

An American flag is hanging in a room with a brick wall. The flag is the central focus of the background image, which is overlaid with a semi-transparent white box containing text.

A Parent's Guide to
RACISM
in the United States

axis

“

Those who cannot
remember the past are
condemned to repeat it.

[George Santayana](#)

A Parent's Guide to **Racism in the US**

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Editor's Note:

We recognize that racism is a complex, sensitive, and divisive subject. In light of this, we have sought to be as thorough, nuanced, and sensitive as possible. This Parent Guide is longer and more difficult to read than most of our Parent Guides, but appropriately so given the subject matter. Though we could not cover every angle, we hope and pray this guide appropriately challenges us while encouraging unity.

What is racism?

Part of the conflict that arises in conversations about race and ethnicity is due to the way that we use words. Words have denotative (literal) meanings and connotative (emotional) meanings. Even though a word might literally mean one thing, culturally we learn to interpret it as something else.

Even though we use words like “racists” and “racism”, we don’t all interpret these words the same way. It can hurt when we say, “I’m not racist,” because it sounds like we’re saying, “Racism and systemic racism don’t exist.” It can hurt when we say, “You’re a racist,” when in fact what we mean is, “You’re being prejudiced and stereotyping.”

To begin a conversation about racism in the United States, we have to understand what we mean when we say “racism.” Today, “racism” is often used as a broad term that encompasses [stereotypes](#), [biases](#), [prejudices](#), [White supremacy](#), [racists](#), [racism](#), and [systemic racism](#). For the sake of this guide, we will use the word “racism” to refer to the broader contexts of racial issues, and use the other words to be more specific.

We can be prejudiced without being racist. We can permit systemic racism without supporting White supremacy. In fact, it’s possible to be anti-racist and pro-racism, opposing discrimination against individuals while supporting systems that reinforce discrimination. May we all be humble, honest, and bold as we examine the issue of racism in the United States.

What does the Bible say about racism?

In the beginning, [God created mankind in his image](#). As [image-bearers](#), we are all equal in dignity and worth, regardless of our country of origin or the color of our skin. Every human being, by no merit of our own, is precious to God.

Jesus was from the lineage of [Ruth](#), a Moabitess who was [interracially married](#). Jesus grew up in [Nazareth, a Bible-times equivalent of the hood](#). In fact, when Nathanael was being told about the Messiah [in the book of John](#), he said, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” If Jesus were a young man today, we might say he came [straight outta Compton](#).

Jesus was not only the Jewish Messiah, He was the Savior of the world. [Anyone who believes in Him](#), no conditions attached, may be saved by faith and [made one with Christ](#). For many Christians, this may seem obvious, but it was a controversial issue for the early church. There was a deep ethno-centric debate going on at the time about how Gentiles could be saved. [Galatians 2 tells us](#) that Paul “opposed [Peter] to his face” for refusing to sit amongst Gentiles when other Jews were around.

Despite the fact that Peter personally witnessed all that Jesus did, he still struggled with racism. Even Peter had to reexamine his beliefs, so we should also be willing to reexamine ours. [Paul reminds us](#) that [we are all members of one body; there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ](#).

[The Parable of the Good Samaritan](#) is perhaps the clearest example we have where Jesus condemns religious leaders for their racism. [Jesus turns the parable on its head](#) and makes the hero of the story a man of the race that Jews hated. In this parable, [Jesus makes the point](#) that loving one’s neighbour transcends all racial and cultural boundaries while simultaneously challenging the Jews’ negative stereotype of Samaritans. Jesus practices what he preaches too, as we see with the [Samaritan woman at the well](#).

In the Old Testament, [Jonah](#) is commanded to bring the mercy of God to the city of Nineveh, a foreign place full of wicked people from a different race and religion. [But Jonah was a racist, a hyper-nationalist](#). He resisted the call of God, and even after God drags him to the city and the people of Nineveh repent and praise God, Jonah despises the mercy of God upon the people that he hates.

From cover to cover, we find that the Bible stands against nationalistic pride and racism. It has always been God’s will to include all people (Leviticus 17:8-9; 18:26; 20:2; 22:18; 24:16, 22; Deuteronomy 10; Numbers 15:14), and one day we will see this accomplished when people from [every tribe, tongue, and nation](#) stand before the throne of God and sing praises.

