

Beyond Colorblindness

Dr. Michaela Null

for

Wright Memorial Public Library

Modern Conceptions of Racism

What do people think of
when they think of racism?

What do people think of
when they think of racists?



Modern Conceptions of Anti-Racism

→ Abolition

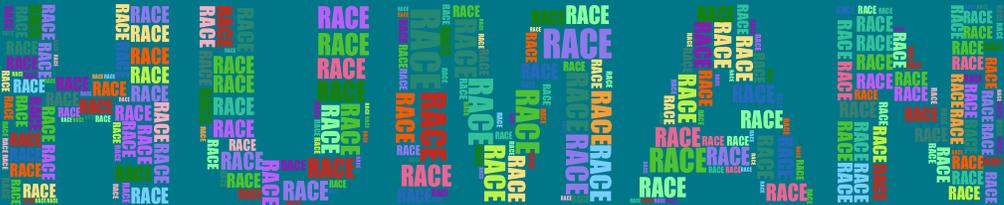
→ Voting Rights

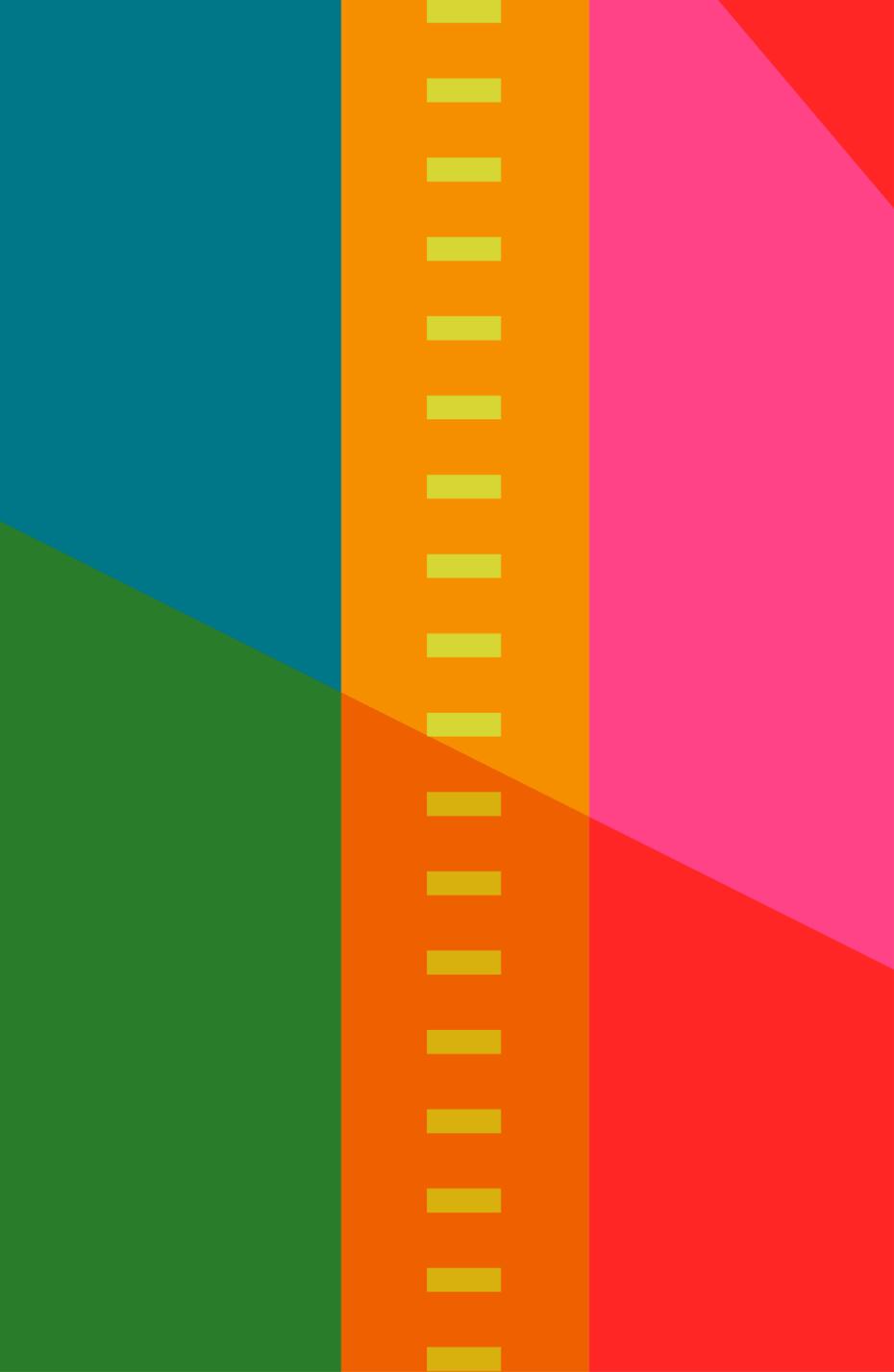
→ Antidiscrimination

→ Colorblindness

→ Affirmative Action

→ Racial Justice





What is Colorblind Ideology?

Defines the problem as treating people differently based on the color of their skin

Defines the solution as not seeing or acknowledging skin color in order to eliminate differential treatment

Focus on individuals

A-historical

Working Understanding of Racism

- **Racism is systemic**
 - big picture, patterns
 - NOT individuals or instances
- **Systemic racism and white supremacy are not merely found in the obvious or overt**
- **Judgements and/or actions based on race are not necessarily conscious or intentional**

