

June 2020 Updated Re-Release: Black History Month

At Global G.L.O.W. we stand with members of the Black community in the fight against racism and injustice. We grieve the lives of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and the countless other lives we have lost to decades of hate and discrimination. We do not tolerate police brutality, racism or complacency in this country.

As an organization that is inherently girl-centered, we remain committed to seeking out ways to best support Black young women across America. Most importantly, we are dedicated to giving them a platform to speak out against the ongoing inequities that exist in the United States.

We all have a responsibility to not only hold ourselves accountable, but to also raise our voices for change. We stand alongside those who fight systemic racism and push for justice for all.

The following activities were distributed to Global G.L.O.W. partners in January 2020 as they prepared to celebrate Black History Month.

In light of the mass demonstrations protesting police brutality, racism and discrimination taking place across the United States and globally, we at Global G.L.O.W. felt it appropriate to re-release these activities with updated discussion questions to help facilitate education and understanding of this important issue.

Though written for a youth club setting the activities and information in this packet can be utilized in a home setting.

To learn more about Global G.L.O.W. and our mission to ignite the power of women and girls as a force for global transformation please visit www.globalgirlsglow.org.



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Updated Discussion Questions & Resources, June 2020

It is important to speak with young people about the protests currently taking place in US cities and in many cities abroad. Youth in your life will likely have some understanding of why these protests are happening, but will need your guidance in working through these events and processing their feelings about them.

We hope the following resources will help you have these important discussions with the youth in your life.

Talking with Children About Racism

DON'T AVOID TALKING ABOUT IT.

Racism and violence are things adults are reluctant to address with youth, wanting to protect children from being frightened or upset. But children can come to harmful conclusions about race when it's not discussed openly.

TRY TO BE CALM AND FACTUAL.

Children take their cues from adults in their life, so talking to them calmly helps them process information. You don't have to be a robot! It is appropriate to have emotional reactions, but try not to let them overwhelm the conversation.

VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS.

Do your best to acknowledge whatever fears, anger or other negative feelings come up for them. This will look different for every child. Your child might be afraid of riots or they might be afraid of being hurt by the police themselves.

ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS.

And don't worry if you can't answer them. It is ok that you don't know all the answers. What is important is that you teach your child how to research and find the answers they need. Encourage them to learn with you.

Please use the following discussion questions as a guide to processing these activities with youth. They can be used with the questions already listed within the curriculum or as inspiration for other questions you may want to ask:

There has recently been a lot of protesting and social media presence, specifically linked to Black Lives Matter, how do you feel while watching or interacting with this movement?

What similarities do you see, in how Black people were treated during slavery to how they are treated now?

What differences do you see, in how Black people were treated during slavery to how they are treated now?



What is something new you have learned during the present Black Lives Matter movement or while doing this packet's activities?

If you had a platform to express your feelings to the Black community, what would you say?

As a young girl of color, how do you think your country views you?

As a young White girl, how do you think your country views you?

If you are not in the United States, does the idea of White Supremacy exist in your country or culture? Is there any idea that is similar to White Supremacy in your country or culture? How has that affected you?

When looking at the Black Lives Matter movement, what are some ways you think we can make a difference?

Resource List

NPR - [How To Talk To Kids About Black Lives And Police Violence](#)

Teaching for Black Lives - <https://www.teachingforblacklives.org/>

Student Ignition Society - [Ending Police Brutality At-Home Family Action Toolkit](#)

Colorful Pages (teaching resource) - <https://colorfulpages.org/>

National Education Association - [Black Lives Matter At School Resources](#)



Why We Celebrate Black History Month

For the entire month of February, Global G.L.O.W. will be celebrating Black History Month. During this month, we recognize and reflect on the powerful contributions African American people have made to both the United States of America and the world. We look back on their experiences and how they have impacted the creation of the United States (US) as well as understanding their resilience and perseverance. This month is a learning experience and a celebration!

Why is it important to talk about Black History, Racism and Colorism?

This is an opportunity to share history that has had a huge effect on American culture but has also impacted communities and cultures around the world.

Racism and Colorism are structures that play a role in everyone's lives. Even if members do not fully understand why and how just yet, this is a way for them to begin to understand how it has affected them and their communities.

An opportunity for members to learn about and build empathy for other people's experiences outside of their own.

An introduction for members to increase their social awareness and consciousness

Girls of color, specifically are at a disadvantage compared to boys.

"Children experience the outputs of structural racism through place (where they live), education (where they learn), economic means (what they have), and legal means (how their rights are executed)."¹

Colorism can create an unfair advantage for those who are of a more "favorable skin tone." For example, in India, the popularity of skin lightening beauty products reflects the connection between skin tone and concepts of beauty and marriageability for women.²

Even if you don't experience racism or colorism in your communities, discussing discrimination in general, can help kids appreciate diversity and better recognize discrimination when they see it in any form (e.g. gender, religion, weight, disability, and others).

IMPORTANT TERMS:

Colorism: A practice of discrimination by which those with lighter skin are treated more favorably than those with darker skin.

Black History Month: Black History Month celebrates the contributions that Black Americans have made to American history in their struggles for freedom and equality.

¹ Trent, Maria, et al. "The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health." *American Academy of Pediatrics*, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Aug. 2019, pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/144/2/e20191765.

