

The Ethics of Care: Dismantling Racism



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Dismantling Racism

- We should collectively hope that we are going to dismantle racism in authentic, meaningful, and transformative ways.
- Talking about racism isn't easy – it's going to take courage, optimism, and an appetite for deep self-examination, and lots of discomfort.



Some Disclaimers

- We should not do this work from a place of guilt or shame or anger.
- This work should be from a place of empathy, humility, and compassion.
- We do not try to make amends for past sins. We are trying to lovingly, willingly, and optimistically lend our voice, hands, hearts, and minds to be true to our own sense of ethical care.
- We should do this work because we truly believe that all human beings have great value, and we have a **moral duty to restore truth and justice.**
- This type of work will help us, because racism dehumanizes ALL of us.



Statement of the Problem

- Despite all the efforts of psychotherapists to mediate in the lives of disturbed individuals, the incidence of psychopathology continues to increase.
- Psychotherapy is a conservative enterprise that **perpetuates the same values and aspirations** that create the need for therapy.
- Mainstream psychotherapy **embraces a status quo.**



Statement of the Problem

- Psychotherapists lack the **wider theoretical perspectives** to understand their clients' pain.
- Even though it makes little sense to foster adjustment to pathological social, cultural, and economic systems, psychotherapist promote these ideas routinely.



Statement of the Problem

- Most graduates of Psychotherapy programs do not grasp fully the role of class, gender, race, and culture in the etiology of psychopathology, nor its potential value in treatment.



Statement of the Problem

- Instead of making social justice a top priority, modern psychology has functioned in an opposite way to **preserve injustice and inequality**.
- Our moral inertia is so strong that the mere mention of **moralistic intentions** would throw into doubt one's credibility as psychotherapists.
- Too often, when the world is messed up for political reasons, **therapists are silent** even though we should acknowledge facts, be supportive of clients, and discuss the problem.



Social Justice Oriented Psychotherapy

- Psychotherapy must strive toward a new relevance in the form of culturally sensitive teaching/therapy/research that asks questions about **larger social problems**, such as gender socialization, class, race, acculturation, addiction, child abuse, and technology-related problems.



Social Justice Oriented Psychotherapy

- In addition to being able to influence disturbed individuals, psychotherapists should be **cultural and transcultural activists** with sufficient scope of understanding to prescribe new social and political policies that stand to improve the general health of large populations.
- Psychotherapists must be encouraged to **develop a social ethics mentality** that motivates them to intervene on behalf of the vulnerable and disadvantaged segments of society.



Racism, Bias, and Discrimination

Racism is not the same thing as bias, prejudice, or discrimination

- Bias and prejudice are largely innate
- Discrimination is action based on bias
- Bias is a product of our biological evolution
- We are not personally responsible for innate or unconscious bias
- It not as a personal failure or flaw, but as an outmoded pattern that no longer serves our highest moral values.
- There is no shame in acknowledging our innate, unconscious bias – in fact, acknowledging it ought to be celebrated as the first step toward dismantling racism.



Racism

- Racism is much more specific than the universal human propensity for bias, discrimination, or prejudice.
- Racism is a **structure** or **system** where the biases held by the dominant group turned into law and policy.



Racism

- All systems – economic, governmental, legal, social, personal – are informed from within by the dominant group's biases and prejudices (policing, the justice system, the education, the banking, the housing, and healthcare systems, the way all goods and services are distributed).
- It doesn't matter if a white person is nice and kind toward the subordinate group. They benefit from **the system** that favors the white race and disadvantages other races, even if they did not construct of the system, nor contribute consciously to its maintenance.

