

Using Fables and Short Stories to Help Blacks and Whites Identify

nine types of racial discrimination issuing from the racist stereotype *blacks are animals* which 'explains' why they are mentally defective and physically gifted (Taylor and Kouyatè, 2003)

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1. Undermining

Challenging and undoing progress toward equity attainment among persons who have been socially, economically, or culturally marginalized

Icon: Dog

Narrative: A HOUND having startled a Hare on the hillside pursued her for some distance, at one time biting her with his teeth as if he would take her life, and at another fawning upon her, as if in play with another dog. The Hare said to him, "I wish you would act sincerely by me, and show yourself in your true colors. If you are a friend, why do you bite me so hard? If an enemy, why do you fawn on me?"

No one can be a friend if you know not whether to trust or distrust him or her.

Aesop Fable



2. Constricting

Minimizing equitable access to opportunity structures offered by the larger society—education, occupation, and income

Icon: Cage

Narrative: If you put a buzzard in a pen six or eight feet square and entirely open at the top, the bird, in spite of his ability to fly, will be an absolute prisoner. The reason is that a buzzard always begins a flight from the ground with a run of ten or twelve feet. Without space to run, as is his habit, he will not even attempt to fly, but will remain a prisoner for life in a small jail with no top.

The ordinary bat that flies around at night, a remarkable nimble creature in the air, cannot take off from a level place. If it is placed on the floor or flat ground, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly and, no doubt, painfully, until it reaches some slight elevation from which it can throw itself into the air. Then, at once, it takes off like a flash.

A Bumblebee if dropped into an open tumbler will be there until it dies, unless it is taken out. It never sees the means of escape at the top, but persists in trying to find some way out through the sides near the bottom. It will seek a way where none exists, until it completely destroys itself.

In many ways, there are lots of people like the buzzard, the bat and the bee. They are struggling about with all their problems and frustrations. not realizing that the answer is right there above them. We are obligated to help them find their way out—whatever the nature of their barriers that constrict their becoming what they were intended to be.

Unknown Author



3. Dissimulating

Noticing information consistent with racist stereotypes and neglecting information inconsistent with racist stereotypes

Icon: Rose

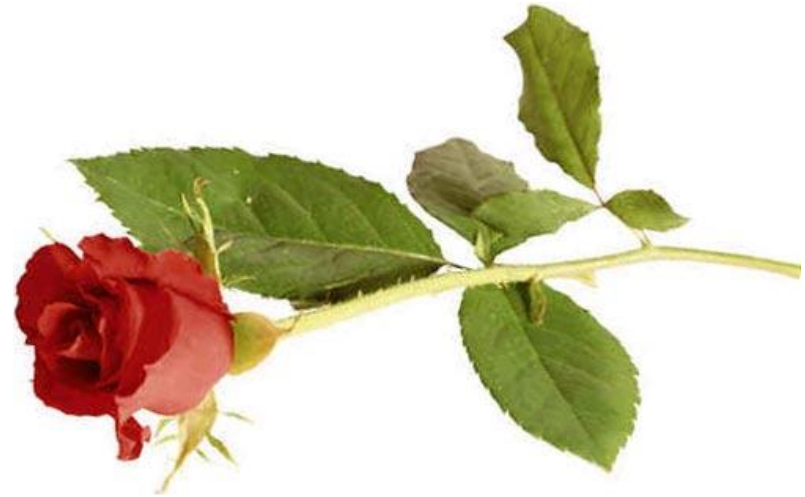
Narrative: A certain man planted a rose and watered it faithfully and before it blossomed, he examined it.

He saw the bud that would soon blossom, but noticed thorns upon the stem and he thought, "How can any beautiful flower come from a plant burdened with so many sharp thorns? Saddened by this thought, he neglected to water the rose, and just before it was ready to bloom... it died.

So it is with many people. Within every soul there is a rose. Our rose-like qualities are planted in us at birth, and they grow amid the thorns we perceive as negatives. Many of us look at others and see only the thorns, the problems or insufficiencies in their lives.

We sometimes despair, thinking that nothing good can possibly come from others. We neglect to water the good within others. and their spirit dies as they neither see nor realize their potential.

One of our most precious gifts lies in reaching beyond the thorns of others and finding the rose within them.



Author Unknown

4. Dodging

Evading, shunning, moving away from, averting one's eyes, 'negative hallucinating' (not 'seeing' who obviously is in plain view)

Icon: Whelp

Narrative: A BLIND MAN was accustomed to distinguishing different animals by touching them with his hands. The whelp of a Wolf [young wolf] was brought him, with a request that he would feel it, and say what it was. He felt it, and being in doubt, said: "I do not quite know whether it is the cub of a Fox, or the whelp of a Wolf, but this I know full well. It would not be safe to admit him to the sheepfold."

Deep overwhelming fear, anxiety, and threat are triggered by this young wolf which motivates estrangement and exclusion from the 'fold'—those like us. Moreover, this fear is so primitive that full sight is not required to activate it—even the blind can 'see'!

Aesop Fable



5. Detaching

Refusing to accept even nominal responsibility for the condition of persons who are socially, economically, or culturally marginalized

Icon: Corn

Narrative: There was a Nebraska farmer who grew award-winning corn. Each year he entered his corn in the state fair where it won a blue ribbon...

One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors.

"How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked.

"Why sir," said the farmer, "didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn."

He is very much aware of the connectedness of life. His corn cannot improve unless his neighbor's corn also improves.

So it is in life. Those who choose to be at peace must help their neighbors to be at peace. Those who choose to live well must help others to live well, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others to find happiness for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all.

Author Unknown



6. Deceiving

Lying, duplicity, and dishonesty are the big three here—promises made but not kept

Icon: Wolf

Narrative: "WHY SHOULD there always be this fear and slaughter between us?" said the Wolves to the Sheep. "Those evil-disposed Dogs have much to answer for. They always bark whenever we approach you and attack us before we have done any harm. If you would only dismiss them from your heels, there might soon be treaties of peace and reconciliation between us." The Sheep, poor silly creatures, were easily beguiled and dismissed the Dogs, whereupon the Wolves destroyed the unguarded flock at their own pleasure.

Here, the wolf feigns friendship, even agreeing to protect and promote the wellbeing of the sheep who accept this false promise to their demise. This accords with 'treaties' or agreements made by the privileged and accepted by victims to the detriment of the latter—the socially and culturally marginalized in our society.

Aesop Fable



7. Denigrating

Besmirching the *personhood* of those socially, economically, or culturally marginalized

Icon: Frogs

Narrative: A group of frogs were traveling through the woods, and two of them fell into a deep pit. When the other frogs saw how deep the pit was, they told the two frogs that they were as good as dead. The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit with all their might. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead. Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and gave up. He fell down and died.

The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it out. When he got out, the other frogs said, "Did you not hear us?" The frog explained to them that he was deaf. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time.

This story teaches two lessons:

1. There is power of life and death in the tongue. An encouraging word to someone who is down can lift them up and help them make it through the day.
2. A destructive word to someone who is down can be what it takes to kill them.



Author Unknown

8. Demonizing

Besmirching the *humanity* of those socially, economically, or culturally marginalized.

Icon: Wounds

Narrative: There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day, the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one.

You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one." The wound here has created an abscess which is capable of infecting the whole body much like demonizing assaults on the cultural and spiritual being of victims marginalized by our society.



Author Unknown

9. Destroying

Using physical or symbolic dehumanizing methods to inflict mental or physical injury to persons who are socially, economically, or culturally marginalized

Icon: Lamb

Narrative: WOLF, meeting with a Lamb astray from the fold, resolved not to lay violent hands on him, but to find some plea to justify to the Lamb the Wolf's right to eat him. He thus addressed him: "Sirrah, last year you grossly insulted me." "Indeed," bleated the Lamb in a mournful tone of voice, "I was not then born." Then said the Wolf, "You feed in my pasture." "No, good sir," replied the Lamb, "I have not yet tasted grass." Again said the Wolf, "You drink of my well." "No," exclaimed the Lamb, "I never yet drank water, for as yet my mother's milk is both food and drink to me." Upon which the Wolf seized him and ate him up, saying, "Well! I won't remain supperless, even though you refute every one of my imputations."

The tyrant will always find a pretext for his tyranny: *They're taking my job! They're getting preferential treatment! They're evil! They're after our women! They're a menace to civilized society! They're animals! They're running down our property values! They are a drag on society!* For every 'reason' refuted, they jump to another. These 'reasons' for maltreating the socially and culturally marginalized proliferate if unchecked. With contravention this proliferation of 'reasons' may continue in attenuated form. But even here we must strive to make a difference—attenuation if not elimination.



Aesop Fable