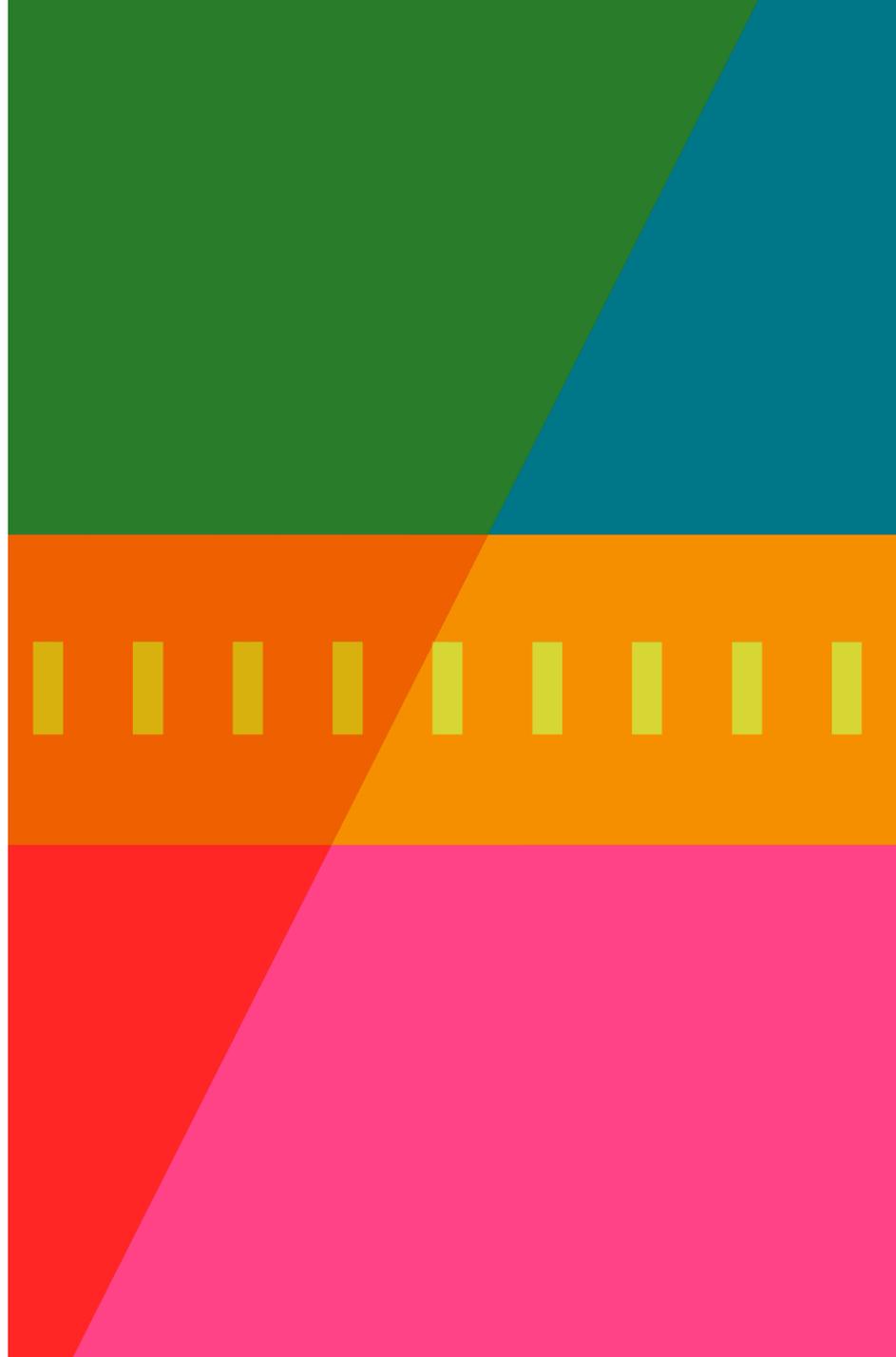


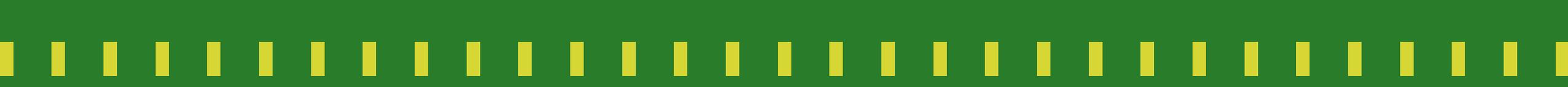
Working Understanding of Discrimination

De-jure

vs.

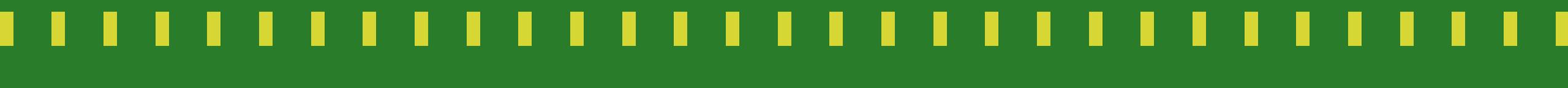
De-facto





Colorblind *Racism*?

How could so-called
colorblindness be racist?



Refusing to “see” or acknowledge race means:

- Defaulting to whiteness
- Ignoring existing inequity and enabling racism
- Applying an individual solution to a systemic problem
- Neither acknowledging OR *celebrating* differences along the lines of race and culture

“Colorblindness” does not address white supremacy or white privilege

Because we live in a country where white = neutral...

Neutrality, objectivity, etc. defaults to whiteness, white culture, white people



“

**Not seeing color also
propagates a white-centric
racial framework and
perspective in which white
privilege is maintained.**

- Gina Laura Gullo, Kelly Capatosto & Cheryl Staats

in Education Week Teacher

“

Our racist systems continue to operate unchecked when white people like me act as though "colorblindness" is possible and desirable.

- Sarah Norris

in Education Week Teacher

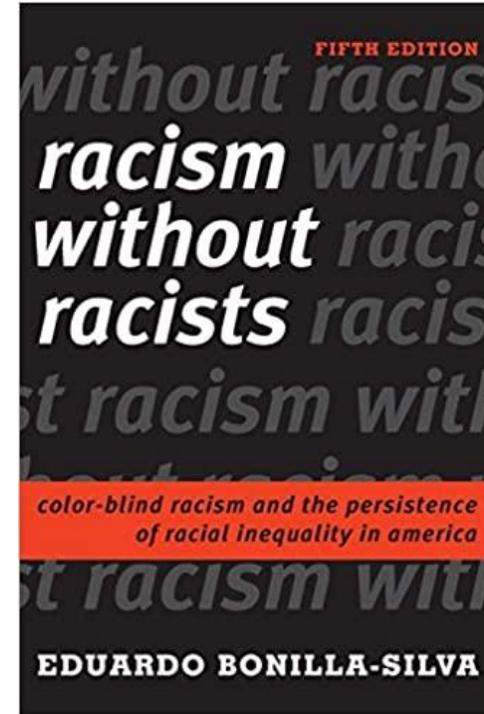
Racism Without Racists

If racism is a system, it is bigger than individuals

If racism is a system, it is not merely about racist beliefs

If racism is a system, it can exist regardless of anyone's intentions

If racism is a system, it can exist without racists





What is the end goal?

