

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

# Ensuring Head Start's role as an Engine for a Transformative, Anti-racist Early Childhood Agenda

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Keynote at FHSA 2021 Annual Conference & Expo

Head Start Leaders: Quality Focused & Innovation Driven

March 3, 2021



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# Honoring Native Lands

**I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I LIVE,  
WORK, AND BUILD MY FAMILIES'  
ECONOMIC WEALTH ON THE  
LUMBEE TRIBE TAKEN THROUGH  
COLONIZATION AND ATTEMPTED  
ERADICATION BY SETTLERS.**



“Speaking like this doesn’t mean that [I’m] we’re anti-white, but it does mean [I’m] we’re anti-exploitation, [I’m] we’re anti-degradation, [I’m] we’re anti-oppression.”

~ Malcom X



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When poll is active, respond at [Pollev.com/iheomairuka437](https://Pollev.com/iheomairuka437)

Text **IHEOMAIRUKA437** to **22333** once to join

## Who is in the room? (2021 FHSA)

Parent

Family Advocate/Supervisor

Teacher/Teaching Coach

Program Staff

None of the above

School Leader

Federal/State Administrator

Other? Who did I miss?

## WHAT IS YOUR PRIVILEGE?

# Who am I? Who are you?

- Black/ African diaspora
- Parent
- Married
- Head Start researcher
- Heterosexual
- English speaker
- Dual Language Learner
- Christian
- Female
- Food Secure
- Housing Secure
- U.S. citizen



## EITHER RACIST OR ANTI-RACIST

# Take Home Points

- Head Start provides protection, affection, expectation, and connection
- Head Start should be credited for focusing on anti-poverty
- Examine all aspects of program to **dismantle** racism and eliminate white-centeredness
- Consider how *Start with Equity* policies can **transform** Head Start programming, standards, and policies



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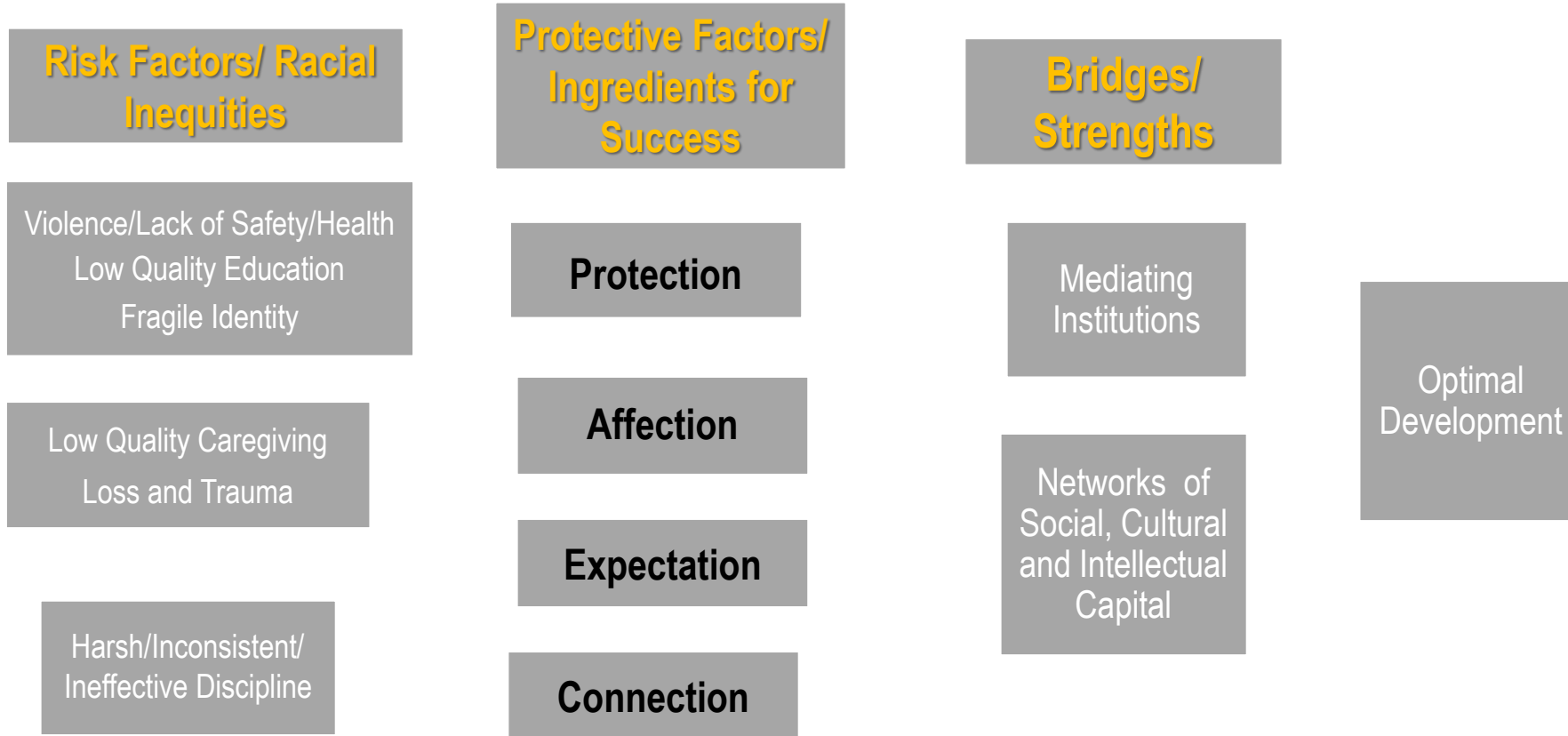
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What principles should guide our child-centered work?

**HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE REACHED IT?**

# Principles for Authentically Supporting Children & Families



\*Adapted from Stevenson, Davis, Abduk-Kabir, 2001; Winn & Stevenson, 2005





## PRINCIPLE 1

# Protection

- **Harm**
- **Violence**
- **Psychological Trauma**
- **Concentrated Disadvantage**



