

A GUIDE FOR UNIONS

**RECOGNIZE AND
RESIST
WHITE SUPREMACY**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Opening Statement 3

What is White Supremacy 4

White Supremacy in our Unions and Communities 5

CUPE Statistics 8

Statistics Canada Data 8

Fighting White Supremacy 10

What can you do? 10

What can the Union do? 11

Conclusion 13

Glossary 14

OPENING STATEMENT

This guide is a tool for locals, elected leaders, union activists, and staff who want to strengthen their work on naming and resisting white supremacy.

Unfortunately, we continue to experience an increase in public displays of white supremacist, racist, anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic actions. It is important to understand that these actions do not just result from the election of Donald Trump in the US, Doug Ford in Ontario, or other right-wing politicians. They continue to occur because they are part of the historical, political, social and cultural foundations of Canada.

From Canada's track record of our treatment of Indigenous peoples; the enslavement of Black people; our flawed immigration policies; exploitative programs, including the Temporary Foreign Worker Program; and routine anti-Black racism, it is clear that racism is maintained by our own policies, institutions, and social realities within and beyond our borders.

The election of a Doug Ford majority government in Ontario, Faith Goldy placing third in the Toronto mayoral election, and Paul Fromm, a self-proclaimed white nationalist running for mayor in Hamilton, shows us that white supremacists are emboldened enough to run in elections in communities across the province and that their actions are being legitimized by the media and public at large. Canadians recently re-elected Justin Trudeau, even as his repeated history of wearing blackface was made public during the campaign. We need to make fighting racism and white supremacy an important public issue.

CUPE Ontario is not immune from the exclusionary politics and white supremacy that we see outside our union – further work is required to bring increased awareness and anti-racist political education to more of our members. For example, the debate at the last few CUPE National conventions about equality seats, and the intervention by Indigenous, Black and racialized members at the 2018 CUPE Ontario convention who pushed for an anti-racism organizational action plan, both highlight the urgency for internal action. As a progressive union, and as providers of public services, we believe in access for all, and we strive for a just society in which all workers can achieve fairness at work, at home, and in society. There can be no economic justice without racial justice.

Our work, as part of the labour movement, is to demand justice for all, and to recognize the ways in which working class issues intersect with equity and human rights issues. It is for that reason that we must take on the work of combatting white supremacy in our unions, in our workplaces, and in our communities.

WHAT IS WHITE SUPREMACY

White Supremacy is an economic, political, cultural and social system that privileges and prefers whiteness and oppresses those who are not considered white. The further you are from whiteness, the further you are from safety, privilege and power. White supremacy relies on the protection of white identity. Indigenous, Black and racialized folks can embody white supremacy by valuing whiteness but they will never fully benefit from it as they are not white.

White Privilege refers to the benefits white people experience simply due to their skin colour. It does not require active participation; one experiences those benefits simply for being perceived as white. Due to our political, economic, social, and cultural systems being founded on white supremacy, white people can choose to work against white supremacy and leverage their white privilege for greater racial justice, but they cannot deny this innate privilege.

Examples of white privilege include easier access to getting jobs, being first considered for promotions or union opportunities, not having your competency questioned because of the way you look, easier access to housing, and not being stopped and killed by police at alarming rates. Privilege is about what people don't have to deal with or even think about.

White supremacy can be expressed and maintained by:

- Cultural standards and norms e.g. valuing white standards of beauty.
- Institutional practices and procedures that promote, perpetuate and protect advantages for white people and those who strive towards whiteness e.g. racially biased standardized tests and access requirements.
- Personal behaviours where we continue our assumptions, biases, prejudicial and discriminatory behaviour.

WHITE SUPREMACY IN OUR UNIONS AND COMMUNITY

At the beginning of CUPE meetings, we all read the Equality Statement. Our Equality Statement speaks to union solidarity, and the importance of working together to create a more equitable society. But we know that members don't always feel equal. Some of this is because of the way we treat one another on a personal level, but much of this is due to structural inequities, including white supremacy.

When you think about white supremacy, what comes to mind? Is it the KKK or Yellow Vests? Do you think about the more subtle ways that white supremacy can play itself out in our union? Here are some examples¹ to consider:

a) An Indigenous member gets elected as a member of the bargaining committee. She asks, "What are the 'equity priorities' of our bargaining agenda?" She is told the bargaining agenda is supposed to meet "everyone's needs," and the union "bargains for the good of all" and that issues of racial justice and gender justice are considered special interest items. Not considering these issues as part of the "bread and butter" needs of the union feeds into the further isolation and dismissal of the real concerns of Indigenous, Black and racialized members.

b) During an organizing campaign, a racialized member of the team complained of experiencing racial discrimination by a senior organizer. When she complained, she was told that the priority right now was "to win", and that her complaint would be addressed after the campaign. Issues of racial discrimination being treated as distractions from the main goal of the union are inaccurate and unfair. Economic justice must include racial justice.

c) "We are proud of the diversity of our union; our membership mirrors the community" declares a union leader. "But why are Indigenous, Black and racialized sisters, brothers and friends underrepresented in leadership positions?" Because, he was told, the union could not find enough "qualified" applicants for senior staff and elected positions. There is usually an assumption that the Indigenous, Black and racialized candidates for a position are not as qualified as their white counterparts and are usually held to much higher standards and expectations with little to no room for mistakes. Even if Indigenous and racialized members are not immediately coming

¹ <https://docplayer.net/24900865-A-leader-s-guide-to-strengthen-unions-moving-beyond-diversity-towards-inclusion-and-equity.html>

forward, this does not absolve the union from putting in extra work to do outreach and recruitment. If for years Indigenous, Black and racialized members were not included, then things cannot expect to change overnight. Intentional and timely work on rebuilding trust and relationships is critical.

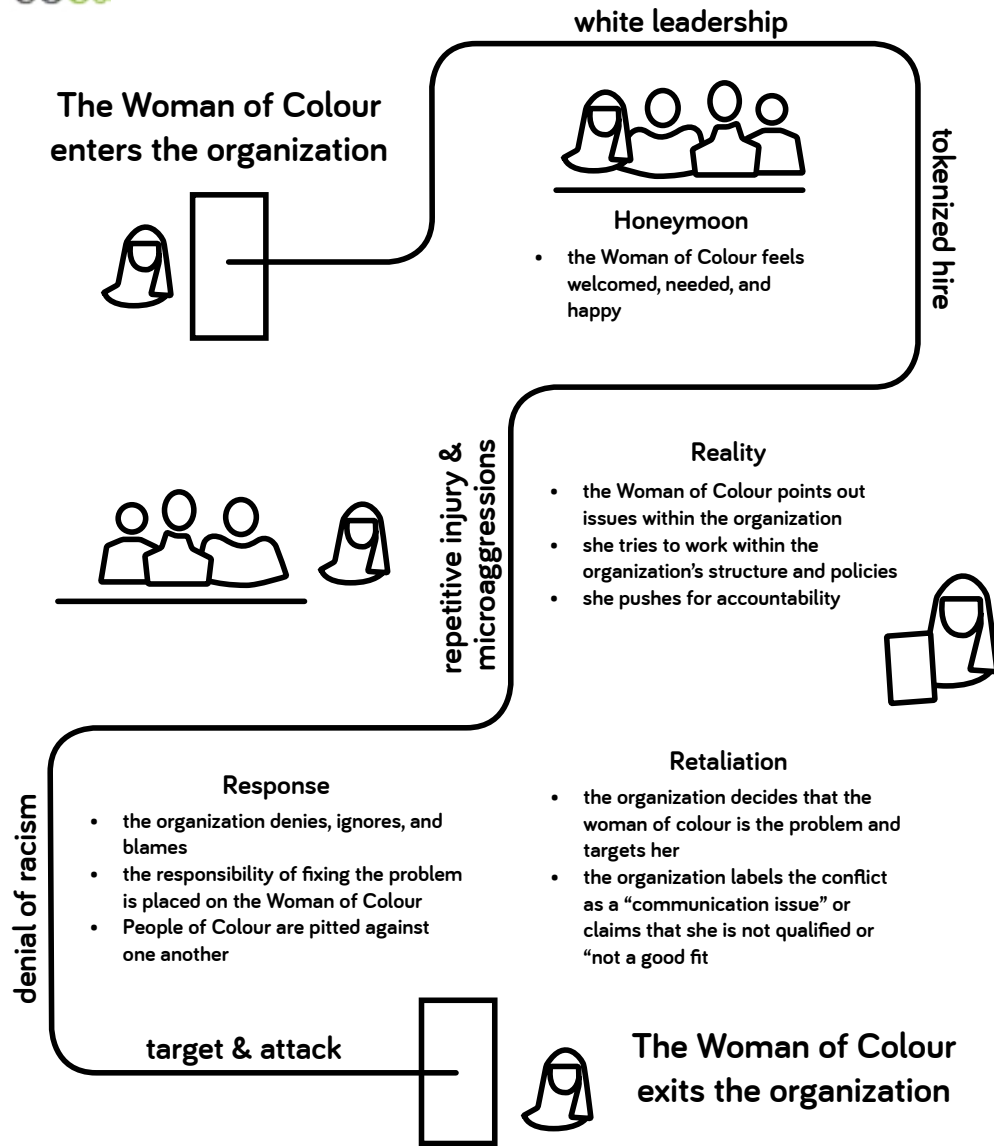
Do these situations seem familiar? Perhaps you've said things like this yourself. White supremacy does not always show itself as the overt racism you might expect. Sometimes we see it through the underrepresentation of Indigenous, Black and racialized folks and or through the assumptions we make about others. Sometimes we can contribute to white supremacy by not addressing it or by delegitimizing the concerns raised by Indigenous, Black and racialized folks. Other times, it's simply by looking at equity issues as separate than union issues.

