

How does someone
learn to be racist or
prejudiced



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Learning Racism and Prejudice Racism and prejudice are not traits that a person is born with, nor are they concepts that a person automatically knows or understands. For someone to display these types of feelings and emotions, they had to have learned them from another person, a specific environment, or from another source or method. When an individual is constantly subjected to the racist or prejudice attitude of another, that individual tends to take on the same personality or set of negative beliefs. When their source of racism and prejudice provides reasons to implement these ideas and feelings into everyday life, the individual finds it easier to condone their own negative ways of thinking. They begin to believe that they have a right to feel as they do. The most common way that a person learns racism and prejudice is through their parents or other close relatives. When a child grows up in a household that openly promotes being racist or prejudice, that child usually grows up to become racist or prejudiced. They are subjected to these ideas from a young age and they grow up thinking that these thoughts, ideas, and behaviors are right. Children are easily influenced by their parents and other authoritative figures in their lives and they end up taking on a lot of their personality traits. If a child's parents raise that child into thinking that a certain race is bad or lower than their own, that child will hold onto that concept throughout the childhood and into adulthood. Sometimes the passing on of racist views is unintended, but, more often than not, a child raised in a situation like this is not corrected when they begin to display some of the same ideals. In many cases, some children are even praised when they first make it known that they have prejudice views towards someone else simply because of their skin color, religion, or sexual orientation. People also learn to become racist or prejudiced from their

environments, such as schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, or even their own circle of friends. Back in the times of segregated schools, there were many people that identified with ideas of racism and prejudice simply because those around them did, thus adopting the ideas for themselves. Neighborhoods during these times, as well as in the present, displayed many racist and prejudiced views that other people learned from, or else adapted to. In many cases, especially amongst friends or fellow peers or workers, someone may take on elements of racism just to fit in with that group. While someone can be influenced by their environment, understanding and readily agreeing to what they are being told, learning racism and prejudice can also come down to the need to fit in and belong with a certain group of people by believing what everyone else believes in. Finally, someone can learn racism or prejudice through negative experience. For example, if a black woman were physically assaulted by a white woman, especially at a younger age, that black woman stands the risk of becoming racist against white people. Or if a man rapes a woman, that woman could become prejudiced towards men. When people are hurt by someone else and do not seek the proper help - medical, justice, or otherwise - then that person risks adopting a racist or prejudiced attitude (Merino 79). If they have children, the same ideas can be passed onto them in a never-ending cycle, which leads to the fact that sometimes learning racism and prejudice is an unconscious act, one that often goes unchecked. While racism and prejudice is something that is learned through influence and experience, they are also capable of being unlearned. Many people are racist or prejudiced from their childhood, but they have the chance to decide for themselves how they view people as they become older. Just like many other concepts and ideas can be rejected,

racism and prejudice can also be. Works Cited Merino, Noel. Racism. New York, NY: Gale Group, 2009. Print.