

# CRACKING THE CODES

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## THE SYSTEM OF RACIAL INEQUITY

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## A CONVERSATION GUIDE

### WELCOME

Thank you for choosing *Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity* as a way to engage in community dialogue that is meant to help deepen the national conversation on race. *Cracking the Codes* is a systemic approach to understanding racial inequity as a precursor to building strategies that address racial and socio-economic barriers. It is designed to aid in understanding the system of racialization and the network of relationships that must be considered if we are to build a society that provides equitable, sustainable access to resources in community where all members can thrive.

### UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM

The subject and behaviors that characterize any form of oppression are set against established norms and standards of “rightness” within any society and are reinforced by institutional and economic power. There is no hierarchy to oppressions; all are terrible, destructive, painful and wasteful in terms of human capital. “Race”, “ethnicity”, “class”, “gender”, “homophobia”, “ableism”, etc., as examples of oppression, are not fixed and static in terms of their identity and presentation. And yet, even with the understanding that all forms of oppression intersect, racial disparities continue to be a complex and layered issue that many people deny and/or are afraid to confront. This film/dialogue program seeks to provide an organizing frame, or an approach, within an context to achieve or elicit a more useful exploration of race, racism and racialization.<sup>1</sup> We offer a systemic approach as a frame for supporting exploration, analysis and gathering wisdom in ways that are communal and collaborative.

The purpose of understanding the System of Racial Inequity is:<sup>2</sup>

- (to) name, understand and explore the complex components that comprise the interconnected nature of racial issues, barriers and outcomes.
- (to) increase confidence within learning groups and communities to identify cumulative racialized outcomes that are the result of hidden structures.

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<sup>1</sup> **Racialization:** Racial identities are not fixed categories. They are shaped by history, nationality, gender, class and identity politics and racial designations often differ from country to country. The term “racialization” makes explicit that this is not about inherent characteristics but about the ways in which we are socialized to differentiate groups of people on the basis of physical characteristics. It emphasizes the active process of categorizing people while at the same time rejecting “race” as a scientific category.

<sup>2</sup> From the Racial Equity Learning Module “Understanding the System of Racial Inequity”

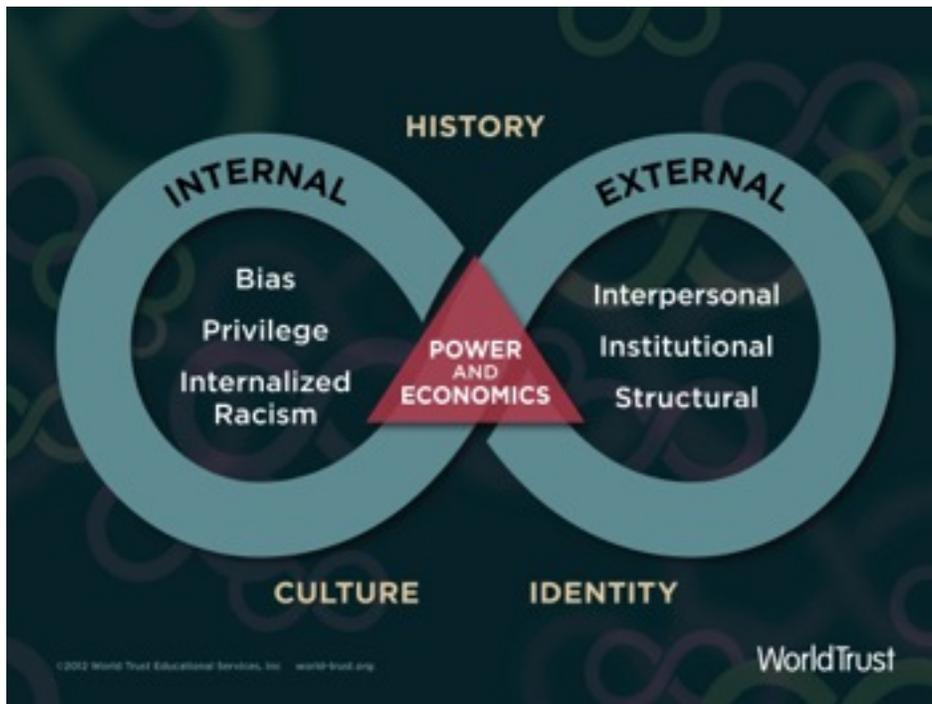
- (to) build alliances and identify targeted strategies across race, class, culture and other “isms” that interrupt racialized processes.

This guide provides suggestions and guidelines for showing the film as a way of exploring the systemic components of racial inequity. Our Racial Equity Learning Modules provide additional support to explore these issues. See the Resources section in this document.

## OVERVIEW

The run time of Cracking the Codes is 75 minutes with credits. Though not required, the film is designed for dialogue. A minimum of 2 hours is recommended to welcome, set context, view the film and engage the participants in three brief rounds of dialogue, and close.

The film is organized into 3 sections: 1) **History, Identity and Culture**; 2) **Internal Components** of Bias, Privilege and Internalized Racism and 3) **External Components** consisting of relationships that are Interpersonal, Institutional and Structural. The menu displays the chapters. Chapter 1 is a brief presentation of the systemic frame upon which the film is organized. This frame is reviewed again near the end of the film.



The film can be watched in several ways:

- It can be watched adhering to the pauses for reflection and dialogue as suggested by the cues that are part of the film (See below.)
- It can also be watched, in sections, over a period of time and coordinated with a course or other reading materials and resources.
- It can be viewed without interruption in one sitting.

## **FACILITATOR PREPARATION**

It is important for you to view the film in its entirety prior to sharing it with others.

- Set your goals
- Prepare the context you will share as part of your welcome and introduction
- Assemble supplemental materials: articles, research, handouts
- Consider reviewing the World Trust's Racial Equity Learning Modules. You may use any of the resources you find in the modules to augment your work with the film. *Many modules can be viewed on [RacialEquityTools.org/REL](http://RacialEquityTools.org/REL).*

## **THE FILM & DIALOGUE SESSION**

This guide is structured to support a conversation using the systemic frame offered. Here is a general outline for a simple 2 hour process and the steps we suggest.

1. **INTRO.** Begin with an introduction process — e.g., Have everyone share their name, why they are participating in the program and perhaps their intention for their own personal learning goals. What might they be looking forward to receiving from their participation? If the group is large, participants can introduce themselves to the person next to them. Taking time for this step builds community and connection between the participants that will support them in the session.
2. **CONTEXT.** Set your context -- Why have you gathered this group? What is your purpose?
3. **THE SYSTEM.** Take time to briefly convey the System of Racial Inequity frame used in the film. You may wish to project the graphic while you talk or refer to handouts of it. **The image can be downloaded here: <http://world-trust.org/system>** More information about the terminology used in the frame ( e.g. "privilege") is available in the glossary at the end of this document.
4. **DIALOGUE PROCESS.** Briefly explain the reflection/dialogue elements if you are planning to incorporate them:

**CHIMES:** indicate a silent pause. You may choose to pause the film and have up to 5 minutes of journaling at these points. Invite participants to remember to breathe and sit with their emotions, which are an important part of learning and developing intellectual capacities. These moments of silence are meant as a resting point.

**FLAGS:** Points in the film when you will pause for brief dialogue. When the flag appears at the end of each section you may invite people to engage in conversation in dyads or triads. Ask questions like, "What in this segment resonated for you and why? What moved you and why? Was there any new information? What are you curious about?"

The suggested time for each conversation is a minimum of 8 minutes to as long as you wish depending on your goals and the time you have.