Some more stark examples of how white supremacy has shown up in union spaces include the exclusion of Black people from labour unions in the early 20th century. In 1918, porters organized a labour union called the Order of Sleeping Car Porters (OSCP) as a response to systemic racism. Their application to the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, formed in 1908, was rejected. The rejection was based on the restriction of membership to white people in the constitution. A separate OSCP membership application to join the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (TLC) was also denied as they were not part of a larger and white union².

² Mathieu, Sarah-Jane (Saje). "North of the Colour Line: Sleeping Car Porters and the Battle against Jim Crow on Canadian Rails, 1880-1920." *Labour / Le Travail*, 47, Spring (2007): 9-41.



The “Problem” Woman of Colour in the Workplace



Adapted from “The Chronicle of the Problem Woman of Color in a Non-Profit” by the Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence
www.coco-net.org

The diagram above³ illustrates what many Indigenous, Black and racialized women go through in the workplace. It is important that we be mindful of how we replicate similar behaviours, interrupt them as soon as possible and listen to what Indigenous, Black and racialized women have to say.

Change extends beyond opening the doors to more Indigenous, Black and racialized women. As the image shows, structural and behavioural changes must also occur.

³ <https://coco-net.org/problem-woman-colour-nonprofit-organizations/>

CUPE Statistics

- 15% of CUPE members identify as racialized
- 3.4% of CUPE members identify as Indigenous
- Racialized members are less likely to hold full-time work (54%) compared to 64% for CUPE members overall
- Racialized members are twice as likely to have casual work and are more likely to work on-call or part time
- Racialized members also have a higher likelihood of having their hours reduced and are less likely to know their work schedule a week in advance; to have employment benefits, workplace pension or paid sick days

The data above was taken from CUPE National's 2015 Membership Survey. Results from a more recent survey are yet to be released but, in the meantime, CUPE Ontario has been asking members to complete a demographic survey at CUPE Ontario events to help identify who our members are and who are the ones able to attend our events.

Statistics Canada Data

We live in a racist society. It's more helpful for us to admit this and consciously work to dismantle white supremacy and racism than it is to pretend it does not exist. Pretending may lead to temporary moments of comfort but it does not lessen the ongoing harm done to Indigenous, Black and racialized communities. Below is some data from Statistics Canada.

- Between 2015 and 2016, the number of police-reported crimes motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity increased 4% (from 641 to 666). In all, 48% of all police-reported hate crimes in 2016 were motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity. Much of this increase was a result of more hate crimes targeting South Asians (+24 incidents)

and Arabs and West Asians (+20 incidents). Despite posting a decrease in 2016, crimes targeting Black populations remained one of the most common types of hate crimes (15% of all hate crimes).

- Overall, 33% of hate crimes reported in 2016 were motivated by hatred of religion. Compared with 2015, the number of hate crimes motivated by religion decreased 2% in 2016 (from 469 in 2015 to 460 in 2016). Police-reported crimes motivated by hate against the Jewish population rose from 178 incidents in 2015 to 221 incidents in 2016 (+24%). In contrast, the number of crimes targeting the Catholic population fell from 55 to 27 incidents.

