




**Historical Perspective of Systemic Racism within the Child Welfare System, and the Devastating and Enduring Impacts on BIPOC Families**

Margaret Jackson  
Anita P. Barbee  
Darlene Hill  
Andrea Sobrado

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**CPM Implementation Support Team**  
*Welcomes Supervisors: Our front-line leaders!*

CPM: Designed to **counteract** systemic and structural inequities. It is a comprehensive intervention on two levels: the **family** practice level and the **system** level.



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**Bridge from Previous Sessions**  
(10 minutes)

- Context of this set of webinars with supervisors
- Specific requests from the last webinar

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## Agenda

1. The lived experience of African Americans today
2. History of racism in the US grounded in a philosophy of white supremacy
3. Impact on the formation, structures and policies of CW
4. How these things show up in disproportionality and disparity numbers- even in Central Valley counties
5. The context of disproportionality and disparities- rooted in societal racism- that impact the child welfare system and families we serve
6. Voices from families regarding the problem and solutions
7. Specific strategies that counteract structural and practice bias

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## Part I: Lived Experience Margaret Jackson Group Discussion (25 minutes)

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## Brutality and Death

- Moment of silence
- What is happening now? Jacob Blake, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor
- This is nothing new. This has been our existence forever.
  - Books have been written about this for the last 100 years
  - Personal experiences and from the perspective of multiple communities
  - The community relationship with systems (e.g. law enforcement, child welfare, schools, health) is tenuous at best.
  - Why the Cultural Broker Program got started and is still necessary

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## Discussion 1

- Knowing the experience and pain of African American communities in California
  - How does this information affect you emotionally?
  - What does this information make you want to do in response?
  - How do you think your agency could change to begin to shift the relationship with this and other communities of color?

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**Part II:  
History of racism in the US and impact on CW  
Anita Barbee with  
Reflections from Margaret Jackson  
Group Discussion  
(35 minutes)**

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## What is Racism in the US?

It's the set of **institutional, cultural, and interpersonal patterns** and **practices** that create **advantages** for people legally defined and socially constructed as "White", and the corollary **disadvantages** for people defined as "non-White" in the United States.

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- What our Western Culture created over time
- In the 1500s, it was established that English people were White and Irish were non-White and inferior to justify the conquest of Ireland and brutalization of the Irish people. This belief was brought to the "New World"
- Earliest prejudice and discrimination was against those from the lower classes, the servant classes or working classes because of social class and because of ethnicity (e.g. Irish)
- As the colonies began to engage in chattel slavery and the population of African descendants grew to become larger than the English White population, the desire to keep power and decrease the chance of an overthrow, led to the creation of the expansion of who was considered "White."
- Whiteness was created as a political construct and organizing tool by the owning class to unite Europeans and maintain control over Indigenous people and enslaved Africans.

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**UL** **A Few Highlights from the History of Racism in the US**

- **Racism against Indigenous Peoples** (528 years)
- Began in North America and Caribbean in 1492 with the arrival of Christopher Columbus and continues to this day
- Columbus and his men murdered up to 5 million Indigenous Peoples in the Caribbean over a 3-year period.
- On the continent, death to Indigenous Peoples began with the spread of diseases brought by Europeans and enslaved Africans
- Then the war with tribes, subjugation of the people through enslavement, mass genocides, forced removal from lands-pushing ever Westward, incarceration, sexual sterilization, cultural genocide through removal of children into Boarding Schools (which were in operation until **1973**) and the Orphan Trains, extinguishing of religions and religious/spiritual customs, extinguishing of language, etc.

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**UL** **A Few Highlights from the History of Racism in the US**

- **Anti-Black Racism** (445-528 year history)
- Christopher Columbus brought enslaved Africans with him to what is now the Dominican Republic. Colonists ever since had enslaved Africans on their ships
- By one account, in 1565 Don Pedro Menendez de Aviles established the first settlement by Europeans and African enslaved peoples in North America in St. Augustine Florida.
- He noted that his arrival had been preceded by free Africans in the French settlement at Fort Caroline, just a few miles north at the mouth of the St. John's river (near modern day Jacksonville) and that enslaved Africans escaping from a Spanish expedition seeking to establish a colony in South Carolina in 1526.
- Slavery in the 13 original colonies settled by the English began in 1619 in Jamestown, VA and did not end until after the Civil War in 1865.
- Followed by Jim Crow Laws, increased incarceration, voter suppression and continued police brutality.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-milestones>

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**UL** **A Few Highlights from the History of Racism in the US**

