



**Thank you for pledging to take a Stand Against Racism in
2022!**

This year, Stand Against Racism participants get access to an exclusive, self-paced curriculum of racial equity content developed by YW Boston to educate, contextualize, and empower organizations and individuals looking to better understand and address racism in Boston.

If you need help additional help participating in our campaign and introducing Stand Against Racism content at your organization, check out our [Participant Toolkit](#).



Note: Our curriculum content will stay up on our website indefinitely and you may continue to engage with it after the campaign ends.

2022 Stand Against Racism Curriculum

1. Foundations of Racial Equity

- The Construction of Race
- Social Identities and Intersectionality
- What are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

2. Understanding Inequitable Systems

- Criminal (in)Justice
- Housing
- Healthcare
- Immigration

3. Continued Learning and Action

4. Claim your Completion Badge

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1. Foundations of Racial Equity

The Construction of Race

The United States' founding document, the Declaration of Independence, stated preservation of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The disparities we currently see across racial, gender, and economic divides do not align with these values. And yet, rather than believing we have veered off the

path of our country's founding, we must recognize that there has always been a disconnect between those stated values and how our systems have been formed. When we do that, we can deeply examine how our current systems of oppression were formed and how they continue to function. We defined "oppression" in our Participant Toolkit as the systemic and institutional abuse of power by one group at the expense of others and the use of force to maintain this dynamic. (kzoo.edu)



The video above is an excerpt from one of YW Boston's DEI Forums titled "Inequitable Systems as Violence." Our DEI Forums are part of YW Boston's DEI Services and are facilitated for organizations of all sizes. [Click here to learn more about our services](#) and how YW Boston can support equitable change within your organization.

In the aftermath of a crisis or tragedy, we often hear declarations that our "systems are broken." In fact, our systems are working as they were designed. Deep inequities were present at our country's founding and have been a through line until today. And therefore, discriminatory beliefs and practices have been built into our systems – those formed by the government and by our institutions. These systems, from education

to class, and everything in between, have been created by those who have held power in the situation, and therefore have been set up to benefit them. We must see our systems clearly in order to rebuild them. Creating patches that improve certain areas but don't alter the underlying structure of inequitable systems is not enough.

Something is systemic in nature when it is spread throughout, affecting a group or system, such as a body, economy, market or society as a whole, and embedded as normal practice within society or an organization. [Systems of oppression \(advantage or disadvantage\)](#), such as racism, sexism, ableism, and so on, refer to the policies and practices engrained in our daily lives that benefit people of certain social identities over others, thereby maintaining the power held by those who are considered to have "privileged" identities.

Key Concept: The changing definition of race

Racism, a system of advantage based on race, is an integral part of the how many of our nation's other systems, such as our criminal justice system, were crafted. This is why race as Americans understand the concept today was formed. As the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) (NMAAHC) explains, prior to American colonization, "race" was used rarely and generally meant to group people by kinship, rather than shared physical characteristics. However, racial categories as we know them today became more commonplace as the "categorization of people became a justification for European colonization and subsequent enslavement of people from Africa." We also know that the conception of who is White has evolved over time, with the term first used as a way to collect power against Native Americans, enslaved Africans, and non-Anglo Saxon immigrants. This meant that groups such as Irish, Italian, and Eastern European Americans were long thought not to be White. However, according to the NMAAHC the category of White "would expand as people wanted to push back

against the increasing numbers of people of color due to emancipation and immigration,” thereby collecting greater power for those considered White. Through this example, we see that constructions of race have long evolved to fit the needs of those with power and privilege.

European colonization and the founding of the United States of America depended on this construction of race, thereby ensuring that race was interwoven into our nation’s policies and practices. Pulitzer Prize winning author Isabel Wilkerson has found that race is the primary factor in how we divide the people of our country, referring to this system as caste. As she [explains](#), a “caste system uses rigid, often arbitrary boundaries to keep the ranks apart, distinct from one another and in their assigned places...In America, race is the primary tool and the visible decoy for caste.” Understanding that race has been and still is the central way that we divide, and therefore understand, our nation helps us see that it has necessarily been built into the core of our institutions.