- Based on data from police services that reported characteristics of hate crimes, 43% of police-reported hate crimes in 2016 were violent offences. Violent offences included, for example, assault, uttering threats and criminal harassment. Overall, the number of violent hate crimes rose 16% from the previous year (from 487 to 563 violent incidents), driven by increases in common assault, criminal harassment and uttering threats.

- Hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation continued to be among the most violent hate crimes. In 2016, 71% of these types of police-reported hate crimes were violent, compared with 45% of crimes motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity and 27% of hate crimes targeting a religion.

- A 2017 Statistics Canada report found that hate crimes specifically targeting Muslims rose by 207% in Ontario and by 185% in Quebec; Alberta and British Columbia also saw increases.

FIGHTING WHITE SUPREMACY

What can you do?⁴

- **Actively Listen:** Ask if you can be of support and be fully present when listening to the responses. Don't prepare your responses as someone is speaking. Listen intently and with care. Be prepared to hear what support looks like. It may look very different from what you imagined it to be and that is okay.
- **Act:** Do something. If it is safe, interrupt the harm while it is happening. In the face of hatred, apathy will be interpreted as acceptance by the perpetrators, the public and – worse – those experiencing harm. Community members must act; if we don't, hate persists.
- **Organize:** Reach out to allies from churches, schools, clubs, and other civic groups. Create a diverse coalition. Include children, public servants, community workers and organizations and the media. Gather ideas from everyone and get everyone involved.
- **Support Those Who Have Experienced Harm:** Those who have been the target of hate crimes are especially vulnerable. If you have experienced harm, report the incident – in detail – and ask for help. If you learn about someone who has experienced a hate crime in your community, reach out to them and offer support. Let them know you care. Surround them with validation, comfort and solidarity.
- **Speak Up:** Hate must be exposed and denounced. Help news organizations and the media achieve balance and depth. Do not debate hate group members in conflict-driven forums. Instead, speak up in ways that draw attention away from hate and toward accountability and unity.
- **Educate Yourself:** An informed campaign improves its effectiveness. Determine if a hate group is involved and research its agenda and strategies. Understand the difference between a hate crime and a bias incident.

⁴ Adapted from <https://www.splcenter.org/20170814/ten-ways-fight-hate-community-response-guide>

- **Create an Alternative:** Do not attend a hate rally. Find another outlet for anger and frustration and for people's desire to do something. Hold a solidarity rally or parade to draw media attention away from hate.
- **Pressure Leaders:** Elected officials and other community leaders can be important allies. But some must overcome reluctance — and others, their own biases — before they're able to take a stand. Keep them accountable.
- **Stay Engaged:** Promote acceptance and address bias before another hate crime can occur. Expand your comfort zone by reaching out to people outside your own groups.
- **Emphasize Accountability:** Bias and prejudice are learned early, often at home. Schools, after-school programs, and community organizations can develop accountability mechanisms to name and disrupt racism and white supremacy, and that foster relationships based on trust and solidarity. You can also develop accountability processes at home, at work and in your union.
- **Dig Deeper:** We all carry our own biases and prejudice. Commit to disrupting hate and intolerance within yourself, as well as at home, at school, in the workplace, and in faith communities. Taking accountability is an important personal decision. It comes from an attitude that is learnable and embraceable. Recognize power, disrupt power and help build the just worlds that we all deserve.

What can the Union do?

- Support the creation of spaces and committees that are occupied by and led by Indigenous, Black and racialized members.
- Provide adequate resources and funding to enable the long-term sustainability of these spaces and communities.
- With Indigenous, Black and racialized members, develop accountability mechanisms to name and address white supremacy and that provide direction to the elected leadership of the union.

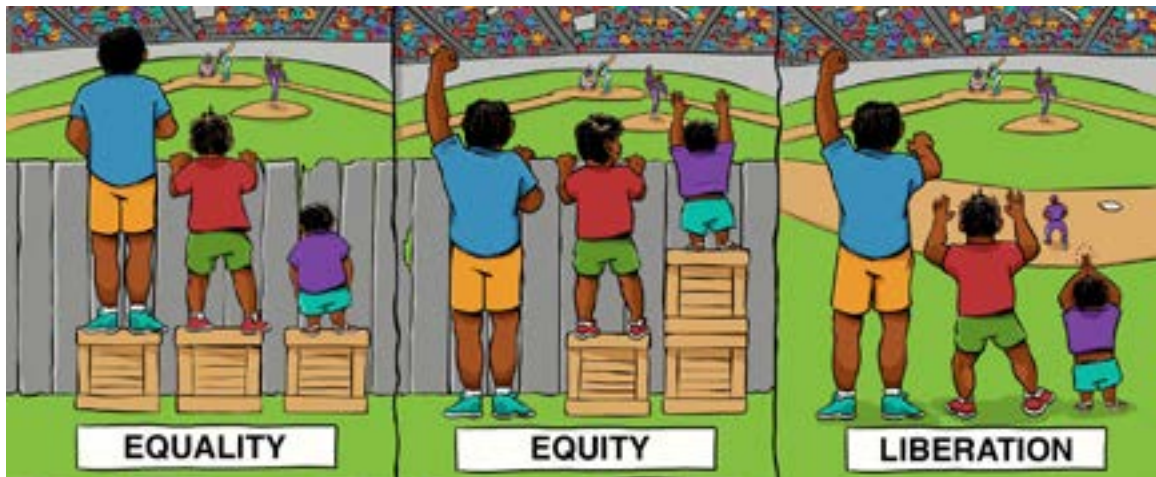
- With Indigenous, Black and racialized members, identify health and support systems and mechanisms as racism and white supremacy can have severe impacts on the physical, emotional and mental health of members.
- Design anti-racism policies and procedures within the union and push the employer to do the same at work.
- Support the work being done by social movements and community organizations and where appropriate, develop coalitions and relationships.
- Make sure your members feel represented. If you're putting on an event or running a workshop, think about how well the people at the front of the room represent your membership. Do you need to make changes? Add more speakers?
- Speak to your National Servicing Representative about CUPE training, workshops and learning opportunities. Your Representative can reach out to Human Rights and Education staff. There are also a number of community organizations who have been doing this work for a long time so you can also find out who they are and request training and presentations.

CONCLUSION

Change is possible and change is necessary. Whether in our unions, workplaces, or communities, inequity divides us from one another. White supremacy gives some unfair advantages while favouring others. The sooner we understand the role we play in maintaining and perpetuating white supremacy, the sooner we can change. Those who have power, including bosses and politicians, count on us to fight one another. If we are not united as workers, no matter what race or ethnicity, we will not be able to effectively fight against those that maintain economic injustice. The liberation of the working class will only be possible when workers come together in solidarity and mutual respect.

GLOSSARY

- Equality treats everyone the same
- Equity identifies and amends the barriers to equal access
- Liberation starts from the place that there should be no barriers to start with and removes the barriers to allow equal access for all.



Ally: is a member of an oppressor group who works to end forms of oppression that privilege some and discriminate others. For example, white people fighting against racism.

Anti-Racism: is the active process of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate individual and systemic racism. It does so by examining the power imbalances between racialized and non-racialized or differently racialized peoples.

Anti-Black Racism: first expressed by Dr. Akua Benjamin, a Ryerson Social Work Professor in Toronto. This term seeks to highlight the unique nature of systemic racism on Black-Canadians and those of African descent living in Canada. The term has been expanded to also interrogate the history as well as experiences of slavery and colonization of people of African descent in Canada and globally.

Anti-Semitism: the fear or hatred of people who are Jewish as an ethnic, religious, or racial group.

Bigotry: prejudice, or bigotry, is an affective feeling towards a person or group member based solely on that person's group membership.

Black: has been accepted or claimed as an individual, group identity and/or culture that refers to people from the African Diaspora community (African, Caribbean, and American/Canadian Black and Black people living outside the continent of Africa). Though many folks of African descent proudly identify as Black, it is a social construct. Black is capitalized when talking about people.

Colonialism/Colonizing: the invasion, dispossession and subjugation of a people, their land, resources, language and identity that results in long-term institutionalized inequality in which the colonizer benefits at the expense of the colonized.

Discrimination: refers to practices or policies that may be considered discriminatory and illegal if they have a disproportionate "adverse impact" on people. This leads to unjust or prejudicial treatment towards different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, ethnicity, colour, age, or sexual orientation/gender expression, abilities/disabilities, weight, religion, criminality, family status.

