What Exactly Is Systemic Racism?
“Racism is not a feeling or emotion. It is a way of thinking, creating, and implementing policies and laws that provide privileges to whites that are nonexistent to minorities. Racism exists on an individual level but more importantly, racism exists in the institutions and structures of our society.” —Dr. Angela Davis

“Racism is a visceral experience . . . the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body.” —Ta-nehisi Coates

Systemic Racism: An Overview

INEQUITABLE SYSTEMS
Systemic racism has led to inequitable systems that continue to ripple throughout society today and affect the health of Black and minority communities and individuals.

Health Care: Black mortality rates can be predicted by historical differences in states’ abolition and enforcement of Jim Crow Laws in the 1800s.

Economic: White slaveholders extracted more than $14 trillion worth of labor, in today’s dollars, from their captives—resulting in an inequitable wealth gap. —Center for American Progress

Education: Lower income brackets in Black and brown neighborhoods lead to lower tax benefits for school systems, which base school funding on local taxation. —U.S. News & World Report

Voting Rights: An estimated 1 in 16 Black Americans does not have the right to vote due to past convictions—4 times the rate of other Americans. —The Sentencing Project

Criminal Justice: In 12 states, more than half of the prison population is Black; in 7 states the black/white prisoner disparity is larger than 9 to 1. —The Sentencing Project

Percentage of communities near harmful landfill sites that are predominantly Black as a result of historic redlining and residential segregation practices.

Click or tap button to learn more about environmental racism.
How TV Stories Can Help

Highlighting the ways characters address systemic racism in different settings, places of employment, and daily interactions is a good place to start. In addition to revealing the problem, show collective solutions to illustrate a way out.

1. Look beyond the individual character at societal barriers
2. Show how equity across sectors can help everyone gain
3. Have families of all backgrounds discuss and address inequities
4. White characters should be aware of how they benefit from systemic racism
5. Have coworkers and management address it in workplace practices
6. Highlight local government’s involvement in perpetuating inequities

Systemic racism is the ultimate societal antagonist for characters of all backgrounds. To be an anti-racist is to fight one of the biggest antagonists in society. Each character must choose to either dismantle systemic racism or uplift it.