

Definitions of Racism

PREJUDICE

"Unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand without knowledge, thought or reason."

-- from RANDOM HOUSE DICTIONARY, 1967

RACISM

"Any attitude, action or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of their color . . . Racism is not just a matter of attitudes; actions and institutional structures can also be a form of racism."

--from RACISM IN AMERICA AND HOW TO COMBAT IT, U.S. commission on Civil Rights, 1970

AND

"Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves having the power to carry out systematic discriminatory practices through the major institutions of our society."

-- from WHAT CURRICULUM LEADERS CAN DO ABOUT RACISM by Dr. Delmo Della-Dora, New Detroit, Inc. 1970

WHITE RACISM

"Power + Prejudice = Racism."

--from DEVELOPING NEW PERSPECTIVES ON RACE, by Pat A. Bidol

"In the United States at present, only whites can be racists, since whites dominate and control the institutions that create and enforce American cultural norms and values . . . blacks and other Third World peoples do not have access to the power to enforce any prejudices they may have, so they cannot, by definition, be racists."

--from EDUCATION & RACISM, National Education Association. 1973

"Racism and white racism mean the same thing, if we are referring to practices of major institutions and dominant societal patterns in the United States today . . . White people are in the majority in the country . . . Thus, government, business, industry, unions, churches, educational and other institutions are almost always dominated by white people. When you combine power with racial discrimination, the result is racism."

RACIST SOCIETY

"Is one in which social policies, procedures, decisions, habits and acts do in fact subjugate a race of people and permit another race to maintain control over them . . . No society will distribute social benefits in a perfectly equitable way. But no society need use race as a criterion to determine who will be rewarded and who punished. Any nation which permits race to affect those who benefit from social policies is racist."

--from INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN AMERICA

WHO IS A RACIST?

"All white individuals in our society are racists. Even if a white is totally free from all conscious racial prejudices, he remains a racist, for he receives benefits distributed by a white racist society through its institutions. Our institutional and cultural processes are so arranged as to automatically benefit whites, just because they are white."

"It is essential for whites to recognize that they receive most of these racist benefits automatically, unconsciously, unintentionally."

--from EDUCATION & RACISM, National Education Association. 1973