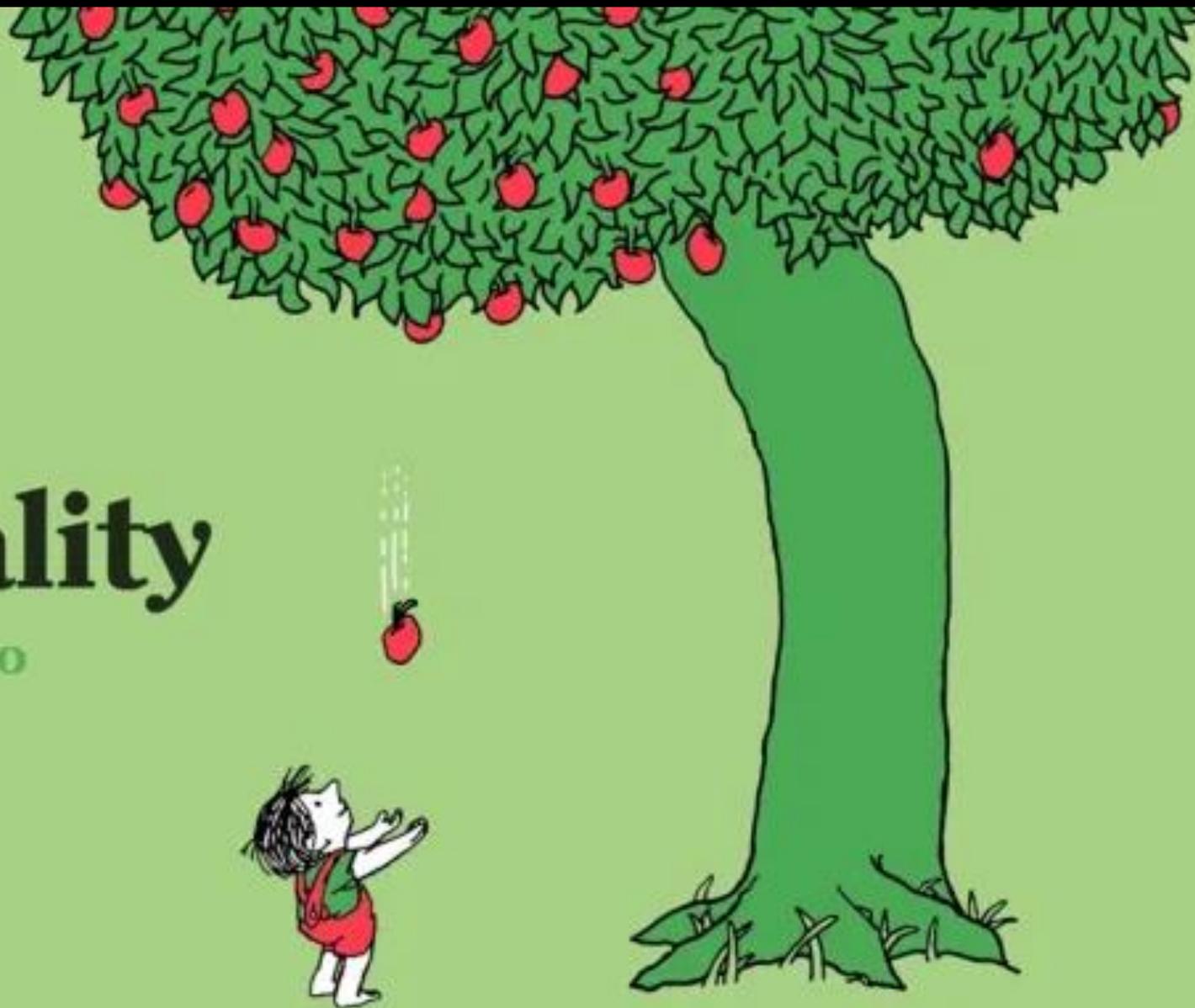
First, we must have a clear assessment of where we are...

...which requires us to look at race.



Inequality

Unequal access to
opportunities





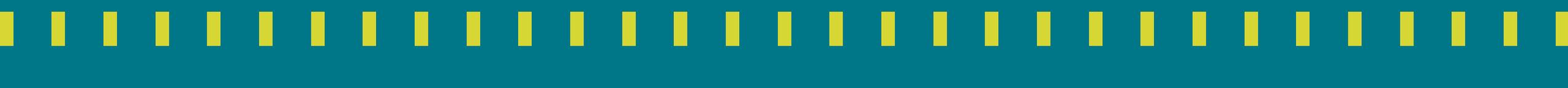
What is the end goal?