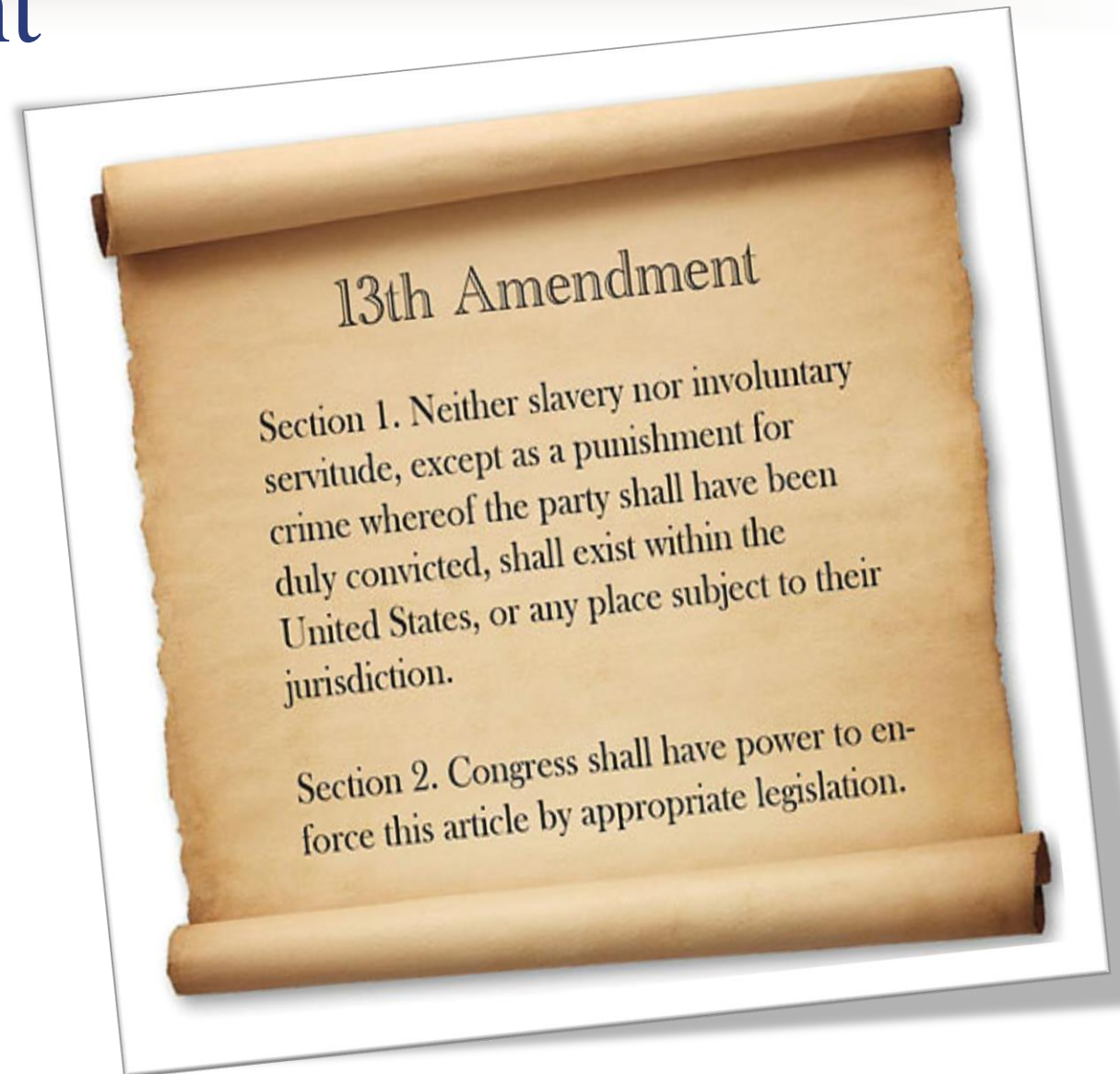


What to do?

