy of cultures
  - Anti-racism doesn’t create a hierarchy

### [Video of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi Speaking](#)

- Main points made by Kendi
  - There is a debate over whether bad people or bad policies cause racism
    - In actuality, there are only two causes: Unequal groups and policies governing unequal groups
  - Racist policies lead to racial inequity; Anti-racist policies lead to racial equity
  - Racist ideas are used as a justification for bad (racist) policies
    - In actuality, racist policies lead to racist ideas which lead to hatred and ignorance
- Discussion Questions:
  - What does Kendi mean by there is only racist and anti-racist?
  - What does Kendi mean by there are only two explanations for racial inequity - bad people and bad policy?
- General comments shared in the group discussion
  - Anti-racism takes energy
  - Once racism is institutionalized, there is a back and forth between racist ideas and racist policies
    - Discussion about circular nature like the chicken and the egg
    - There is a tendency for people to want to think about large concepts linearly
    - It is best to think first comes racist policies, then racist ideas, but there is constant interplay and movement between the two. They developed in tandem.
  - Policy written in a “neutral” way will have discriminatory outcomes
  - Removing the concept of “non-racism” removes the concept of “non-action”
  - A system left alone will keep perpetuating racism
  - For white people, it is hard to recognize racial undertones of specific policy
  - There was a discussion over whether people in power have to “give up” power to those discriminated against for progress to be made
    - Now, pressuring people in power is more common
    - People in power are more “forced” to give up power

- Capitalism is a motivating factor for racist policies
- White supremacy is also tied with religious supremacy
- For white people, there is a choice to be in the conversation about race, for people of color, there is not.