

# Judaism & Current Events:

## Antiracism

What does it mean?

How to achieve it?

## Outline/Agenda

1. Prayer for Peace in Times of Trouble
2. Guidelines
3. What does it mean to be Antiracist vs not racist or color-blind?
4. What is Systemic Racism?
5. Promoters of Racism
6. What can we do to be Antiracist?
7. Antiracist Changes We Are Seeing & Ideas for the Future
8. Suggested Readings
9. Movies & Documentaries to Watch to Learn About Racism, History
10. URJ Statement: Witnessing Protests, Rage, and Our Torah's Unbending Demand for Justice – May 30, 2020
11. Reform Jewish Leadership Statement: Black Lives Matter is a Jewish Value – June 12, 2020
12. 100 Ways You Can Take Action Against Racism from Your Home Right Now – USA Today

## **A Prayer for Peace in Times of Trouble**

***Lord, give us peace that we may shine brightly in a dark world. Grant us the courage to live faithfully to our highest values even in the midst of hard times. Let our faith in each other be the beginning of wisdom and compassion rather than allowing fear to drive our actions.***

***Help us to live strongly in the midst of a world that needs to know peace. We pray for our brothers and sisters of the world, for we are of one family.***

***Show us mercy and heal those who are suffering in times of trouble and plague. Most of all, inspire us to restore the world and make all things new.***

***Amen.***

# Guidelines

- This is a discussion, not a debate. The purpose is *not* to win an argument, but to hear many points of view and explore many options and solutions.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate. It is always OK to "pass" if you are asked to share.
- No one or two individuals should dominate a discussion. If you have already voiced your thoughts, let others have an opportunity.
- Raise your hand to signify your wish to speak. The Moderator will call on you. Ideally, one person speaks at a time. Keep interjections to a minimum. If you think you will forget an idea that comes to mind, write it down.
- Please fact-check your sources. We don't want to give oxygen to unverifiable information.
- Listen to and respect other points of view.
- Do your best to understand the pros and cons of every opinion, not just those you agree with. Be as objective and open-minded as you can be.
- Seek first to understand, not to be understood. Ask questions to seek clarification. Be thoughtful. Be kind.

# **What does it mean to be Antiracist vs not racist or color-blind**

**Think, support and promote antiracist ideas:**

**All races are equal**

**All races are treated equally**

**Laws and policies apply equally to all races**

**Systems apply equally to all races**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qx-gUfQx4-Q>

**Robin DiAngelo, Author of White Fragility**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doHhMjudb3c>

**Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, Author of How to Be Antiracist**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7mzj0cVL0Q>

**Robin DiAngelo, Deconstructing White Privilege**

# What is Systemic Racism?

Laws and policies that are inherently racist:

- Housing codes (redlining in the real estate industry)
- Banking system / lending guidelines
- Criminal justice and the prison system
- Education – funding inequalities / segregation / busing
- War on Drugs – inequality in sentencing
- Mass deportations
- Mass incarceration

# Promoters of Racism

## Movies & TV Shows

- “Cops” cancelled after 32 seasons
- “Gone with the Wind” pulled by HBO Max
- “Amos N Andy” 1950’s TV show
- “The Little Rascals” (1950’s)
- “Happy Days”
- “Father Knows Best (1950’s)
- “Ozzie & Harriet” (1950’s)

## Branding

- Aunt Jemima & Uncle Ben brands discontinued

# What Can We Do to Be Antiracist?

Create a new normal

Speak out when someone makes a racist statement or tells a joke

Educate yourself:

- Buy books by black scholars
- Download podcasts by POC
- Watch media (TV/movies) produced by POC and with black/Latinx actors (see list)
- Read books about the racial divide, history of minorities (see list)

Donate to & support people of color

- Black-owned businesses
- Racial justice groups
- Elected officials

Protest: stand with POC / show up at events, marches

Listen to people of color – respect that world



# Antiracist changes we are seeing & ideas for the future

- Confederate flags banned / removed from state flags
- Confederate monuments & statues removed
- Branding changes (Aunt Jemima)
- Redefining police departments, bringing transparency (Wis. Gov. Evers & Lt. Gov. Barnes)
- Police body cams
- Reparations
- ACA (Obamacare)
- Healthcare for all

# Suggested Readings

- How to Be Antiracist, Dr. Ibram X. Kendi
- White Fragility, Robin Diangelo
- So You Want to Talk About Race, Ijeoma Uluo
- Me and White Supremacy, Layla Saad
- The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander
- Eloquent Rage, Brittany Cooper
- Reproductive Injustice, Dana-Ain Davis
- Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America, Dr. Ibram X. Kendi

# **Movies & Documentaries to Watch to Learn About Racism, History**

**13<sup>th</sup>**

**Hidden Figures**

**I Am Not Your Negro**

**Do the Right Thing**

**The Help**

**Selma**

**Just Mercy**

**If Beale Street Could Talk**

**Notes from the Field**

**Crime + Punishment**

**Rodney King**

**Django Unchained**

**Green Book**

## URJ Statement: Witnessing Protests, Rage, and Our Torah's Unbending Demand for Justice

May 30, 2020; New York, NY – Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, director of the [Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism](#) and senior vice president of the Union for Reform Judaism, issued the following statement:

On Shavuot, as we received the Torah anew, with its unbending demand for justice, we also witnessed protests in Minneapolis, Louisville, and around the United States following the all-too-familiar lethargy in bringing George Floyd's killers to justice.