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## PRINCIPLE 2

### Affection

- **Intentional Affirmation**
- **Caring**
- **Nurturance**



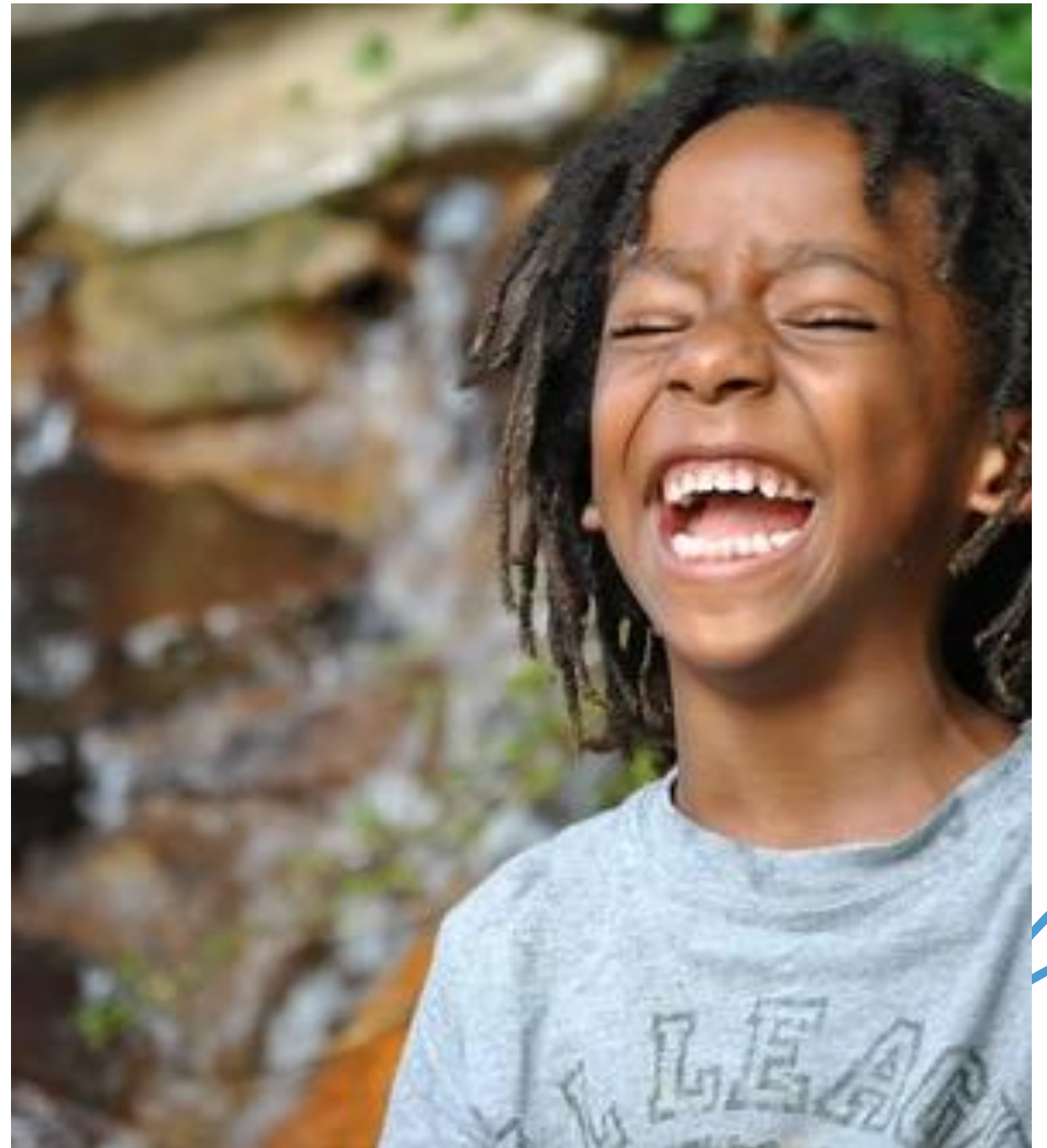
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## PRINCIPLE 3

### Expectation

- **Support for Adaptive Behaviors**
- **Reconciliation**
- **Humanity**



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## PRINCIPLE 4

### Connection

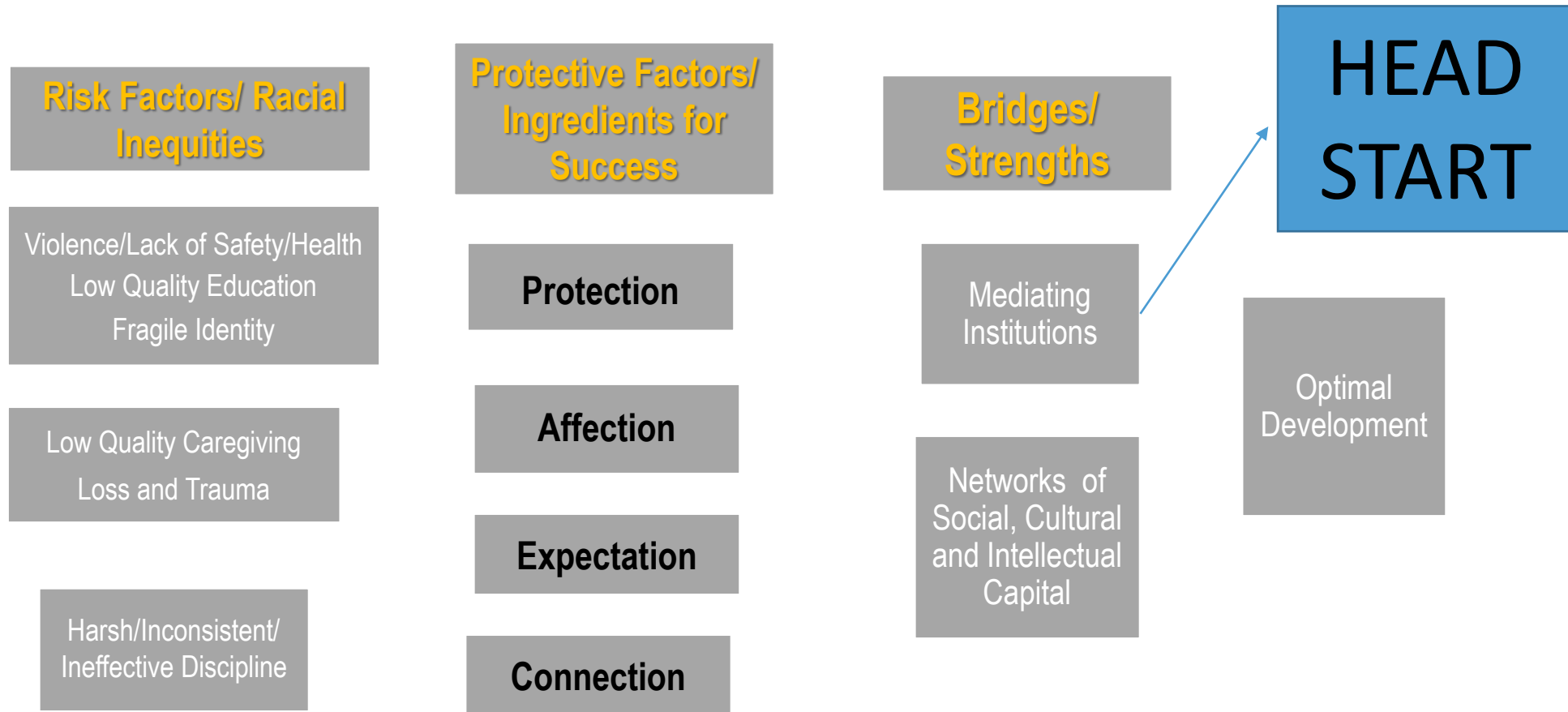
- **Belonging**
- **Value**
- **Uniqueness**



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# Principles for Authentically Supporting Children & Families



\*Adapted from Stevenson, Davis, Abduk-Kabir, 2001; Winn & Stevenson, 2005



HEAD START IS AN ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

# Head Start as an Anti-Racist Strategy



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Congratulations  
to Dr. Bernadine  
Futrell as  
Director of OHS!!

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## RACISM ALSO DIRECTLY HARMS CHILDREN

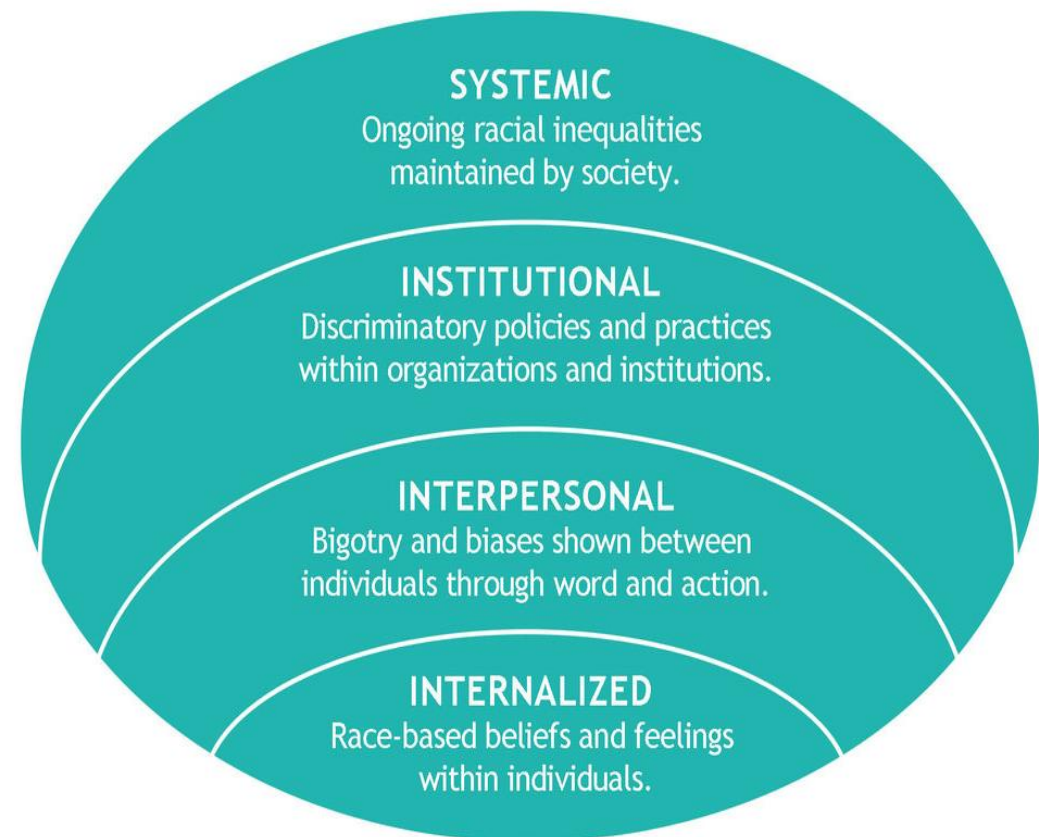
# Racism exists at multiple levels

Racism is the use of **institutional power to organize around white supremacy AND the oppression, denigration, and dehumanizing based on skin color**. This means that white people, people who look white, or whiteness based on language and culture benefit from this system and arrangement of power, privilege, and resources.

Whiteness is then regarded as beautiful, intelligent, worthy, and something to aspire to; thus, maintaining the racist system.

- Adapted from Crenshaw, 1995; Lee, 1996

## LEVELS ON WHICH RACISM EXISTS

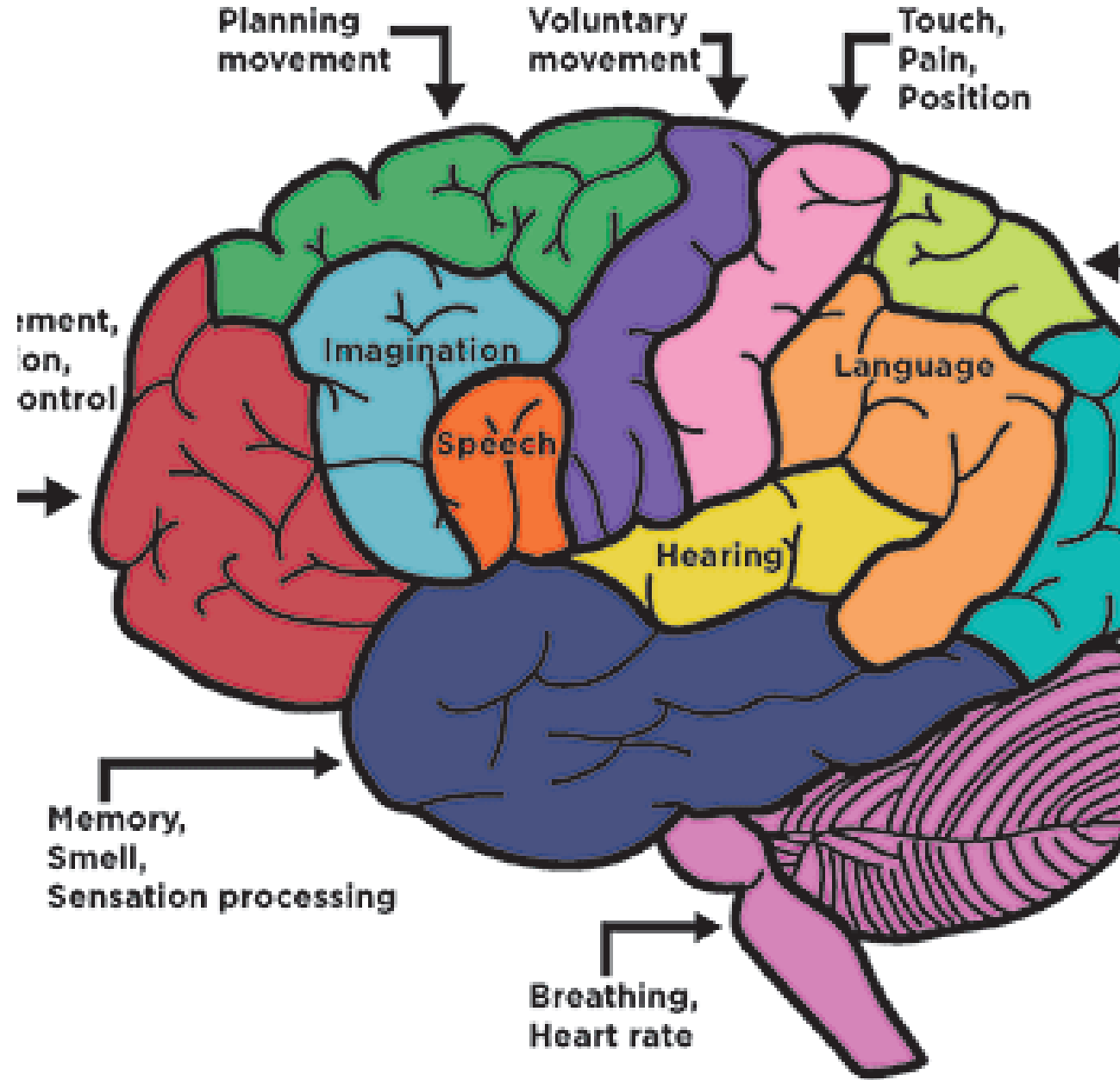




# Implicit Bias

A set of **automatic and uncontrolled** cognitive processes that affect our attitudes toward others. These biases are thought to be involuntary and not under the conscious control of the individual and can lead to either favorable or unfavorable characterizations of others.

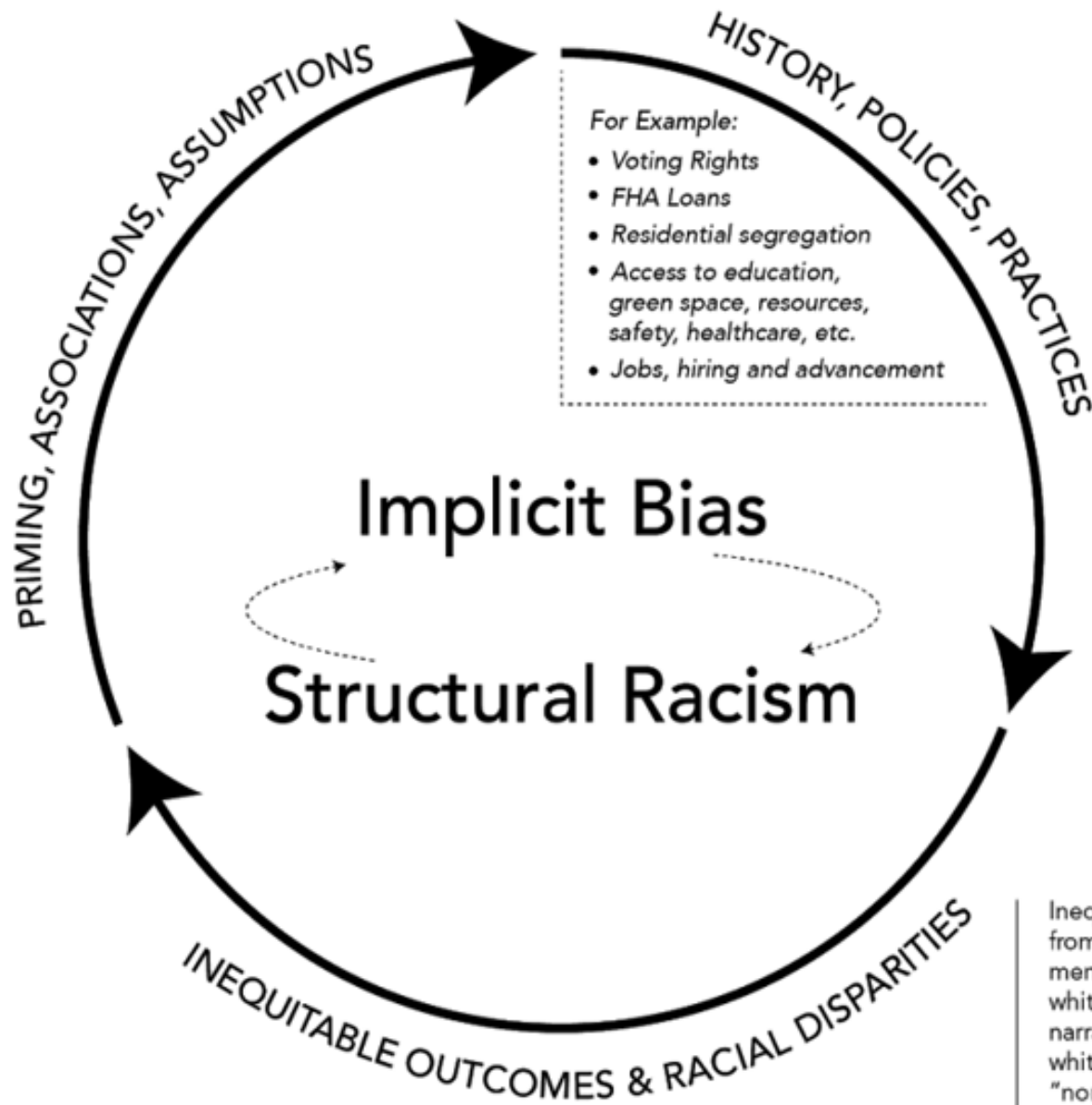
SOURCE. IRUKA, I. U., CURENTON, S. M., DURDEN, T. R., & ESCAYG, K.-A. (2020). DON'T LOOK AWAY: EMBRACING ANTI-BIAS CLASSROOMS. GRYPHON HOUSE.



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Dominant narratives about race (family, media, society) coupled with racialized structural arrangements and differential outcomes by race all prime us to believe that people of color are inferior to white people, create and maintain harmful associations, and lead us to make harmful assumptions, consciously and unconsciously, about people of color



Race is created to justify enslaving people from Africa (economic engine of country)

Policies and practices that consolidate and protect power bestow unearned economic, social, cultural, and political advantage to people called "white," and unearned disadvantage to people of color

National narrative (ideology, belief system) about people of color being "less than" human (and less than white) justifies mistreatment and inequality (white supremacy)

Inequitable outcomes and experiences resulting from policy decisions in health, housing, employment, education, and life expectancy - reinforces white supremacist beliefs and ideology; dominant narrative uses disparate outcomes as evidence of white superiority, promotes whiteness as "normal" and desirable and justifies inequality



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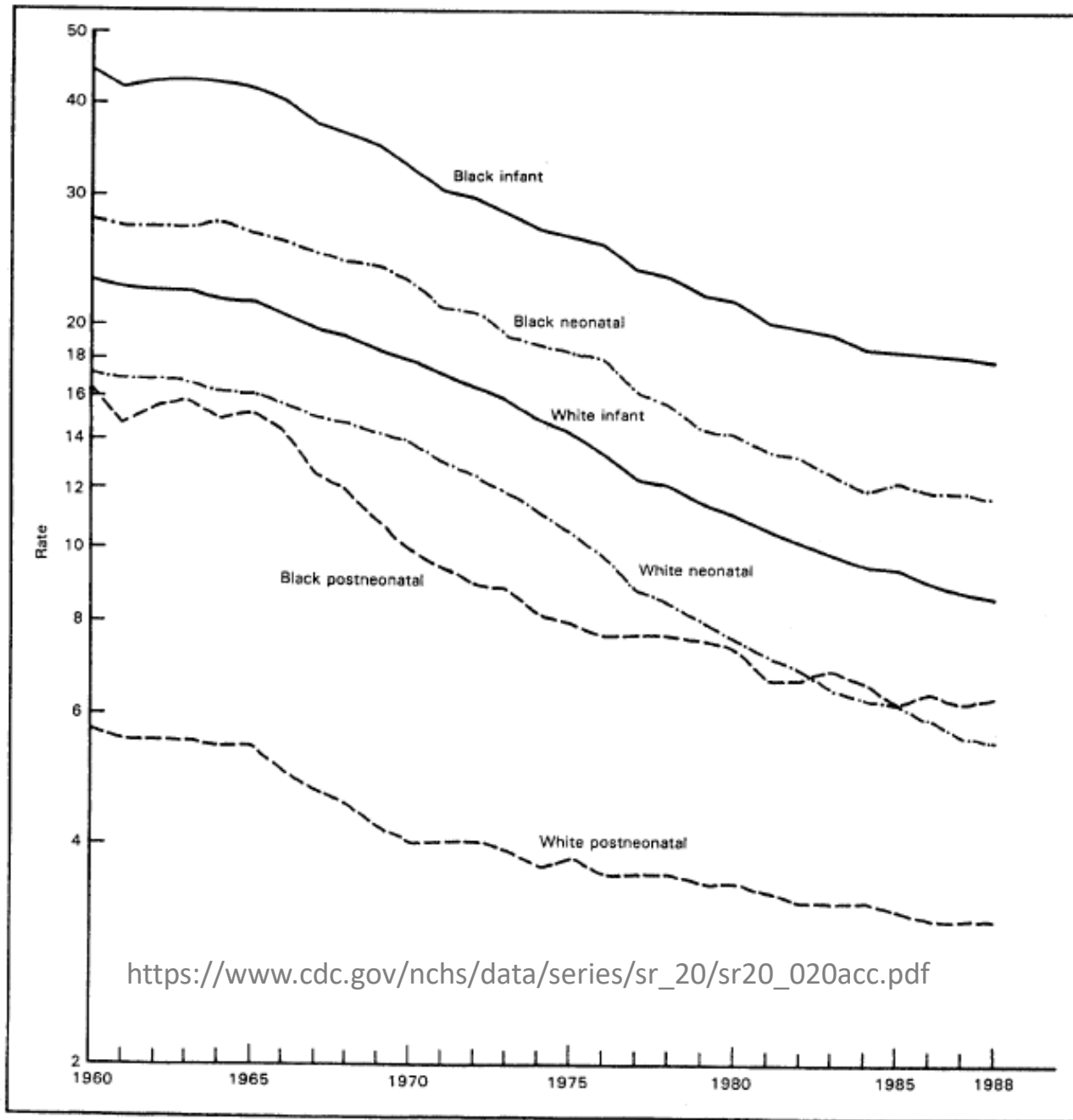
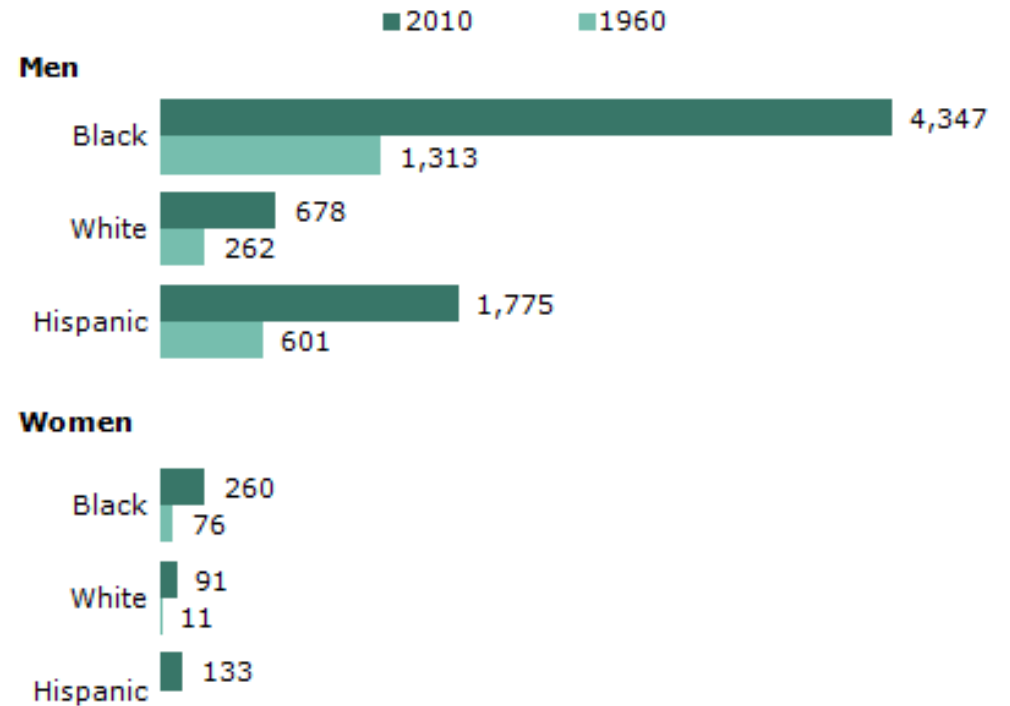


Figure 4. Infant, neonatal, and postneonatal mortality rates, by race: United States, 1960–88

## Incarceration Rates, 1960 and 2010

Inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents

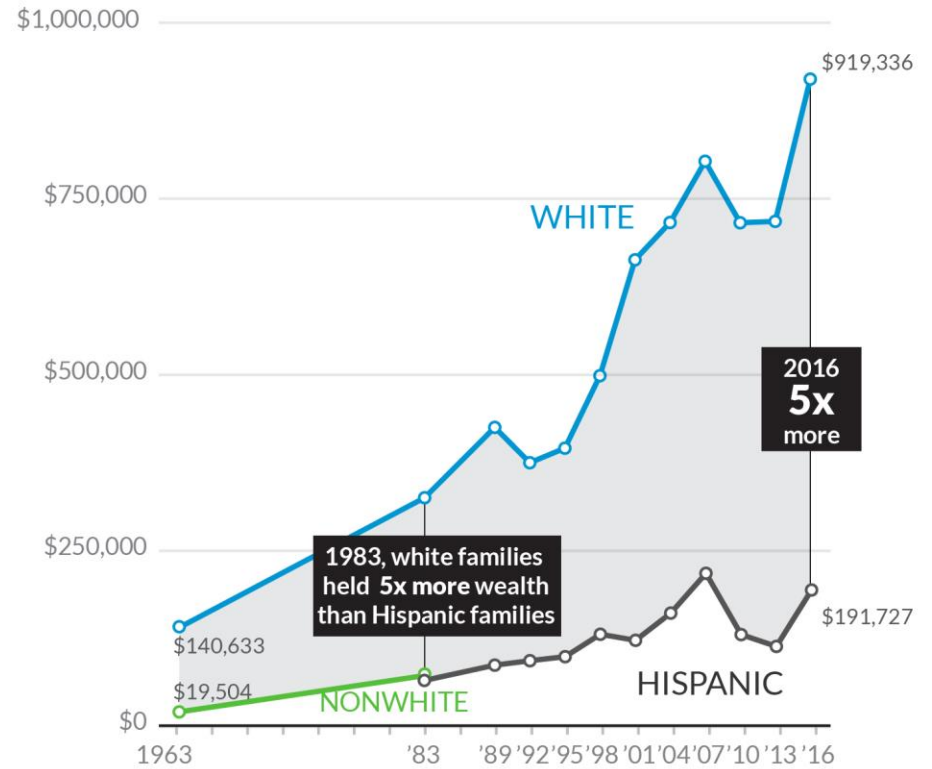
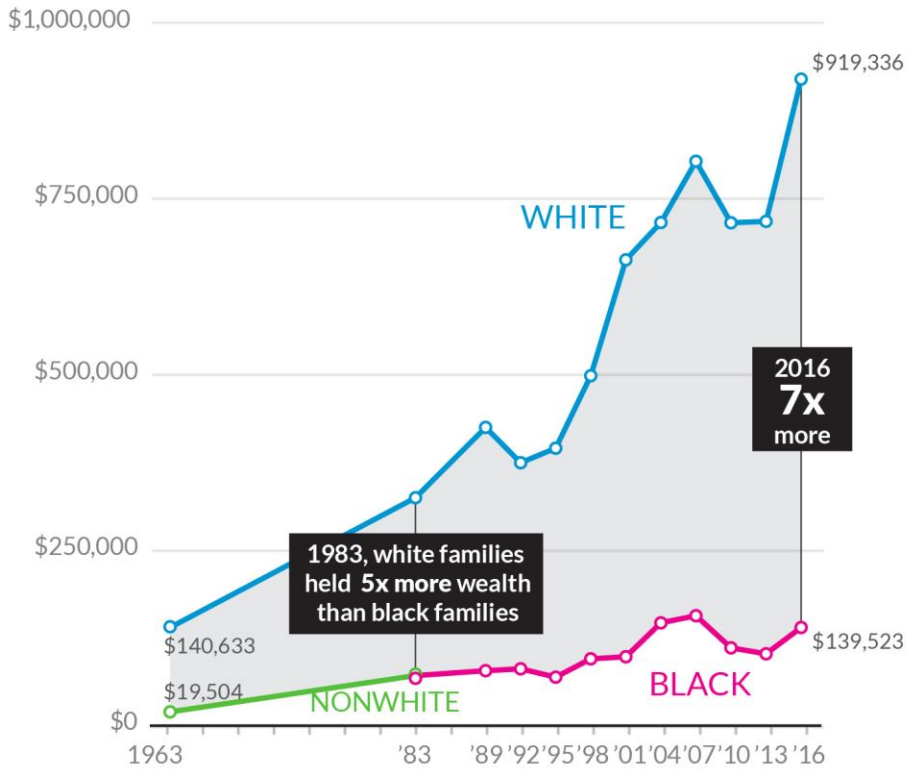


Note: Incarceration rates are for total prisoners in local, state and federal correctional facilities. Total prisoners includes persons under age 18. Hispanics are of any race. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. In 2010, whites and blacks include only those who reported a single race. Asians, Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. A figure for Hispanic women in 1960 is not shown due to small sample size.

Source: For 1960, Pew Research Center analysis of Decennial Census data (IPUMS); for 2010, Bureau of Justice Statistics data <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus10.pdf>

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# Average Family Wealth by Race/Ethnicity, 1963–2016



Source: Urban Institute calculations from Survey of Financial Characteristics of Consumers 1962 (December 31), Survey of Changes in Family Finances 1963, and Survey of Consumer Finances 1983–2016.

Notes: 2016 dollars. No comparable data are available between 1963 and 1983. Black/Hispanic distinction within nonwhite population available only in 1983 and later.

URBAN INSTITUTE

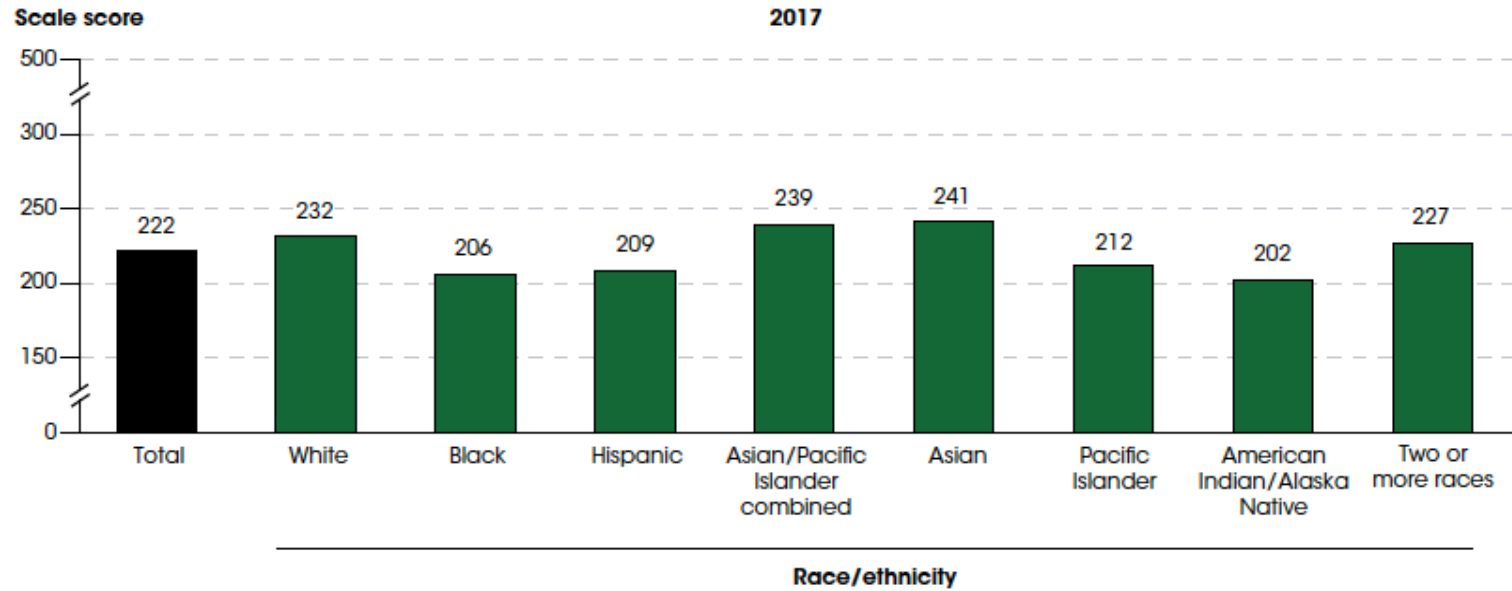
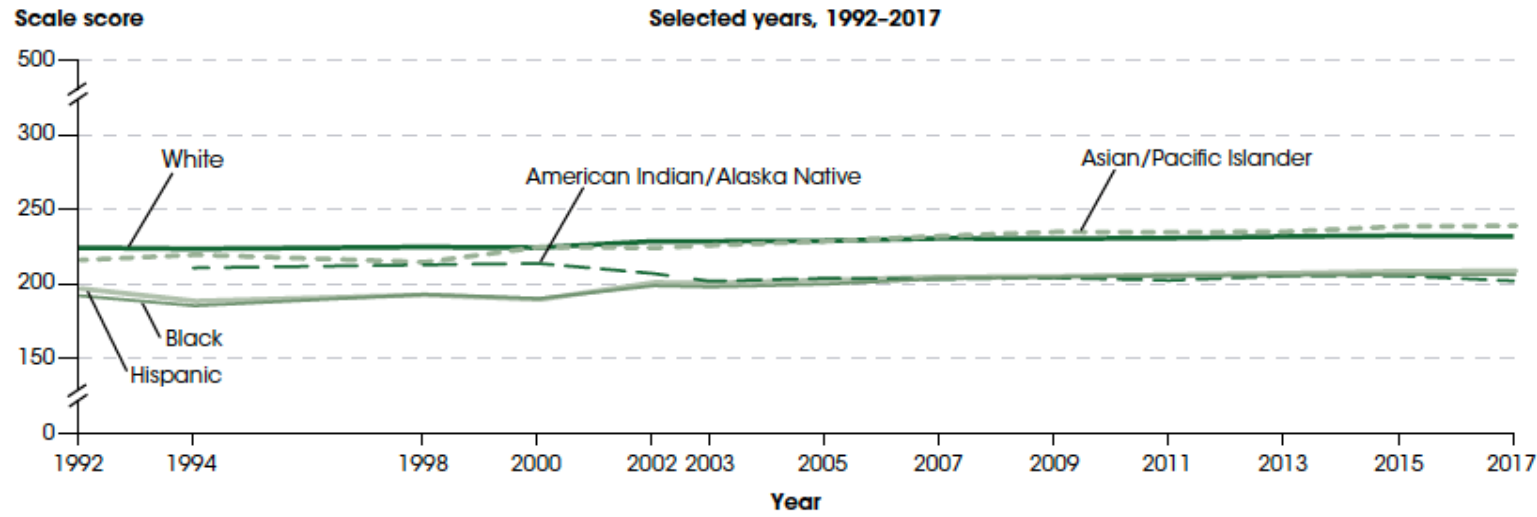


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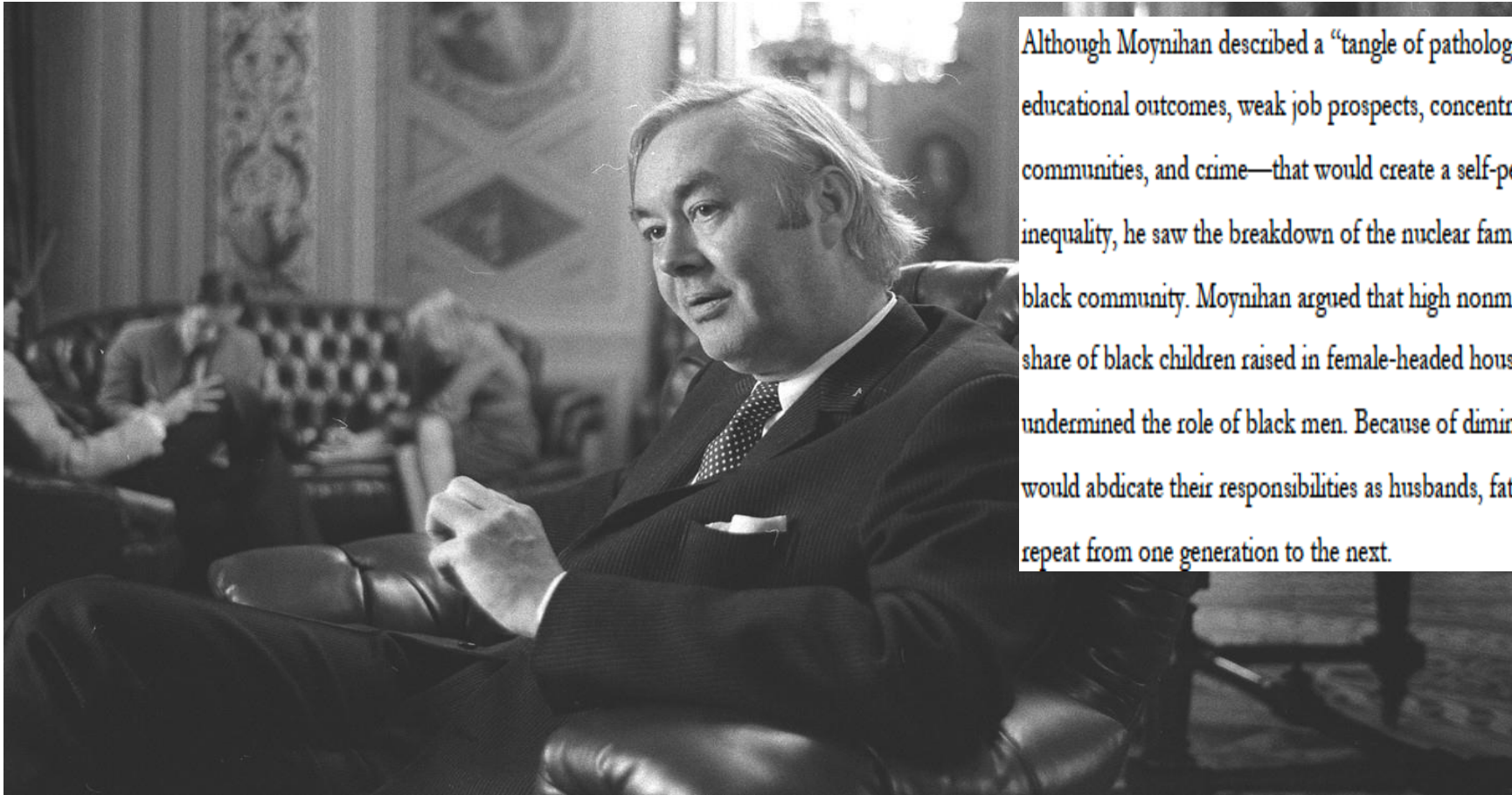
<https://apps.urban.org/features/wealth-inequality-charts/>

**Figure 10.1. Average National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scale scores of 4th-grade students, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1992-2017**



RESEARCH CAN BE WEAPONIZED.

# The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (aka Moynihan Report 1965)



Although Moynihan described a “tangle of pathologies”—from disintegrating families to poor educational outcomes, weak job prospects, concentrated neighborhood poverty, dysfunctional communities, and crime—that would create a self-perpetuating cycle of deprivation, hardship, and inequality, he saw the breakdown of the nuclear family as the fundamental source of weakness in the black community. Moynihan argued that high nonmarital birth rates among blacks and the large share of black children raised in female-headed households created a matriarchal society that undermined the role of black men. Because of diminished authority within the family, black men would abdicate their responsibilities as husbands, fathers, and providers, and the pattern would repeat from one generation to the next.



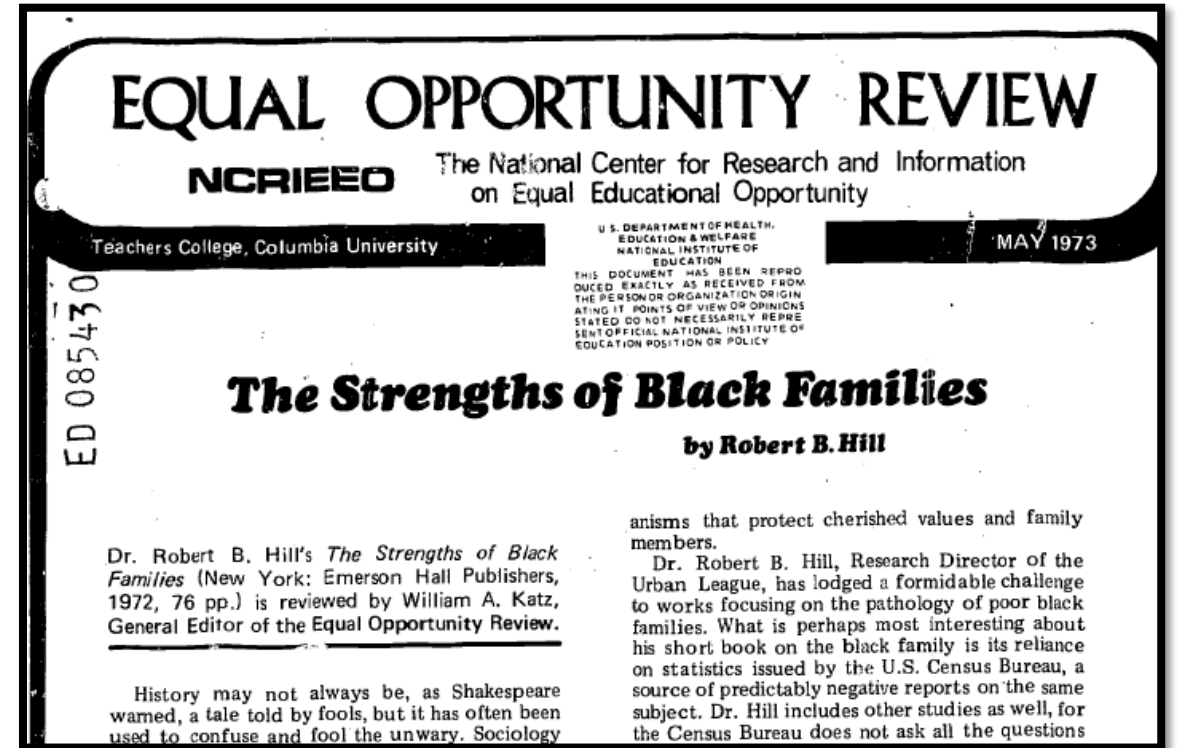
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## WE NEED TO

# Counter-narratives rarely made visible or acted upon

- Strong kinship bond
- Strong work orientation
- Adaptability of family roles
- High achievement orientation
- Religious orientation



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**WE ARE IN A  
TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENT!**

Head Start started  
during a  
transformative  
moment



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## HEAD START HAS IMPACT ON CHILDREN, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITIES.

# Head Start has benefits

- Served more than 37 million children since inception
- Almost \$10B Federal Appropriation for 1 million children in 2019
- Services offered full day and full year
- Over 90% of children have health insurance, immunizations, medical and dental home
- Support families in obtaining health insurance, services for children with disabilities, housing, job training, and prenatal education
- Many positive outcomes for children, families, and educators

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/hs-program-fact-sheet-2019.pdf>



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## Head Start's history still permeates in practices and policies

- ... **experts**...Dr. Robert Cooke, a pediatrician at John Hopkins University, and Dr. Edward Zigler, a professor at Yale University developed program
- ...a comprehensive child development program that would help communities meet the needs of **disadvantaged preschool children**
- ...government's thinking on poverty was influenced by new research on the effects of poverty
- ...**compensating** for inequality in social or economic conditions
- ...break the **cycle of poverty**
- ...**culturally responsive** to the communities served



## CENTERING FAMILIES VOICES?



What questions come to mind when you think about the history and Head Start's programming?

# Moving Head Start towards an Anti-Racism Agenda

***Form of action against white supremacy, oppression, hatred, bias, and racism towards a racially minoritized group***

- Examining the roots – who, what, why, and how?
- Acknowledging racism and its impact on children, families and communities?
- Who are the leaders of Head Start? Where are the men?
- Who determine what is good quality, good curriculum, good teaching?
- How is systemic oppression addressed in Head Start?
- How are families liberated and provided with wealth generating opportunities?



# Starting with Equity: 14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care and Education

1. Equitable funding
2. **Authentic Integration**
3. Equity in Monitoring & Accountability
4. Workforce Equity
5. Equity in Workforce Prep & Dev
6. Equity in QRIS/QI
7. **Culturally Responsive Curriculum & Pedagogy**



Source. <https://fpg.unc.edu/publications/start-equity-14-priorities-dismantle-systemic-racism-early-care-and-education>



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**CHILDREN'S EQUITY  
PROJECT**

# Starting with Equity: 14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care and Education



8. **Equity in Global Quality Assessments**
9. Eliminate Harsh Discipline
10. Equity in EI/SPED ID
11. Equity in CQI
- 12. Family Leadership**
13. Center FCC
14. Equitable access/ expansion to DLL

Source. <https://fpg.unc.edu/publications/start-equity-14-priorities-dismantle-systemic-racism-early-care-and-education>



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**CHILDREN'S EQUITY  
PROJECT**

# How can Head Start be more anti-racist?

**THOUGHTS?**



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# How can Head Start center anti-racism?

DOING NOTHING IS CONDONING RACISM.

Thank you!

Questions??



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