² Taunya Lovell Banks, *Colorism Among South Asians: Title VII and Skin Tone Discrimination*, 14 Wash. U. Global Stud. L. Rev. 665 (2015), https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_globalstudies/vol14/iss4/11



Racism: Prejudice and/or discrimination against people based on the social construction of race. Differences in physical characteristics (e.g. skin color, hair texture, eye shape, nose structure) are used to support a system of inequities.

Racial Segregation: The systemic separation of people into racial or other ethnic groups in daily life. Segregation can involve spatial separation of the races, and mandatory use of different institutions, such as schools and hospitals by people of different races.

Slavery: A condition in which one human being is owned by another. A slave is considered by law as property, or chattel, and is deprived of most of the rights ordinarily held by free persons.

How to talk about these topics with club members³:

As a Mentor, it is important to acknowledge that you may have members in your club who have been targets of racism or ethnic bias. Some members who have been impacted by bias and discrimination may feel relieved and comfortable discussing these issues and others may feel nervous, scared or angry.

Mentors should:

- Acknowledge the importance of race and skin color in member's lives.
- Create a safe environment with clear communication guidelines.
- Recognize hurtful, targeted, and discriminatory language potentially said by members and stop it.
- Explain why certain language is inappropriate and hurtful to the full group.
- Be conscious of your own biases and do not reinforce stereotypes.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Create opportunities for students to speak from their own experience.

Helping a mentee if they feel upset or uncomfortable:

Helping your mentee understand and properly manage their emotions can be an important part of your relationship. You can help your mentee manage her emotions constructively by providing a safe space to discuss their feelings and by acting as a positive role model. You are the person they can talk to without feeling judged, and it is important to try to see things from their perspective and validate their experience, regardless of how you may initially perceive it. As you likely know it can be very hard to think rationally when experiencing strong emotions, so first give your mentee a chance to simply express what they feel as you listen.

If possible, take the mentee aside to speak privately. Giving your mentee time to express what they are feeling could potentially be enough for them to feel prepared to go back to the group.

Remind your mentee that she is safe with you.

³ "The March Continues." *Teaching Tolerance*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Dec. 2019
. <<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/the-march-continues>>.



It is the mentee's decision on when or if she is ready to go back to the material she finds upsetting. If the mentee is unable or unwilling to continue on with the group, tell her that you respect her decision. If possible, you may need to make arrangements for another adult to remain with the mentee, an alternate activity, or even an early end of the day for that child.

If you think the mentee requires assistance you are unable to provide her, please seek out the guidance of your Coordinator.

Important Facts on Racism

Please consider the following information as you prepare to use this packet at your club sites. While neither you nor your mentors need to be experts on the following information to implement these lessons, we highly suggest you look closely at the ways these topics affect your club members, women in general, and your communities as a whole.

KEY FACTS:

Racial bias can negatively affect how students' behavior is evaluated in school, as well as impact their grades and future educational achievement.

It is important to acknowledge that women of color experience the combination of sexism and racism, and are specifically targeted for violence and experience different types of discrimination than white women and men of color.

Skin tone is a part of this issue as well, as darker-skinned and black women of color tend to experience discrimination on the basis of being darker.

Racism and colorism do not just affect social, political, and economic outcomes- these together can negatively impact peoples' mental/physical health.

Women and girls who are discriminated against on the basis of both gender and race are frequently subject to violence. In armed conflicts, women are sometimes explicitly targeted because of race or ethnic background. Women who are victims of trafficking frequently also suffer from racial discrimination, doubly subjugated and vulnerable, and women from certain racial or ethnic groups may be particularly vulnerable to trafficking or targeted by traffickers. Rape and other forms of violence against women have been used as weapons of war in conflicts throughout history.⁴

⁴ "Fight, Racism, Antiracism, Racial, Take a Stand, Discrimination, Advocating, Human Rights, Justice, United Nations, UN." *United Nations*. United Nations, n.d. Web. 21 Dec. 2019. <<https://www.un.org/en/letsfightracism/women.shtml>>.



Black History Month Goals

Give a basic understanding of Black History Month as it has existed in the US, covering the origins of enslavement in the US as well as the Civil Rights Movement

Give a basic understanding of the concept of colorism and its existence around the world

Bring awareness to issues that people of color experience every day and around the world

Members will build their empathy skills, considering their own experiences and the experiences of others around a serious issue in both activities and read-alouds

MATERIALS LIST:

Journals and Writing Paper

Pens/Pencils

Chart Paper

Tape

Markers/Colored pencils/Crayons

Read/See Aloud materials (located in the Appendix)



Community Building Activities and Read Aloud Options

Week 1 of
February

Community Building Activity: The Story of My Name

Instructions:

- Start by introducing the activity and explaining that girls will be sharing their name and its meaning with a partner. Our names are often connected to our culture, ethnic group and our families. When they share their name with their partner, girls can share the origin of their name, why they were given it, and any background information or special significance about their first and/or last names. Some questions girls can try to answer when introducing themselves and their names are:
 - What does your name mean?
 - What language is it in?
 - Where does it come from?
 - What is the cultural or historical significance of your name?
 - How did your parents choose your name?
 - Are you named after anyone?
- Ask girls to find a partner and have them introduce themselves by saying their first and last names to one another and then sharing the meaning and origin of their names.
- After girls have introduced themselves, return back to the full group and invite any pairs who would like to share out. Girls can either choose to share their name and its origin themselves or introduce their partner to the group and share her name and origin.

