

Questions – Intro through Ch. 5

- 1) What does it mean to have to constantly reaffirm your identity as an antiracist? Is there any benefit to the fact that you can't just decide you are "not racist" or an antiracist and be done with it?
- 2) What are some examples you've seen of assimilation, segregationist, and anti-racist mindsets?
- 3) What is your reaction to the "War on Drugs" – the stiffer sentencing policies for drug crimes and the mass incarceration of non-violent offenders? How does this fit within our current tensions around racial disparities in law enforcement and police brutality toward Black individuals?
- 4) What is your response to hearing the story of Prince Henry enslaving Africans? And Linnaeus' racial hierarchy? How do these mesh with stories you have heard about race growing up?
- 5) When have you witnessed or been a perpetrator of microaggressions? How do you respond to those who say they do not "see color?" How might we respond?
- 6) Have you experienced this (the double standard in ethnic racism] tension before? Why do we consume racist/sexist/classist ideas about other groups and reject racist/sexist/classist ideas about our own?

Here are the questions along with the context from which they came.

Introduction

The book's central message is that the opposite of "racist" isn't "not racist." The true opposite of "racist" is antiracist. "The good news," Kendi writes, "is that racist and antiracist are not fixed identities. We can be racist one minute and an antiracist the next." What does it mean to have to constantly reaffirm your identity as an antiracist? Is there any benefit to the fact that you can't just decide you are "not racist" or an antiracist and be done with it?

"Racist" is not- as Richard Spencer argues- a pejorative. It is not the worst word in the English language; it is not the equivalent of a slur. It is descriptive, and the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it- and then dismantle it. The attempt to turn

this usefully descriptive term into an almost unusable slur is, of course, designed to do the opposite: to freeze us into inaction.”

Chapter 1 – Definitions

“What is racism? Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities.”

“No one becomes a racist or antiracist. We can only strive to be one or the other. We can unknowingly strive to be a racist. We can knowingly strive to be an anti-racist. Like fighting an addiction, being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination.”

Chapter 2 – Dueling Consciousness

Kendi explores assimilation, segregationist, and anti-racist mindsets. What are some examples you’ve seen of each of these?

What is your reaction to the “War on Drugs” – the stiffer sentencing policies for drug crimes and the mass incarceration of non-violent offenders? How does this fit within our current tensions around racial disparities in law enforcement and police brutality toward Black individuals?

Chapter 3 – Power

Kendi recounts the history of race as constructs. Have you heard this history before? What is your response to hearing the story of Prince Henry enslaving Africans? And Linnaeus’ racial hierarchy? How do these mesh with stories you have heard about race growing up?

“This cause and effect – a racist power creates racist policies out of raw self-interest; the racist policies necessitate racist ideas to justify them – lingers over the life of racism.” (p42)

Chapter 4 – Biology

Microaggressions, i.e. racial abuse – When have you witnessed or been a perpetrator of microaggressions? “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership?” (p46)

What is the impact of this persistent daily hum of racist abuse? Kendi lists distress, anger, worry, depression, anxiety, pain, fatigue, and suicide. (p46)

Disparities in punishment and education – “I wonder if her racist ideas chalked up my resistance to my Blackness and therefore characterized it as misbehavior, not distress. With racist teachers, misbehaving kids of color do not receive inquiry and empathy and legitimacy. We receive orders and punishments and ‘no excuses,’ as if we were adults. The Black child is ill-treated like an adult, and the Black adult is ill-treated like a child.” (p47)

Racial categories – Kendi argues that as long as racial inequities exist, that racial categories are essential in identifying those inequities and addressing racist policies. (p54) This is why a color-blind system doesn’t work. It neglects to acknowledge the racial inequities and maintains the existing racial hierarchies and power structures. How do you respond to those who say they do not “see color?” How might we respond?

Chapter 5 – Ethnicity

“...The central double standard in ethnic racism: loving one’s position on the ladder above over ethnic groups and hating one’s position below that of other ethnic groups.” (p65) Have you experienced this tension before? Why do we consume racist/sexist/classist ideas about other groups and reject racist/sexist/classist ideas about our own?