



Easy Read Edition

What Is Structural Racism?

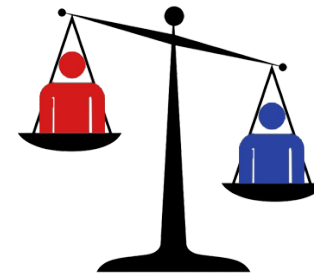
Part 7: Structural Racism
is sometimes hidden

Words to Know in Part 7



citizen

A citizen is someone who has certain rights in the country they live in.



discrimination

Discrimination is treating someone unfairly because of who they are.



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



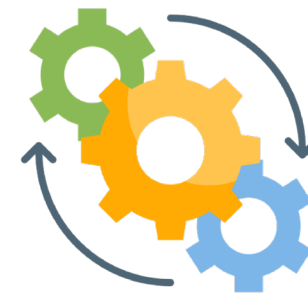
racism

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



structural racism

Structural racism is racism that is built into systems.



system

A big group of people working together.



white supremacy

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

Structural Racism is Sometimes Hidden



Sometimes it is hard to tell that structural racism exists.



Even when people make racist systems, they usually don't say so.



Most of the time, they give other reasons for how the system works.



This makes a lot of people think that structural racism doesn't exist.



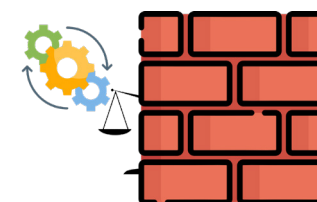
They might think that it only existed in the past.



Or they might think that racism only happens because of individual decisions.



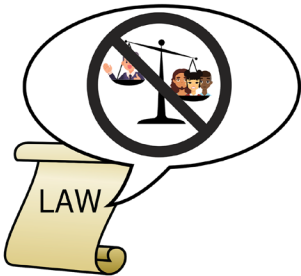
None of this is true.



But when structural racism is hidden, it is very hard to prove it is happening.



People create racist systems that don't look racist. They do this on purpose.



They hide racism because of laws against racism.



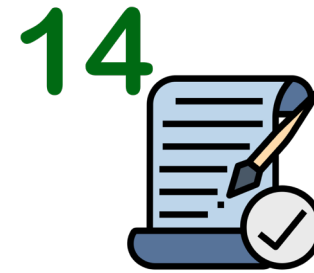
They also hide racism because some people don't like obvious racism.



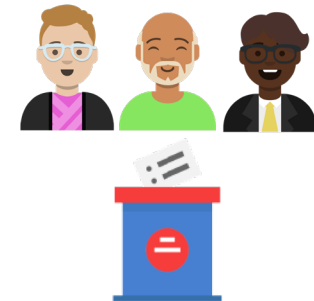
We gave an example of how racism can get hidden when we talked about juries.



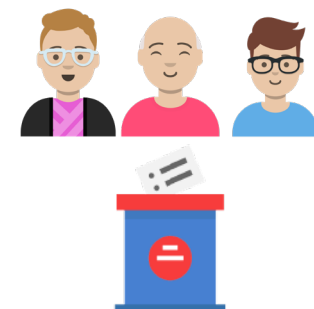
Another example happens in voting.



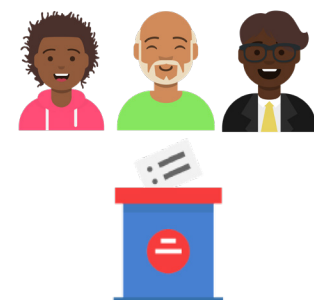
The 14th Amendment said that everyone born in the US is a US citizen.



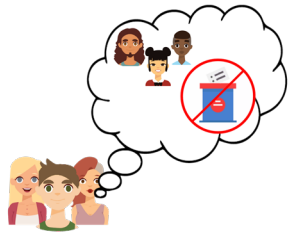
Male citizens had the right to vote.



Before the 14th amendment, only white men had the right to vote.



After the 14th amendment, men of color also had the right to vote.



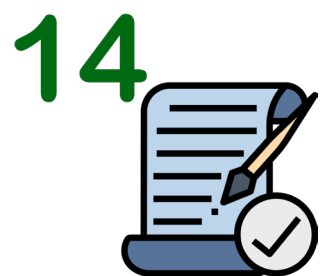
White people in many parts of the country did not want people of color to vote.



They didn't want people of color to have power over the laws.



This is white supremacy.



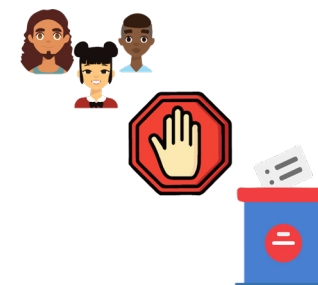
But the 14th Amendment and other laws said they couldn't keep people of color from voting.



So they came up with new rules that kept people of color from voting.



