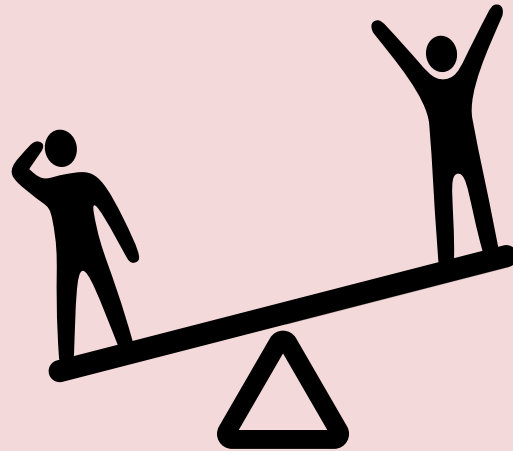


Internalized Racism

What is Racism?

Racism is defined as a belief or doctrine that **inherent differences among the various human races determine cultural or individual achievement**, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others." ¹



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What is Internalized Racism?

Internalized Racism is a specific type of racism that encompasses the **internalization of the racist stereotypes, values, images and ideologies** perpetuated by the white dominant society about one's racial group. ²



1. Race & Social Justice Initiative, n.d.

2. Race & Social Justice Initiative, n.d.

Internalized Racism and Systemic Oppression

It's important to note that **internalized racism is a form of systemic oppression in the way that it upholds white supremacy and undermines the power of people of colour.**³

Seeing internalized racism as a form of systemic oppression allows us to distinguish it from human wounds like self-hatred or "low self esteem" to which all people are vulnerable.⁴



As outlined by Donna Bivens, **Internalized Racism is not:**

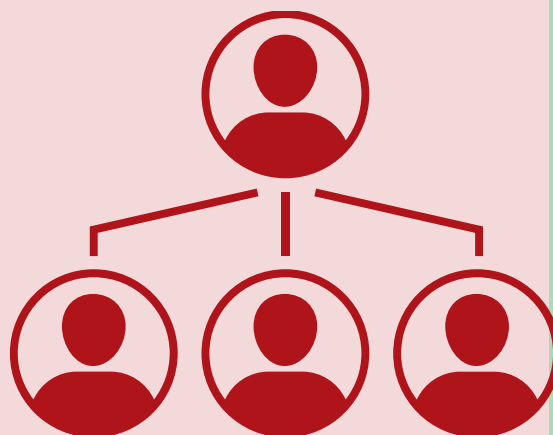
- low self-esteem,
- color prejudice/colorism
- stereotyping, or
- self-hatred

While these may be symptoms of internalized racism, they are not internalized racism itself.



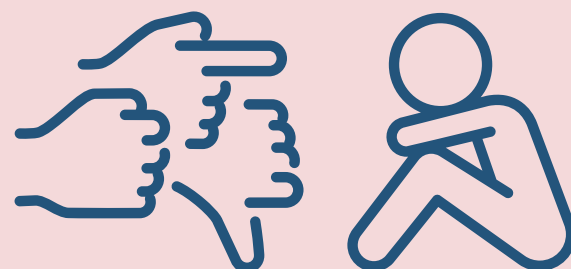
Internalized racism can be on BOTH the part of the oppressor and the oppressed.

Internalized Racial Inferiority



Individuals within communities of Colour may support the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by **maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviours, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group's power.**⁵

As people of Colour are victimized by racism, **they internalize it.** That is, they **develop ideas, beliefs, actions and behaviors that support or collude with racism.**⁶



Individuals, institutions and communities of Colour are often unconsciously and habitually **rewarded for supporting white privilege** and power and **punished and excluded when we do not.**⁷

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Internalized Racial Inferiority

Internalized racism has its own systemic reality and its own negative consequences in the lives and communities of people of color. **Internalized Racial Inferiority within communities of Colour can be seen in 4 elements:**

1. Decision Making

Due to structural racism, people of colour don't have the ultimate decision making power. This might cause these communities to think white people know more about what needs to be done for them. Structurally, the system rewards people of colour who support white supremacy and punishes those who don't. ⁸



2. Resources

Resources such as money, time, connections, information are under the control and in the hands of white people. As such, communities of colour may not understand how to access these resources and not understand their right to control those resources. ⁹



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Internalized Racial Inferiority

Internalized Racial Inferiority within communities of Colour can be seen in 4 elements:



3. Standards

Eurocentric or North American popular consumer culture are seen as normal and appropriate. These are white standards and communities of Colour can struggle to name, communicate and live up to our deepest standards and values. ¹⁰

4. Naming the problem

The system in place blames people of colour for racism. Internalized racism may cause these communities to internalize and believe this and support racist systems that white individuals of power put in place. ¹¹



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Internalized Racial Superiority

The acceptance and acting out of a superior definition of self, rooted in the historical designation of one's race.

Over many generations, this process of empowerment and access can be expressed as:

- Unearned privileges
- Access to institutional power
- Invisible advantages
- Inflated self-image based upon race



Internalized racial superiority can show up on a spectrum, however it encompasses **a range of false racist beliefs that can be unconsciously used in the daily lives of white people and communities in power.**

12



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Internalized Racial Superiority

Here are four examples of ways that internalized racial superiority and internalized white superiority can show up:



1. Paternalism

"I and other white people/organizations know what is best for others; people of color need our help."

This is born from systems of power that have placed white individuals in continual positions of power. This **power has become internalized in a sense of paternalism over communities of colour.** ¹³



2. Silence

"I will wait until I know exactly what to say before I speak up"

"Being silent when racism shows up is neutral, not doing any harm."

Silence is a privilege and silence in racist interactions is a form of white privilege. It's important to note that being silent is not neutral especially when sitting from a place of privilege. ¹⁴



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Internalized Racial Superiority

Here are four examples of ways that internalized racial superiority and internalized white superiority can show up:

3. Distancing/exceptionalism:

"Racism is just about a few bad apples (e.g., systemic racism is not true rather blaming issues of racial profiling on a few corrupt police officers"

Internalized racism can be seen through believing and acting through the dismissal of structural racism. ¹⁵

4. Meritocracy

"My achievements have to do with me, not with my membership in the white group; I can feel that I personally earned, through work and merit, any/all of my success."

"I have many choices, as I should; everyone else has those same choices."

Internalized racial superiority can be **failing to take into account you privilege as afforded to you by you race and/or skin colour.** ¹⁶



Looking to learn more about internalized racism and work with anti-racism educators in your community? Check out these Ontario-based community organizations engaging marginalized and racialized communities with racial justice work on Instagram!

- **Urban Alliance on Race Relations**
[@uarrtoronto](#) non-profit organization working to address inequality with educational programs, advocacy & research.
- **Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter** [@CCNCTO](#) an organization that promotes equity, social justice, inclusive civic participation, and respect for diversity.
- **Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators** [@onabse_org](#) an organization that works to promote equity for African Canadian students, educators, and professionals at all levels in schools
- **The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians**
[@cassaonline](#) an umbrella organization supporting and advocating for the needs of the Canadian South Asian community
- **The National Council of Canadian Muslims**
[@nccm_community](#) an organization that protects Canadian human rights and civil liberties, challenges discrimination and Islamophobia, builds mutual understanding, and advocates for the public concerns of Canadian Muslims

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