Social Identities and Intersectionality

At YW Boston, we define **identity** as “The way an individual thinks about themselves, the way they are viewed by the world and the characteristics that define them.” More specifically, **social identities** are a specific type of identity that are the “result of shared constructions and social relations” based on human-created societal norms ([Johnson, 2006](#)).

There are an almost endless number of ways that society has categorized people over time. It is helpful to look at the social identities that are most distinct and impactful in American life today. During our [“Understanding Social Identities”](#) workshop, YW Boston dives deep into the “Big 8” social identities. When you read through the following list, consider how you personally identify:

- **Race:** Social construct that refers to groups of people who have differences and similarities in physical traits (skin color, bone structure, hair texture, etc.) deemed by society to be socially significant (YW Boston)
- **Gender:** A social and legal status and set of expectations from society, about behaviors, characteristics, and thoughts based on an individual's perceived sexual organs (YW Boston)
- **Age:** How people are categorized by society's perceptions of different age groups. ([Appalachian State University](#))
- **Ability:** The diverse array of differences in physical, mental, cognitive, developmental, learning, and/or emotional make-up. It also includes mental health and the impact of social experiences such as trauma and surviving abuse. ([Appalachian State University](#))
- **Sexual Orientation:** An individual's physical and sexual attraction, or any lack thereof, as it relates to other people (YW Boston)
- **Religion:** A person's or a group's beliefs about the existence of God or gods and/or an identification with a particular religion or set of spiritual practices. ([Appalachian State University](#))
- **Immigration Status:** The way in which a person is present in the United States. ([National Latino Network](#))
- **Class:** The social standing of an individual or group determined by a combination of education, income and occupation (YW Boston)

Key Concept: Intersectionality

One's identity is like a unique puzzle, and how an individual categorizes themselves based on social identities makes up the puzzle pieces. The term **intersectionality** refers to the way in which these social identities overlap and effect one another, creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Kimberlé Crenshaw, law professor and social theorist, first coined the term intersectionality in her 1989 paper "Demarginalizing The Intersection Of Race And Sex: A Black Feminist Critique Of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory And Antiracist Politics" to expand on the unique experiences of Black women specifically. Nowadays, intersectionality is considered a crucial framework to social equity work.

It is important for individuals to take time to examine their own social identities, how they perceive themselves, how others perceive them, how these identities shape their world view and experience, and how their identities interact with each other. This practice is important for everyone because our understanding of social identities can change over time.

Reflection Checkpoint: Social Identities Activity

Social Identities Activity

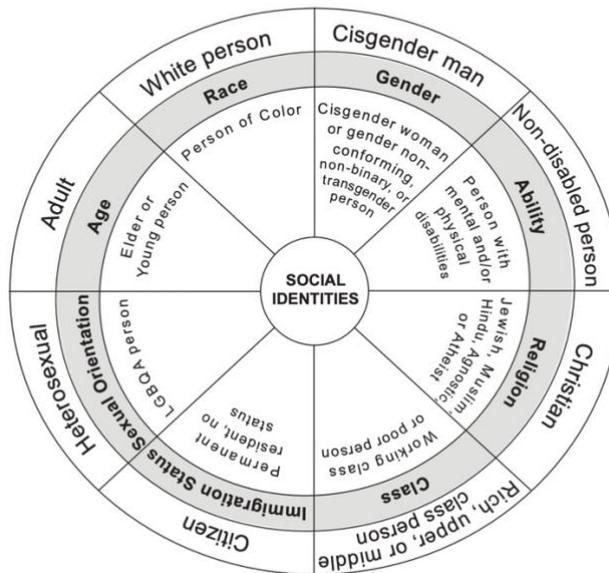
eliminating racism
empowering women



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boston

SOCIAL IDENTITIES ACTIVITY

1. Color in the sections that coincide with your identity.
2. Make note, with a symbol or shape, on the outside of the circle at the location of identities that are invisible.
3. Are there identities others ascribe to you, but you do not feel? If so, place an exclamation point next to those.



Reflection Checkpoint: Discussion Questions

- Reflect on which identities sit on the outer edge of the diagram and which sit closer to the center. What does holding accumulated advantage and disadvantage in these categories mean to you?

- How do social identities inform your interpersonal relationships?

Foundations of DEI: What are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, or DEI as it is commonly referred, is a phrase that broadly outlines the efforts an institution takes to create a more welcoming environment for people of less-privileged identities. This can mean working to ensure your upper management is not fully comprised of White men or implementing mentorship opportunities for young professionals of color in your workplace. As a whole, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts seek to create meaningful, systemic change toward more equitable environments. Part of the barrier to getting started building a DEI strategy is not knowing the difference between these three concepts, and therefore how to address each.

Boiled down simply, [Independent Sector](#) does a great job of explaining the definitions of each of these terms:

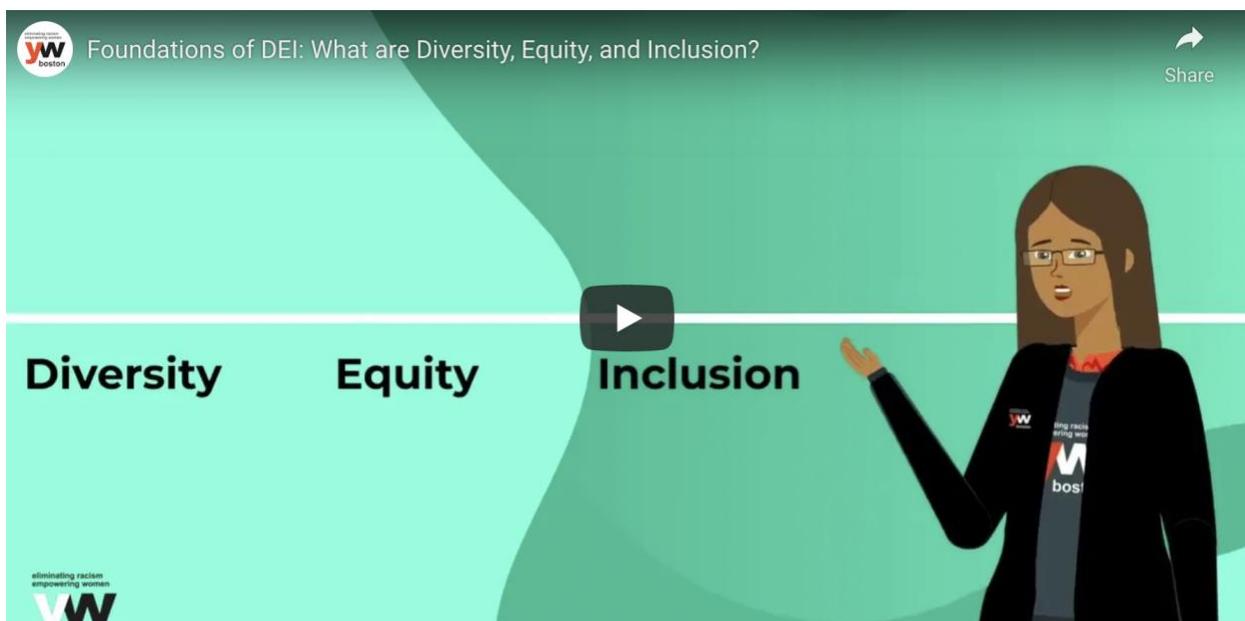
Diversity “includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another,” including identity markers such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and more. It also takes [intersectional](#) diversity into account, when people’s identity is made of a number of underrepresented identities.

Equity is “the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the

procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources.”

Inclusion is “the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.”

Now that we know the differences in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, we can see why it is harmful to equate the three with one another. Goal setting is an important aspect of DEI work, but diversity, equity, and inclusion each require different methods of intervention, different resources, and different tools for measurement. For instance, because racial, ethnic, and/or gender diversity can sometimes (but not always) be determined by visually scanning an organization, organizations may feel it is the easiest to measure and the easiest to tackle. Diversifying the workforce is important, but that doesn’t directly lead to those new hires feeling welcomed or supported in the organization.



2. Understanding Inequitable Systems

Many existing systems continue to perpetuate long-standing inequities to this day. Exploring inequities in a topical and systemic manner allows us to inspect the beliefs, policies, and practices that uphold these inequities so we can envision individual and collective action. In this section, we will explore some of these systems and contextualize them locally within Boston and Massachusetts.

Criminal (in)Justice

In an ideal world, law enforcement would carry out the mission statement “To protect and to serve,” without discrimination, but for people of color this is far from reality. Though the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 brought the issue to the forefront for the first time for some, inequities in the criminal justice system have always existed at its foundation. In America, and internationally, the beliefs and attitudes about a person’s race can determine how they’re treated by the criminal justice system.

Our criminal justice system is purported to be based on humanistic values – that one is innocent until proven guilty and that everyone has the right to a free trial before a jury. And yet, Black Americans are incarcerated at nearly five times the rate of White Americans, an issue that cannot be explained simply by the individual racism of the judge and jury. Recent Boston Police Department data showed that Black people accounted for 70% of police officer stops through their “Field Interrogation and Observation” program, “which includes... police actions [such as] “stop and frisk,” ...even though Black residents comprise less than one quarter of the city’s population.”

Inequities experienced by Black people and people of color are not new and can be traced back to the beginnings of the criminal justice system in America. The police departments of today are the evolution of both

slave patrols and Night Watches, which formed early on in the country's history. Slave patrols began in the American South and were designed to control and punish Black slaves, in a similar vein Night Watches were designed to police and control Native Americans.

Jim Crow laws, named for a racist Black minstrel show character, were a collection of state and local laws that legalized racial segregation directly after slavery was abolished – a tactic to both limit the power of formerly enslaved people and to [utilize forced labor](#) in the form of imprisonment. While Jim Crow was abolished with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, those in power simply changed tactics – continuing to incarcerate Black men through legislation tied to the “War on Drugs.” This covert approach remains an effective way to keep power out of the hands of Black Americans and utilize their labor in prison. Thus, the disparities in incarceration are due to the design of the legislative system altogether. You can learn more about this from Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*.

Inequitable outcomes persist once people of color exit the system. Formerly incarcerated Black men [experience higher rates](#) of unemployment than formerly incarcerated White men and women, but more so than all three, formerly incarcerated Black women experience the highest levels of unemployment.

It's important we recognize the criminal justice system as a form of systemic inequity because, once we understand that it is not just about individual players—such as a handful of police officers who use excessive force or a few players within the court systems who hand out disproportionate sentences for the same crime based on the race of the accused—we can identify root causes and understand that we need to address racism in the criminal justice system beyond the people who operate within it to enforce it.

Housing

We see a similar pattern built into our housing system. In response to the Great Depression, the New Deal included housing programs – programs which [intentionally](#) shut out Black Americans. On top of this, the newly established Federal Housing Administration refused to insure mortgages in and near Black neighborhoods, a process called redlining. Over the past century, mortgage insurers have not always explicitly stated that race is a reason for denying coverage, instead color coding these neighborhoods as “risky”. But the racism was overt in the Federal Housing Administration’s manual, which stated that “incompatible racial groups should not be permitted to live in the same communities.” Today, credit scores are used as a form of redlining, disproportionately impacting Black and Latino households. Home ownership is one of the most secure ways for families to accrue wealth. As a result of redlining policies, White households have a [median wealth](#) that is ten times that of Black households and eight times that of Latino households. You can learn more about this in Richard Rothstein’s *The Color of Law*. In March of 2022, WBUR reported on Boston’s home loan gap in their article [Black and Hispanic people are more likely to be denied mortgage loans in Boston](#).

Healthcare

Healthcare and community wellness are essential to human experience. They allow us and our communities the resources to take care of our minds and bodies and have a comfortable quality of life. When we think about what healthcare is, the first thing that might spring to mind is the care received when we feel sick or experience an injury. However, healthcare isn’t just reactive. It also includes preventative care.

Healthcare and community wellness are affected by [social determinants of health](#). They are “conditions in the environments in which [we] are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of

health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.” Social determinants of health can range from the neighborhoods we live in, the quality of food we have access to, and even the language we speak. When it comes to health outcomes, it’s crucial to recognize the interconnected nature of racial inequities and social determinants. If a person lives in an area where they cannot be active or where they are exposed to pollution and contamination, they would be more prone to adverse health outcomes as result. For many people of color, it is not a matter of being able to “make good choices” that benefit their health, but a lack of access to good choices in the first place.

According [to the CDC](#), amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, several social determinants of health “contribute to racial and ethnic minority groups being disproportionately affected by COVID-19, including Neighborhood and Physical Environment.” With people of color being uniquely affected by housing inequity, they may be confined to housing and neighborhoods with “crowded conditions [...] that lack access to reliable transportation. These conditions may make illnesses, diseases, and injuries more common and more severe, when experienced.” Around the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Boston, YW Boston hosted a webinar titled “[An unequal response: Addressing the intersectional dimensions of COVID-19](#)” which emphasized that inequities pre-dating COVID-19 were worsened by the pandemic and responses should involve cross-sector participation and a deep understanding of social systems in order to ensure more equitable outcomes.

Experiences and access to healthcare for Boston residents also differ depending on race. Through reporting, The Boston Globe Spotlight team [examined segregation patterns in Boston health care](#). These segregation patterns showcased differences in where Black and White populations receive medical care in the city. As the team reports:

“The reasons are complex. More [Whites] live near Mass. General. Certain lower-cost health insurance plans generally don’t pay for care at Harvard Medical School’s high-priced academic medical centers, including Dana-Farber and MGH [(Massachusetts General Hospital)]. And some [Blacks] are uncomfortable at mostly [White] institutions – or those institutions may not make them feel welcome – a divide compounded by a dearth of [Black] physicians.”

Immigration

Immigration is broadly defined as a process through which an individual moves to another country in order to live there; including both involuntary and voluntary motives. Immigration is a nuanced circumstance, one which is often misrepresented, weaponized, and conflated with concepts such as legal status, citizenship, and legality. Thus, immigration and systems of oppression, such as racism, are closely interlinked and have been since their beginnings. From “the [Naturalization Act of 1790](#), which restricted citizenship to ‘any alien, being a free white person[,]’” to the 2017 [Muslim ban](#), we continue to witness inequities resulting from the intersection of immigration and racism.

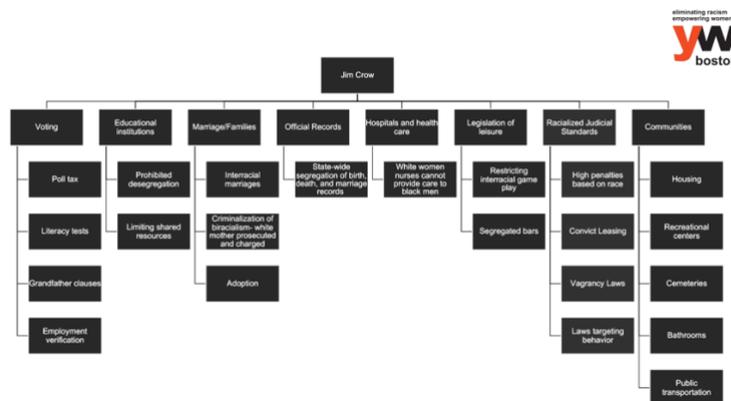
The discrepancy in the treatment of White immigrants as compared to immigrants of color reflects the impact of racial bias, with sympathy being more easily offered based on an individual’s [proximity to Whiteness](#). We’ve been able to observe this most recently during the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine and through the media coverage and treatment of Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainian refugees are undoubtedly deserving of outpouring support and sympathy. At the same time, many [social justice advocates](#) are pointing out [the discrepancy](#) between responses to this invasion of Ukraine and military invasions that have taken place in countries with a population that is not predominantly White. Journalists have covered the disparate experiences of White

Ukrainians and Ukrainians of color when trying to exit the country. In a speech talking about Ukrainian refugees, Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov said, “These are not the refugees we are used to... these people are Europeans... These people are intelligent, they are educated people. This is not the refugee wave we have been used to, people we were not sure about their identity, people with unclear pasts, who could have been even terrorists...”

Furthermore, the intersection of social identities and inequitable systems creates precarious conditions for people of color. In Massachusetts, like in other states, immigrant communities have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Immigrants without officially recognized documentation are at a high risk of COVID-19 outbreak exposure after being detained by ICE. [According to the Vera Institute of Justice](#), “[In late January of 2022] more than 3,100 detainees were fighting infections, about 14 percent of the detained population and well past the peak of 2,100 [in] May [of 2021.]”

Reflection Checkpoint: The Institutionalization of Racism

The chart below includes examples of policies that have succeeded Jim Crow laws to institutionalize racism. Take a moment to explore it.



Reflection Checkpoint: Discussion Questions

- Were you aware of the historical context, policies, and inequitable outcomes explored in this section, such as Jim Crow laws?
- How does this history challenge or affirm your socialization or perception of history?
- Besides the topical areas explored—criminal justice, housing, healthcare, and immigration—are there any other areas where you are able to observe racist beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and policies?

3. Continued Learning and Action

Racism is a long-standing, over-arching system that requires both collective and individual action to dismantle. The work can feel unsurmountable, but by engaging in continuous learning, education, and action planning, we can get closer to achieving justice. Below you will find some resources to complement the Stand Against Racism curriculum you have just completed that will help you take follow up action.

For this section, we'll be referring to the 4 I's Framework presented on page 9 of your [Stand Against Racism Participant Toolkit](#). Take a moment to review it again.

Reflection Checkpoint: 4 I's Worksheet

Applied Frameworks: 4 I's Worksheet

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Applied Frameworks: The 4 I's

The work to Stand Against Racism does not end on April 30th. Take what you learned from this year's curriculum and use the 4 I's framework from the Participant Toolkit to map out how you will commit to taking a Stand Against Racism in 2022 and beyond.

Strengths

What am I doing/What is my organization doing to promote racial equity?
What am I/are we proud of?

Aspirations

What would the institutions I am a part of feel like if they were more equitable?
What markers would be in place to make sure we're on the right track?

**CONSIDER THE 4 I'S WHEN ENVISIONING RACIAL EQUITY:
IDEOLOGICAL, INTERNALIZED, INTERPERSONAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL.**

Reflection Checkpoint: Discussion Questions

Reflect on areas of growth and opportunities for action that you have both as an individual and within your sphere of influence, such as your workplace, university, friend or family group, and so on. Consider:

- When are you the authority? When do you make decisions about others or for others? Are they a part of the decision making process?
- Who do you influence? Who have you built trust and rapport with?
- Where do you see privilege and power intersecting in your workplace, organization, or the primary institutions you interact with?

4. Claim your Completion Badge

Have you completed this year's Stand Against Racism curriculum? Let us know so we can send you a personalized Stand Against Racism badge to showcase your participation. Please fill out the form below to claim your badge.



[Visit our website](#) to access the form and claim your badge.

Share the news on social media!

Help YW Boston engage as many people as possible in racial equity work by sharing your participation on social media and encouraging others to take a #StandAgainstRacism.

Sample social media posts:

- We are proud to be participating in YW Boston's 2022 #StandAgainstRacism campaign! Learn more and sign up on @ywboston's website: <https://www.ywboston.org/our-work/ourprograms/stand-against-racism/2022-stand-against-racism/>

- We must all learn about and strive toward racial equity. Sign up to participate in YW Boston's 2022 #StandAgainstRacism campaign. Participants will receive access to an exclusive, self-paced curriculum of racial equity content and a toolkit to help guide reflection and action. Plus, you'll get a digital badge for participating!
<https://www.ywboston.org/our-work/our-programs/stand-againstracism/2022-stand-against-racism/>



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Stay engaged!

- Follow YW Boston on social media @ywboston to stay up to date about our work and ways to get involved.
- Learn more about our [DEI Services](#) and how YW Boston can partner with your organization to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- [Make a gift to YW Boston](#) to ensure we can continue to provide free anti-racism content for years to come.

Questions?

If you have any questions about Stand Against Racism, please reach out to Aaron Halls at ahalls@ywboston.org.