

Costs of Racism to White People Checklist¹

It can be hard for us to be honest with ourselves about the costs of racism in our own lives. The following is a checklist you can use to evaluate the costs of racism to white people. *Check each of the items that apply to you.*

- I don't know exactly what my European American heritage is, what my great-grandparents' names were, or what regions or cities my ancestors are from.
- I grew up, lived, or live in a neighborhood, or went to a school or a camp, which as far as I knew, was exclusively white.
- I grew up with people of color who were servants, maids, gardeners, or babysitters in my house.
- I did not meet people of color in person, or socially, before I was well into my teens.
- I grew up in a household where I heard derogatory racial terms or racial jokes.
- I grew up in a family, or heard as a child that people of color were to blame for violence, lack of jobs, or other problems.
- I have seen or heard images, in magazines, on TV or radio, on cassettes and CDs, or in movies of (*check all that apply*):
 - Mexicans depicted as drunk, lazy, or illiterate
 - Asians depicted as exotic, cruel, or mysterious
 - Asian Indians depicted as excitable or "silly"
 - Arabs depicted as swarthy, ravishing, or "crazed"
 - African Americans depicted as violent or criminal
 - Pacific Islanders depicted as fun-loving or lazy
 - American Indians depicted as drunk, savage, or "noble"
 - Any character roles from non-white cultures depicted by white actors
- I was told not to play with children of particular other ethnicities when I was a child.
- I have sometimes felt that "white" culture was "wonderbread" culture - empty and boring - or that another racial group has more rhythm, more athletic ability, was better at math and technology, or had more musical or artistic creativity than mine.
- I have felt that people of another racial group were more spiritual than white people.
- I have been nervous and fearful or found myself stiffening when encountering people of color in a neutral public situation (for example, in an elevator, on the street).
- I have been sexually attracted to a person from another racial group because it seemed exotic, exciting, or a challenge.
- I was in a close friendship or relationship with a person of color, where the relationship was affected, stressed, or endangered by racism between us or from others.

- I am not in a close significant relationship with any people of color in my life right now.
- I have been in a close friendship or relationship with another white person where that relationship was damaged or lost because of a disagreement about racism.
- I have felt embarrassed by, separate from, superior to, or more tolerant than other white people.
- I have worked in a job where people of color held more medial jobs, were paid less, or were otherwise harassed or discriminated against and I did nothing about it.
- I have participated in an organization, work group, meeting, or event which people of color protested as racist or which I knew to be racist and did nothing about it.
- I have had degrading jokes, comments, or put-downs about people or color made in my presence and did not protest or challenge them.
- I have felt racial tension or noticed racism in a situation and was afraid to say or do anything about it.
- I have seen a person of color being attacked verbally or physically and did not intervene.
- I am concerned that there is not enough attention paid to family violence and sexual assault in my community because of the focus of police and criminal justice resources on communities of color.
- I am concerned that drug abuse in my white community if not taken seriously enough because disproportionate attention is on drug use in communities of color.
- I experience a heightened and intrusive state of surveillance and security in my neighborhood, where I shop, in my school, when I cross borders, or when I use airports because of social fears of the dangers of people of color.
- I have had to accept unnecessary limits on my basic civil liberties because of social fears that people of color are dangerous.
- I have felt angry, frustrated, tired, or weary about dealing with racism and hearing about racial affairs.
- I live in a community where, for whatever reason, no people of color are present, so that some of these questions don't apply.

1. *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*, 2002, Paul Kivel, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada.