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| **The lie that invented racism** | Ashley Priest |
| June 14, 2021 |
| **Essential Question**  Once we accept that the tool was invented by us, why isn’t it up to us to change? | |
| **Key Ideas**  White people means all of us – white folks in general, not just “those” white people  Race is not a biological concept, it’s a story. People told that story to justify the brutal exploitation of other people for profit  Racism is not just a problem of attitudes and individual bigotry, it is a tool to divide us and to prop up systems that advantage some and disadvantage others  Once we accept that the tool was invented by us, why isn’t it up to us to change?  What leaders do we support? What community projects do we ask for? How do we support colleagues of colour? | **Notes**   * People of colour have been asking question for centuries, white people are starting to given what’s “going on” * Only 20% of white people supported MLK Jr when he was alive * Parental education can sometimes make kids feel like racism exists in “other” places, not in their reality * Hard to conceptualize why racism still exists when you haven’t experienced it, been in the right place, asked the right question * Smart phones and more visible events bring to light * Deeply racialized inequities * Solid majority of white people will embrace/accept white status quo * Journalism – flip the story: stop asking BIPOC “how they are doing” and focus on critique of whiteness * Assume racism comes from “other” – tragic misunderstanding * Most of human history people had no notion of race * Greeks – culturally superior * Slave comes from word slav for Slavic people * Where did idea of whiteness come from – we’re all the same race 99.9% the same genetics, First articulation of racist ideas – Gomez de Sara…ra? (1450s) * Pre-colonial time some of most sophisticated cultures were in Africa. Gomez was hired to write book that justified African slave trade. Created the notion of “blackness” and “otherness”. Blackness has no meaning without whiteness. Other countries followed suit. * Racism didn’t start with a misunderstanding, it started with a lie * White people turned ideas into laws, laws that gave even the poorest white people benefits – not be a slave, free land, long before American revolution * Racism is not bad outdated thinking – it’s a tool still doing what it was designed to do * Pocketbooks and power * There are no sidelines! We are all implicated by being complicit in system that props up people that look like me. * Guilt and shame isn’t necessary, try responsibility * Show up with humility, vulnerability, willingness to put down power that we did not earn * Show up, take action, because it’s right. |
| **Summary**  The concept of race is not based on biological/genetic differences. Division of people based on cultural differences has been around since the Greeks, but the concept of supremacy for power and profit was formally introduced in the 1450s as justification for the slave trade. The idea turned into laws that advantaged even the poorest white people over people of colour – e.g. not being enslaved, free land during colonization. We can’t expect BIPOC to “get over it, it was so long ago” when they and their families have been systematically excluded from power and privilege for hundreds of years. Maintaining the status quo means supporting a tool still doing what it was designed to do – disadvantaging people of colour for the power and profit of white people. There are no sidelines, we are all implicated by participating in a system that props up people that look like me. Once we accept that the tool was invented by us, why shouldn’t it be up to us to dismantle it? Stop putting that burden on the backs of BIPOC. What leaders do we support? What community projects do we ask for? How do we support colleagues of colour? | |