

RACISM & XENOPHOBIA: CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING ETHICALLY & EFFECTIVELY

- Before leading students in a lesson about racism or xenophobia, consider your personal thoughts and opinions, as well as your own biases.
- Remind students that racism is not only about individual actions; it is something that is ingrained in American culture. Encourage students to move past the idea of racism only as individual acts and examine how racism works on a systemic level.
- Our identities and personal experiences inform our responses. Keep in mind that students of color and white students may have very different reactions to lesson about racism. Where differences arise, address them openly with your students.
- Discussions about race can make students feel vulnerable and uncomfortable. Allow time to process the strong emotions that the film and discussion might elicit from your students. Additionally, tell students that they can expect to feel some discomfort. Sitting with and working through discomfort is critical to dismantling racism.
- Acknowledge that each of us has biases and prejudices that inform our beliefs and actions; these biases may be implicit or explicit. Most people do not want to consider themselves bigoted or racist, so honestly examining prejudices can be difficult and painful.
- When confronted with discussions of race, white people often state that they “don’t see color.” If students bring this up, engage your students in a discussion of how this point of view ignores the lived realities and experiences of many people of color.
- Caution students against making assumptions about each other based on their race, gender, religion, or any other characteristic. No community is a monolith and members of the same group or ethnicity may have wildly different opinions about the issues raised in class.
- Acknowledge that racism and xenophobia may be challenging to discuss. Let students know that they can take a break from the discussion, or opt out if needed. The purpose of the lessons are to illuminate and examine systems of oppression, not to (re)traumatize.