Until that glorious day, one thing is clear: If the Bible makes a point to address these issues, then we must as well.

How did we get here?

Following the deaths of [Breonna Taylor](#), [Ahmaud Arbery](#), and [George Floyd](#) in 2020, the United States erupted in scenes of protests and riots across cities and states. Many across the United States were left wondering, “How did we get here?”

[As the saying goes](#), those who don’t know the past are doomed to repeat it. We must start by looking into our history. The list we have compiled in this guide [is not exhaustive](#), but seeks to demonstrate the profound impact that history has on racism in the United States today. We hope that examining history in this way helps us understand and empathize with communities that have long desired to be seen and treated as equals.

Our Foundations

[On his first day in the New World](#), Columbus ordered six Native Americans to be seized, writing in his journal that he believed they would be good servants. In [1619](#), a Dutch ship carrying 20 African slaves landed in Jamestown, Virginia to satisfy the growing need for free labor. [Though impossible to know an exact figure](#), estimates indicate millions of African slaves were imported to the Americas between the 1600s and 1800s.

[Thomas Jefferson](#), who penned the phrase “[All men are created equal](#),” and [George Washington](#), the first president of the United States, both owned slaves. In 1789, the [Constitution](#) stated Black slaves would be counted as [3/5ths a person](#), and guaranteed the right to repossess any “person held to service or labor” ([an obvious euphemism for slavery](#)).

George Washington believed the best way to deal with the “[The Indian Problem](#)” was to civilize natives, convert them to Christianity, and teach them English. When [Andrew Jackson](#) became president, he [called Natives “savages”](#) and [removed them from their homes](#) in a process known as the “[Trail of Tears](#),” where thousands died.

The United States is known as the “land of the free” yet it was established with slaves and forcing natives out of their land. In order to heal the wounds of the past we must acknowledge what has been called our original sin: racism. The “land of the free” didn’t start that way for everyone.

The Civil War and Reconstruction

In the 1860s, the United States erupted in a [Civil War](#). Many Confederates wanted to establish a new nation built upon White supremacy, and the Confederate flag [symbolized these ideals](#). In his [Cornerstone Speech](#), Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens justified the revolution saying,

“Our new government is founded upon... the great truth that the negro is not equal to the White man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.”

The issue of slavery was addressed with the [emancipation proclamation](#) and the [13th amendment](#). [The 13th amendment](#) reads: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime** whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” In other words, [the 13th amendment had a loophole](#) that Southern states exploited and slavery continued under [a new name](#).

The Union victory decimated the southern economy, and the states enacted “[Black codes](#),” laws that allowed them to criminalize recently freed Black slaves. The codes were often vague and nonsensical, like the “[Vagrancy Act of 1866](#),” which made it a crime for recently freed Black slaves to not have a job. As Black people were criminalized and put in prison, they were used as [convict laborers](#) to help recover from the economic fallout of the Civil War.

During the time of Reconstruction, [The Ku Klux Klan](#), a White supremacist group, was initiated. Its members swore to uphold Christian morals, and sparked terror across Black communities with lynchings and bombings. In 1915, [The Birth of a Nation](#), a movie that glorified the KKK and was the most profitable and technologically advanced movie of its time, helped resurge [political interest in the KKK](#) across the nation, and the group grew to as many as [three to eight million Klansmen](#) in the 1920s and marched on Washington D.C in 1925 [with 30,000 Klansmen](#).

The Great Depression and World War II

[The Red Summer of 1919](#) began a new wave of “[race riots](#)”, where African Americans were mobbed, murdered, and oppressed in cities across the US. At the time, Tulsa,

Oklahoma, was known as [Black wall street](#), a place where Black business thrived. During the [Tulsa Massacre of 1921](#), hundreds of Black people were murdered by a White mob, 1,200 homes were destroyed, and postcards of the event were passed around by White supremacists as souvenirs.

In the 1920s, the stock market crashed, unemployment grew, and [anti-Hispanic hatred spiked](#). A decade of deportations began, during which time [over a million Spanish-speaking citizens](#) were forcibly removed over fears for White job losses. [In 1917 alone](#), 100,000 Mexicans were deloused at the border with “gas baths”, a practice described by a local newspaper as a “Jail Holocaust” which inspired Nazi scientists in the building of Jewish extermination camps. [The practice continued until 1964](#).

In the wake of the [Great Depression](#), President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) introduced the New Deal, which included the [National Housing Act of 1934](#). The Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) [created residential security maps](#), where neighborhoods with Black and Brown residents were deemed racially unclean and less valuable. This process became known as “[Redlining](#),” and it made it nearly impossible for people of color to develop home equity and build wealth.

Even during [WWII Black soldiers were segregated](#) from White soldiers. After [Pearl Harbor was attacked](#), over 80,000 Japanese American citizens were displaced from their homes in [Japanese Internment Camps](#).

The Civil Rights Era

The Civil Right Era began in 1954 with the Supreme Court verdict of [Brown v. Board of Education](#), which overturned the ruling from the [Plessy v. Ferguson](#) case. The result was a blow to [Jim Crow laws](#), and southern congressmen drafted a [Southern Manifesto](#) in rebellion.

The next year, [Emmett Till](#), a 14 year old Black boy, was brutally murdered in Mississippi and city-wide bus boycotts began in Montgomery, Alabama. Four months later, a secretary of the NAACP, [Rosa Parks](#), was arrested for sitting at the front of the bus, which was reserved for White people. [Later she explained](#), “I had been pushed as far as I could stand to be pushed. I had decided that I would have to know once and for all what rights I had as a human being and a citizen.”

Four days later, [Martin Luther King Jr.](#), a young Black pastor, helped spearhead

a boycott against the bus company. The movement was a success, and Dr. King continued to push for Black rights, as did groups like [SNCC](#), [CORE](#), and the [NAACP](#).

After years of civil protests, arrests, and organization, Dr. King wrote “[Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#).”

“I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the White moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the White moderate, who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action”; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a “more convenient season.” Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection... the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be...Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists. I had hoped that the White moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action.”

Afterwards, Dr. King led some 250,000 people in the [March on Washington](#) where he delivered his famous “[I have a dream speech](#).” Less than a month later, a [Birmingham church was bombed](#), and 4 young Black girls died. It was the [third church bombing in 11 days](#) since the federal government had ordered integration in Alabama’s school system.

In July of 1964, president Johnson signed the [Civil Rights Act](#), which banned all segregation. Dr. King continued to put the movement’s efforts into Black voting rights, and in 1965 organized a March from [Selma](#) to Washington. After the murder

of [Jimmie Lee Jackson](#), the group crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge where they encountered intense police brutality. The day, known as “[Bloody Sunday](#),” was [broadcasted on television](#), and helped convince Johnson to pass the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#), a significant piece of legislation for the Civil Rights Movement.

In the next three years the [Black Panthers](#) grew in popularity, [Dr. King was assassinated](#), [interracial marriage was legalized](#), and the [Fair Housing Act of 1968](#) was passed. The Civil Rights had made significant progress in the fight for racial equality. People of color, and Black people in particular, had more legal rights in 1968 than they had ever had before, but the fight was far from over.

Post Civil Rights

The Civil Rights Era ended when [Richard Nixon](#), the “Law and Order” president, was elected in 1969. Nixon ran a campaign promising to deal with the growing drug issues, and he coined the phrase “[War on Drugs](#)” in 1971. The [War on Drugs disproportionately targeted people in poverty and people of color](#) for decades to come. When asked about the War on Drugs in 1994, [John Ehrlichman](#), Nixon’s domestic policy chief, said,

“The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and Black people. You understand what I’m saying. We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or Black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and Blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.”

In 1986 [Ronald Reagan](#) passed the [Anti-Drug Abuse Act](#), which required [mandatory minimum sentences](#) for drug offenses. One of the defining elements of the War on Drugs was its [disparate punishments](#) for crack cocaine, which was primarily used by people of color, and powder cocaine, which was primarily used by White people. Though crack cocaine and powder cocaine were [the same drug](#) under two different names, the repercussions for using them [were not equal](#).

[Disproportionate](#) policing of people of color and disproportionate sentences led to a severe increase in the prison population. In 1994, President Bill Clinton introduced

the [Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act](#). [This act and others](#) in the 1990s increased prison funding and militarized police. When Nixon had taken office, there were [just under 200,000](#) prison inmates, but by the time Clinton left office in 2001, the number of prison inmates reached [nearly 2 million](#): a [mass incarceration](#).

During the War on Drugs, [prisons were widely privatized](#), and they became profitable for investors. Prison corporations like [CCA](#) made contracts with the states, [and they had to protect their investments](#), so the states were required to keep prisons filled even if nobody was committing a crime.

Additionally, local and state authorities were still [illegally arresting people](#) and abusing the judicial system to oppress people of color. In 1988, [Walter McMillian](#), a 45 year old Black man, was falsely accused of murdering a White woman in Alabama and given the death sentence without a fair trial. The case was disputed years later, and McMillian's innocence [vividly displayed](#) the depth of racially motivated systemic oppression that still existed.

Modern America

[The United States makes up 5%](#) of the world population, but holds 25% of the world's prison population. [Even as crime has gone down](#), incarceration rates have remained high and [city police budgets have increased](#). [The lifetime likelihood of imprisonment](#) for White men is 1 in 17, but 1 in 4 for Black men: [Black men make up](#) 6.5% of the US population, but 40% of the prison population.

The private prison industry makes over [\\$4 billion dollars a year, but it can cost an inmate \\$11 for toothpaste](#). GeoGroup and CoreCivic manage over 50% of private prison contracts, and [their #1 customer](#) is [ICE](#), which primarily deports Hispanic immigrants. [Corporations like](#) AT&T, McDonalds, IBM, Microsoft, Boeing, BM, Victoria's Secret, Macy's, Nordstrom, and Target invest in the prison industry and employ inmates as cheap labor. [Some inmates](#) are paid as little as 17 cents an hour.

“Throughout American history, African Americans have repeatedly been controlled through systems of racial and social control that appear to die, but then are reborn in a new form, tailored to the needs and constraints of the time. After the collapse of slavery, a new system was born, convict leasing, which was a new form of slavery. Once convict leasing faded away, a new system was born, a Jim Crow system, that relegated African Americans to a permanent second-class

status. And here we are, decades after the collapse of the old Jim Crow, and a new system has been born again in America. A system of mass incarceration that, once again, strips millions of poor people, overwhelmingly poor people of color, of the very rights supposedly won in the civil rights movement. Instead of talking about it, we just tried to move on. After the Civil Rights Act was passed and after the civil rights laws, we tried to play it off. Because we didn't deal with it, that narrative of racial difference continued."

- [Excerpt from Netflix film "13th"](#).

For centuries, we have learned to view the United States through a lens framed by the victories and successes of White people. As a nation, we have made significant steps towards true justice and racial equality, but the harsh reality is that there has not been a decade where the United States has not been plagued by racism. Even when it's uncomfortable, taking inventory of our past is essential for envisioning new futures.

What about anti-White racism?

Almost exclusively, the United States' problems with racism have revolved around White people being racist towards others. But White people do not hold a monopoly on racism. Indeed, [most of the world struggles with racism](#), and has for most of human history.

In 1994, after video of [Rodney King was released, the L.A. riots began](#). During the riots, four Black men pulled a White truck driver from his vehicle and [beat him within an inch of his life](#). In 2016, Micah Xavier [Johnson ambushed](#) police officers in Dallas, Texas, killing 5 and injuring 9 more. Johnson was killed during the conflict, [but had previously stated](#) that he wanted to murder White people, especially White officers because of [all the police brutalities that occurred in 2016](#).

Almost always, anti-White racism is in response to White racism. Though understandable, these acts must be called by their proper name: sin. As humans, we understand the idea of revenge. Anger in response to injustice is a natural, even appropriate response. But, when we take matters into our own hands and distribute justice according to our desires and need for vengeance, we rebel against God and sin against others.

Is White privilege real?

For much of the last 2,000 years in Western Society, White people have held almost all political and religious positions of power. As we've seen, the United States was founded by White people and made into a prosperous nation through the oppression of Black slaves. In the centuries that followed, White people were given preferential statuses, and people of color were legally oppressed or disadvantaged.

In the United States, material and cultural privilege is causationally tied to race; it is not a [correlative association](#). Because of this, White people are likely to have more material wealth, legal power, and cultural influence than people of color.

The solution is not to tear down White people, it's to lift up people of color. We cannot solve the disparities we find in society through "White guilt." Just as Black people should not feel ashamed for the color of their skin, neither should White people feel ashamed for the color of their skin, or any other person for the color of their skin. As a nation, we must honestly examine ourselves and take responsibility for our past, and as individuals we must honestly examine ourselves and take responsibility for our own sins.

