

ABLEISM AND RACISM: AN INEXTRICABLE CONNECTION

Topic

In this video, Talila “TL” Lewis, offers definitions of *racism and ableism* and explains the historic and present relationship between these and other oppressions, which continue to harm negatively racialized people with disabilities or those who are labeled as disabled. The video provides a broad overview of a complex topic.

Relevance of Topic to System-Involved Youth with Disabilities

Some ideas expressed in the video may challenge popular understandings of disability. TL’s explanation of how ableism and racism intersect helps to illuminate how marginalized people are often labeled “dependent”, “disabled” and/or “delinquent” and how, often, these labels are “placed upon” people because of structural and systemic inequity, deprivation, and forced precarity.

Ableism is the valuation of a person’s importance or worthiness based on their ability to perform in ways that society considers “normal”. Ableism is a type of systemic oppression that is connected to all other types of oppression. Systems are designed based on perceptions of how people “should” or “should be able to” act.

Recommendations for Creating Systems Change

- Acknowledge that youth, like all people, have multiple social identities.
- Learn about and work to end ableism and other forms of oppression (sanism, transphobia, xenophobia, etc.).
- Be mindful that how services are designed, promoted, and delivered can contribute to oppression and trauma.
- Re-consider how you think about, discuss, evaluate, invest in programs, education, services for youth and those affected by impoverishment, ableism, classism, racism, and any form of oppression.

Learn More

- [Working definition of ableism \(2021\)](#)
- [Disability Solidarity Playlist & Context](#)
- [Freeing Black Fates & Capturing Black Freedom](#)
- [Grounding Movements in Disability Justice](#)
- [Achieving Liberation through Disability Solidarity](#)

Presenter Information

Talila “TL” Lewis is a Black disabled community lawyer and consultant whose work highlights and addresses the nexus between ableism, racism, classism, and all forms of structural and systemic inequity. Recognized as a 2015 White House Champion of Change, TL’s advocacy primarily focuses on anti-violence, decarceration, and prison abolition. To learn more about TL’s work, go to [Talila Lewis Publications](#) and [Be Heard DC](#). Follow TL on IG/Twitter @TalilaLewis.

