



Anti-Black racism

A guided learning journey

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Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
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Guided learning on anti-Black racism

Black History Month is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements and diverse contributions of Black communities in Canada, and beyond. [This month-long observance was officially recognized in 1995 through the efforts of Honorable Jean Augustine](#), and it also serves as a crucial reminder of the systemic inequities and anti-Black racism that Black Canadians have historically endured and continue to face today.

This guide seeks to illustrate these realities by offering a deep dive into critical concepts such as *misogynoir*, *anti-Black racism*, *colorism*, and *White supremacy*. These key terms have been thoughtfully selected to explore the historical and contemporary frameworks sustaining oppression, while encouraging meaningful allyship and activism. Accompanying each term are curated resources for further exploration, ensuring readers can engage thoughtfully and thoroughly with the material.

Understanding these terms is only the first step in unlearning harmful biases and dismantling anti-Black racism. Actively engaging with your own biases and the systems that perpetuate anti-Black racism is crucial for meaningful change, and this involves reflecting on how unconscious biases may shape your actions, decisions, and interactions, as well as challenging stereotypes and discriminatory practices in your daily life. By committing to this ongoing work, we can collectively dismantle systemic barriers and create spaces where equity, justice, inclusion, and accessibility thrive.

To deepen your understanding, we encourage you to explore these additional resources:

- Learn more about the [history of Black History Month from BC Black History Awareness Society](#).
- CCDI's actionable toolkits in support for Black History Month: [Sustaining the Black Lives Matter movement in the workplace](#). As well as the [Glossary of Terms](#) for more information on key terms used in this guide.

Misogynoir

Misogynoir is a term coined by [African American feminist, scholar, activist, and writer Moya Bailey](#) to describe the unique form of anti-Black sexism faced by Black women. As we talk about Black History Month, the term “misogynoir” is fairly new, but the experiences and histories of Black women are not (Bailey and Turdy, 2018). It describes the unique intersections of anti-Black racism and misogyny and highlights how Black women – including Black trans women, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming individuals – are unfairly judged by society in ways that reinforce negative stereotypes.

It is vital to recognize the unique challenges faced by Black women, and understanding this term and concept is important for reshaping industries and fields with low representation of Black women.

The consequences of misogynoir are deeply felt across various aspects of Black women’s lives, as [Monica Samuels of the Canadian Women’s Foundation](#) explains that “Black women are more likely than other groups of people to live in poverty. They’re more likely to be paid less than White women. They face disproportionate barriers to entrepreneurial financing and support. They’re racially profiled and over-incarcerated. They’re over-represented when it comes to chronic illnesses and infections such as COVID-19”.

Recognizing misogynoir is essential to any discussion of Black history, as Black women’s contributions and struggles have been overlooked and dismissed.

Learn more:

- [Q&A: Author Robyn Maynard on Anti-Black Racism, Misogyny, and Policing in Canada](#) – Canadian Women’s Foundation
- [On Wednesdays We Pop Off: Confronting Misogynoir Through Feminist Discourse in Art](#) – Wavy Wednesdays
- [Exploring Misogynoir](#) – Canadian Women’s Foundation
- [What is Misogynoir](#) – Blackburn Center
- [La « misogynoire », une discrimination méconnue qui touche les femmes noires](#) – ICI Radio-Canada

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According to [Black Health Alliance](#), a community-led charity working to improve the health and well-being of Black communities in Canada, they define anti-Black racism as the policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as education, healthcare, and justice that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping, and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent. Black History Month serves as a pivotal time (as well as a reminder) to reflect and address anti-Black racism, and understanding the systemic challenges faced by Black individuals and communities, and it is important to recognize anti-Black racism as a specific form of racism against Black people.

It is important to note that anti-Black racism is not just about individual biases – it is reinforced by longstanding systems that prioritize Whiteness while marginalizing Blackness. These systems shape the [workplace](#), [healthcare](#), and everyday life in ways that disadvantage Black individuals.

This form of racism runs deep within the history of both Canada and the United States and is embedded within social structures and institutions. The effort to devalue Blackness, combined with other categories of identity, can not only make Blackness less important in these institutions, but can make other parts of Black identity invisible. An example of this is seen when [Comrie et al., \(2016\)](#) explains that Black women and other gender dissents are not fully considered either in policy design or implementations, leaving them disproportionately negatively impacted and vulnerable.

Learn more:

- [Anti-Black Racism in Canada](#) – The Canadian Encyclopedia
- [How to Talk About Anti-Black Racism](#) – Art Gallery of Ontario
- [Give Us Permanence – Ending Anti-Black Racism in Canada’s Art Institutions](#) – Canadian Art

Colorism/Shadeism

Colorism, also known as shadeism, refers to the preferential treatment of individuals with lighter skin tones over those with darker skin tones – often within the same racial or ethnic group. This discrimination privileges light-skinned people of color, affording them better opportunities and social advantages, while marginalizing those with darker skin. At the same time, “dark-skinned people of color are typically regarded as more ethnically authentic or legitimate than light-skinned people”, which is directly related to the larger system of racism seen in North America and around the world (Hunter, 2007). An important distinction to make is that colorism is concerned with actual skin tone, as opposed to racial or ethnic identity (Hunter, 2007).

Colorism is deeply intertwined with anti-Black racism because it reinforces Eurocentric beauty standards by perpetuating the idea that proximity to Whiteness brings increased privilege and power. [As a result, anti-Black racism is amplified when colorist attitudes create additional barriers for those who do not fit the narrowly defined ideal of beauty and success.](#) By understanding colorism in this way, we can see how it not only shapes personal identity and social interactions but also underpins systemic inequities that persist in our institutions. Addressing colorism is essential to challenging and dismantling the broader framework of anti-Black racism, paving the way for a more inclusive society where all skin tones are valued equally.

Learn more:

- [Confessions of a D Girl: Colorism and Global Standards of Beauty](#) – Ted Talk with Chika Okoro
- [Anti-Blackness/Colorism](#) – Center for Antiracist Research – Moving Towards Anti-Bigotry
- [The Persistent Problem of Colorism: Skin Tone, Status, and Inequality](#) – Department of Sociology and Anthropology
- [THE COLORISM ART EXHIBIT PROJECT – Colorism: Looking Outside the Brown Paper Bag](#) – Ashley A. Jones

White supremacy

White supremacy is a deeply entrenched belief system that holds White people as superior to people of all other races and seeks to maintain social, political, and economic dominance of White people. This ideology underpins systems of oppression and discrimination that marginalize and subjugate people of color and Black people, and it is the root from various forms of discrimination, such as [as anti-Black racism, misogynoir, and colorism – emanate](#). It's not just an individual attitude, but is embedded within institutions, policies, and cultural norms that sustain racial inequalities by embedding prejudice into institutions such as education, healthcare, and the criminal justice system.

It largely manifests through practices and structures that perpetuate racial disparities, and while the mechanisms of oppression have evolved over time, the impact remains the same – the privileging of Whiteness through the systemic disenfranchisement and disadvantage of people of color. During Black History Month, we not only celebrate the achievements of Black communities but also confront the enduring legacy of White supremacy.

By examining Black history through this lens, we see how discriminatory policies and cultural norms systematically disadvantaged Black individuals have, from unequal economic opportunities to healthcare and legal treatment, which continue to shape the lived experiences of Black people today. This lens also calls to address the historical injustices but also the ongoing practices that perpetuate inequality, paving the meaningful way for social change.

Learn more:

- [“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”](#) by Peggy McIntosh
- [How ‘White fragility’ reinforces racism](#) – Guardian News (Interview with Robin DiAngelo)
- [Conceptions of White](#) – Vancouver Art Gallery
- [How White Supremacy is Built into Societies](#) – Psychology Today

Resources

Bailey, M., & Trudy. (2018). On misogynoir: citation, erasure, and plagiarism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), 762–768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447395>

Comrie, Janvieve, et al. “Anti-Blackness / Colorism.” *Center for Antiracist Research*, www.bu.edu/antiracism-center/files/2022/06/Anti-Black.pdf.

Hunter, M. (2007). The Persistent Problem of Colorism: Skin Tone, Status, and Inequality. *Sociology Compass*, 1, 237-254. <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00006.x>

Additional resources in English

Here is a way to stay connected to news centring Black Canadians:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/beingblackincanada>

<p>Books to explore</p> <p>White Fragility: Why It's So Hard For White People to Talk About Racism (Robin DiAngelo)</p> <p>So You Want To Talk About Race (Ijeoma Oluo)</p> <p>Freedom Is A Constant Struggle (Angela Davis)</p> <p>The Fire Next Time (James Baldwin)</p>	<p>Visual experiences</p> <p>The Myth of the Black Woman</p> <p>Interviews with Black settlers:</p>
<p>Podcasts</p> <p>BlacktoCanada:</p> <p>Historica Canada – Strong and Free series:</p> <p>Teachers like Us: Black History Month 101 (just one episode):</p> <p>Code Switch</p>	<p>Articles to learn more</p> <p>White Supremacy and Whiteness – York University</p> <p>Knowing the Past Opens the Door to the Future: The Continued Importance of Black History Month – The National Museum of African American History and Culture</p> <p>Here's the History on Black History Month... – BC Black History Awareness Society</p>

Please note: There may be a cost associated with viewing or listening to some selections. We encourage you to contact your local library or book seller for availability. Some of the selected visual choices may showcase authentic experiences and stories, while others may focus on fictionalized retellings.

Additional resources in French

<p>Livres à explorer</p> <p>Le ventre de l'Atlantique</p> <p>La pendaison d'Angélique (The Hanging of Angelique) - Afua Cooper</p>	<p>Expériences visuelles</p> <p>Kanaval</p> <p>Le Mois de l'histoire des Noirs avec Sarahmée</p> <p>Ressource pédagogique Mois de l'histoire des Noirs</p>
<p>Balados</p> <p>Portrait de Noirs au Canada – épisode 1</p> <p>Fort et libre</p>	<p>Articles pour en savoir plus</p> <p>Mois de l'histoire des Noirs... en chiffres</p> <p>L'histoire des Noirs et l'antiracisme au Canada</p> <p>Engagement collectif 2024 : progrès et perspectives antiracistes dans le secteur de la coopération internationale au Canada</p>