For those of us who are White, we need to [wrestle with](#) the question of White privilege. It's an idea that must be discussed with humility and bravery amongst White people, and a topic that must be addressed when looking at racism in the US. Those of us who are White should spend some time reflecting: how might we view the present differently if the history provided in this guide was our family's lived reality?

What about immigrants, refugees, and foreigners?

[The Bible has a lot to say about](#) the way we treat immigrants, refugees, and foreigners, though it typically uses the words "stranger" and "sojourner," as well as "foreigner." However, it's important to remember that the Bible doesn't give instructions for governmental policy or civic duty, but rather religious and personal interaction.

In a broad sense, the Bible is a book about sojourners; this world is not our home. As [Christians, we should not get too attached](#) to the country we are from, the home we live in, the wealth we have, or the family we live with. Even Abraham was displaced

from his home, and [Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fled to Egypt](#) as refugees.

[The Law commanded the Israelites](#) to love and bless foreigners, assemble with foreigners to praise God, invite foreigners to holidays, and take care of foreigners' needs so that others could learn to fear the Lord and follow Him. At the height of Israel's power, [King Solomon directed](#) the Israelites to take care of refugees and migrants.

Jesus tells us that the [greatest commandment](#) is to love God and to love our neighbors. He then used [a parable](#) to explain that our neighbors are foreigners. The good Samaritan takes care of the Jewish man on the road to Jericho, [a notoriously dangerous path](#). [Not only](#) does the Samaritan take care of a foreigner, he does so at great risk to himself, and he sacrificially gives up his time and money.

Today, immigrants, refugees, and foreigners are often oppressed, harassed, and overlooked. [In 2016](#) there were over 125 anti-Muslim assaults. [In 2017](#), a man yelled "Get out of my country!" before killing an Indian immigrant. [In 2019](#), a shooter targeted and killed 20 Hispanics in El Paso, Texas. [In 2020](#), xenophobia against Chinese Americans spiked in light of COVID-19.

God makes special effort to take care of the needy, and so should we. [Regardless of governmental regulations and national policies](#), we must look out for the oppressed, and lift up the needy when we personally interact with them. Rather than marginalize the overlooked, we should give voice to refugees, immigrants, and foreigners and empower them.

What about Black Lives Matter?

To have a conversation about Black Lives Matter, we must first recognize a distinction: there is [Black Lives Matter](#) the organization, and "Black lives matter" the message and movement. [The organization began in 2013](#) as a grassroots response to the death of [Trayvon Martin](#). It does not belong to any one leader, nor live in any one location, a strength that has helped the organization grow internationally and push for Black equality and Black justice through social media and legal reform.

Some have pushed against the organization because of its open support for abortion and the LGBTQ+ community. The Black Lives Matter organization also works with

the Democratic Party and organizations like [Planned Parenthood](#). For these reasons, some Evangelicals have [been uncomfortable supporting Black Lives Matter](#).

But the organization, though intimately connected, is distinct from the message and movement of “Black lives matter”. Many use the phrase “Black lives matter” without intending to embrace all of the larger organization’s beliefs. What they embrace is what the phrase plainly says: Black lives *really do matter*.

The movement seeks public acknowledgment and awareness of the history of racism in the United States, particularly against Black people. The movement also seeks to demonstrate how a legacy of racism in the United States continues to affect Black lives to this day, through direct racist acts and systemic racism.

Some have wondered if the phrase “Black lives matter” implies that other lives do not matter. This has never been the message behind the movement, but nonetheless an “all lives matter” movement began as a counterprotest. Invariably, [All Lives Matter](#) is perceived as a subliminally or directly racist response to “Black lives matter,” because it undercuts and subsumes the [urgency of its unique assertion](#).

When people remember the twin towers from 9/11, no-one jumps in to say “No, all towers matter.” When people raise awareness for breast cancer, no-one jumps in to say, “No, all cancer matters.” When a house is on fire, firefighters don’t show up and douse every house on the street because “all houses matter.” So why do some of us respond with “all lives matter” when we hear the phrase “Black lives matter”? Unfortunately, this response is often given by White people who are afraid that saying “Black lives matter” will imply that other lives don’t.