Read Aloud: The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles (found in Appendix)

Discussion Questions

- What did you learn from the story of Ruby Bridges?
- Can you relate to Ruby in any way?
- Ruby Bridges was viewed as a leader at a very young age, why do you think she was?
- What was your favorite part of the story?

Week 2 of
February

Community Building Activity: Community Circle

Instructions:

- Before beginning this activity, choose a “talking piece”—this is an object that is passed around the group and signals that the holder has exclusive speaking rights. You can use a toy, ball, or any object that is easy to hold and pass around.
- Next, Mentors can gather members into a full group circle and explain to members that in the Community Circle, only one person may talk at a time and everyone else must listen quietly and respectfully. Show the class the talking piece and explain that only the individual holding the talking piece may speak.
- Have one round where you pass the talking piece around and everyone has a chance to say their favorite thing to do after school. Make sure the only person talking is the one holding the talking piece.
- For the second round, have members share one thing they love about their skin.



- After each member has shared, transition everyone back to their seats.

Read Aloud: Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o (found in Appendix)

Discussion Questions

- Do you relate to any parts of Sulwe's story?
- Have you heard people say similar things to a person about having dark skin? How do you think people should respond to comments like this?
- Where do you think beauty comes from?
- What kind of things do people in your community say about skin color?
- Can we change how people are treated because of their skin color? How?

Week 3 of February

Community Building Activity: Respect Me

Instructions:

- Have the group divide into two and stand in two lines, facing each other.
- Explain that they are going to find out what respect means by asking each other.
- Have the first group ask, "What does respect mean to you" to their partner.
- After a minute have the second group ask their partner the same question.
- Once each partner has shared, have the first group move one person to their left.
- Have them switch partners at least two more times.
- At the end of the activity, ask the members what it means to respect people in this group.
- Then, ask them what the people they spoke to had in common. You can also ask if they noticed if there was anything unique about their partners' answers. It is important to remind the group that while there is a basic definition of respect, we always want to treat people how they want to be treated.

See Alouds (found in Appendix):

See Aloud #1: This piece of art is by Chioma Ebinama, a Nigerian-American illustrator based in Brooklyn, New York. The artist used watercolors and bleach to paint this painting.

See Aloud #2: This is a skin bleaching advertisement.

Discussion Questions

- What do these images make you feel?
- What do you think is the subject matter of these images?
- Why might people want to make their skin lighter?
- If your best friend said she wanted to make her skin lighter, what would you tell her?
- What kind of messages do we hear about skin lightening in advertisements?
- What do we notice about skin color in art?
- What do we hear about skin color at home?



Black History Month: In-Club Celebration Curriculum

Final Week of February

*Disclaimer: Mentors can share with members that this final session will be more listening and discussion based than normal. While listening to the introduction to racism and colorism, members can take notes if needed. Mentors should also be prepared to effectively introduce both topics.

Welcome & Overview of the Day (10 minutes)

Start by welcoming everyone to the space and bringing all members together into a circle. Mentors should begin by sharing the purpose of today's club time and how it will be different from normal sessions, how the previous week's CBA's and Read Alouds tie into what they will be doing today, and the flow of the day's activities. You can say,

Welcome everyone! Today we are going to have a different club session than we normally have and explore new ideas and activities. We are currently in the month of February and this month is known as Black History Month in the United States of America. During this month, Americans reflect back on the experiences and contributions Black people have made to American history. Today we are going to do the same, and learn more about the important role Black people have in the creation of the United States. This is a special day where we are building compassion, empathy, and understanding. We are going to learn new things that might make us feel uncomfortable or upset and that is okay! We want this day to be a learning opportunity for us all and a safe space where we begin to understand the experience of other people outside of our community.

We are also going to learn a little more about racism and colorism, and how these ideas have negatively impacted dark skinned people both in the US and around the world. We are going to do writing and arts based activities where we dig deeper to understand how we might have been impacted by racism and colorism as well as how it impacts other people. Throughout this entire month, we have been doing special Community Building Activities, reading Read Aloud books and See Alouds, and having discussions all based on these topics. The conversations and ideas that came up during those times will help us even more with our exploration today!

Before we begin, would anyone like to share something new they've learned over the last three weeks? It can be something that you learned during a read aloud story, something your friend said during a discussion or something anything you found interesting during that time.

Take a few share outs and transition into the next portion of the day.



Introduction to Racism (15 minutes)

After the Welcome and Overview of the Day, invite members back to their seats for a full group introduction to one of today's topics. Introduce the first topic of Racism in the United States to the group.

First give members a timeline of Black people's experience in the US beginning with The Middle Passage and chattel slavery, segregation, and Black leaders during The Civil Rights Movement. Make sure to allow for questions at the end.

Before you begin, Mentors should take a moment to warn members of some of the graphic details they will be hearing. For some, this may be their first introduction to this history and they may be unprepared for references to violence and sexual assault. You can find a resource in our Helping a Mentee if They Feel Upset or Uncomfortable section, to help if a participant becomes uneasy by the material. You can say,

Before we begin with the day's activities, I am going to give you a general overview of the experience Black people in the United States of America have had since the seventeenth century. We are going to begin with an explanation of racism and then explain how Black people became enslaved in the US, the experience they had as slaves, and how they have continued to fight for their equality and freedom. Before we get into the details of this history, I want to acknowledge that some of these facts might be upsetting to hear about. We'll be talking about violence and sexual assault that occurred during these experiences. If at any point you feel very uncomfortable, please let me know. Let's begin.