The national rage expressed about the murder of Mr. Floyd reflects the depth of pain over the injustice that People of Color – and particularly Black men – have been subjected to throughout the generations. In recent months we have seen, yet again, too many devastating examples of persistent systemic racism, leading to the deaths not only of Mr. Floyd but of other precious souls, including Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

We remember others before them: Eric Garner. Tamir Rice. Trayvon Martin. Sandra Bland. Oscar Grant. Philando Castile. Walter Scott. Terrence Crutcher. Samuel Dubose. Michael Brown. The list feels endless, and so too is our despair. But as we recite the Mourner's Kaddish for them all, we say now, again: *We will not sit idly by.*

## **URJ Statement: Witnessing Protests, Rage, and Our Torah's Unbending Demand for Justice (continued-2)**

Our country simply cannot achieve the values of “justice for all” to which it aspires until we address ongoing racism in all sectors and at all levels of society. We remain in solidarity and action with [the NAACP’s urgent #WeAreDoneDying campaign](#), whose policy demands cover areas of criminal justice, economic justice, health care, and voting, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately impact Black Americans.

As the NAACP says, “Senseless hate crimes and incidence of COVID-19 cases and deaths spreading throughout the Black community display the continuance of systematic racism and privilege granted to white people in America.”

We pray for the families of Mr. Floyd, Ms. Taylor, Mr. Arbery, and all those whose lives have been so cruelly and violently taken, and we renew our commitment to working to achieve a nation that exemplifies compassion and justice for all.

## **Reform Jewish Leadership Statement: Black Lives Matter is a Jewish Value**

June 12, 2020

Throughout the past 400 years, Black people in America have been enslaved, subjugated, disenfranchised, murdered, and discriminated against. From generation to generation, white Americans, including white Jews, have failed to own and end the systemic racial injustices on which the nation was founded, and instead have actively or passively perpetuated these injustices.

Our Jewish tradition is replete with instances of moral reckoning when we are asked to be present and accounted for. “*Ayecha?*,” we are asked. “Where are you?” We respond with a full throated, “*Hineinu.*” “We are here.” As Reform Jews committed to the spirit of this teaching, we say unequivocally, Black Lives Matter.

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is to commit to a human and civil rights movement, working to end systemic racism against Black people and white supremacy.

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is to recognize that we are a racially diverse Reform Jewish Movement, and that our diversity is a source of our strength.

**Reform Jewish Leadership Statement:  
Black Lives Matter is a Jewish Value (continued-2)**

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is for white Reform Jews to pledge to be in solidarity with Black Jews and Black people from all backgrounds against racial injustice and to act accordingly.

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is to recognize the imperative to live with complexity and know that we can be steadfast in our love of and support for Israel while working side by side with those who hold differing views and express them respectfully.

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is to accept discomfort, knowing that actions or inaction of white Jews have contributed to ongoing racial injustice.

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is to move beyond allyship and commit to long-term solutions both internally in ourselves, our own organization, and externally in our communities to disrupt and dismantle white supremacy.

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is to acknowledge that Black people risk their personal comfort and safety every day in white dominated institutions, and that white Jews must commit to risking their personal comfort and even safety in the struggle for racial justice.

**Reform Jewish Leadership Statement:  
Black Lives Matter is a Jewish Value (continued-3)**

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is to ensure that People of Color can be whole, never expected to choose between aspects of their identity and celebrate the multifaceted nature of humanity.

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is to commit to individual and organizational antiracist trainings, identifying specific antiracist hiring practices and lay structures, and outlining goals around specific racial justice action steps.

To affirm that Black Lives Matter is for white Jews to reflect on their own thoughts and behavior, to build meaningful relationships with Jews of Color and People of Color generally, and to work for reforms that will achieve real, lived freedom for Black people.

We affirm that Black Lives Matter.

**Learn, Read, Listen, Act:**

We want to first acknowledge the transformative role of antiracist work led by April Baskin, former vice president of the Union for Reform Judaism, who provided instrumental strategy and vision for the Audacious Hospitality initiative, which we continue to build off of today. Many of the Jewish leaders of Color who have and continue to guide the Reform Jewish Movement were engaged and mentored by April, and she remains a thought leader in the field. You can [read many of April's writings here](#), including her poem ["Racial Justice is a Jewish Issue."](#)



**100 Ways You Can Take Action Against Racism from Your Home Right Now**  
**USA Today May 29, 2020**

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/2020/05/29/george-floyd-death-donations-resources-justice-petitions/5282539002/>