



Easy Read Edition

What Is Structural Racism?

Part 2: What is A Social Construct?

Words to Know in Part 2



people of color

People of color are people who are not white, or who belong to more than one race.



race

Race is one way that society groups people. There are different races people can belong to. Each person can be part of one race or multiple races.

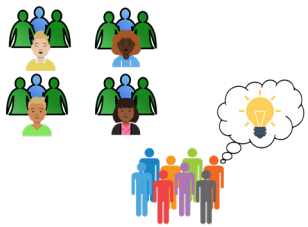
Some examples are:

- Black
- White
- Asian
- Latinx



segregation

Segregation is when laws or rules keep different groups of people apart.



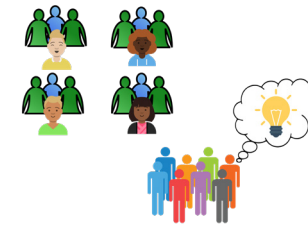
social construct

Social constructs are ideas that people make up together.



white supremacy

The racist idea that white people are better than people of color.



What is a social construct?

Race is a **social construct**.



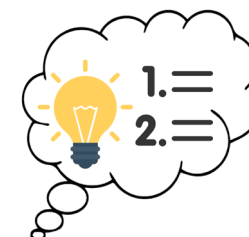
Social constructs are ideas that people make up together.



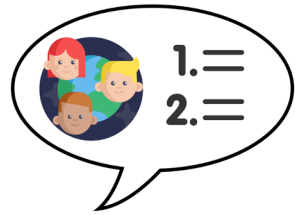
Then, these ideas get accepted by society.



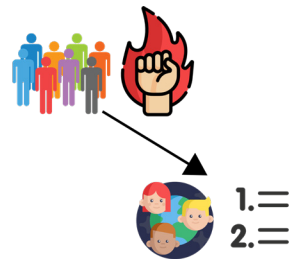
People thought certain ideas were important.



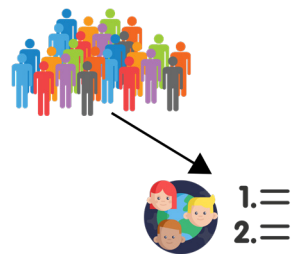
They made rules for these ideas.



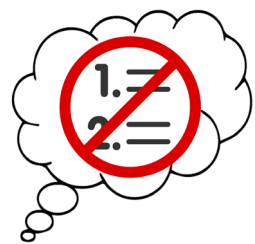
They said other people had to follow those rules too.



When the people making these rules have enough power, they can make other people follow these rules.



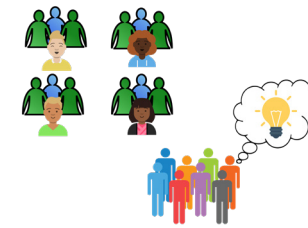
When there are enough people following these rules, they can make other people follow the rules too.



They can make people follow these rules even when other people don't want to follow them.



These ideas are social constructs.



Race is a social construct.



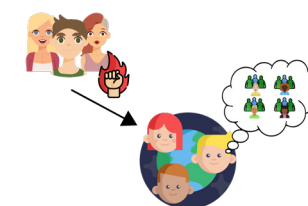
White people decided that race was important.



White people created racial groups.



White people had a lot of power.



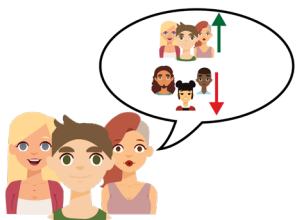
They used that power to make everyone else accept racial groups.



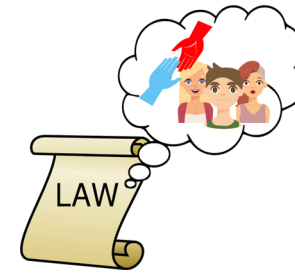
Making racial groups gave white people more power.



White people decided who counted as "white."



They said that white people were better than other races.



Then, they made laws and decisions that only helped white people.



This gave white people even more power. They kept using that power to only help white people.



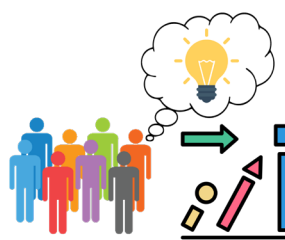
This is a part of white supremacy.



People make up social constructs.



But social constructs still matter.



Social constructs still have real effects,
because enough people with power say
they matter.

For example:



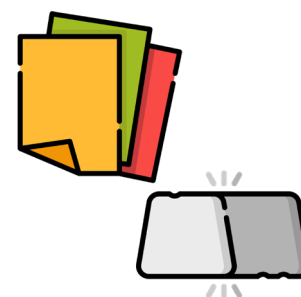
Money is a social construct.



People make dollar bills and coins.



They are real. You can touch and feel
them.



But they are just paper and metal.



We agree that dollar bills and coins are worth more than just paper and metal.



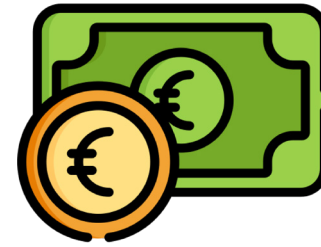
We say that they are money.



A lot of people agree that money can be used to buy things.



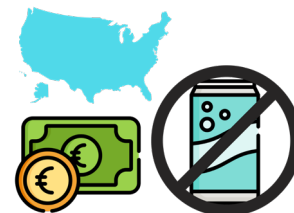
If we didn't agree, money wouldn't work.



For example, some countries in Europe use euros instead of dollars.



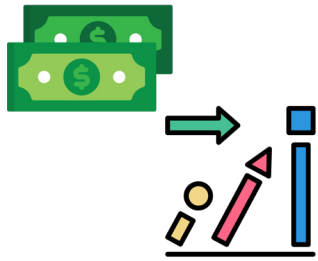
In the US, we don't use euros.



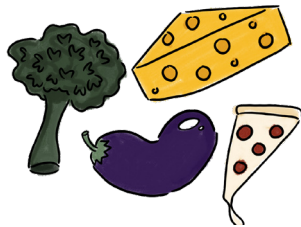
You can't buy a soda with euro coins in the US.



In Europe, you can buy a soda with euros.



Money also has real effects.



You can buy food with money.



You can buy a house with money.



Money is made up, but the things you can buy with money are real.



It is very hard to get food or a place to live without money.



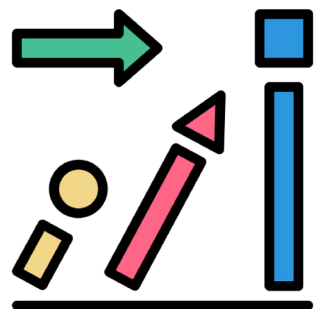
People have to use money.



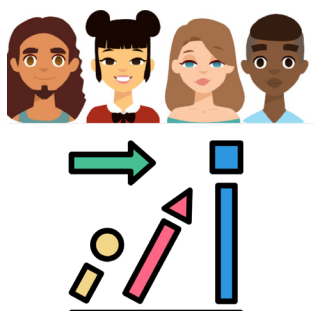
Race is like money.



It is made up, but it is still very important in our society.



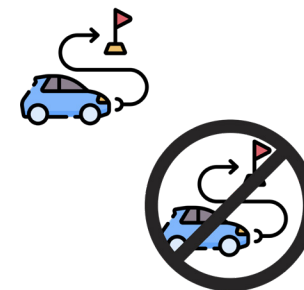
It has real effects.



It impacts people's lives every day.



Another example of a social construct is traffic lights.



Traffic lights tell us when we can drive and when we can't.



They work that way because we all agree that's what the lights mean.



Traffic lights are like other lights.



But we decided that the traffic lights have meaning.



Green means go.



Red means stop.



Other lights don't tell us when to drive.



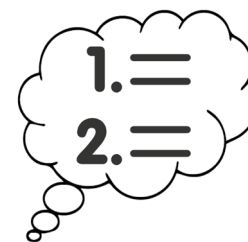
We obey traffic lights so that no one gets hurt.



But we also do it because of laws.



There are laws that say what traffic lights mean.



These laws are rules people made up.



But if we break the rules, we can be punished.



If you drive when the light is red, that is illegal.



You can get in trouble.



These social constructs have laws that say how they work.



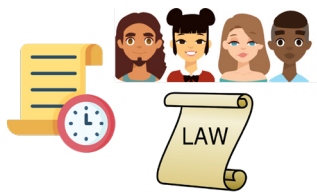
The laws punish people who don't follow them.



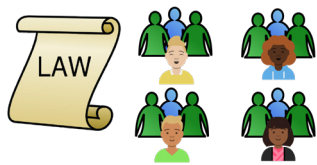
Sometimes, there are laws about race.



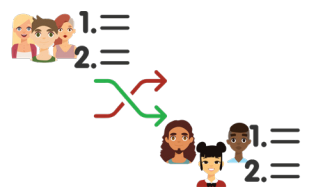
Today, many people do not think there are laws about race.



But in the past, there were laws that told people how race worked.



There were laws that defined racial groups.



These laws made different rules for different racial groups.



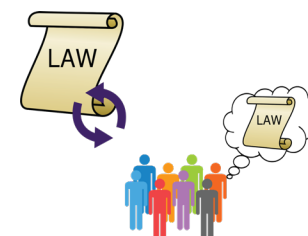
These laws punished people if they did not follow the rules.



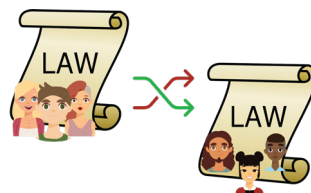
Today, some laws have changed.



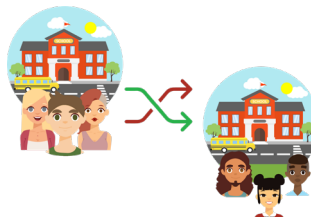
Some laws still exist.



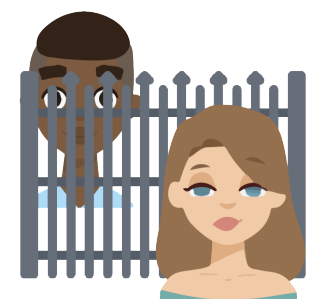
Sometimes, people kept following the rules after laws changed.



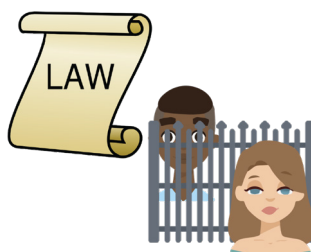
For example, there were different laws for white people and people of color.



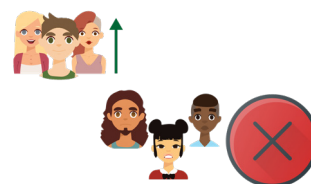
These laws said that white people and people of color should go to different schools.



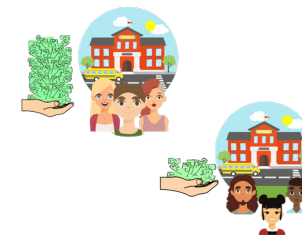
These laws are called **segregation**.



Segregation is when laws or rules keep different groups of people apart.



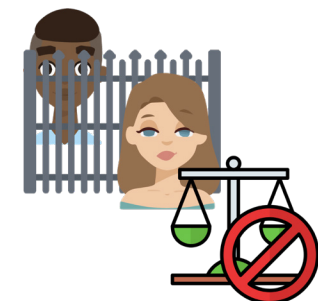
Segregation laws gave advantages to white people and kept people of color from getting the same advantages.



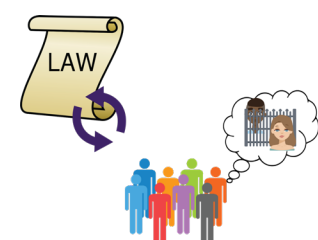
For example, white schools got more money than schools for people of color.



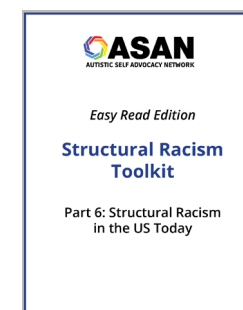
Segregation laws were racist.



Some forms of segregation are illegal now.



But people kept following some of the rules of segregation after laws changed.



We will talk more about segregation in a later section.