If you chose to pause the film for reflection and/or dialogue, the chimes/flags occur here:

Chapter	Title	Start(Hr:Min:Sec)	End (Hr: Min:Sec)
1	System Dynamics	00:00:00:00	00:02:31
2	History	00:02:31:23	00:09:00 (Chime/Reflection)
<b>3</b>	<b>Culture &amp; Identity</b>	<b>00:09:01:01</b>	<b>00:16:23 (Flag/Dialogue)</b>
4	Bias	00:16:24:28	00:21:13
5	Privilege	00:21:15:06	00:32:07 (Chime/Reflection)
<b>6</b>	<b>Internalized Racism</b>	<b>00:32:08:25</b>	<b>00:42:35 (Flag/Dialogue)</b>
7	Interpersonal	00:42:36:10	00:51:04 (Chime/Reflection)
8	Institutional	00:51:05:07	01:00:50
<b>9</b>	<b>Structural</b>	<b>01:00:51:01</b>	<b>01:14:20 (Flag/Dialogue)</b>
10	Credits	01:14:21:01	01:19:24

5. **GROUP SHARING:** As time permits, you may want to engage the entire group in sharing their thoughts, ideas or questions before returning to the film. The 3<sup>rd</sup> flag, or the end of the film, is when you can explore institutional and structural examples that speak to systemic nature of racial disparities. There is an abundance of material and studies on healthcare, education, the prison pipeline, opportunity structures, etc. available on [RacialEquityTools.org](http://RacialEquityTools.org). Once again, please feel free to use the Racial Equity Learning Modules as one resource.
6. **CLOSING.** Thank people for their participation. At the close of a film/dialogue session people often ask, “Where do we go from here?” Offering potential next steps can be helpful. Examples include:
  - a. Offer a handout of the System of Racial Inequity graphic, a list of readings and/or other resources
  - b. Schedule a follow up session within a week or ten days to continue the conversation.
  - c. Interested participants may wish to form a study group using [Racial Equity Learning Modules](#) to support them in taking their understanding deeper and moving to action. Learn more about this media-rich, multi-modality curricula at [world-trust.org/learning-modules/](http://world-trust.org/learning-modules/).
  - d. Make the film available to participants who wish to hold their own film/dialogue session with family, friends or colleagues.
  - e. Consider offering film/dialogue sessions with other World Trust films based on the needs of your audience. Each of these films is designed for dialogue and has a downloadable conversation guide. More information at [www.world-trust.org/films](http://www.world-trust.org/films):
    - [Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible](#) features the experiences of white activists who have worked to understand and overcome their own internalized privilege and racism. The stories in the film reveal what is often required to move through the stages of denial, defensiveness, guilt, fear, and shame into making a solid commitment to ending racial injustice.
    - [The Way Home: Women Talk about Race in America](#). Sixty-four women representing a cross-section of cultures (Indigenous, African-American, Arab/Middle Eastern, Asian, European-American, Jewish, Latina, and Multiracial)

came together to share their experience of racism in America. With uncommon courage, the women speak their hearts and minds about resistance, love, assimilation, standards of beauty, power, school experiences, and more. Their candid conversations offer rare access into multi-dimensional worlds invisible to outsiders. *The Way Home* is rich with stories and experiences that will provoke conversation, and is designed to be viewed and then discussed.

- [Light in the Shadows](#). This film documents a frank conversation about race among ten American women of Indigenous, African, Arab/Middle Eastern, European, Jewish, Asian, Latina and Mixed Race descent who use dialogue to crack open a critical door of consciousness. What lies behind it is a perspective on race that is often unseen/unnoticed within the dominant culture. With clear language, open hearts and a willingness to engage – even when it gets hard – these women travel over roads that demonstrate why valuable discourse on race is so laden with emotion, distrust and misunderstanding. *Light in the Shadows* is a springboard for critical self-inquiry and inter-ethnic dialogue.

## **RESOURCES**

[System of Racial Inequity graphic](#) - to project or handout.

[RacialEquityTools/REL.org](#) - Racial Equity Learning modules for further study and skill building.