ORIGIN OF RACISM:

Racism in both the United States and around the world, began in the early to mid 1400's⁵. White European settlers wanted to become more powerful and boost their economy with cheap labor. During this time, many countries grew crops and resources specific to their environment and traded with other countries to get money. White people wanted to increase their amount of money and did this by going to different countries to steal their resources and force their people to become slaves. Those slaves will then work on plantations to produce crops such as cotton, tobacco and sugar cane, which helped White people trade more and gain more money. It was later that White people began to defend their actions by saying that because these people are darker skinned and speak different languages, they are inferior to White people and deserve to be enslaved.

THE BLACK EXPERIENCE:

Dark skinned people have now been enslaved by White people to gain money, What does this look like?

- *White people first went to Africa to buy and remove African from their homes.*
- *They then forced Africans on a boat that will take them from Africa to the West Indies and the United States. This journey is called The Middle Passage. The journey took 3 weeks and on the boat, hundreds of Africans were stripped naked, crammed into small chambers and chained to one another. Children were taken from their mothers, women were sexually abused, and men were violently mistreated. The physical and mental health*

⁵ "Africans in America | Part 1 | Narrative | Europeans Come to Western Africa." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, n.d. Web. 21 Dec. 2019. <<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1narr1.html>>.



conditions on the boat were horrible. Africans did not have nutritious meals, did not have a place to use the bathroom, and were brutally punished and treated. Many Africans did rebel and fight back but this often resulted in death. About ½ of Africans died on the boat before making it to the US.⁶

- *For those who did make it, the conditions in the United States of America were not good as well. Africans were now in a new land, not allowed to be with their families, speak their languages, practice their religions, and enjoy any moment of life. Approximately six to seven million Africans were brought to this new land. They were now considered property and were owned by their White slave master. Once owned, they will travel to their slave master's plantation and work on his field to produce crops; this is the birth of "chattel slavery" in the US. Slaves worked from early morning to late at night, not able to socialize, cook, read and write, or marry. Slaves who refused to work were publicly whipped and burned. Similar to The Middle Passage, many slaves fought back and tried to escape to freedom. And many slaves were successful at escaping, but those who were not, were killed.⁷*
- *As hundreds of years went by, African continued to be enslaved in the United States of America creating generations of Black slaves. The descendants of these slaves are what we know today as African Americans. During this time, some laws began to give African Americans freedom and slavery was eventually abolished. However, African Americans still had a very hard time in the US. It was hard for them to make money or get a proper education. Black people were still viewed as less than White people. This time in history is considered the Segregation Era. This era began in approximately 1865 and continued up until the mid 1900's⁸. However, many parts of the US are still segregated today.*
- *Even though Black people were forced into these horrible conditions for hundreds of years, they never lost hope. During segregation, they fought back, worked together, and tried to influence political systems that negatively impacted them. Many great Black leaders led this movement called The Civil Rights Movement that strengthened the African American community, actively went against the system that favored White people, and tried to put an end to the unfair treatment of people based on their skin color.*
- *African Americans took part in creating the United States and even though their conditions have improved, they are still not given the same rights and privileges as White people, to this day.*

After introduction, show members photos located in the Appendix.

⁶ "Life on Board Slave Ships." *National Museums Liverpool*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Dec. 2019. <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/slavery/middle_passage/>.

⁷ History.com Editors. "Slavery in America." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 12 Nov. 2009. Web. 21 Dec. 2019. <<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery>>.

⁸ History.com Editors. "Segregation in the United States." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 28 Nov. 2018. Web. 21 Dec. 2019. <<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/segregation-united-states>>.



Untold Stories (20 minutes)

After members have discussed and received an introduction to the topics and ideas of racism in the United States, they will participate in a writing exercise where they put themselves in the shoes of an enslaved African. Members will brainstorm and envision themselves during any time of slavery, segregation, or the Civil Rights Movement and write and journal entry from the perspective of a Black person during that time. Members will write about the physical things they think Black people have experienced as well as the mental and emotional feelings Black Americans might have dealt with.

MATERIALS LIST:

Journal or Writing Paper

Pen/Pencil

Markers/Crayons/Colored Pencils

Chart Paper

Tape

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Start by introducing the activity and sharing how members will first brainstorm and visualize themselves back in time as Black person in the US during slavery, and then write a journal entry expressing their thoughts and feelings in that moment. You can say,

This exercise is titled Untold Stories and for this activity, we are going to travel back in time to the seventeenth century, where Black people in The United States were sold into slavery and remained enslaved for many years. We just learned about Black people's experience during this time, whether it was during the Middle Passage, where they traveled from Africa to the US, chattel slavery, where Black people served White families and worked on plantations, segregation, where Black people gained limited freedom but were still greatly mistreated and powerless, and The Civil Rights Movement, where Black people's ideas, perspectives, and voices were beginning to be heard.

Taking everything we have learned today and from the Read Alouds we have been doing over the past few weeks, we are going to put ourselves in the shoes of Black people and think about how it might have felt to have experienced this. You are going to write a journal entry, through the eyes of a Black person during this time, and express what you think their thoughts and emotions might have been. How do you think they felt, what do you think they were thinking about. Before you write your journal entry, we will brainstorm and organize our thoughts and then transition into writing.

2. Prompt members to individually brainstorm in their journals or on a piece of paper, what do they envision being a Black person, during this time. They can put themselves in any moment during slavery, segregation or The Civil Rights Movement. Members can loosely use their five senses to help them during this visualization. During this brainstorm, you can write or draw your responses



and express your answers in any way you feel comfortable with. Some prompts can include the following

"Envision yourself, as a Black person, in the year 1655,

- What do you see around you, what are you looking at? Who do you see, Where are you?
- What do you hear?
- What are you thinking about?
- What do you feel, how do you feel? What are your emotions?"

Mentors can write these brainstorming prompts on a piece of chart paper or chalkboard for the full group to view. Give members **10 minutes** to complete their brainstorm.

3. After members have completed their brainstorm, allow them to transition into writing their journal entry. They can organize their entry in any way they want and highlight any part of their brainstorm that sticks out to them the most. Give members **10 minutes** to complete their journal entry. You can say,

Now that we have completed our brainstorm, we are going to use the ideas that came out of it, to create a journal entry. Like most journal entries, this is a personal moment where we will write something to ourselves and release our thoughts and feelings onto paper. Similarly to brainstorm, you can format this journal entry in any way you like. You can both write or draw your feelings and either talk about one thing specific in your brainstorm or summarize everything you've brainstormed into one entry. You will be given 10 minutes to reflect back onto your brainstorm and make a journal entry on a new sheet of paper.

4. Once members are finished writing their journal entries, take a handful of volunteers to read their writings aloud to the full group. After members have shared, Mentors can transition everyone back to their seats to have a full group discussion.

Discussion Questions (5 minutes)

How did it feel to envision yourself as a Black person in the United States of America during this time?

How do you think, Black people as a whole felt during this time in history?

Was there any part in this activity that was challenging?

What did you enjoy about completing the brainstorm and journal entry?



Grounding Exercise (5 Minutes)

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is a quick grounding, or calming exercise, meant to be a break from what can potentially be a challenging discussion.

1. Tell the members to sit in a relaxed position. Tell them this is a quiet exercise so that everyone can focus, but it is for a short amount of time
2. Explain that they will think of the following things:
 - 5 things they can see
 - 4 things they can hear
 - 3 things they can smell
 - 2 things they can touch
 - 1 thing they can taste
3. If they finish quickly, they can go through the list again. Tell them to focus on breathing deeply as they go.
4. To finish the activity, ask the group to take a deep breath together on the count of three



Introduction to Colorism (10 minutes)

After the Grounding Exercise, invite members back to their seats for a full group introduction to the next topic. Introduce the second topic of Colorism to the group. First, remind the members that like the last section, there will be some facts and themes that are hard to hear and talk about. Explain the definition and give some basic examples of colorism. **If you have additional examples or information about colorism in your country, please include them.** Make sure to allow for questions at the end. You can say,

Before starting the next activity, I want to acknowledge that this section will also include facts that are hard to talk and hear about. If at any point you feel very uncomfortable, please let me know. Now, we are going to go over the definition of colorism, where colorism comes from, as well as examples of colorism.

DEFINITION OF COLORISM:

A practice of discrimination by which those with lighter skin are treated more favorably than those with darker skin. In other words, Colorism means to discriminate against someone because of the color of their skin. Colorism is related to racism; people tend to discriminate against people with dark skin tones.

HISTORY OF COLORISM:

In the US, colorism in black communities can be traced back to slavery. White slave-owners would sexually assault their slaves and those slaves would have children because of the assault. These children would still be slaves, but they had lighter skin than other slaves. The slave-owners would often choose lighter skinned slaves to work inside their house instead of in the fields. After slavery, Black people with lighter skin were hired for jobs more often than Black people with darker skin.

*Skin tone was also used as a way to decide if Black people were allowed to be a part of richer Black social circles; some stories say there was a paper bag test, where if you were darker than a paper bag, you weren't allowed in the group. **Colorism is the product of racism and the idea of white supremacy, however all people can discriminate based on skin tone.**⁹*

Historically, in parts of South Asia, colorism is related to social class status and colonial rule. In India, through a combination of factors including a strict social hierarchy and colonial rule, people started to believe lighter skin was better.¹⁰

You can observe similar social divides in other parts of the world. For example, Brazil forcibly brought 10 times as many slaves from Africa to their country than the US. This created a large class difference between White people who colonized the region and Black enslaved people (as well as indigenous people).¹¹

⁹ Nittle, Nadra Kareem. "The Origins of Colorism and How This Bias Persists in America." *ThoughtCo*. ThoughtCo, 15 Aug. 2019. Web. 21 Dec. 2019. <<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-colorism-2834952>>.

¹⁰ Neha Mishra, *India and Colorism: The Finer Nuances*, 14 Wash. U. Global Stud. L. Rev. 725 (2015), https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_globalstudies/vol14/iss4/14

¹¹ Bourcier, Nicolas. "Brazil Comes to Terms with Its Slave Trading past." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 23 Oct. 2012. Web. 21 Dec. 2019.



In other countries like those in Southeast Asia, skin color discrimination likely came from colonizers. One example is in the Philippines, where Spanish colonization helped make people think lighter skin means being more rich and beautiful.¹²

COLORISM TODAY:

Similarly to racism, sometimes people believe that colorism does not affect people the same way it has in the past. But today, colorism still has a big impact on people's lives.

In Latin America research has shown that people with lighter skin tones will make more money than people of darker skin tones, even if they come from the same background.¹³

In the US, Black women with lighter skin received shorter prison sentences than Black women with darker skin. Also in the US there is evidence that skin tone is a factor in how likely you are to get a job, how much money you will make, and can even affect individuals' dating practices(lighter skinned people are stereotypically considered more beautiful).¹⁴

Women around the world use creams to make their skin lighter. These products often contain harsh chemicals which are dangerous. (In India, for example, the skin lightening cream industry is valued at over 200 million USD.)¹⁵

¹² Laxamana Rondilla, Joanne. "Colonial Faces: Beauty and Skin Color Hierarchy in the Philippines and the U.S." University of California, Berkley, 2012. Web. 2019.

¹³ AmerQuarterly. "The Effects of Skin Color in the Americas." *Americas Quarterly*. N.p., 21 Feb. 2012. Web. 21 Dec. 2019. <<https://www.americasquarterly.org/the-effects-of-skin-color-in-the-americas>>.

¹⁴ Greenidge, Kaitlyn. "Why Black People Discriminate among Ourselves: The Toxic Legacy of Colorism." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 09 Apr. 2019. Web. 21 Dec. 2019.

¹⁵ Nagar, Itisha. "The Unfair Selection: A Study on Skin-Color Bias in Arranged Indian Marriages." University of Delhi, 2018. Web. 2019.



My Skin's Barrier (20 Minutes)

INTRODUCTION:

Members will discuss the definition and examples of colorism, then consider how it has impacted them. They will also explore external and internal qualities that make them feel confident.

MATERIALS:

Journal or Writing Paper

Pen/Pencil

Markers/Crayons/Colored Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Start by explaining to the group that they will be thinking about how skin color affects their lives. Ask them to consider the information they just heard about colorism/skin tone discrimination. Remind them of what they read in the book *Sulwe* in the weeks leading up to this activity.
2. Next, ask the group to do a quick Stop and Jot on how skin color has affected their lives. Then, ask them to write down how they have seen colorism affect other people they know. Take a few share outs.

**It is important that if members say that skin color does not affect their life or anyone they know, that it does affect other people's lives. It is important for them to seek to understand others' experiences of discrimination even if they have not experienced colorism themselves.

**It is important to correct members if they are reproducing harmful stereotypes in the group. It can be helpful to refer back to the group agreements if that happens, or remind them of the importance of respecting other club members.
3. Now that they have thought about some examples of colorism and have discussed some of their own experiences with colorism, you will do an art activity to try to challenge the negative ideas you and your club participants may have heard about skin tone and features.
4. First, ask members to draw an outline of themselves in the middle of a piece of paper or in their notebook. This could include facial features and hair, but the inside should be blank and large enough so that they can write inside the outline they draw of themselves. See example in Appendix.



5. Then, inside their drawing, ask members to write down inner or internal qualities that they love about themselves. This may be difficult for some, so provide a few examples, such as: they are honest, they are good at math, they are kind to people, they make their friends laugh. You can say,

Inside the drawing of yourself, write down some internal qualities that you love about yourself. [Provide examples] This internal part of ourselves is one important part, or “layer” of ourselves. It is a part of ourselves that people can’t always see right away, but it is an important part of what makes you beautiful, unique, and powerful. When you hear things on TV, the internet, or from people you know that make you feel less than because of your skin and other parts of you that you cannot control, remember all these qualities that you love about yourself.

6. Next, you will ask the members to make an outline around their body, leaving about an inch around their drawing. Explain that they are leaving that space to write more things about themselves. Ask the members to think about things they love about their skin and their features. There are many things that can make you feel beautiful, powerful, or special. They will write these ideas or qualities in between their drawing of themselves and the outline of that drawing. You can say,

Find a beautiful thing to compare your skin to- is it like the sky at night?

Does it remind you of a family member? Do you love your moles or freckles? Do you love your nose? Do you like the way you look when you smile? These are all things that you write around the drawing you did of yourself. It is important to remember that there are things we love about our appearance as well, especially if we hear things that tell us we shouldn’t!

7. Once all of the members have finished drawing their protective layer, ask them to share something from their art today.
8. Make sure to thank members for sharing something like this. You can say,

It can be hard for people to be vulnerable and this activity requires some vulnerability. It is important when people make judgments about us based on our skin tone or color that we remember all the things we love about ourselves, whether that is physical or internal.

It is hard to stop believing what we have been told about skin color, but it is important to try to have compassion for ourselves and others around appearance and skin color.

Discussion Questions (5 minutes)

What does it feel like to write these words around yourself? What did you write inside your body?
What did you write around your body?

How does this relate to colorism?

Do people with darker skin hear different messages about their skin? Is that fair?

What can we do to challenge negative ideas about dark skin?



Full Group Conclusion (10 minutes)

For the full group conclusion of the day, Mentors can summarize everything members have learned and discussed today and over the course of the month. You can say,

Over this month of February, we have learned about different parts of racism and colorism and how they have had effects on people personally as well as entire communities and cultures. We have also learned about other's experiences and looked within to see how racism and colorism play a role in our identities.