- **Anti-Latinx Racism** (175 years)
- The US fought **with** Mexicans against Spain in the War for Mexican Independence and **with** Mexicans against various tribal nations like the Comanche between 1810 and the early 1900s.
- But starting in 1835 Texas fought with US help to succeed from Mexico- then joined the US in 1845.
- In the 1846-1848 Mexican American War, the US won and got California, half of New Mexico, most of Arizona, Nevada, Utah, parts of Wyoming, CO.
- After the US got Texas and through the second half of the 1800s and into the first half of the 1900s, citizens of the US **lynched** huge numbers of people with Mexican or South American heritage (Hispanics, Latinx).
- During the Great Depression, the US tried to send Hispanics back to Mexico during forced deportations and drove out about 1 million; 60% of whom were US citizens.
- In Los Angeles in the 1943 Zoot Suit riots, US servicemen terrorized Latin youth. Racial oppression is much like that towards African Americans.
- Oppression continues today with degrading those who speak Spanish, **emphasis on acculturation, hostility towards immigrants and draconian measures at the border**

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**UL** **A Few Highlights from the History of Racism in the US**

- **Anti-Arab; Anti-Middle Eastern; Anti-Muslim, Hindu, Sikh; Anti-Indian**  
Hatred of these groups for globalization and outsourcing of jobs to India. Long standing racism, heated up after 9/11
- **Racism against Asians**- began with the Naturalization Act of 1790 which made Asians, among others, ineligible for citizenship.
- A large influx of Asians came to the US when companies brought in Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush in the mid-1800s and then again during the Industrial Revolution, to build the Transcontinental Railroad.
- The 1879 Constitution of the state of California prohibited employment of Chinese people by state and local governments, and by businesses incorporated in California.
- The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 banned immigration of Chinese people nationally. Followed by massacres of Chinese people in 1885 and 1887.
- All Asians banned in the Immigration Act of 1917
- WWII Japanese Internment Camps imprisoned over 117,000 Japanese between 1942 and 1945.
- Continues today with blaming Asians for COVID-19.

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**UL** **More about the Roots of Racial Bias in the US**

- Throughout our history, the White race was believed to be superior to any other race (Black, "Indian," Asian) and the narrative in stories, books, churches, etc. was that White culture was good and Black, Red or Yellow culture was bad or inferior
- So, after a time, even the poor Whites and those from Ireland, Italy, etc. were added to the classification of White race. And any drop of Black or "Indian" blood made a person Black and thus inferior
  - Class still was a dividing line, and the very wealthy and even middle class came to despise and privately disparage lower class "White Trash" (Isenberg, 2016)
  - But in any dispute with members of the Black race, and in day to day enforcement of White supremacy, wealthier people enlisted the help of poor and working-class Whites to enforce this White superiority or supremacy.
- We often think of **White Supremacy** to only be promoted by evil and blatant racists like members of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK), but in reality the belief that White people, White culture, White religion (they later classified people of Middle Eastern descent as White so Jesus would be White) is what is part of the "In-Group" and every other group (Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asians) are members of the "Out-Group."
  - Remember in-group members are seen positively, preferred, seen as superior, individuated and members of the out-group are seen negatively, stereotyped (not individuated), seen as inferior and to be dominated, ruled or owned.

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**Race and Whiteness are Both Unscientific Concepts**

**“Scientific studies conclude that race has no biological meaning or significance. The gene for skin color is linked with no other human trait. The genes that count for intelligence, athletic ability, personality type, and even hair and eye color are independent of the gene for skin color.”**

Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, Structural Racism and Community Building (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2004), p.15.

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### What is Seen as “Supreme” in White Culture?

- White culture or Western values and beliefs prioritize both whiteness and maleness
  - Sees history through a Western European lens
  - Linear and future time orientation
  - Competition
  - Judeo-Christian and Protestant work ethic
  - Owning goods and property
  - Nuclear family unit
  - Perfectionism: Perfectionistic culture, only one right way, either-or thinking, worship of the written word
  - Concentration of Power: Power hoarding, paternalism, defensiveness
  - Hierarchical power structures
  - Right to comfort: Right to comfort, fear of open conflict
  - Rugged individualism: I’m the only one
  - Progress is bigger and more: objectivity, quantity over quality, sense of urgency
  - Action-orientation
  - Objective science
  - Glue that holds all together is belief that Whites are superior to other groups and are the normal and healthy and anything that deviates is pathological- so there is an elevation and maintenance of white status and protecting and privileging White people

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### White Supremacy

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The **process and system** that sustains our society’s racialization of people. It is motivated by economic interest and entrenched through law and public policy.

This can be seen historically, and currently perpetuated within economic, political, and social advantage for White people.