Jesus did not spend most of his time proving that Pharisees matter or that Romans matter; his society made that self-evident. Instead, He spent most of his time demonstrating that the outcasts and oppressed matter: the poor, the lepers, the Samaritans, the women, the fishermen, the orphans, the widows. Today, it is not obvious that “all lives matter”... as Christians, we should aim to live like Christ and spend more of our time demonstrating that Native American lives matter, Hispanic lives matter, Jewish lives matter, Muslim lives matter, immigrant lives matter, Asian lives matter, and Black lives matter.

What can my family do?

If your family is just now beginning to grasp the effects of racism in the United States, we encourage you to listen, learn, and empathize. We should intentionally learn from non-White historians, philosophers, and theologians to consider how racism has affected our economics, education, politics, sports, music, and more. Learning from sources we don't normally interact with helps us to understand the bigger picture.

We should be willing to examine our own hearts and ask God to expose any racism within us. "Have I stereotyped others? Have I been prejudiced towards others? Have I made racist comments? Have I supported institutions that maintain systemic racism? Have I been insensitive or ignorant? Have I been self-centered? Have I ignored the oppressed?"

We should be willing to answer these questions, and we can demonstrate humility in front of our kids by admitting our faults and having honest conversations as a family. We must engage in conversations about racism, but Jesus said the [world will know us by our love](#), so we also must take action. Whether we are discipling others, caring for the needy, politically engaging, volunteering in prisons, or ministering in church, we can love the oppressed and demonstrate love.

How do I talk to my teen about racism?

Racism is a sin that humanity has struggled with for all of history, so we must bring this issue out of the dark. While we talk with our teens about this, it's important to model patience and humility and encourage questions.

Over the decades, many schools have gotten better about educating students on events like the [Holocaust](#), [Apartheid](#), or the [Rwandan Genocide](#). Nonetheless, as parents we need to make sure our teens are accurately and holistically learning about history.

We can help our teens grasp the significance of their online actions, and help them understand why we must be sensitive about the subject of racism. In recent years, teens have [danced on graves at holocaust memorials](#), had their acceptances to Harvard rescinded [for sharing racist memes](#), and mocked the death of George

Floyd in a “[George Floyd challenge](#).” We must help our teens understand what is inappropriate behaviour, and help them learn there are real life consequences for what we do online.

We also need to help our teens navigate truth online. [Alt-Right](#) groups and [Neo-Nazis](#) intentionally use social media platforms like Youtube, Reddit, and Discord to lure young people towards their ideologies and encourage events like the [Christchurch shooting](#). It’s very easy to fall down a [rabbit hole](#), and teens may not even realize how easily propaganda can justify racist actions.

Another online tactic that can feel very rewarding for our teens but might not always be the best way to enact change is [internet mob justice](#). We can help our teens realize that [cancel culture](#) only [casts stones of judgment](#) without actually addressing real issues in society. We can also help our kids realize that activism when it’s convenient or activism when it’s popular isn’t really activism, it’s [virtue signaling](#). Being a [keyboard warrior](#) makes us feel good about ourselves without actually accomplishing anything.

Despite these threats, the reality is that the internet has helped make [Gen Z](#) far more empathetic, socially aware, and historically informed about things like racial injustice than many of us as parents may be. As parents, we should recognize and value this, and we should even be willing to learn from our kids.

How should the Church address racism?

As American citizens should be willing to reexamine American history, so Christians should be willing to reexamine Christian history. Racism existed in the [Middle Ages](#) and during the [Crusades](#). The [Reformer Martin Luther was a racist](#). [Christians used the Bible to justify slavery](#).

As Christians, [we have no rights](#). We should find no security in property, power, comfort or happiness. We are called to [lay down whatever we have for the cause of Christ](#). We are to give to those in need. [Whatever authority and power God has given us](#) on earth, we are called to steward it well and love others.

It’s often said, “The only thing needed for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” We must confess where we have erred as denominations, churches, and individuals. As Christians, [we can be neither complicit nor complacent](#). We are called

[to do right, seek justice, and defend the oppressed.](#)

[Christians are supposed to be impartial](#), pursuing truth no matter what form it takes. The “truth” is not found in any one political party or denomination, and Christians should not be married to a particular group. This doesn’t mean that Christians shouldn’t be [politically involved](#). Politics, legal reform, and social action can be avenues by which God’s mercy and justice are manifested.

