

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ANTIRACIST?

There is much more to being an antiracist than just not being racist. The first step in being antiracist is recognising that the United Kingdom and the institutions within – such as the police, the healthcare system, and the justice system – are institutionally racist. Once this is understood, it is impossible to act within the system as it expects you to.

If you are a nurse, for example, and you now understand that healthcare in this country is systemically racist – it disproportionately results in negative outcomes for PGM – then it is not enough to just not be overtly racist. By just doing that you are still complicit in the perpetuation of the very system that harms people of colour so dramatically. Instead, become antiracist (sometimes written anti-racist), advocate for change at the institutional level, not just the individual one, demand things like equal painkiller distribution based on symptoms not bias across the NHS, call out colleagues who intentionally or accidentally spread falsehoods about PGM. This is what it means to be antiracist, looking beyond the individual and taking action against antisemitism, islamophobia, and all other forms of racism at the systemic level.

A more practical example in our area would be the education system, specifically higher education. An antiracist approach to looking at the awarding gap for example looks beyond individual lecturers and staff that may hold problematic beliefs, but at the culture that allowed for these beliefs to take hold. We would also look at the experience of students prior to coming to University, as well as, what policies the University has that disproportionately affect people from minoritised backgrounds, as well as the lack of policies to support them. Notice that this doesn't ignore the people who may be overtly racist in their actions and beliefs, but seeks to explore their cause, hopefully preventing anymore from appearing going forward.