

## What do we mean when we say “antiracism”?

Huey Wu, June 6, 2022

We use the terms racism and antiracism, racist and antiracist, as defined by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi in his book *How to Be an Antiracist*. Racist ideas assert that people of different races are superior or inferior. Antiracist ideas assert that people of different races are equal. Racist policies produce or sustain unequal conditions for people of different races. Antiracist policies oppose unequal conditions and establish equal conditions for people of different races.

We have all been shaped by racist ideas and racist policies. In his writing, Dr. Kendi describes how he, as a Black man, gradually recognized and confronted the racist ideas he had internalized and was holding against other Black people. Thus, regardless of our own identity, past experiences, or intentions, we all still hold racist ideas and may, through the policies we support, contribute to unequal conditions for people of different races.

However, if we are willing to recognize racism in ourselves and our society, then we can make a conscious choice to support and uphold racial equity. Dr. Kendi’s definition of antiracism empowers us to look at our impact on the world, rather than just our intentions. Antiracism, defined in this way, helps us set our sights on ideas and policies that transform racial inequities into racial equity and a better world.

Dr. Kendi in his own words, from [\*How to Be an Antiracist\*](#):

"Racism is a marriage of **racist policies** and **racist ideas** that produces and normalizes **racial inequities**." (p. 17-18)

"**Racial inequity** is when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing." (p. 18)

"A **racist policy** is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups. By policy, I mean written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people." (p. 18)

"A **racist idea** is any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior to or superior to another racial group in any way. Racist ideas argue that the inferiorities and superiorities of racial groups explain racial inequities in society." (p. 20)

"'Racist' and 'antiracist' are like peelable name tags that are placed and replaced based on what someone is doing or not doing, supporting or expressing in each moment. These are not permanent tattoos. No one becomes a racist or antiracist. We can only strive to be one or the other." (p. 23)

Questions for reflection and conversation:

- How would you define racism? Has the way you define racism changed over the course of your life?
- What is your understanding of antiracism? In your daily life, do you think about things in terms of being “racist” and “antiracist”? Why or why not?
- Dr. Kendi writes, "The opposite of racist isn't 'not racist.' It is 'antiracist.' What's the difference? One endorses either the idea of racial hierarchy as a racist, or racial equality as an antiracist. One either believes problems are rooted in groups of people, as a racist, or locates the roots of problems in power and policies, as an antiracist. One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is no in-between safe space of 'not racist.'" (p. 9) What are your thoughts on this quote?

[Check out IDEA's Google Site for more resources on antiracism.](#)

Check out these resources from fellow Waldorf schools on antiracism, inclusion, diversity, and equity.

- [Resources from the Maine Coast Waldorf School](#)
- [Resources from the San Francisco Waldorf School](#)
- [Resources from the Washington Waldorf School](#)
- [Resources from the Waldorf School of Philadelphia](#)