

Study Guide
To
Understanding and Dismantling Racism:
The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White America
By Joseph R. Barndt

Introduction to the Study Guide

When will racism come to an end in our society? How can we help make it go away? The answers to these questions depend to a great extent on how well we understand racism and how well equipped we are to confront it and work to dismantle it. This book, *Understanding and Dismantling Racism: The Twentieth Century Challenge to White America*, assumes racism will not be dismantled without committed participation by white people and people of color; it is not, as we too often assume, a job for people of color alone. At the same time, it is very difficult for all of us – white people and people of color alike – to break out of old understandings and to explore new ways to understand and work for the elimination of racism. I hope this book is helpful in accomplishing this goal.

The purpose of this study guide is to offer assistance to readers in probing the book's content and conclusions. The guide is intended as an accompanying tool for understanding and communication. Whether you are a student, an institutional leader, a grassroots community organizer, or a participant in a church study group, it is hoped that the study guide will better prepare you to explore, discuss and debate the book's contents.

Although each reader can decide to use the study guide in ways that suit your own needs, I have made two assumptions on its use in the writing of the study guide:

1. I assume you will first be reading the book and study guide alone, before you participate in a group discussion.
2. I assume you will proceed one chapter at a time, using the study guide's suggestions for each chapter before you read that chapter in the book.

Finally, a word about additional resources: you will find books, videos, and other organizational resources listed at the back of the book. You can also use your own search engine to find further resources. Above all, I hope you see yourself as an important resource to others in understanding and dismantling racism, and I hope this book and study guide will assist in equipping you for that task. I am glad to participate with you in the on-going, long-term struggle to eliminate the evil of racism in our society and to build new communities and institutions that are anti-racist and multicultural.

Exploring the Book's Introduction

Key Points in the Introduction

The book begins with a parable of a Happiness Machine (Page 1-3) that satisfies the wants and needs of a powerful and controlling group of people, while excluding other groups of people from its benefits, and actually causing them great harm because of the Machine's side effects. Although the Happiness Machine parable can be applied to any situation of oppression (racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, etc.), in this book on racism in the United States, it is the white society that is identified as the owner and beneficiary of the Happiness Machine. The groups that are excluded from using the Machine and are harmed by its side effects are people of color.

The Happiness Machine in the parable represents the systems and institutions of our society. The purpose of this parable is to announce from the beginning of the book that the problem of racism can not be understood by simply focusing on individual attitudes and actions; rather, we must also focus on the self-perpetuating institutionalized mechanisms of society – the Happiness Machines. It is not enough to work on changing people, but systems and institutions must be changed as well.

Since the image of the Happiness Machine is woven throughout the book, this study guide begins by taking a closer look at the book's introduction and especially at the meaning and implications of this parable. Please read the story and the rest of the book's introduction, and reflect on the exercises below.

Key Terms to Know

African American/African Descent

Native American/Indigenous

Asian American and Pacific Islander

Latino/Hispanic

Arab American/Middle Eastern

White/European American

Key Questions

1. Exploring the Central Message of the Parable

- Does this story reflect reality in the United States? Is there a Happiness Machine that serves white people either exclusively or better than people of color?
- Do you think race is real in the United States, or is it an illusion? Are racial categories real? Are racial divisions real?
- How would you end the story of the Happiness Machine?

2. Applying This Message to Your Local Context

- From your experience, do you think white people understand they are served by Happiness Machines? Are they aware of them? Do they defend them?
- How do you think people of color view the Happiness Machines? Are they aware of them? Do they feel negatively toward the machines or toward white people because of the machines?

3. Personal Implications

- What were your initial impressions about the title of this book before you began reading it?
- What is your personal experience with your own racial identity that you bring to this book?
- Can you see your own self and your racial identity in the Happiness Machine story?
- Do you bring an openness to reflecting on these matters? Are you open to better understanding? Are you open to change? Where are your points of resistance to change?

Exploring Chapter 1 The Continuing Evil of Racism

Key Points in This Chapter

Understanding the Long-Term Effects of Racism

- The long history of racism in the United States (more than 500 years) begins with genocide of Native Americans and enslavement of African peoples, and continues with the shaping of the United States as a white supremacist nation, and the subjugation of all people of color (Page 15-25).
- There is also a better side to this bitter history, with more than 500 years of resistance to racism, culminating in the civil rights movement and its many accomplishments and changes for all people of color (Page 25-33).
- Fifty years later, we are well into the twenty-first century, and although much has changed, the dismantling of racism is still incomplete. New forms of racism in the post civil rights era are more subtle, but still devastating and destructive. The gaps between white people and people of color remain wide and deep (Page 32-41).
- Equipping ourselves to detect, measure and continue to the task of dismantling racism in the 21st century requires an understanding of this history of racism and resistance (Page 42-53).

