

WHAT IS STRUCTURAL RACISM?

Lesson Plan for High School History and Civics Classes

Structural or systemic racism is a topic we address when we are explaining why the commonly-told narrative of Chapel Hill's history as "the Southern part of heaven" rings true for a few but excludes so many -- and why this matters. The same can be asked of the US in general where many people believe in equal opportunity for all. When the playing field is presented one way but experienced very differently by people of color, the questions we ask are, "How did things get like that? Why do certain people have an advantage but don't seem to recognize this? Why is affirmative action regarded as a relatively recent agenda designed for Black advancement rather than a centuries-old practice of advantaging White people?"

We attempt to tackle these questions in a series of 2 workshops. Links and brief descriptions of lesson plans for each workshop are shown below:

1. Structural Racism: An Introduction

"Structural Racism: An Introduction" is a self-guided research project designed to help students uncover some of the historical evidence for structural racism in US history. In the process, they realize how deep the roots of white supremacy reach.

2. Fish, Lake, Groundwater

"Fish, Lake, Groundwater" is a lesson adapted from a curriculum developed by the Racial Equity Institute (<https://www.racialequityinstitute.com>). This lesson deepens students' understanding of structural racism by introducing them to a model and then engaging them in a practical exercise that allows students to feel what happens when the rules are fair but the game isn't.