What is Racism?

In order to clearly understand racism, we need to consider it within an historic context. Racism occurs in three forms:

• **Structural racism** is built into the fabric and foundation of society; it has always been an inherent part of the economic, political and "dominant" cultural systems of this nation and is reflected in all major U.S. institutions.

• **Institutional racism** is the utilization of policies, rules, and laws that govern and guide institutions in ways that abuse, exploit, and discriminate against people based on race. As a result, large numbers of oppressed people express feelings of inferiority in their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. At the same time, large numbers of people in the "dominant" group—even those with little power— express feelings of superiority in their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs.

• **Individual racism** is abuse, exploitation, and discrimination against one individual over another based on race.

The story of the carousel panel is the ongoing story of structural, institutional, and individual racism in our community.

For Further Information:

Web Links:

- Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia (homepage): www.ferris.edu/jimcrow
- Deconstructing White Privilege with Dr. Robin DiAngelo (video): vimeo.com/147760743
- The Racism Discussion with Oprah and Jane Elliott (video): www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8PicAzrNU0

Books:

- *Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice* by David Pilgrim (2015)
- *What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy* by Robin DiAngelo (2012)
- *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America* by Michael Eric Dyson (2016)
- *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* by Joy DeGruy (2005)

This exhibit is a partnership between:

City of Rochester, NY
Lovely A. Warren, Mayor
Rochester City Council

RMSC
Rochester Museum & Science Center

TAKE IT DOWN
Planning Committee

Central Church of Christ

To learn more about opportunities to view the exhibit and participate in community-wide events, visit: www.rmsc.org/carousel

Take it Down!

Organizing Against Racism

Traveling Exhibit

Introduction

How can racism hide in plain sight? In 2016, a panel featuring racist artwork was removed from the Dentzel Carousel at Ontario Beach Park in Rochester, NY, after being on display for 111 years. The issue generated controversy in our community. Activists created the *Take It Down!* exhibit to show that pickaninny art perpetuates ongoing individual, institutional, and structural racism by denying the humanity of black children.

What is pickaninny art, and where did it come from?

Courtesy of the Jim Crow Museum

The painting on this carousel panel is an example of pickaninny art. It depicts black children with ragged clothes, exaggerated facial features, and unkempt hair. By representing black children as wild, neglected "pickaninnies," white artists declared them inhuman and unworthy of survival.

Pickaninny art is a product of racism that developed alongside European colonialism and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. By the 1800s, offensive cartoons of black children were part of a broader effort to dehumanize black people. When the Dentzel Carousel was built in 1905, images of "pickaninnies" with threatening animals were rampant on postcards, greeting cards, and posters. These pictures conveyed white supremacist, pseudo-scientific theories of the period that Blacks were inferior and doomed to extinction. It is possible that the image on the carousel was copied from a popular postcard.

Why did it take 111 years to remove the offensive carousel panel and why is racism still an issue?

The offensive imagery on the carousel went unnoticed to many people in our community because racism against African Americans is so deeply embedded into the structure of our society. Offensive stereotypes—often in the form of cartoons and jokes—have become "normal" ideas in our individual and institutional thinking, and a large percentage of the population fail to see them as harmful. The Race and Education Action and Change Work Group of the Facing Race, Embracing Equity (FR=EE) initiative recognizes many different kinds of damage caused by the long legacy of racism in our society:

- Legalized slavery and Jim Crow segregation
- Internalized feelings of inferiority
- Internalized feelings of superiority
- Implicit bias
- Micro-aggressions
- Mass incarceration
- Racial profiling

What needs to be done?

Courtesy of Spectrum News

Removing the carousel panel from a public place where children play is one baby-step toward addressing institutional and individual racism. But the work does not end there. The Race and Education Action and Change Work Group of the Facing Race, Embracing Equity (FR=EE) initiative recognizes many different individual, institutional, and structural actions required to overcome the damage caused by ongoing racism. To combat racism, we need actions that lead to:

- Individual introspection
- Interpersonal relationships
- Cross-class, cross-race dialogues
- Strategic institutional reform (policies, practices, rules, regulations, laws)
- Civic thinking and action
- Structural change
- Spaces for open and honest dialogue