Glossary of Terms - see below

## **ABOUT WORLD TRUST AND SHAKTI BUTLER**

Shakti Butler, PhD is Founder and Creative Director of World Trust Educational Services, a nonprofit based in Oakland, CA and the director of the film *Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity*. Through education rooted in love and justice, World Trust is a catalyst for racial equity. Using the powerful combination of film, dialogue, and transformative learning, World Trust strives to create new understanding and build community. World Trust produces programs and seminars based on Dr. Butler's acclaimed documentary films such as "The Way Home: Women Talk About Race in America" and "Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible." World Trust's film-based conversation/study programs are in continual use at hundreds of schools, universities, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and government institutions nationwide and engage thousands of new people in racial equity each year. More information about bringing Shakti Butler and a *Cracking the Codes* workshop to your institution or community, please visit [www.world-trust.org](http://www.world-trust.org).

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**Bias**—prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. Unconscious or implicit bias refers to biases that we carry without awareness. To learn more about implicit bias and to take an implicit association test online, visit Project Implicit at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

**Culture**— sum total of ways of living, including 1) values, 2) beliefs, 3) aesthetic standards, 4) linguistic expression, 5) patterns of thinking, 6) behavioral norms, and 7) styles of communication which a group of people has developed to assure its survival in a particular environment. We are socialized through "cultural conditioning" to adopt ways of thinking related to societal grouping.

**Cultural Pluralism**—recognition of the contribution of each group to the common civilization. It encourages the maintenance and development of different lifestyles, languages, and convictions. It is a commitment to deal cooperatively with common concerns. It strives to create the condition of harmony and respect within a culturally diverse society (Pusch, 1979).

**Cultural racism**—the individual and institutional expression of the superiority of one race's cultural heritage and values over another.

**Discrimination**—the behavioral manifestation of prejudice involving the limitation of opportunities and options based on particular criterion (i.e. race, sex, age, class).

**Ethnocentrism**—the belief that one group is right and must be protected and defended. The negative aspect involves blatant assertion of personal and cultural superiority. "My way is the right way".

**Identity**—the feeling of being included in a group or culture.

**Internal and External Frameworks**--the internal structures and neural pathways formed in the brain that are a response to, and a way of, making meaning of the history, culture and identity formation that pervade and inform what is considered to be normal. These frameworks may be part of, and responded to, in ways that are unconscious or deeply inform assumptions related to one's worldview. They are associated with conscious and unconscious bias, privilege, and internalized racism. These nested elements are more than personal. They impact behaviors that are individual, collective and relational. These belief systems inform external relationships that are interpersonal, institutional, structural and are mechanisms for churning out inequities.

**Internalized Racism**—the personal conscious or subconscious acceptance of the dominant society's racist views, stereotypes and biases of one's ethnic group. It gives rise to patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that result in discriminating, minimizing, criticizing, finding fault, invalidating, and hating oneself while simultaneously valuing the dominant culture. This internalized racism has its own systemic reality and its own negative consequences in the lives and communities of people of color.

**Interpersonal Racism**—actions that perpetuate inequalities on the basis of race. Such behaviors may be intentional or unintentional; unintentional acts may be racist in their consequence.

**Institutional Racism**—laws, customs, traditions and practices that systematically result in racial inequalities in a society. This is the institutionalization of personal racism.

**Internalized Racism/ Oppression**—the internalization of conscious or unconscious attitudes regarding inferiority or differences by the victims of systematic oppression.

**"ISMS"** —a way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure which subordinates (oppresses) a person or group because of their target group, color (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), older age (ageism), youth (adultism), religion (i.e. anti-Semitism), sexual orientation (heterosexism), language/immigrant status (xenophobia), etc.

**Modern Racism/Racialization**—suggests that the culture of racial prejudice in America has changed. Many people currently use non-race related reasons to continue to deny blacks equal access to opportunity.

**Multicultural Education**—a structured process designed to foster understanding, acceptance, and constructive relations among people of many different cultures. It encourages people to see many different cultures as a source of learning and to respect diversity in local, national, and international environments... Multicultural Education refers first to building an awareness of one's own cultural heritage, and understand that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another; secondly, acquiring those skills in analysis and communication that help one function effectively in multicultural environments (Pusch, 1979).

**Oppression**—the systematic mistreatment of the powerless by the powerful, resulting in the targeting of certain groups within the society for less of its benefits – involves a subtle devaluing or non-acceptance of the powerless group – may be economic, political, social, and /or psychological. Oppression also includes the belief of superiority or “righteousness” of the group in power.

**Personal Racism**—individual attitudes regarding the inferiority of one group and the superiority of another that have been learned or internalized either directly (i.e. negative experiences) or indirectly (i.e. imitation and modeling of significant others’ reactions, affective responses to the media); these attitudes may be conscious or unconscious.

**Power and Economics**—are the engine that “drive” a system that provides a rationale and elements of cognitive dissonance that is divisive.

**Prejudice**—a negative attitude toward a person or group, based on pre-judgment and evaluation, often using one’s own or one’s group’s standards as the “right” and “only” way.

**Privilege/Internalized Entitlement**— white privilege is about the concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society that whites receive, unconsciously or consciously, by virtue of their skin color. There are unearned entitlements—things that all people should have—such as feeling safe in public spaces, free speech, the ability to work in a place where we feel we can do our best work, and being valued for what we can contribute. When unearned entitlement is restricted to certain groups, however, it becomes the form of privilege that Peggy McIntosh calls “unearned advantage.” Unearned advantage gives whites a competitive edge we are reluctant to even acknowledge, much less give up. The other type of privilege is conferred dominance, which is giving one group (whites) power over another: the unequal distribution of resources and rewards.

**Racism**—the systematic oppression of people of color; occurs at the individual, internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and/or cultural levels; may be overt or covert, intentional or unintentional.

**Structural Racism/Racialization** --The word “racism” is commonly understood to refer to instances in which one individual intentionally or unintentionally targets others for negative treatment because of their skin color or other group-based physical characteristics. This individualistic conceptualization is too limited. Racialized outcomes do not require racist actors. Structural racism/racialization refers to a system of social structures that produces cumulative, durable, race-based inequalities. It is also a method of analysis that is used to examine how historical legacies, individuals, structures, and institutions work interactively to distribute material and symbolic advantages and disadvantages along racial lines.

**World View**—the way an individual perceives his or her relationship to the world (i.e. nature, other people, animals, institutions, objects, the cosmos, their creator). One’s memories, expectations, assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, values, interests, past experiences, strong feelings, and prejudices, influence a person’s worldview.

*The Kirwan Institute has compiled the bulk of the definitions in this glossary. (World Trust has added some terms that help define our framing of the system of racial inequity.) Kirwan Institute’s commentary is as follows:*

*At the Kirwan Institute, we think that identifying and addressing structural racism/racialization is a key civil rights challenge for the 21st century. Our work operates on the premise that opportunities exist in a complex web of interdependent factors, and that to alleviate inequities in any single area, we must first consider the entire structure that supports these inequities. Without this holistic framework from which to view social inequities, our work becomes reactionary at best, and at worst, we can actually produce problems in one area while seeking to remedy them in another. The Kirwan Institute attempts to bring a structural analysis to all of its work. Our extensive work around spatial racism, for example, brings the structural lens to bear on our land use policies to understand how space has become racialized and how this racialization denies people of color access to opportunity and reproduces disparities along racial lines.*

FILM CHAPTER DETAILS (Length in Minutes and Seconds)

Chapter	Title	Start	Length
1	System Dynamics	00:00:00:00	2:31:23
2	History	00:02:31:23	6:29:07 (Chime/Reflection)
<b>3</b>	<b>Culture &amp; Identity</b>	<b>00:09:01:01</b>	<b>7:23:27 (Flag/Dialogue)</b>
4	Bias	00:16:24:28	4:50:07
5	Privilege	00:21:15:06	10:53:19 (Chime/Reflection)
<b>6</b>	<b>Internalized Racism</b>	<b>00:32:08:25</b>	<b>10:27:15 (Flag/Dialogue)</b>
7	Interpersonal	00:42:36:10	8:28:17 (Chime/Reflection)
8	Institutional	00:51:05:07	9:45:13
<b>9</b>	<b>Structural</b>	<b>01:00:51:01</b>	<b>13:13:00 (Flag/Dialogue)</b>
10	Credits	01:14:21:01	5:03:24