

# RESOURCE OF THE WEEK



**In our last post, we acknowledged that doing our part in working toward racial justice begins with ourselves. Who are we? As art educators in the Milwaukee area, most, but not all of us, identify as white. Because of this, the content in this post is primarily about the work that non-black educators need to do. Historic racism has created an educational system in which proportionally the identities of teachers do not represent the students they teach. We individually choose to be teachers, but we exist within broader societal systems. We can't do the critical work of racial equity without understanding who we are within systems of power and privilege. Doing this work allows us to show up for our students, their families, and our colleagues, including those who identify as non-white. We hope you will join us here.**

We invite fellow educators to join us in this work, as we listen to each other in the struggle to understand and make change. It is an uncomfortable journey to critically reject the assumptions of our white privilege while maintaining our own positive identities.



# "WE NEED YOU DEFECTING FROM WHITE SUPREMACY AND CHANGING THE NARRATIVE OF WHITE SUPREMACY BY BREAKING WHITE SILENCE."

— ALICIA GARZA, CO-FOUNDER BLACK LIVES MATTER AND SPECIAL PROJECTS DIRECTOR AT THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKER ALLIANCE

## Questions We Should Ask Ourselves

- Going back into your childhood, what is your earliest memory of racial difference?
- Were you taught by diverse teachers as a K-12 student?
- Can you describe a moment where you were in conflict with a family member over an issue of race?
- Can you identify a belief that you used to hold about race that you have since rejected?
- Can you describe a moment when you felt challenged by racial difference in your teaching?
- Can you describe a way that you have changed your teaching practice to better serve the needs of your Black students?
- How do you reconcile your identity as a white person to your role as a teacher of Black children?
- Can you describe a moment where you were made aware of the privilege of your whiteness, or of the whiteness of others?

Can you describe a moment when you were made aware of the privilege of whiteness, whether it was your own or of others?

It was my first year in the U.S.; I was a freshman in college and had been roomed at the dorms with three women, all white -except for myself. I remember having moments in which I felt very isolated, confused and just different from them. I had never felt quite so much like the "odd duck" before. That year I was bombarded with questions about my identity and racial background -not from my roommates, but from everyone around me, it seemed like-. I remember expressing my thoughts and how I felt like many were looking at me and questioning "what I am" instead of who I am or what I like, what my potential is. I looked to my roommates (most of whom are still my dearest friends) for support and for words of guidance, but what I found was a sense of more confusion because they have never experienced any question to their identity or to the essence that makes them who they are. That first year was difficult, it made me question who I was, something that used to be very clear to me. This made me think seriously about the color of skin, the texture of hair and the shape of a body in being very telling about how others perceive and judge you based on given preconceptions they may have.

**-Tania Espinoza**

How do you reconcile your role as a white teacher educating black children?

I initially felt a lot of guilt, like "is what I'm doing even making a difference since I'm white?" I have come to terms with the fact that I was raised in a society based on white supremacy and I need to reconcile this in myself to better serve my students. I need to do inner work to better serve my students. I have looked at resources online and took a meaningful course with SURJ about white supremacy culture that made me aware and able to start to do the work. When I was an undergrad, reading "colorblind racism in art teaching" by Dipti Desai really opened my eyes to the need to start doing the work.

**-Liz Kremer-Wanserski**



## Can you identify a belief that you used to hold about race that you have since rejected?

“ So, I remember when I was just out of high school, I was living with some friends on the east side of Milwaukee and there was this conversation that stands out to me as a point when I really started to question and unlearn toxic beliefs I held about race. I was hanging out with my partner at the time and my roommate came home and we started talking about one of her classes, I think. The topic of race and power structures in the US came up. Now, I grew up really poor, moving around a lot in the south. Some of the places we lived, especially when I was in elementary school and younger, were kind of tough neighborhoods. Trailer parks and all that. We, as white folks, were in the minority in most of our neighborhoods and we didn't always have the greatest experiences. So, when my roommate and partner were talking about white privilege and the imbalance of power between black and white Americans, I was upset. I argued. I was stubborn and couldn't look past my own experiences. I was adamant that "it's not about race, it's about class. Poor white folks struggle, too." All that. I was seeing my experience but I wasn't seeing the structures around my experience that informed it. As a kid, I felt the tensions and resentment and animosity but I didn't know why they existed. After that conversation, I dug my heels in and went to bed mad as hell at my roommate and partner. The next day, my partner said, "You know you're wrong about this." I think he was right. At some level I knew I was wrong and that what they were saying made sense. I spent some time mulling it over and educating myself and eventually it clicked. My understanding of race and privilege will never be perfect. Unlearning the white supremacy that is so rampant in every part of life in the US (and beyond) is a life long process but I am grateful to those that have challenged me.

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**-Kenicia McKinney**



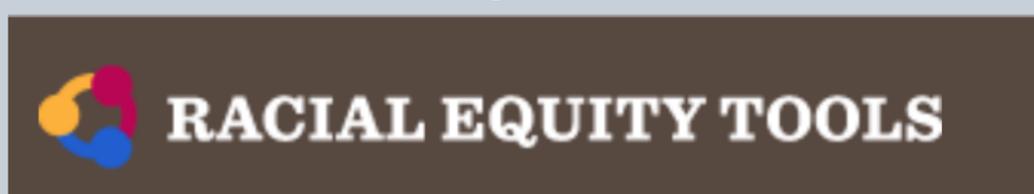
# Where do we Begin?

- Be an accountable ally to People of Color.
- Work to change racist institutions. Learn to live as multi-racial people.
- Take responsibility for our own racial identity journey.
- Learn the truth about the racist history of our country.
- Nurture a positive anti-racist identity in white children?
- Build a white anti-racist collective.

-taken from the [Racial Equity Tools](#) website, "[Whiteness and White Privilege](#)"

## Resources

[What's My Complicity? Talking White Fragility](#)  
With Robin DiAngelo  
[Teaching Tolerance](#)



It starts with asking ourselves the difficult questions. We are calling on you to join us in this conversation and work that we began in last week's post, [Racial Justice Resources for Art Educators](#). We want to hear your voice, one of many within the Milwaukee teacher community. We hope you will consider joining our conversation. We understand this conversation is and will happen over time. Our goal is to encourage the work of racial equity amongst Milwaukee area art teachers, and hearing each other's voices will be important in this process.

Please click here to take the survey on [Racial Justice and Art Educators](#).

[Visit Lynden Sculpture Garden Virtual Hub for more resources](#)