Equality?

Equity?

Justice?

(there are important distinctions)



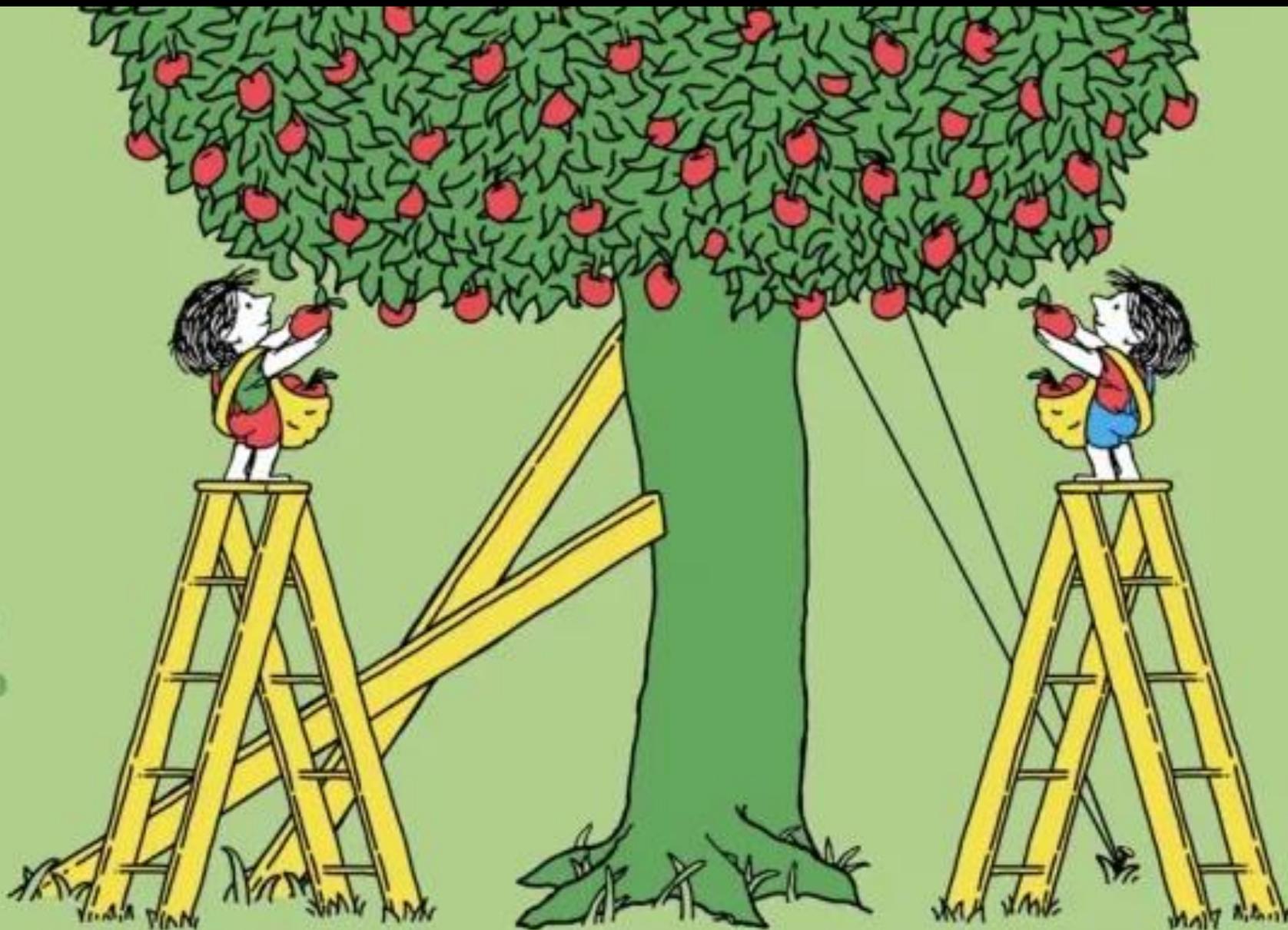
Equality?

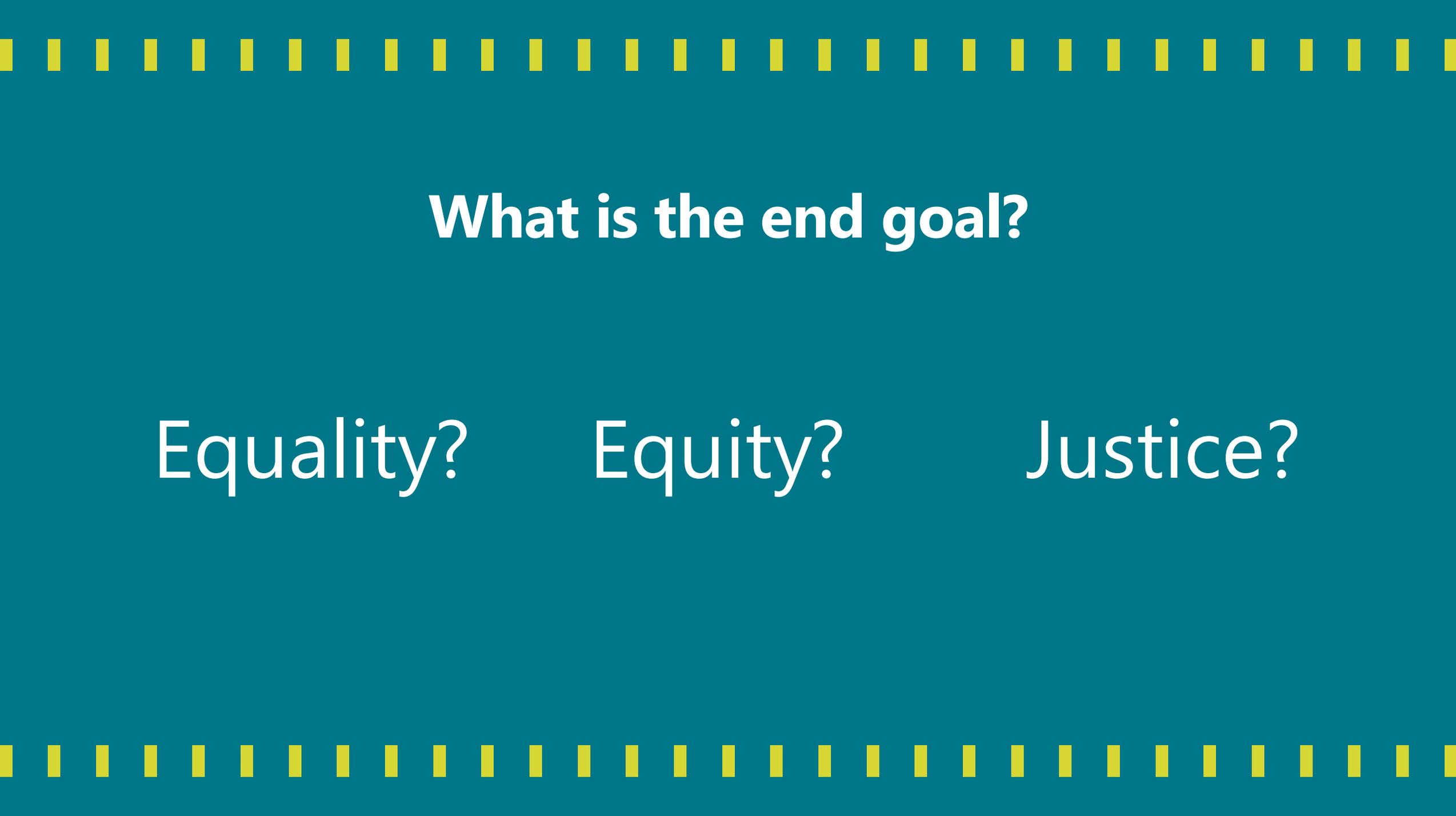
Evenly distributed
tools and assistance



Justice

Fixing the system to
offer equal access to
both tools and
opportunities





What is the end goal?

Equality?

Equity?

Justice?

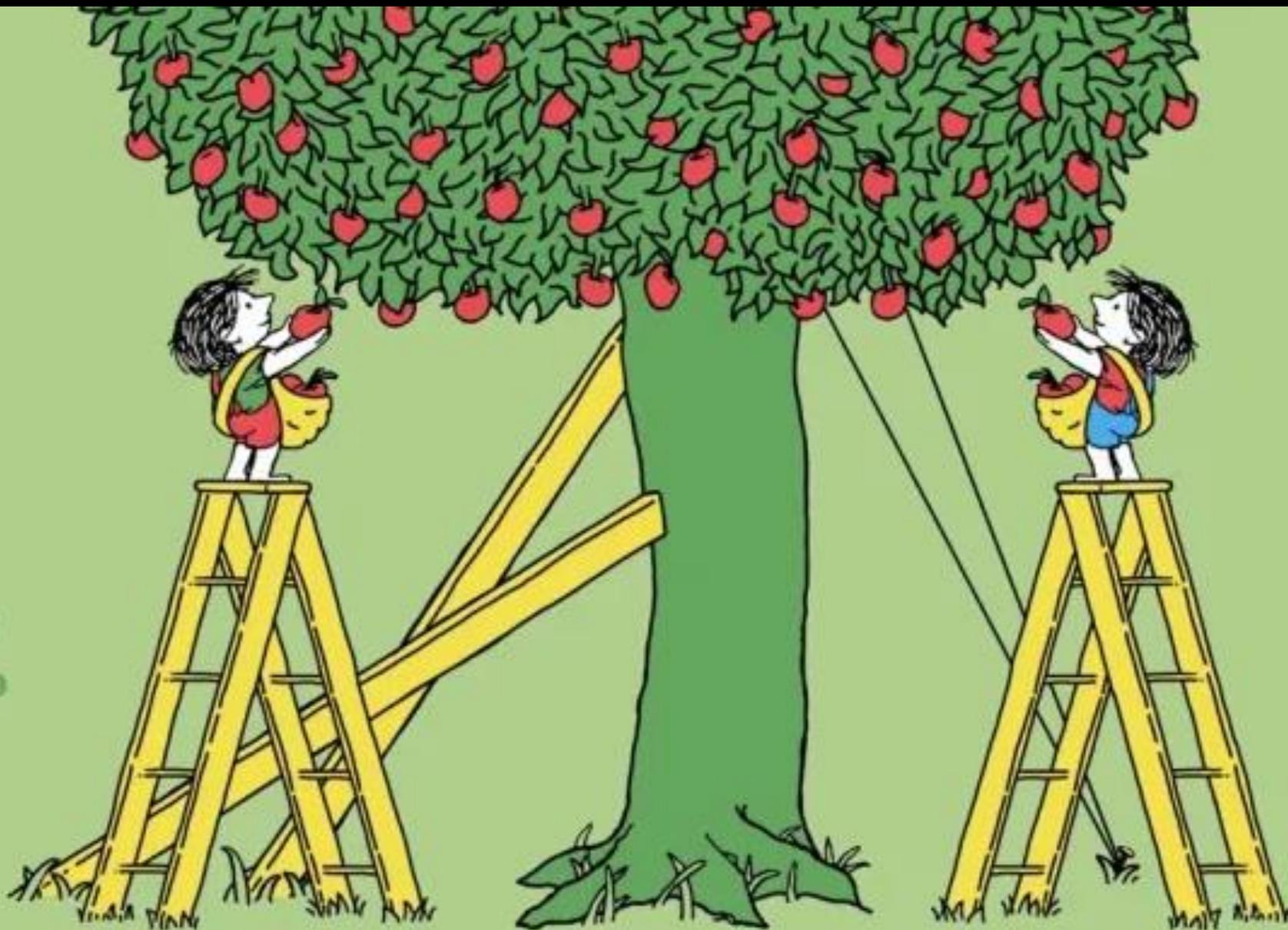
Equity

Custom tools that
identify and address
inequality



Justice

Fixing the system to
offer equal access to
both tools and
opportunities



Modern Conceptions of Anti-Racism

→ Abolition

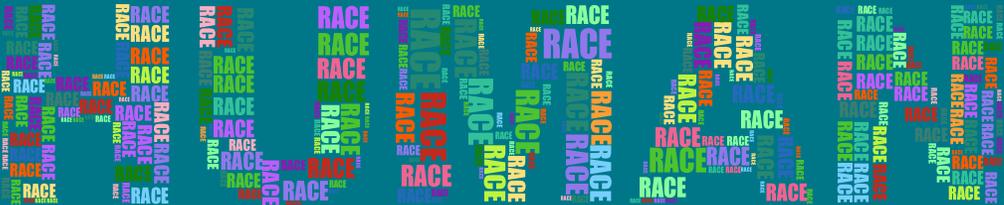
→ Voting Rights

→ Antidiscrimination

→ Colorblindness

→ Affirmative Action

→ Racial Justice

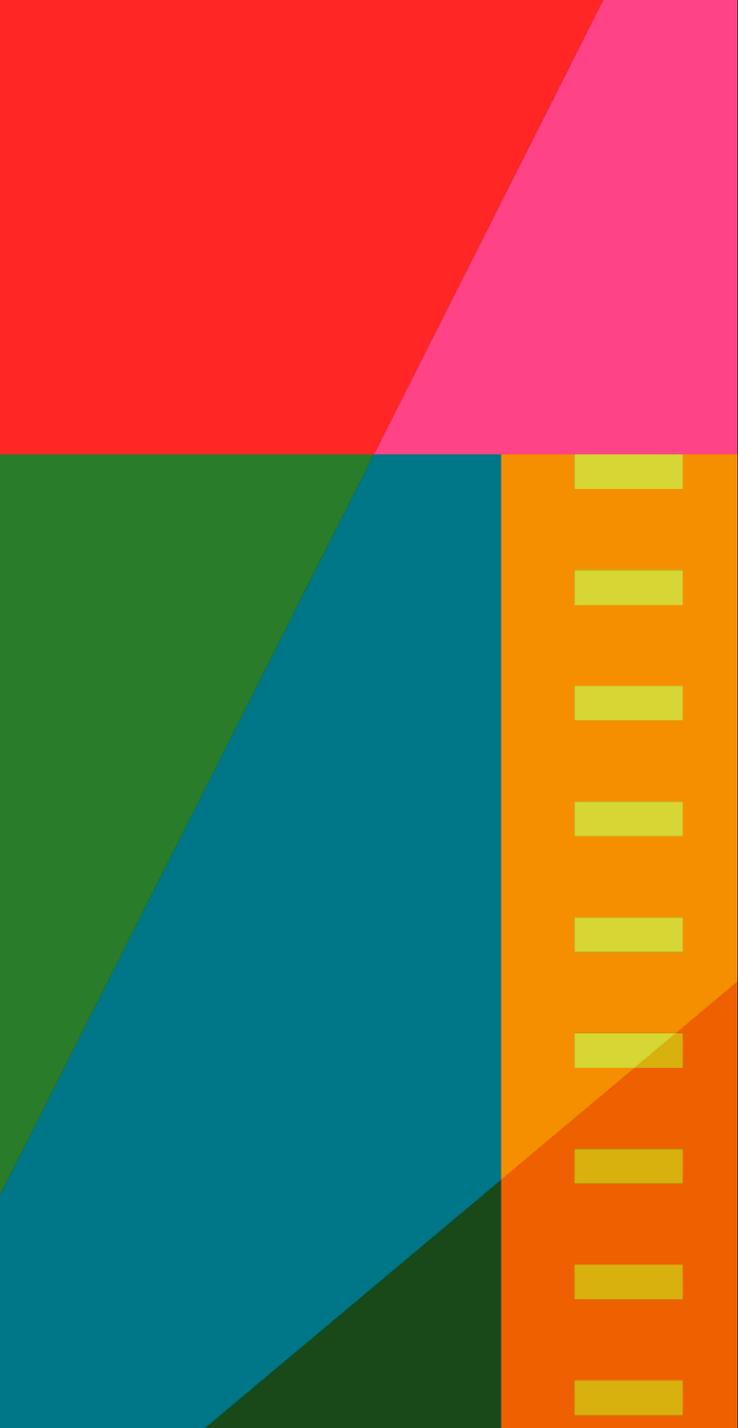


But I'm Still Only Just One Person...

- Seek to understand and honor lived experiences that are different from your own
- Seek to celebrate and value differences without appropriating or tokenizing
- Challenge colorblind ideology and white supremacy
 - Talking about or acknowledging racial inequity does not perpetuate racism

Focus on changing the system





Q&A

Recommended

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2010. *Racism Without Racists: Colorblind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (3rd ed). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

Clair, Matthew and Jeffrey S. Denis. 2015. Racism, Sociology of. *In International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 857-863). New York, NY: Elsevier.

<https://scholar.harvard.edu/matthewclair/publications/sociology-racism>

Colbert Report: Neutral Man's Burden

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/tt0y6c/the-colbert-report-the-word---neutral-man-s-burden>