These rules didn't say they were stopping people because of race.



But, they only stopped people of color from voting.



For example, states made people pass a test before they could vote.



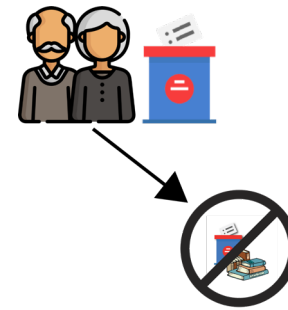
They said they wanted voters to be able to read and write.



No one should have to pass a test to vote.



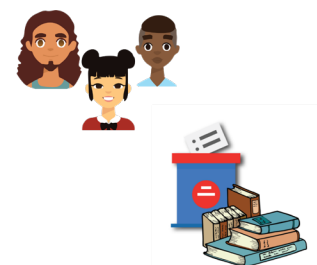
They also made the tests very unfair.



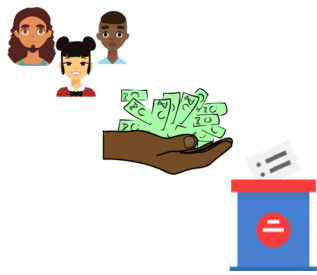
Sometimes they said if your grandparents voted, you did not have to pass the test.



But most people of color didn't have grandparents who were allowed to vote.



So only people of color had to take the tests.



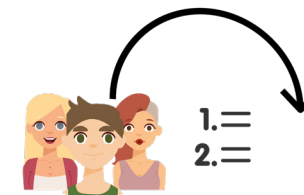
Sometimes states made people of color pay extra fines to vote.



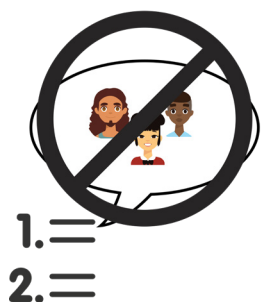
These rules were made to look like they applied to everyone.



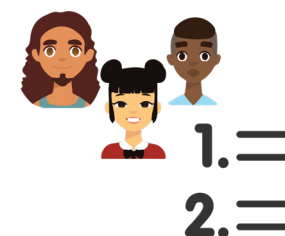
They also made it harder for people of color to prove they were allowed to vote.



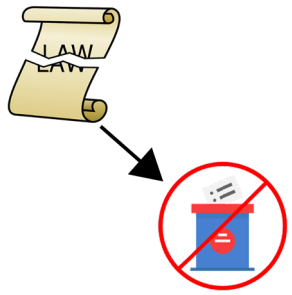
Sometimes they gave white people a way to get around the rules.



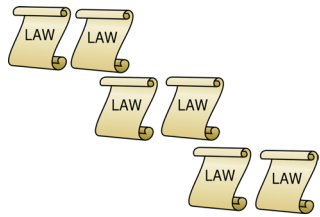
But these rules almost never mentioned race or people of color.



Or they only used the rules on people of color.



Sometimes states made laws that said people who broke the law couldn't ever vote again.



Then they made a lot of laws that made sure people of color could be arrested.



These laws also didn't say that they were about people of color.



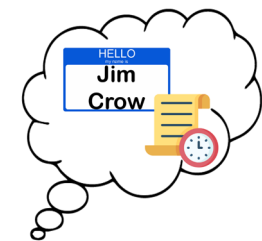
But the laws were only used to arrest people of color.



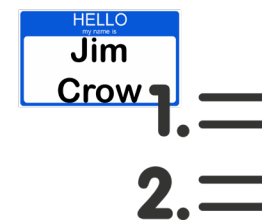
So a lot of people of color had their right to vote taken away.



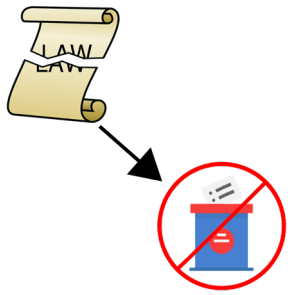
When states made these laws right after the 14th Amendment, it was called Jim Crow.



Some people think Jim Crow is in the past.



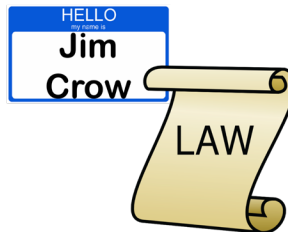
But a lot of these rules stayed around.



For example, some places still take away people's right to vote when courts say they broke the law.



The Voting Rights Act was supposed to stop a lot of these laws.



Sometimes these are the same laws that states passed during Jim Crow.



The Voting Rights Act said states could not make these laws unless the federal government said they could.



Sometimes these laws were never changed.



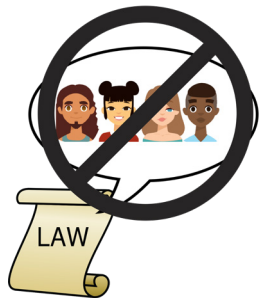
But that part of the Voting Rights Act got taken away.



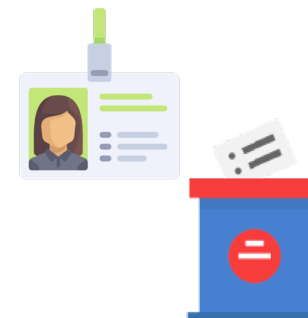
Now states are passing very similar laws today.



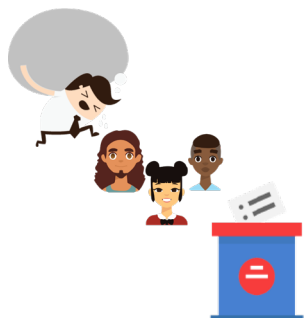
Sometimes they look at the way that people of color vote. Then, they try to make those ways of voting harder.



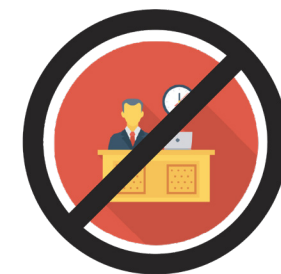
None of these laws mention race.



Sometimes there are rules to make people get new paperwork to vote.



But a lot of times the laws make it harder for people of color to vote.



And then they close the offices where people can get that paperwork.



They close the offices that are near communities of color only.



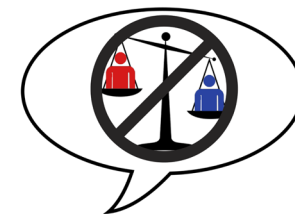
Sometimes they move or close the places to vote in communities of color.



This means people of color have to travel further and wait longer to vote.



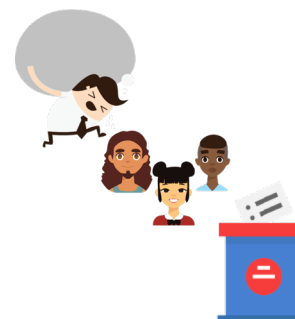
The people making these rules defend these decisions.



They say they're not discriminating because they don't mention race.



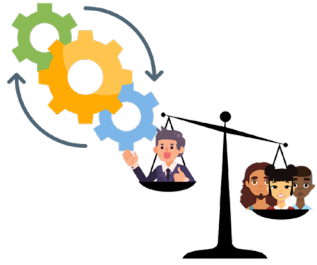
They give other reasons for the decisions.



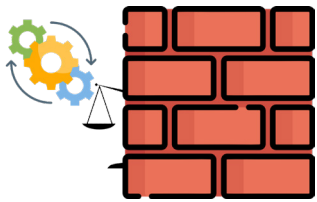
But all the decisions make it harder for people of color.



And that is on purpose.



That is structural racism.



Even if the reason is hidden, it is still structural racism.



Because these rules don't mention race, it is harder for people to notice they cause discrimination.



It is easier to defend them.



Sometimes people think the rules and systems aren't the problem.



They might think the only problem is individual people's racism.



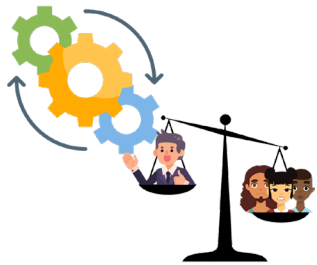
This can make people think that the problem can go away if they don't think about race at all.



But not thinking about race doesn't change the rules and systems.



The rules and systems are still there.



And the rules and systems are still racist.



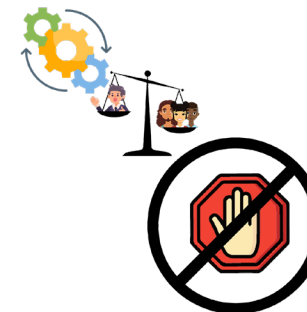
Not thinking about race at all makes it even harder to notice and fix this.



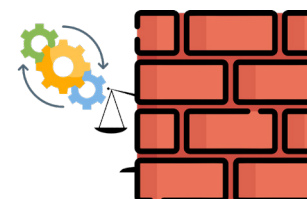
Sometimes people think all the real racism happened a long time in the past.



They think that we got rid of racism and don't need to think about it anymore.



But a lot of structural racism didn't go away.



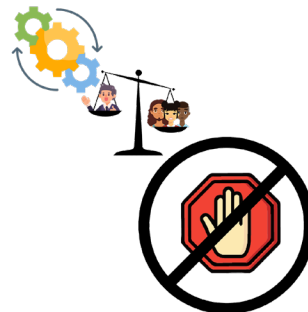
Some of it was only changed to be more hidden.



People tried to make racism look neutral in the past too.



It is always important to look at how systems hurt people.



Deciding structural racism doesn't exist doesn't make it go away.



It just makes it harder to notice.