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**UL** **History of Policies Affecting Child Welfare**

- Origins of CW- a focus on “saving” poor immigrant children, acculturation
- Mass removal of Native American children- put into governmental children’s homes
- Initially AA children were excluded from receiving CW services
- When there was a shift to accept AA children- increased punitiveness to families
  - Separated CW from “War on Poverty” CW- Nixon favored a quasi-law enforcement model
  - Criminalization of addiction in the early 1970s persisting to today
- The Court system is entrenched in criminal mentality. Much of CW may need to utilize restorative justice practices and mediation instead of the courts.
- 1980 Law increase in foster care led to children languishing in care
- ICWA, MEPA, IEPA
- 1996 ASFA- Sped up process, shift in funds to adoption as permanency
- Family First (about every 20 years we swing)- hope but...

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**UL** **Reflections from Margaret Jackson**

- What thoughts does this review of US history bring up for you?
- What do you see as the most evident legacy of racism in the child welfare system?

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**UL** **Discussion 2**

- What did you think white supremacy was before it was defined today?
- Given the definition of white supremacy living in systems- how does it impact the work we all do in child welfare?
- Knowing the damage that white supremacy does, what can we do to dismantle it in child welfare?

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**How these things show up in D&D #s?  
How social structures lead to D&D?  
Potential Solutions  
Anita Barbee and Margaret Jackson  
Group Discussion  
(40 minutes)**

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**Evidence of Disproportionality  
and Disparities in CW Systems**

- D&D national stats continually change. But over the past 20 years of measuring this, overall the numbers have not been reduced.
- Remember in the D&D stats for Central Valley counties, African American children are disproportionately brought into care and stay longer than White children.

“Racism is manifest in the outcomes of social systems that persistently show disproportionately negative outcomes for people of color, regardless of social class or other factors. Individual bias, embedded in history and cultural norms, and rooted in institutional structure, are the three interlocking components of racial inequity that need to be understood and addressed.” Blitz, Green, Hernandez & Shah (2014)

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**What is a Disproportionality  
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- It is a number that indicates the relative representation of one group of children (for example children documented as Black) as compared to another group (for example children documented as White) in a specified metric of involvement with the child welfare system. Two of those metrics are:
  - In a 12-month period, Entry into Foster Care for more than 8 days
  - On a specified date, being in a placement episode (In Care)

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**UL** **Research on CW Systems**

- There are disparities in CW system towards Native American and AA children (and in 19 states, Latino children)
- Difference in how view families and willingness to work with families to keep them together
- Difference in willingness to reach out to fathers and their families
  - So more placed in OOHC- foster care, residential, mental health facility
- Difference in how many services offered to NA, AA families
- Difference in how well BIPOC individuals are engaged in those services (MH, Health, Schools)- these clients more likely to drop out
- Difference in how many services are offered to the children and how well they are engaged
- Difference in how long stay in foster care, whether they age out of the system or are adopted

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**UL** **Contextual Factors Driving Disproportionality and Disparities in CW Systems**

- Kokliari, Roy & Taylor found in a review of the literature (2019)
  - Child maltreatment is 5 x more likely to occur in poor neighborhoods (Sedlack, et al 2010) and income is strong predictor of child removal (Dettlaff et al 2011).
  - Black families vs. White are more likely to be poor, jobless and attain less education (Dettlaff & Rycraft 2008; Wulczyn et al 2013).
  - African Americans make up 15% of the population, double the rate of poverty 27%.
  - Unemployment rate of African Americans is twice that of whites too.
  - 40% of children of color are in poverty- double the rate for white children (APA 2017).
  - Nearly half of poor families live in concentrated poverty and unsafe environments (Dettlaff & Rycraft 2010) with subpar housing stock, overcrowded living conditions, multi-unit dwellings lacking space or privacy. Inside are rats, led, fire hazards. Outside is gun violence. Kids grow up in a war zone.
  - Neighborhoods with concentrated poverty have higher rates of incarcerated residents, single parents, few ed opportunities, lack of stimulating rec activities- all this is a form of structural violence.
  - AA families are less likely to ever escape the trap of poverty (Dettlaff et al 2011).
  - All of this contributes to **Visibility Bias, Threat of Harm Category, Lack of Culturally Appropriate Services**

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**UL** **Contextual Factors Driving Disproportionality and Disparities in CW Systems**

- There is systemic and individual bias by those that report (teachers, law enforcement, medical providers), and those that serve (child welfare, social workers, mental health, DV workers, judges and attorneys) which influences decision making and makes us more prone to discriminatory behavior and a **lack of culturally appropriate services**
- Racial bias plays into how view parenting. When a BIPOC parent is annoyed, scolding or critical it increases the likelihood the worker will authorize a maltreatment report (Berger, et al., 2006)
- In this context Black parents will be more likely to face charges of neglect and child removal based on conditions related to precarious financial standing such as poor food quality, lack of medical supervision (Roberts, 2014)

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## Reflections from Margaret Jackson

- What factors do you see affecting disproportionality and disparity rates for African American children and youth entering and moving through the child welfare system?
- What is the impact of D&D on the African American communities you have worked with?

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## Voices from Families

Asked AA parents from Southern US why D&D occur- (Did not see as stemming from racism)

- 1) **Profound lack of trust**- tough policies, no empathy and high turnover
- 2) **Overwhelming trauma**- both childhood and in the system with child removal- when inquire about children are labeled as angry...
- 3) **Severe and persistent poverty** – put them in CW cross hairs and made it difficult to comply with requirements
- 4) **Health and mental health**- one had post-partum depression due to child sexual abuse- baby removed but could have been avoided with treatment and support. Others- mild drug use (alcohol, pot, cocaine) caused removal and drug charges affected housing... many were young parents with no knowledge- support would have helped avert child removal
- 5) **Socio-economic conditions** – minimum wage- can't pay bills, lack of medical coverage, deficient housing... dangerous neighborhood... schools lacked counselors, trauma informed approaches, special programming
- 6) **Sense of social isolation**- good- extended family, support from church and after school programs.. many out of school time programs are not well run, boring, etc... if had individualized, nonpunitive parent advocate that helped.

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## Voices from Families: Suggestions for Improvement

- 1) **Cultural bias and insensitivity**- train workforce in bias, DM, historical issues, greater understanding of cultural practices with follow up coaching, supervision
- 2) **More Checks and Balances in DM**- reflective supervision, structured DM protocols, blind reviews, judicial bench cards, structured risk assessments, accessing family and BIPOC cultural brokers to help families navigate the system and cultural providers to enhance culturally based in-home services, reunification support, recruitment of diverse families into foster care, etc.
- 2) **Family Support Services**- make sure connected to them, more prevention services, outreach for people with addictions and poor mental health, programs to reduce early pregnancy, more parenting support groups and information
- 2) **Economic Revival**- more jobs, training, budgeting, civil rights, negotiating child welfare, improving interactions with the police
- 3) **More placement with kin and support for those kin**
- 4) **Better communication**- provide wrap around services that communicate with each other...more agency outreach...open for evening hours... advocate for more one-stop community centers.. to get health care, children services and education programs...
- 5) **More Understanding**- See the complexity of their situations, actually listen, find ways to help, be respectful, hire more people from the community
- 6) **Author Suggestions**- Trauma informed practice, preventative safety plans, practice models, more prevention

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 **Reflections from Margaret Jackson**

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- What solutions have been tried in CA to reduce D&D?
- What can we do?
  - For ourselves?
  - For those we are responsible for in our units?
  - For the families that our organizations partner with

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 **Discussion 3**

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- What can we do?
  - For ourselves?
  - For those we are responsible for in our units?
  - For the families that our organizations partner with?

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 **Part V:  
Closing Reflections, Change Delta  
Darlene Hill and Andrea Sobrado  
(10 minutes)**

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### Discussion 4

- What is the bottom line- the big take away from today's discussion?
- What more do you need to know to move forward to dismantle racism in your county agency?

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### Response from Margaret Jackson

- "Working in child welfare, following rules, policies, and doing everything right can still be harmful for families because we are perpetuating this racist system."

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### Anti-Racism Reading List

Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome, by Joy DeGruy  
[Between the World and Me](#), by Ta-Nehisi Coates  
[Breathe: A Letter to My Sons](#), by Imani Perry  
[Excessive Use of Force: One Mother's Struggle against Police Brutality and Misconduct](#), by Loretta A. Prater  
[How to Be an Antiracist](#), by Ibram X. Kendi  
[How We Fight White Supremacy](#), edited by Akiba Solomon and Kenrya Rankin  
[Our Black Sons Matter: Mothers Talk about Fears, Sorrows, and Hopes](#), edited by George Yancy and others  
[Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America](#), by Ibram X. Kendi  
[Wandering in Strange Lands: A Daughter of the Great Migration Reclaims Her Roots](#), by Morgan Jerkins  
[The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration](#), by Isabel Wilkerson  
[We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy](#), by Ta-Nehisi Coates  
[When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir](#), by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and asha bandele

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 **Child Welfare Anti-Racism Reading List**

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**Shattered Bonds (2002)**  
The Color of Child Welfare  
By: Dorothy Roberts

**The Lost Children of Wilder (2002)**  
The Epic Struggle to Change Foster Care  
By: Nina Bernstein

**Race Matters in Child Welfare (2004)**  
The Overrepresentation of African American children in the system  
Edited by Dennette Derezotes, John Poertner, and Mark Testa

**Childhood Disrupted (2016)**  
How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology, and How You Can Heal  
By: Donna Jackson Nakazawa

**When the Welfare People Come (2017)**  
By: Don Lash

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 **CPM implementation: an Important Step**

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**Stay tuned for more information about the “CPM for Supervisors” Webinar series!**



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