



# Cultivating the Soil

**Systemic Racism & the American Dream**



# Hello!

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Alliance for Just Society





# What is Racial Justice?

**Racial Justice** aims at full liberation for all. Racial justice acknowledges that racial equality and racial equity are necessary but not sufficient. Racial justice in action is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

**“Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.”**

**- Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.**

# Different Levels of Racism

**MICRO**

Individual  
Interpersonal

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**MACRO**

Institutional  
Systemic



# **Where Does Systemic Racism Come from?**



A detailed historical engraving depicting the settlement of Jamestown in 1619. The scene is set in a coastal area with several wooden buildings, some with thatched roofs. In the center, a large group of Native Americans, many holding bows and arrows, are gathered around a structure. To the right, a group of English settlers, including men and women, are walking along a path. In the foreground, a Native American man is shaking hands with an English woman. To the right, a Native American man is working on a wooden boat. The background shows a landscape with palm trees and a fence line. The overall style is that of a 17th-century engraving.

**1619**

**Jamestown**

# John Rolfe



I am John Rolfe, an English settler here in Virginia. You might know me more by my famous wife, Pocahontas, now deceased.

This August I was a witness as an English pirate ship, the White Lion, brought about 20 Africans into port. I believe they are the first Africans to see these shores. They were taken from a Portuguese slave ship the English raided. Our colony traded them in exchange for food.

Since these Africans are baptized Christians, we will take them into indentured servitude to earn their keep like many of the Englishmen here in the Colony of Virginia. Maybe one of my sons will buy one or two servants to work our plantation, Varina Farms.

# John Punch



I am John Punch. I believe I was born in Cameroon in Africa, but no one knows for sure. As a child, I was kidnapped by Portuguese slavers and taken to the New World. But our ship was raided on the way to Mexico and I was taken by the English here to Virginia.

I am now an indentured servant, but just twenty years in the future, in 1640, I will try to escape Virginia with some English indentured servants. My punishment will be to become a permanent servant. In other words, I will be enslaved. My English counterparts will not be enslaved. I will be the first permanent slave in the English colonies. The first of many.





# Lessons from 1619



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Quickly, laws and policies distinguish between Black, white and Native people.



1676

Jamestown

# Nathaniel Bacon



I am Nathaniel Bacon. I was born into a rich merchant family in England and came to Virginia as a planter. I own two large farms and I am on the Governor's council.

But I have become the figurehead of a movement here opposing the powerful plantation owners and the corrupt Governor of Virginia Colony. Freed European and African indentured servants, small landowners and others from all classes in Virginia, unite around my banner. We will burn the capital Jamestown to the ground, chase the governor out and make a "Declaration of the People," demanding rights as citizens...



# Nathaniel Bacon



What united us against the elites was our demand that the Virginia government remove the original inhabitants of this land from their traditional lands, fight the Indian tribes who get in the way, and let us free men take the lands for ourselves. We believe the land belongs to good Christians, not to the “savage” Indians.

For nearly a year my small army of 500 men roams around Virginia killing the Native people and fighting the government's troops. Eventually I die and the rebellion ends, but our rebellion inspires another uprising one hundred years from now.

# William Berkeley



I am William Berkeley, the Governor of the English Colony of Virginia. I am on a ship sailing back to England because I failed to stop Bacon and his rebellion. But the small group of Englishmen that rule Virginia has learned a hard lesson. They will pass laws over the next few years that will divide the coalition that united under Bacon.

The descendents of African indentured servants will become enslaved for life and their children too. Freed Negroes will be barred from owning European indentured servants. Virginia will reduce and eventually eliminate indentured servitude, to be replaced by slavery. Negroes will be barred from Indian lands. And Indian land will increasingly be taken by military force to appease English farmers.



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A small group of elites benefit from racial division between white, Black and Native people.





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**What was your  
biggest discovery  
from this history?**

# Conclusions & Lessons



- History demonstrates how racism evolved in the United States - it's different in other places around the world.
- Systemic racism primarily benefits a small elite.
- Race is a social construct and Racism is a human-made system. Both change based on our resistance - the action we take.
- Racism is a system of oppression. It is not a bone disease.



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**What does systemic  
racism mean for Whole  
Family Approach?**