- We need to shift the conversations around racism from **personal belief and behavior to systems and structures.**

The 13th Amendment

- In late 1865, the 13th amendment to the Constitution was ratified
- Note the exception...
- No 40 acres and a mule
- Not hired for jobs, then arrested for homelessness
- Prison workers leased out to industry
- The criminalization of color



Black Codes and Jim Crow

- When the 4 million slaves were freed, most states enacted “Black codes” greatly restricting all aspects of black people’s life
- Segregation laws (“Jim Crow”) institutionalized discrimination and deprived Black families of access to economic stability
- Freed, but not free
- The lie of “separate, but equal”
- Jim Crow impacted multi-generational Black wealth





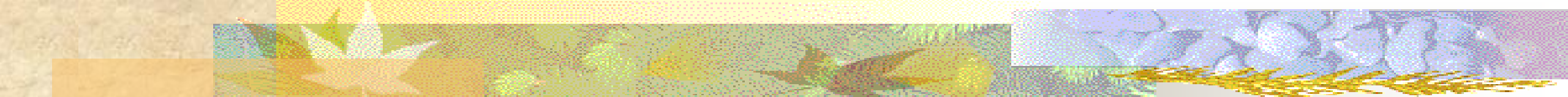
The GI Bill and Redlining

- Creating the middle class through home ownership
- Low cost loans, college tuition, unemployment insurance
- Blacks excluded and multi-generational wealth never accumulated.
- The practice of redlining divided cities and towns into White and Black neighborhoods



Black Family Wealth vs. White Family Wealth

- The average White American family has a net worth of \$170,000
- The average Black American family has a net worth of \$17,000
- This is based on centuries of uncontrolled systemic racism, which gave birth to “White privilege.”
- Showing up in a White body allows you have access to a whole host of advantages not available to people in non-White bodies.
- White people often get treated better unconsciously, by store security, loan officers, realtors, police, salespeople, teachers, college admissions officers, and hiring committees.



“In Louisiana, black women were put in cells with male prisoners and some became pregnant. In 1848, legislators passed a new law declaring that all children born in the penitentiary of African American parents serving life sentences would be property of the state. The women would raise the kids until the age of ten, at which point the penitentiary would place an ad in the newspaper. Thirty days later, the children would be auctioned off on the courthouse steps 'cash on delivery.' The proceeds were used to fund schools for white children. . . many of [the black children] were purchased by prison officials.”

Source: American Prison: A Reporter's Undercover Journey into the Business of Punishment by Shane Bauer



Why Can't We End Racism?

- Universalism

- By this we mean the pushback against further discussions about racism on the grounds that we're all one (everyone discriminates).

- Individualism

- By this we mean the pushback against further discussions about racism on the grounds that no one is defined by their race, all of the outcomes in our lives are solely the product of our **choices**.

- Both of these stances are rooted in **White fragility**, and the denial of the existence of racism, and the *denial of racism is racism.*



Anti-Racism Work

■ Political work

- Seeking change in laws, political institutions, and structures
- Rewriting curriculum, redesigning structures (policing, judicial, economic, education, etc.)

■ Relational work

- Deepening our relationships with one another, having honest, humble, and loving conversations with people inside and outside our racial group

■ Inner Work

- Unpacking unexamined unconscious bias, releasing old ways of thinking and being, becoming a student, cultivating “beginner’s mind,” reading “Waking Up White,” “White Fragility,” “How To Be An Anti-Racist,” watching “13th” and “The color of fear”, committing to filling in the gaps in our incomplete educations



Golden Rule:
Stay Informed!!



The Ethic of Care

- We have a moral obligation to contribute to the healing of the world.
- It is our duty to be a sources of wisdom, compassion, courage, and service.
- All human beings should have infinite value and this reason alone imposes moral obligation to treat all people with dignity and respect.
- MLK said, “the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice,” and we must all contribute to the bending of the arc.



The Ethic of Care

- Providing knowledge should not be based on anger, shame, or guilt. It should be based on love, humility, joy, and the consciousness of service
- Oppressed communities need “**White Warriors**” to help them, not White allies or saviors, centering around White voices and White solutions.
- We need to start with ourselves. Read, watch, listen, and learn.
- Our deep, long-term goal is widespread paradigm shift for White people. Only when they understood, acknowledged, and accepted the **long history of oppression of BIPOC**, change would happen.



Heather Heyer

“If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention”