

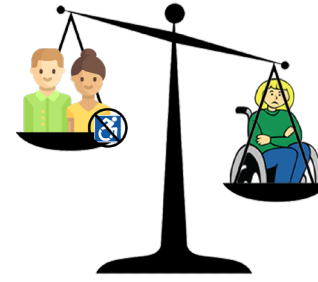


*Easy Read Edition*

# **What Is Structural Racism?**

## **Part 4: What Is Structural Racism?**

# Words to Know in Part 4



## ableism

Ableism is discrimination against people with disabilities.



## discrimination

Discrimination is treating someone unfairly because of who they are.



## institutions

Institutions are places where a lot of disabled people live. People living in institutions did not decide to live there and usually do not have their rights.



## 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.

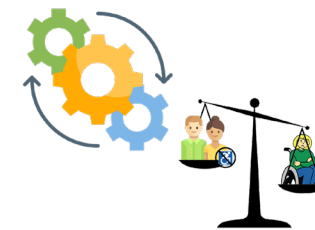
Some examples are:

- Black
- White
- Asian
- Latinx



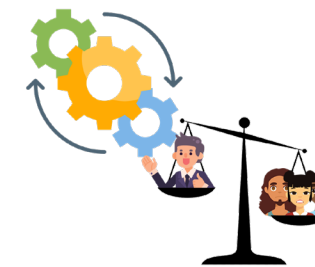
## racism

Racism is when people discriminate against others because of their race.



## structural ableism

Structural ableism is ableism that is built into systems.



## structural racism

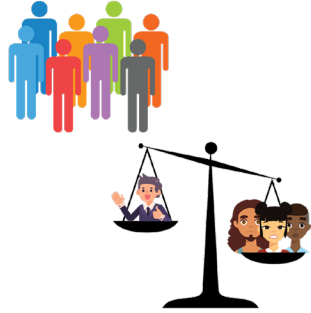
Structural racism is racism that is built into systems.



## system

A big group of people working together.

# What is structural racism?



Sometimes people or groups working together can do racist things.



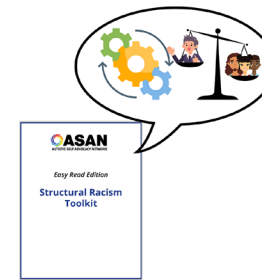
Sometimes organizations or systems are racist.



Sometimes governments are racist.



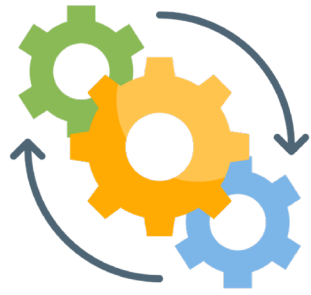
This type of racism is harder to see.



In this toolkit, we are talking about this type of racism.



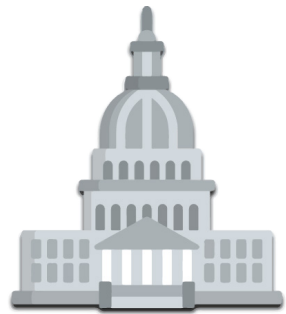
We are talking about when racism affects systems.



A **system** is a big group of people working together.



Systems affect a lot of people.



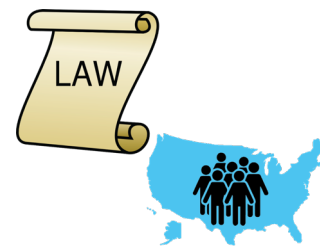
One example of a system is the government.



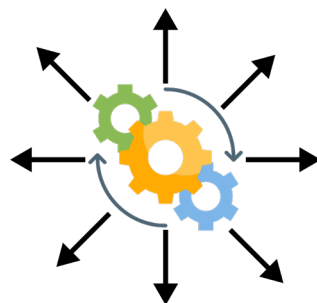
For example, there are over 300 million people in the US.



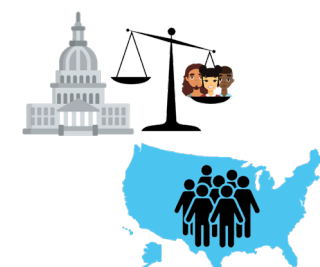
Another example is a company.



The decisions and laws of the US affect all of those people!



Systems are big.



If the US government does something racist, it affects many people.



When systems that people made cause a problem, we call that a structural problem.



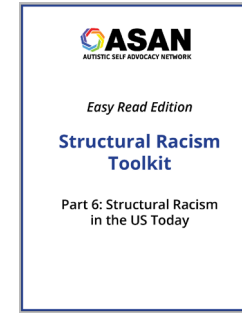
A structural problem is a problem caused by a system.



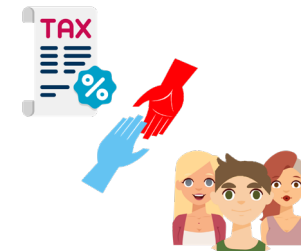
For example, the US government has rules that give tax benefits to people who own their own homes.



White people are more likely than people of color to own their homes.



(We will talk about how this happened later in this toolkit.)



So this rule about taxes mostly helps white people.



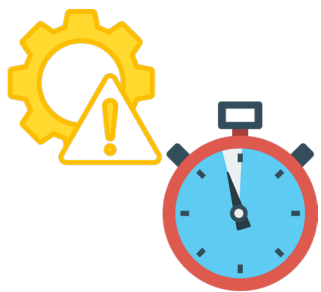
This makes homes cost more for people of color.



This is a structural problem.



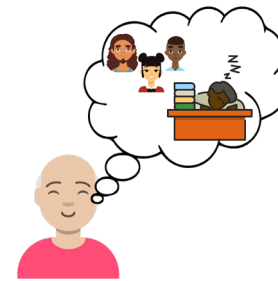
When a system causes problems, the problems don't go away on their own.



Even if people don't make problems worse on purpose, the problems stay around.



The system can even make the problem worse on its own.



For example:

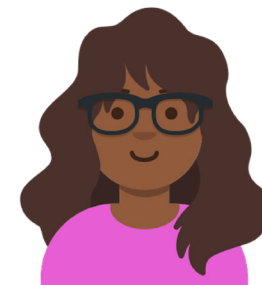
John is racist. John thinks that people of color are lazy.



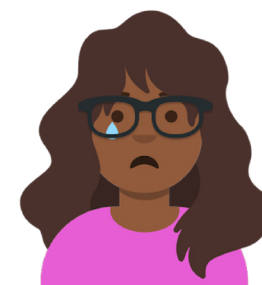
This is racist!



He talks about this with his friends.



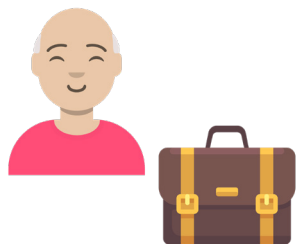
Maria hears him. Maria is a person of color.



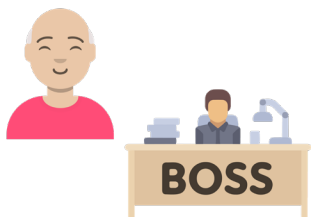
Maria is hurt by John.



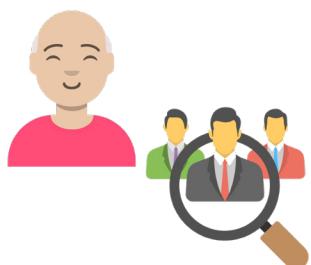
This is racism.



The next day John goes to work.



John is the boss of a company.



John is hiring people to work at his company.



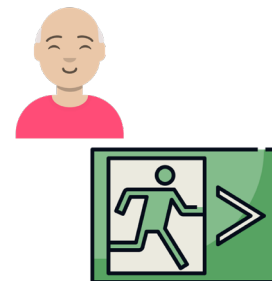
John thinks that people of color are lazy.



The company doesn't hire any people of color.



The company is racist.



Then, John leaves.



But the company still doesn't have any people of color working there.



The company doesn't have any people of color as leaders.

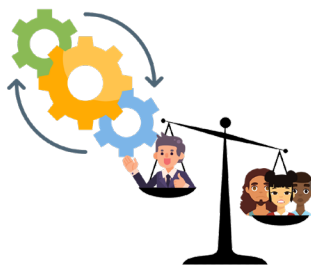




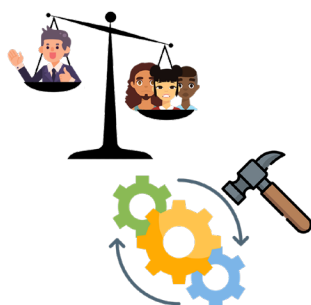
The company keeps hiring the same groups of people it did before.



Even though John is gone, the company is still racist.



This is **structural racism**.



Structural racism is racism that is built into systems.



Some examples of systems are:

- Government.



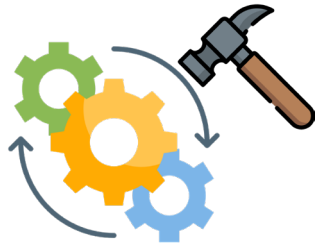
- Schools.



- Societies.



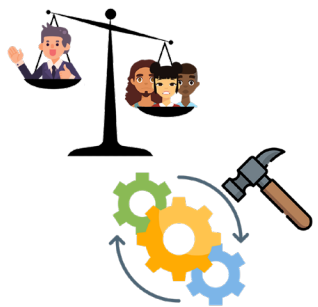
- Companies.



People in power set up systems.



People in power make choices about how systems work.



Sometimes a system is set up in a racist way.



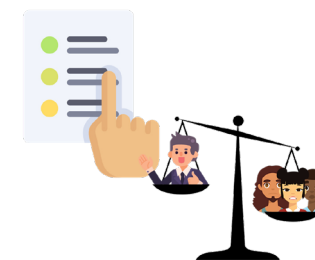
Sometimes the people setting up the system are being racist on purpose.



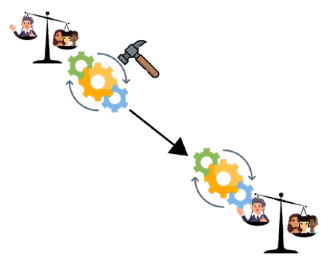
They decide to discriminate against people of color.



Sometimes they don't think about people of color at all.



But their choices still discriminate against people of color.



Structural racism means that systems that are built racist, stay racist.

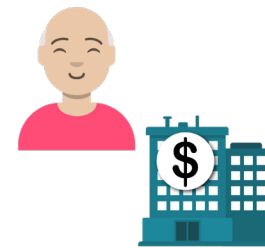


Racism will keep happening.

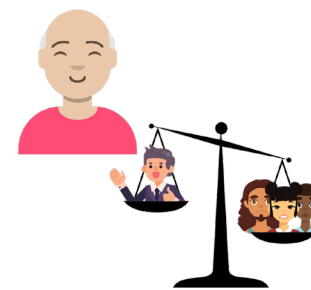


Racism won't stop unless the system changes.

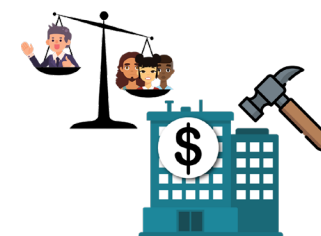
For example:



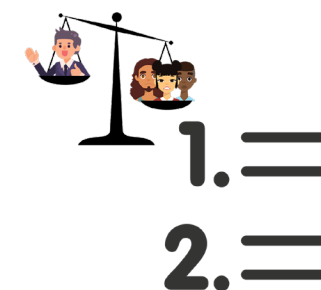
John created the company we talked about earlier.



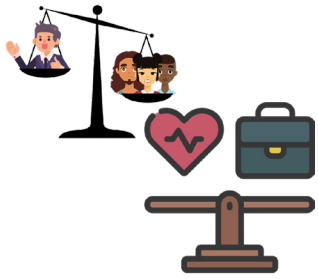
John is racist.



Racism is built into the company.



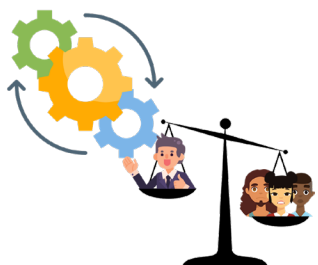
The rules might be racist.



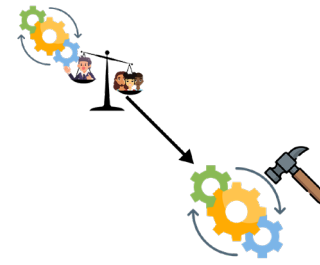
The culture might be racist.



People of color are not leaders of the company.



These are all examples of structural racism.



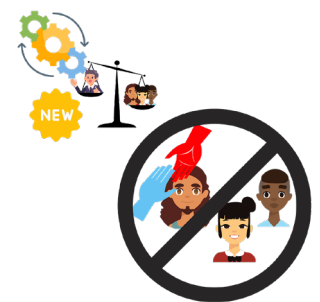
Even the way systems get made is affected by structural racism.



Structural racism sometimes means that people of color get ignored when making new systems.



This means the new systems that get made are structurally racist too.



People of color weren't listened to. So the new systems didn't help people of color.



Often, these new systems even harmed them.



For example:

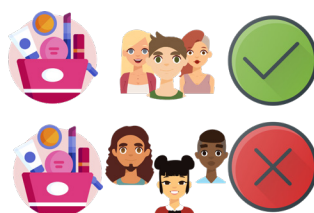
Janine owns a company that sells makeup.



Janine and her coworkers are all white.



They don't talk to people of color about makeup.



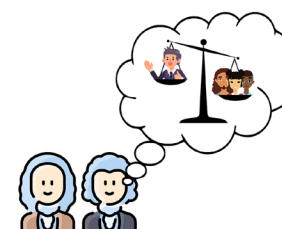
So they only make makeup for people with light skin.



They ignore what people with darker skin need.



The US is structurally racist.



The people who created the US were racist.



They thought that people of color didn't deserve rights.



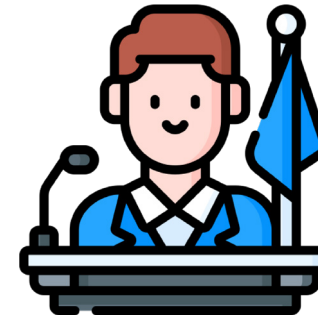
The Constitution is the document that made the US government.



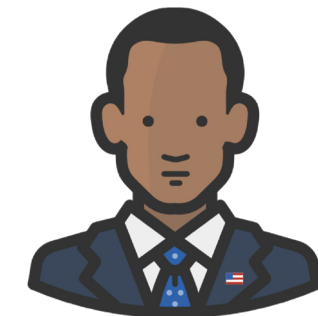
Almost half of the people who wrote the Constitution enslaved Black people.



No Black people were part of writing the Constitution.



Presidents in the US are almost always white.



There has been one president who is a person of color.



Every other president has been white.



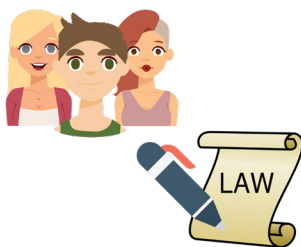
People who make laws in the US are mostly white.



There have been almost 2000 white Senators in history.



There have been 11 Black Senators in history.



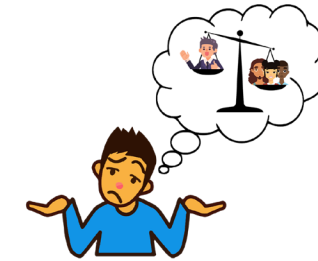
White people make most of the US laws.



They may be racist.



They may be racist on purpose.



They may be racist without realizing it.

For example:



The Great Depression was a time in US history when many people were poor.



Many people did not have a job.



They did not have a place to live.



They did not have enough money to buy food.



The US passed laws to help people.



The President and Congress wrote these laws.



Almost all of the people making the laws were white.



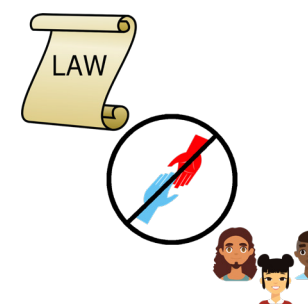
The laws helped mostly white people.



The laws didn't think about the needs of people of color.

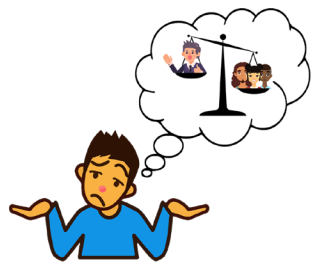


Some people making the laws were racist on purpose.



They would only pass laws that didn't help people of color.

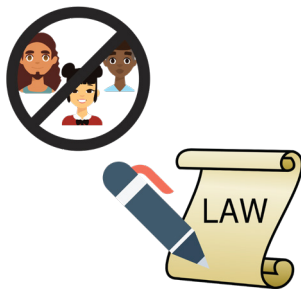




Other lawmakers might not have been racist on purpose.



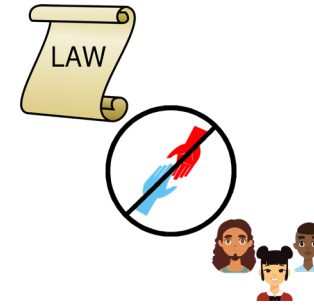
But they agreed to pass these laws too.



There were almost no people of color making laws.



So white lawmakers ignored people of color.



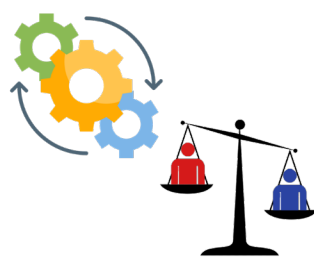
People of color weren't helped as much.



They were less likely to get jobs or help to buy food.



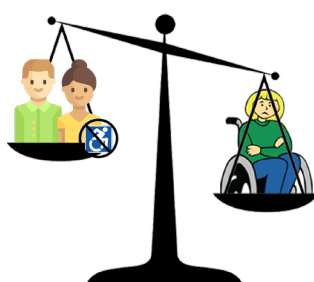
This was structural racism.



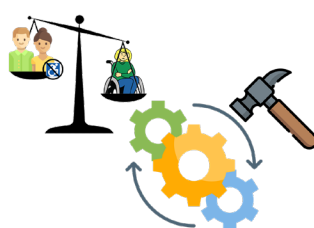
There are other forms of structural discrimination.



One example is **structural ableism**.



**Ableism** is discrimination against people with disabilities.



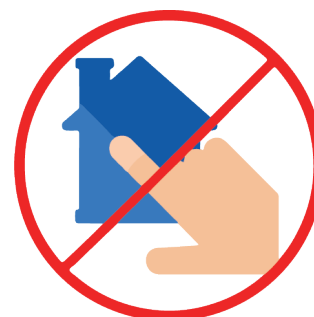
Structural ableism is ableism that is built into systems.



One example of structural ableism is **institutions**.



Institutions are places where a lot of disabled people live.



People living in institutions did not decide to live there.



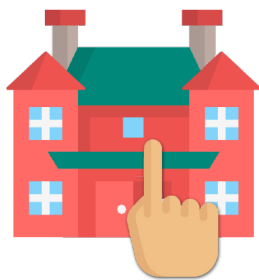
They usually can't leave when they want to.



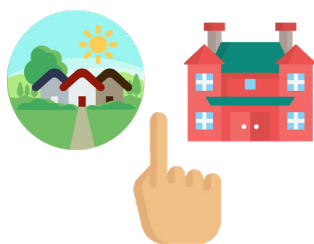
Some people with disabilities need support to live on their own.



For a long time, the government would only pay for institutions.



People who did not want to live in institutions were forced to live in institutions anyway.



People with disabilities should decide where we want to live.



We should not be forced to live in institutions.



This is structural ableism.



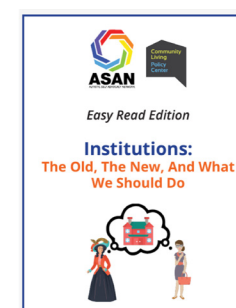
The government said they would only pay for institutions.



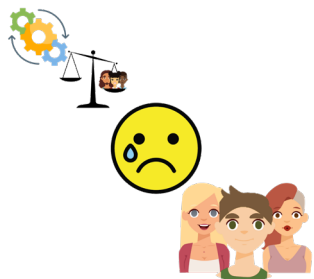
This rule is unfair and ableist.



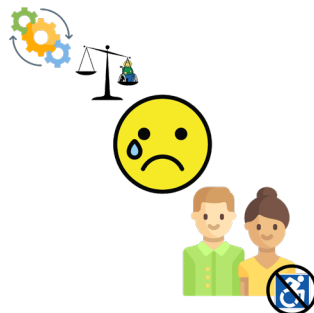
The government made this rule without listening to people with disabilities.



Learn more about institutions in our toolkit *Institutions: The Old, The New, and What We Should Do*.



Structural racism can hurt white people, too.



And structural ableism can hurt people without disabilities, too.

For example:



The US gives some people government benefits, like help with buying food.



The US doesn't spend enough money on government benefits to help people with low incomes.



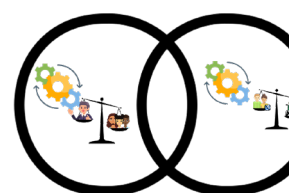
One reason for this is that many white voters think of government benefits as being for people of color.



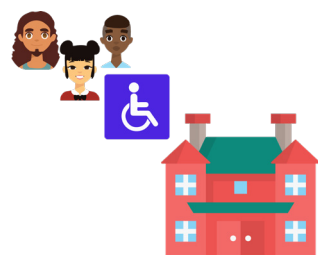
So they won't vote for people who will spend more money on benefits.



But spending more money on benefits would help people of all races.

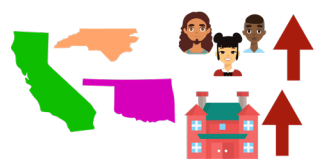


Different kinds of structural discrimination interact.

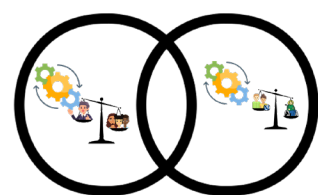


For example:

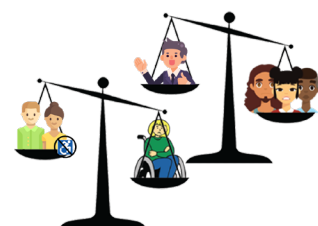
People of color with disabilities are more likely to be in institutions.



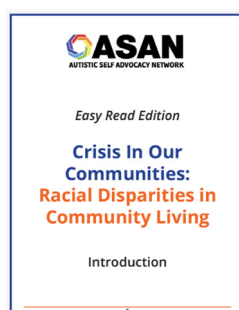
States with a lot of people of color have more institutions.



This is both structural racism and structural ableism.



People of color with disabilities have to deal with both ableism and racism.



We talk more about this example in the chapter on supports in our toolkit [Crisis in Our Communities](#).