We must also remember that political reform does not usher in the Kingdom of God; the Kingdom of God ushers in political reform. We experience this when laws change lives, like the [Loving v. Virginia](#) case that legalized [interracial marriages](#). [Had the church been more outspoken against Nazi Germany](#), Hitler may not have been able to accomplish the Holocaust.

Perhaps the church can be more vocal today, and give voice to the [millions of Muslims in internment camps in China](#) or show the love of Christ to immigrants and people of color in the United States. [If we as Christians take up our inheritance](#) and push back darkness in the world, we can usher in a kingdom of peace, love, and unity that condemns racism and shatters the lies of the Enemy.

Though we are called to action, we must remember that [ultimate power belongs to God](#). No amount of political change, social justice, or racial equality [will solve our human condition](#) of sin. We must trust God to reign with truth and justice, and join Him to see [His will accomplished](#) on earth as it is in Heaven. [Until the glorious day](#) when people of every tribe, nation and tongue gather together and rejoice as one, [may we as Christians](#) learn to do [justice](#), love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

A Parent's Guide to **Racism in the US**

Recap

- Today, “racism” is often used as a broad term that encompasses stereotypes, biases, prejudices, White supremacy, racists, racism, and systemic racism.
- The Bible addresses the heart issues behind racism, so we should as well.
- Those who don't know the past are doomed to repeat it. We have to look at the history of racism in the United States in order to understand what is going on today.
- From its foundations to the present day, the United States has not had a decade where it has not been plagued by racism.
- Even if most of racism in the United States has been from White people towards others, White people do not hold a monopoly on racism.
- We must wrestle with the question of White privilege with bravery and humility.
- We should give voice to the voiceless, and take care of our neighbors.
- One can support “Black lives matter” the message without supporting Black Lives Matter the organization.
- We should intentionally learn from non-White historians, philosophers, and theologians to consider how racism has affected our economics, education, politics, sports, music, and more.
- We must help our teens understand what appropriate and beneficial behavior is for online and in person activism.
- We must take action, but trust God to reign with truth and justice.

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!

A Parent's Guide to **Racism in the US**

Discussion Questions

- What do you think racism is?
- Do you think the Bible has anything to say about racism? If so, what?
- How do you feel about what happened to Native Americans and Africans when colonizers settled in North America?
- What do you know about the KKK and Neo-Nazis?
- What do you think about Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*?
- What are your thoughts about the War on Drugs?
- Do you think White privilege is real? Why or why not?
- How do you think we should treat foreigners, immigrants, and refugees?
- What do you think about “Black lives matter” the message, and Black Lives Matter the organization?
- What artists do you like that are not the same ethnicity as you?
- How do you and your friends talk about racism online?
- How do you think Christians should address the issue of racism?
- How do you feel when people stereotype you or discriminate against you?
- In what ways have you seen yourself being prejudiced, biased, or even racist?
- What do you think we can do as a family to pursue justice?

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!

Additional Resources

Websites

[Equal Justice Initiative](#) - A non-profit committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States and protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society.

[AND Campaign](#) - A Christian organization pursuing redemptive justice through biblical values and social justice.

Movies

[13th](#) (Documentary exploring the history of racial inequality in the United States)

[Just Mercy](#) (Based on the case of Walter McMillian, a Black man sentenced to die in 1987 for the murder of a young White girl, despite evidence proving his innocence)

[Selma](#) (Based on Dr. King's crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965)

Books

[The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism](#), Jemar Tisby

[The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#), Michelle Alexander

[Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America](#), Michael O. Emerson

Podcasts

[Code Switch](#), NPR (Conversations about race and culture from journalists of color)

[1619](#), The New York Times (An audio series on how slavery transformed America)

Music

[Crooked](#), Propaganda

"[Gangland](#)," Lecrae ft. Propaganda

"[White Privilege](#)," Macklemore

Videos

"[Housing Segregation and Redlining in America: A Short History](#)," NPR

[Missing Chapter](#), Vox (Video series explaining history not covered in textbooks)

Related Axis Resources

- [The Culture Translator](#), a **free** weekly email that offers biblical insight on all things teen-related.
- Check out our blog posts about [Juneteenth](#), [George Floyd](#), and [racism](#).
- Check out [axis.org](#) for even more resources!
- If you'd like access to all of our digital resources, both current and yet to come, for one low yearly or monthly fee, check out the [All Axis Pass!](#)

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