Key Terms to Know

- Colonialism
- White supremacy
- Genocide
- Chattel Slavery

Key Questions

1. Exploring the Central Message of this Chapter

- How do you think understanding the history of racism can inform both our understanding of racism and our efforts to dismantle racism today?
- Do you see a link between racism and colonialism in the history of the United States? In the history of the rest of the world?
- Can you give some examples from your experience of the “iron fist” and the “velvet glove” of racism?

2. Applying This Message to Your Local Context

- How does this oft-quoted statement apply to racism in our society today: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (George Santayana *The Life Of Reason*, 1905)?
- When you look at the evidence of results (rather than evidence of legality, opportunity or intentionality) where do you see racism in the United States today?
- Where do you see resistance to racism today?

3. Personal Implications

- Most people report they learned very little of this history of racism and resistance in school. Is that also your experience? How do you explain this reality?
- How does the history of racism and resistance in this chapter help you prepare for the exploration of racism in the next chapters?
- Explore the ways in which this chapter motivates you to read further, and to accept the challenge to resist racism?

Exploring Chapter 2 The Definition of Racism

Key Points in This Chapter

Understanding the Power Factor

- Racism is not the same as prejudice and bigotry; racism is race prejudice plus the misuse of power by systems and institutions (Page 59).
- The central issue of racism is power – collective systemic power to benefit one racial group over others (Page 60, 73-82).
- Race is both myth and reality. It is a socially constructed myth created for the purpose of establishing superiority and dominance. But the myth of race has become a reality that infects and affects every aspect of life (Page 62-73).
- Racism is the intentional misuse of power that results in the empowerment of the white society (and every white individual), and the disempowerment of communities of color (and every individual person of color) (Page 73-82).
- Racism is not overcome by helping/healing/changing people of color, but by changing white people and white systems and institutions (Page 78-80).

Key Terms to Know

- Prejudice/bigotry
- Racialization
- Systemic power
- Misuse of power
- Power¹, Power², Power³

Key Questions

1. Exploring the Central Message of this Chapter

- How are prejudice and racism confused with each other in our society? Do you understand the distinction between these two?
- How can something be a myth and reality at the same time? Can you perceive this dual designation when talking about race?
- Reflect on the definition of race on page 72. Do you find this definition useful?
- Can you identify how the definition of power and misuse of power applies to your experience?

2. Applying This Message to Your Local Context

- How is race and racial identity today still determined by the history of race that is described in this chapter?
- To what extent do institutions today still empower white people and disempower people of color?
- Make a list of programs that are aimed toward helping/healing/changing people of color, but do not help change white people and white institutions.

3. Personal Implications

- How much of the history of race as described in this chapter is new to you?
- Are you aware of having your race “assigned” to you, rather than your choosing it?
- How does your racial identity benefit or not benefit you?
- Can you distinguish between prejudice and racism in your personal experience?

Exploring Chapter 3 White Power and Privilege

Key Points in This Chapter

Understanding the White Advantage

- The central purpose and function of racism is to benefit the white society by providing and maintaining white power and privilege (Page 85-86).
- In order to understand these benefits, it is important to distinguish between power and privilege (Page 90-91).
- Power is mostly collective, expressed through the control of systems and institutions in a society. The United States was created with systems and institutions controlled by white people, and designed so that resources would exist primarily for the benefit of white people (Page 91-94).
- Privileges are the advantages given to individuals by these systems and institutions. White privilege describes the personal and individual benefits that are received by all white people as they are served by systems and institutions of white power (Page 95-98).
- White privilege is accumulative; the benefits of whiteness, along with inherited wealth, are passed on from generation to generation (Page 99-102).

Key Terms to Know

- White power
- White privilege
- Human rights
- Multi-generational

Key Questions

1. Exploring the Central Message of this Chapter

- How is “studying white people” different from “studying people of color”
- How does it change the way we understand history if “every system and every institution in the United States was created originally and structured legally and intentionally to serve and empower the white society exclusively” (Page 93)?
- Make a list of laws that were explicitly designed to benefit white people and to exclude benefits for people of color?
- Make a list of laws that explicitly define the role of people of color as existing to serve the needs of white people?

2. Applying This Message to Your Local Context

- Why do you think white privilege still exists in our society, even after the laws have been changed?
- Make a list of institutions that still exist today that were created originally, legally and intentionally to serve the white society exclusively?

3. Personal Implications

- If you are a white person using this study guide, carry out the three exercises in the book (pages 99 – 107) that focus on your family history, your contextual environment, and on doing a personal inventory of your privileges.
- If you are a person of color using this study guide, test your own awareness of white privilege by participating in these exercises about white reality.
- Reflect on your personal feelings and the implications of your learnings from these exercises

Exploring Chapter 4 Individual Racism

Key Points in This Chapter

Understanding Racism's Power Over Me

- The most dangerous and destructive aspect of racism is its ability to make all of us prisoners – white people and people of color – and to make us all serve and do its will. None of us are free from the dehumanizing effects of racism (Page 118-120).
- Early in life, each and every white person goes through a socializing process to accept an identity as a racially superior person who is part of a racial group with a racially superior role and position in society. This socializing process is called the “internalization of superiority” (Page 123-124).
- Similarly, early in life, each and every person of color goes through a socializing process to accept an identity as a racially inferior person who is part of a racial group with a racially inferior role and position in society. This socializing process is called the “internalization of inferiority” (Page 124-125).

Key Terms to Know

- Racialization
- Identity formation
- Internalization of racial superiority
- Internalization of racial inferiority

Key Questions

1. Exploring the Central Message of this Chapter

- Reflect on the process of individual identity formation (described on pages 120-123) as it affects all aspects of a person's life; is this consistent with your view of reality?
- If you are white, do you see yourself (along with all other white people) included in the definition of a white racist: a person who “willingly or unwillingly, wittingly or unwitting participates in and benefits from the system of white power and privilege” (page 115)? How does this definition differentiate between racism and prejudice or bigotry?
- Does this definition of a white racist help make the conclusions more understandable that every white person is (made into) a racist, and no person of color can be a racist?

2. Applying This Message to Your Local Context

- Identify the mechanisms of socialization and identity formation that shape superior and inferior racial consciousness today.
- Where do you see the four walls of the white prison in our world today (separation and isolation, lies and illusions, amnesia and anesthesia, white power and privilege (pages 128-136)?
- Are you aware of the ideology of “colorblindness” and how it helps to create illusions to cover up racism (page 132).

3. Personal Implications

- If you are a white person, what do you recall about your socialization to internalize a racially superior identity - either an explicit/intentional racist or an unintentional/“liberal” racist?
- If you are a person of color, what do you recall about your socialization to internalize a racially inferior identity?
- What is your personal reaction to learning of your socialization as a racially superior white person or as a racially inferior person of color?
- What does it mean for a white person to “go home and free your own people”?

Exploring Chapter 5 **Institutionalized Racism**

Key Points in This Chapter

Understanding Racism's Institutional Roots

- The primary function of institutions in a society is to create, manage and distribute society's resources (Page 145-146).
- However, despite this good and necessary purpose, when institutional power is misused, institutions can become dangerous instruments of inequality, oppression and greed (Page 147-149).
- The reality of institutional racism is that all institutions in the United States were intentionally designed to serve and be accountable to white people, and this arrangement continued without serious challenge for centuries until less than 50 years ago (Page 154-157).
- Although explicit and intentional white supremacist institutions were barred by the law in the 1960's, racial equality within our institutions is still a long way off. That which was begun by these changes in the law can not be completed without further changes in institutional design, structure and accountability (Page 157-165).

Key Terms to Know

- Institutionalize/institutionalization
- Institutional identity formation
- Accountability
- Transactional change
- Transformational change

Key Questions

1. Exploring the Central Message of this Chapter

- Explain the difference and the relationship between systems and institutions.
- How does something become "institutionalized"?
- Give some examples of institutional racism, based on the definition of institutionalized racism (Page 151-154); identify the ways in which they are designed to serve and be accountable to white people and to not serve nor be accountable to people of color.
- Practice using the institutional levels chart (Page 168). Choose an institution you know well and identify the five levels. Then give examples of institutionalized racism at each level.

2. Applying This Message to Your Local Context

- List at least ten examples of institutional racism in the community in which you live. (Hint: gaps between white people and people of color, loss of affirmative action, disparities in criminal justice, disproportionality in services, etc.)
- How are these examples often perceived as problems in the upper levels of the institutional chart (Personnel, Programs and Services, Constituency), but are actually problems that must be dealt with in the lower levels (Organizational Structure, Mission and Purpose)
- Reflect on the statement on Page 182: "A system or institution will produce what it is designed to produce. If we want to produce something different, we have to redesign the system". Relate this to the concepts of transactional vs. transformational change.

