

## Definitions of Racism

### **Webster's (quoted in House of Bishops Letter, 1994)**

**Racism:** Abuse of power by a racial group that is more powerful than another group, and the abuse of that advantage to exclude, demean, damage, control, or destroy the less powerful group; a belief that some races are by nature superior to others; racial discrimination based on such belief. Racism confers benefits upon the dominant group that include psychological feelings of superiority, social privilege, economic position, or political power.

### **Other current dictionaries**

#### **Random House Webster's Unabridged (2001)**

**Racism 1.** A belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human races determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others. **2.** A policy, system of government, etc., based upon or fostering such a doctrine; discrimination. **3.** Hatred or intolerance of another race or other races.

### **Older editions reveal growth in scholars' understanding**

#### **Webster's 3rd New International (1968)**

**Racism: 1.** The assumption that psychocultural traits and capacities are determined by biological race and that races differ decisively from one another, which is usually coupled with a belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race and its right to domination over others. **2a.** A doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism and designed to execute its principles. **2b.** A political or social system founded on racism. **3.** Racialism.

**Racialism: 1.** Racial prejudice or discrimination; race hatred. **2.** Racism

#### **Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, Second Edition (1955-1983)**

**Racism: 1.** Racialism. **2.** Program or practice of racial discrimination, segregation, persecution, and domination, based on racialism.

**Racialism:** A doctrine or feeling of racial differences or antagonisms, especially with reference to supposed racial superiority, inferiority, or purity; racial prejudice.

INHERENT IN EACH DEFINITION: A racist political/social system inspires among members of its advantaged group the assumption or belief in their own racial superiority, often subconsciously, and endows them with power and privileges that work both directly and indirectly to sustain the system.

## Forms of Racism

1. A conscious or unconscious assumption, or a belief or doctrine claiming one's own racial superiority (individual racism).
2. Acting on this belief when relating to others (interpersonal racism, usually expressed in the form of prejudice, stereotyping, scapegoating, discrimination, or bigotry).
3. A policy, program, or system incorporating this belief (institutional racism).
4. Cultural norms, standards, practices that inherently affirm the privileged group and ignore, exclude, or demean anyone who is not part of it (cultural racism).
5. Power granted and practices perpetuated by institutions, government and culture that favor the advantaged racial group and collectively enforce the racist belief, even when many advantaged group members disagree with it (systemic racism).

### *Definitive results of racism*

6. Victimization and oppression of all those outside the empowered group which define them as victims.
7. Benefits experienced by the dominant racial group (power, privilege) which, as they are accepted, even unconsciously, inherently define members as racist.