Diversity: includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from one another. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

Equality: treats everyone the same and ignores the socio-political differences and the lived reality of individuals that mean differential access for some.

Equity: is giving someone what they need to succeed as it recognizes that everyone faces different barriers. Equality denotes that everyone is at the same level, whereas equity refers to the qualities of justness, fairness, impartiality and even handedness, while equality is about equal sharing and exact division.

Hate Crime: is a crime designated by law or legislation as being motivated by hate for the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person. It assigns a greater penalty for conviction of such a crime.

Homophobia: refers to a wide range of negative feelings and behaviours such as fear, hatred, prejudice, discomfort with and mistrust of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and who exist along the non-heterosexual spectrum of sexual orientation.

Implicit Bias: negative associations expressed automatically that people unknowingly hold; also known as unconscious or hidden bias. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that people may profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases about race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics.

Institutional Barriers: are policies, procedures, or situations that systematically disadvantage certain groups of people. These barriers exist in any majority-minority group situation and often seem natural or "just the way things are around here." For example, when an initial population is fairly similar (e.g., in male-dominated professions), systems naturally emerge to meet the needs of this population. If these systems do not change with the times, they can inhibit the success of new members with different needs.

Institutional Racism: refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups but always benefitting the dominant group. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for white people and oppress and disadvantage other groups such as Indigenous, Black and racialized people. For example, city sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in Indigenous, Black and racialized communities such as what happened in Africville, Nova Scotia and what continues to happen in many Indigenous communities.

Intersectionality: the interconnected or over-lapping existence of social categories such as race, class, gender, ability and sexuality. At the intersection of these identities are overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. The term originated with Sojourner Truth, "ain't I a woman speech" then by the Combahee River Collective where Black feminists wrote about their experiences of being Black, lesbian and queer women. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the phrase when talking about the legal differences in sexual assault case law between Black men and women versus white men and women.

Islamophobia: is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.

Prejudice: an attitude usually based on stereotypes and limited information. It is the unfair like or dislike of someone based on skin color, sex, religion, etc.

Power: a fluid and relational degree of control over material, intellectual, human and financial resources. In Canada and many parts of the world, that power is unequally distributed. Individuals and groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access to and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates.

Privilege: unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to all members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it and because it feels normal, who benefiting from it usually feel entitled to it.

Racism: is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group - whose own characteristics and markers are social constructs and keep shifting over time - is inherently superior to others. It is a system of privilege and oppression that rests on an understanding of humans as belonging to different races ordered in a hierarchy. People thereby deserve or are given different treatment. It can be openly displayed as racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values, and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, **these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time.** Racism operates at a number of levels, individual, systemic, institutional, and societal, national, international, and these are all connected. Racism is subtle, elusive, and widespread.

Structural Racism: the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that privileges white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in as it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present that continually reproduce old and new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism. For example, we can see structural racism in the many institutional, cultural and structural factors that contribute to lower life expectancy for Indigenous, Black and racialized people, compared with white people. These include higher exposure to environmental toxins, dangerous jobs and unsafe housing, higher exposure to and more lethal consequences for reacting to violence, stress and racism, lower rates of health care coverage, access and quality of care and systematic refusal by the nation to fix these situations.

Systemic Racism: is the belief that racism has been institutionalized and is also deeply embedded in our national life, our systems, our laws, our culture, our words, images, vocabulary, attitudes, and preferences. Institutional and structural racism are both forms of systemic racism. Even the educational system is tainted with institutional and structural (system wide) racism. Example: European or Western ways of knowing are privileged over others. This is epistemic racism and in this sense most of us who live in European and Western countries are racists.

Transphobia: refers to a wide range of negative feelings and behaviours such as fear, hatred, prejudice, discomfort with and mistrust of people who are transgender, perceived to be transgender and whose lives challenge and do not conform to traditional gender roles.

White Privilege: unearned, and often unquestioned, set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white.

White Supremacy: a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white people and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

Xenophobia: is the fear and distrust of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. Xenophobia can manifest itself in being suspicious of others, and a desire to eliminate their presence to secure a presumed purity and may relate to a fear of losing national, ethnic or racial identity. Xenophobia is a political term and is not a recognized medical phobia.