3. Personal Implications

- Where do you see examples of "redlining" in your community (Page 163)?
- What are your personal experiences of working for institutional change. Relate these experiences to the upper and lower levels of the institutional levels chart.

Exploring Chapter 6 Cultural Racism

Key Points in This Chapter

Understanding the Dominating Power of White Culture

- A people's culture is their collective "way of life", and includes nearly every aspect of human existence (Page 187-190).
- Distinct and different "race-based cultures" came into being as a byproduct of racialization and segregation, replacing original immigrant cultures (Page 190-194).
- Cultural racism is the dominating power of the white race-based culture over the race-based cultures of people of color (Page 195-203).
- Race-based cultures of people of color have been a major source of strength and survival (Page 204-207).
- White culture – also a race-based culture – is a destructive byproduct of white power and privilege. (Page 207-217).

Key Terms to Know

- Culture
- Race-based culture
- Cultural racism
- Multicultural diversity
- Multiracial diversity
- Cultural assimilation
- Appropriation without accountability

Key Questions

1. Exploring the Central Message of this Chapter

- Reflect on the definition of cultural racism on pages 195-196.
- We have been a multiculturally diverse nation from the very beginning. How have contemporary programs of multicultural inclusiveness and diversity often become "racist multicultural diversity"?
- In what ways do you perceive that race-based cultures been the source of strength and survival for people of color?
- How do you explain that the "melting pot" created a white culture that erased and displaced other aspects of culture of European immigrants?

2. Applying This Message to Your Local Context

- How do you explain the continuing dominance of white cultural in our present time?
- List examples of how white cultural racism has destroyed, distorted, discredited the cultures of people of color.
- Do you agree with the assertion that cultural appropriation without accountability is stealing? Why or why not?

3. Personal Implications

- Using the identity mapping process described on pages 189-190, explore your own socialization and race-based cultural identity formation.
- Readers of color list the ways in which race-based culture is a source of your strength and survival.
- White readers list the gains and losses you have experienced as a result of the melting pot and the formation of white culture.

Exploring Chapter 7 **Dismantling Racism**

Key Points in This Chapter

Learning to Tear Down and Learning to Build

- A message of hope – dismantling racism is possible; what has been done can be undone (Page 219-221, 262-268).
- The key to this hope is “anti-racism”: an anti-racist personal identity, an anti-racist community, and anti-racist organizing (Page 221-231).
- Institutional transformation takes place through a step by step, long-term intentional and collective anti-racism movement across a continuum (Page 231-243).
- There are specific principles of organizing that need to be learned and implemented by institutional and community people in order to lead institutions across the second half of the continuum (Page 243-255).
- Most institutions have already come a long way; but all institutions still have a long way to go before fully institutionalizing anti-racism (Page 255-262).

Key Terms to Know

- Anti-racism/anti-racist
- Institutionalizing anti-racism
- Anti-racist multicultural
- Organizing

Key Questions

1. Exploring the Central Message of this Chapter

- Study and reflect on each stage of the “Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution” and the bulleted phrases in each stage (Pages 234-235).
- What is the importance of crossing the line between stage three and stage four in the continuum? Is it clear that most institutions are somewhere in stages one to three, and that stages four to six is where institutions need to go?
- List and share your understanding of the five principles of anti-racist organizing.

2. Applying This Message to Your Local Context

- Identify an institution that you know well, that is in both stage two and stage three in the continuum (see chart on page 240). Describe the struggle taking place between forces that are “trying to keep things the way they are” and “trying to do something new”.
- Identify an institution that you know well that is on the line between stage three and stage four, and is in crisis because of the “failure of multicultural diversity”. Describe the struggle between those who want to move backward, and those who want to move ahead.
- Identify an institution that you know well that is working in stage four to become an anti-racist multicultural institution. Describe the process of organizing a “critical mass” of people who are claiming an anti-racist institutional identity

3. Personal Implications

- Describe your personal path and progress of participating in an anti-racist community, and your learning to be an anti-racist organizer.
- Assess your options for helping to create an anti-racism transformation team in an institution in which you are deeply involved.
- Remembering that hope is not a sign of having arrived, but of struggling along a path of change, where in your community do you see hope and change?