A lot of the information we have learned this month, might have made us feel uncomfortable, sad, upset, or confused. All of your feelings are okay to have and express. If you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with your club members or your Mentor that is fine and you can also share what you have learned with your family and friends. However, this can be hard to talk about with outsiders who might not fully understand racism or colorism, or those who may not have experienced it themselves. Be patient when explaining these topics to others and be aware that everyone has different levels of knowledge on racism and colorism. If you would like advice on how to talk about these topics to others outside of this club or just want to continue the conversation and learning after this month, we can further this discussion! Also remember that, you always have the power and choice to treat all individuals with respect and kindness, no matter their skin color or cultural background.

After Mentors have provided a recap, transition members into a full group discussion on how they have felt throughout this learning process and to think about ways they can link this information to their own lives.

Discussion Questions:

What is something you learned throughout this entire month?

What is something you learned specifically today?

How did you feel while completing today's activities?

Why do you think we celebrated Black History Month?

How do you think the topics we learned during Black History Month affects you?

How do you think they affect your community?

How will you use this information in your future?

What are some ways you can share the information you learned today, with others?

Who would you like to share with?

Thank you for participating in this program! We welcome your feedback about these activities.



Appendix

READINGS:

Listen to “The Story of Ruby Bridges” by Robert Coles read aloud - <https://youtu.be/U8D4IdGY41s>

Listen to “Sulwe” by Lupita Nyong’o read aloud - <https://youtu.be/9m8JvdBZjSE>

Please consider supporting a Black-owned bookstore to purchase your own copy of “The Story of Ruby Bridges” by Robert Coles or “Sulwe” by Lupita Nyong’o.

WE RECOMMEND:

- Semicolon Bookstore & Gallery, Chicago, IL: <http://www.semicolonchi.com/>
- Cafe Con Libros, Brooklyn, NY: <https://www.cafeconlibrosbk.com/order-a-book>
- Blackstone Bookstore & Cultural Center, Ypsilanti, MI:
<https://www.blackstonebookstore.com/>
- Eso Won Books, Los Angeles, CA: <https://www.esowonbookstore.com/>
- The Lit. Bar: Bookstore & Chill, Bronx, NY: <https://www.thelitbar.com>



“See Aloud” Images:

SEE ALOUD #1: CHIOMA EBINAMA’S WATERCOLOR AND BLEACH PAINTING





“See Aloud” Images:

SEE ALOUD #2: SKIN BLEACHING ADVERTISEMENT



ABOUT FAIR & LOVELY PRODUCTS FAIR & LOVELY FOUNDATION MEDIA AND PRESS
FAQS CONTACT US

The advertisement features three women's faces in profile, transitioning from dark skin on the left to light skin on the right. A woman's hand holds a tube of Fair & Lovely cream next to her face. Below the main image is a banner with the following text and logos:

FORGET MARKS FOREVER
antiMarks FAIRNESS CREAM

SCHOLARSHIP 2009

Fair & Lovely FOUNDATION

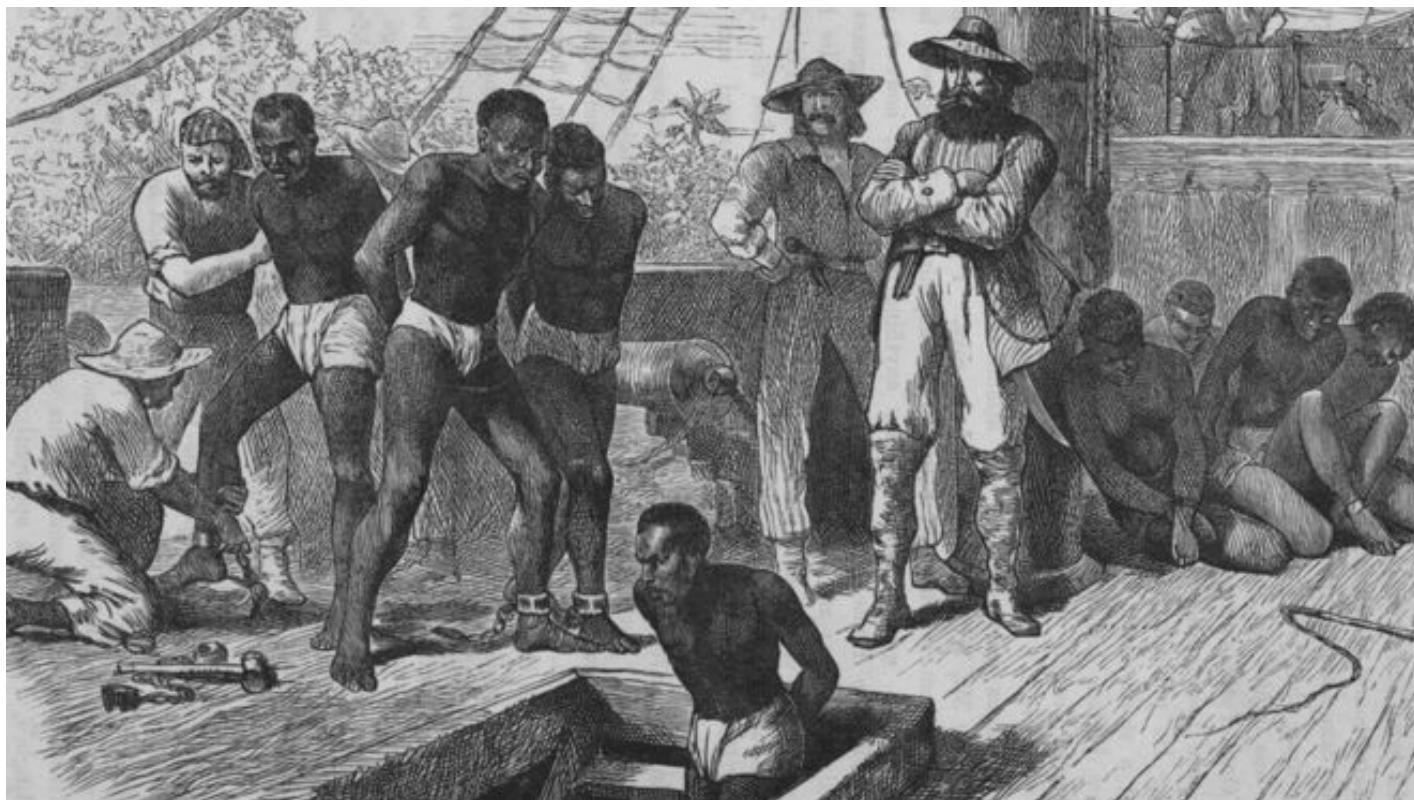
Names of shortlisted candidates for the Pers...

© HUL 2009 | Disclaimer | Sitemap | Site Credits

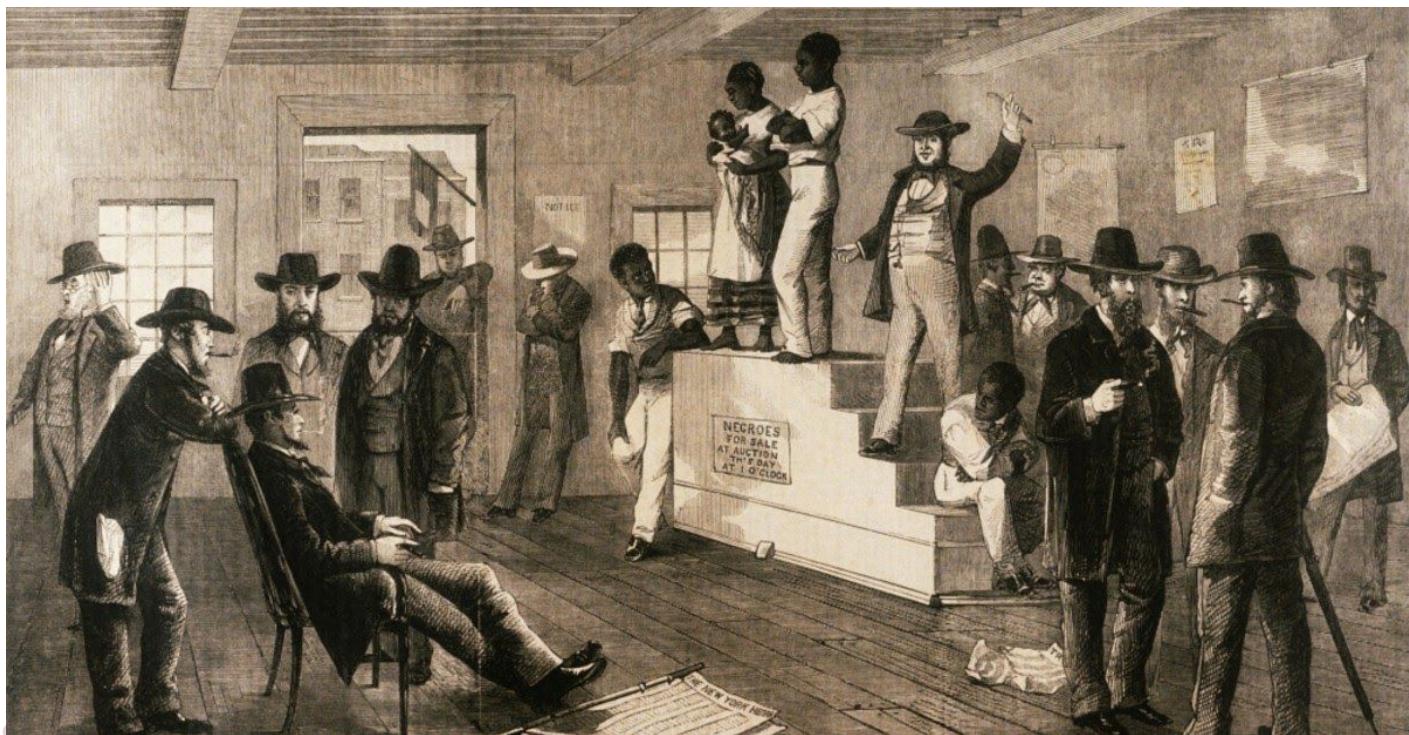


Introduction to Racism Images:

AFRICANS FORCED ONTO CARGO SHIP DURING THE MIDDLE PASSAGE



AFRICANS BEING SOLD INTO SLAVERY:





AFRICAN SLAVES WORKING ON PLANTATION FIELDS:





MY SKIN'S BARRIER EXAMPLE:

