

## Event and Activity Ideas for Children, Youth and Communities

The National Day of Racial Healing takes place annually on the day after Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The observance grows year after year as people living and working in towns, cities, neighborhoods and organizations across the country work to create connections and share a sense of belonging.

Each year, the National Day of Racial Healing is an opportunity to gather children, teens, neighbors and community members together across differences to:

- Get to know each other.
- Cultivate trusting relationships.
- Learn about each other's diverse backgrounds, cultures, perspectives and lived experiences.
- Explore the cultures that make up their communities.
- Share information on the history or current realities of racism.
- Brainstorm ways to take actions that increase empathy, advance racial equity and build solidarity.

### NEED A STARTING POINT?

Click to jump to the **DEFINITIONS** section on the last page.

In planning an event or activity, you, your families or neighbors can be creative. Any event or activity that achieves one of those goals counts — from one as simple as a play date or dinner among a small group of friends to something more elaborate.

Also, be sure to let us know your plans. If your event is open to the public, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) will include it on our national event listing. If your event is private, we'd still like to hear about it, as new ideas will inform what's most helpful for next year's action kits. Please share your event details at [DayofRacialHealing.org](https://www.dayofracialhealing.org).

## RACIAL HEALING ACTIVITIES FOR SCHOOL SETTINGS

### EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH COLLEGE

School curricula that cover the history of racism and the contributions of various cultural groups in the United States have come under fire in recent years. Yet, in order for children to thrive, it is essential that they have equitable opportunities to learn about diversity and to see themselves reflected in school curricula and textbooks.

## PRESCHOOLERS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

- Hold a special story time focused on books with diverse characters and authors.
  - Recommendations for younger readers are available from the [Anti-Defamation League](#) and [PBS Kids](#) — look for the Celebrate Diversity section.
- Invite a traditional storyteller from your local Indigenous, Black, Asian or Latinx community to speak at a special assembly.
- Plan age-appropriate cooperative games that help children work together.
- Organize a conversation to find out what your students know about race or about Asian, Latinx/Hispanic, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native and White people. Emphasize caring about and respecting people of different races.
- Make it a movie day and watch “Coco,” “Encanto,” “Bao,” “Raya and the Last Dragon,” “Turning Red,” “Soul” or episodes of “Molly of Denali.”
- Plan a show-and-tell activity where students bring something from home that represents their culture or a family tradition they enjoy.
- See the [ADL’s](#) curriculum guides for elementary school lesson plans.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL

- Create a cooperative game that helps students from different backgrounds work together.
- Assign students to develop an essay or presentation about their cultural backgrounds or family traditions that are meaningful to them.
- Ask students to learn the origin of their names and share the stories with the class. Encourage everyone to see each other’s names as gifts from parents and ancestors and to practice pronouncing their peers’ names correctly.
- Read a book about race, racism or culture together. See the University of Washington Libraries’ [reading list](#) for middle-grade and young adult readers.
- Help students write a [land acknowledgment](#) for their school grounds.
- Invite elders from the community to share stories about the cultural or racial history of the neighborhood where the school is located. Especially consider inviting Indigenous elders to talk about the land and their history.
- Hold a visioning exercise for students to imagine their community beyond racism.

- Ask: What would children, teens and families experience? How would people feel about the community? What are current barriers to experiencing or building that future? Ask students to consider what they can do now or in their future education endeavors to contribute to that future.
- Create an after-school club where students plan events and school assemblies for [Black History Month](#), [Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#), [Hispanic Heritage Month](#), [Indigenous Peoples Day](#) and [Native American Heritage Month](#).

## HIGH SCHOOL SPECIFIC

- Studies show<sup>1</sup> that when youth of color participate in activism, it reduces the physical and psychological harms of racism:
  - Make it a movie day. Watch and discuss movies that show teens and young adults making a difference, such as “The Hate U Give,” “Just Mercy” and “Freedom Summer.”
  - Read and discuss articles about young people making a difference, such as:
    - [Minnijean Brown-Trickey: the teenager who needed an armed guard to go to school.](#)
    - [Finding the calm: Parkland students lead social-emotional response to COVID-19.](#)
    - [Healing through action](#) (about young survivors of violence in Chicago).
- Assign a group project for students to explore how racism impacts members of the local community and to propose possible solutions. Topics could include: access to education, health care, food or housing insecurity, policing, representation of people of color in local media, etc.
- Help students plan a service project, especially one that benefits younger children in their community, such as painting a mural with an encouraging message or building a little library and filling it with books featuring diverse characters and authors.
- Create a safe space for students to talk openly about the current culture of the school.
  - Do they feel as though they belong and can bring their full selves to school every day? Do they feel their culture is respected and appreciated? How would they improve the school culture? What would they ask their peers, teachers and administrators to do to make the school a more equitable place?

<sup>1</sup> Studies include: *Cultural Continuity as a Hedge Against Suicide in Canada's First Nations*, Michael J. Chandler & Christopher Lalonde, *Transcultural Psychiatry*, June 1998. *Perceived Discrimination Among African American Adolescents and Allostatic Load: A Longitudinal Analysis with Buffering Effects*, Gene Brody and Man-Kit Lei, et. Al. *Child Development*, May/June 2014. *Balm in Gilead: Racism, Religious Involvement and Psychological Distress Among African American Adults*, Christopher G. Ellison, March A. Musick and Andrea K. Henderson, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47(2).

- Encourage students from similar backgrounds to form affinity groups, where they can hold healing conversations and encourage one another.

## COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

- Bring together affinity groups and other student organizations, like sororities, fraternities and clubs, for a special event — perhaps a shared meal or potluck, book discussion, interactive arts experience like poetry slams or other performances.
- Host a racial healing circle in your dorm or another common space on campus using this [Conversation Guide](#).
  - Host a movie night or film festival that showcases stories about activism and racial justice.
  - [Watch](#) and discuss past National Day of Racial Healing events and videos featuring racial healing in communities across the country.
  - Visit a local museum that features the history of cultural groups in your local community.
  - Plan a service project that gets people of diverse backgrounds working together.
  - Facilitate a visioning session to imagine a campus, community or country without racism. Ask your peers to discuss: What does that future look or feel like and how do we get there?
  - Invite speakers from different professional backgrounds to share how their career paths allow them to address racism or contribute to a more racially equitable society.
  - Work with school administrators and other students to write and post a [land acknowledgment](#) on campus grounds. Be sure to research the history of the school and the land where it is located and elicit the guidance of your local Indigenous community.
  - Contact the [American Association of Colleges and Universities](#) to collaborate with its efforts as an official partner in Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation efforts.

*Additional materials and curriculum resources for educators:* [Zinn Education Project](#), [Teaching for Change](#), [Learning for Justice](#), [ADL](#), [Center for Racial Justice in Education](#), [Facing History and Ourselves](#)

## Libraries

Libraries provide a meeting place for people across a community to discuss ideas and learn from each other. They are a perfect venue for community conversations on race, racism and racial healing. Book clubs, local authors, cultural storytellers and community members can all play a role in a successful National Day of Racial Healing. While there are many calls to ban books by authors of color or featuring characters of color, in order for children to thrive, they must have equitable opportunities to learn about diversity and see themselves reflected in the literature offered by their local libraries.

- Dedicate your children’s story hour to the National Day of Racial Healing. Focus story time on books about diverse kids, by diverse authors. Book lists are available from the [Anti-Defamation League](#) and [PBS Kids](#) — look for the Celebrate Diversity section.
- Invite a traditional storyteller from your local Indigenous, Black, Asian or Latinx community to present during your children’s story hour.
- Host a panel discussion of local historians and authors about the history of race, culture or racism in your local community.
- Provide your book clubs with racial equity, diversity and inclusion book lists.
- Form a new book club specifically focused on racial equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Find a space in the library for people to contribute their declarations of support for racial healing. Use a whiteboard, chalkboard wall or poster board with the words, “I will promote racial healing by…” at the top and ask your patrons to fill in their ideas.
- Work with library administrators to write and post a [land acknowledgment](#) on library grounds.
- Create a display about the racial and cultural history of the community surrounding the library. Gather youth and elders to help you research relevant stories.
- Host racial healing circles using this [Conversation Guide](#).

## READING LISTS

- The American Library Association’s [Great Stories Club](#) connects ALA’s long-standing literary programming model to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation framework.
- A [collection of diverse reading lists](#) for all ages from We Need Diverse Books.

- University of Washington Libraries [reading lists](#), including fiction and poetry, memoir and essays, middle grade and young adults and resources for taking action and academic research.
- [PBS Books](#).
- [The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards](#), a list from the nation's only juried prize for literature that addresses racism and diversity, chaired by Henry Louis Gates Jr.

## Parks and Recreation

*Difference meets at the playground.* Parks and recreation professionals operate at the intersection of differences in race, gender identity, religion, class, geography, age and ability. Quality parks and recreation opportunities are essential to advancing individual and community health, environmental and community resiliency and overall well-being. As trusted local leaders with a mission to make their communities better places to live, learn, work, play and age, parks and recreation professionals are in a unique position to champion efforts that advance diversity, equity and inclusion and racial healing, enabling every community member to find themselves in the outdoors.

### PERSONAL HEALING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR PARKS AND RECREATION STAFF

- Start a tradition by hosting an annual staff development day on the third Tuesday in January that focuses on personal and professional development related to racial equity, inclusion and racial healing:
  - Guide staff through completing the [self-assessment in the National Recreation and Park Association's Health Equity Framework](#). Use the guide to facilitate a conversation.
- Learn about the land your agency sits within, including reaching out to Indigenous leaders and tribal elders; work with them to create and post a [land acknowledgment](#).
- Invite a community member or traditional storyteller from a Black, Hispanic, Asian or Indigenous community to come and share their history and experience in the park.
- Learn about the [history of parks and recreation](#), including the unfair practices that have shaped access and distribution of parks and recreation in your community.
  - Seek information about the history of your place; work with community members and leaders to document the history of your parks and public spaces.
- On your own, or with other staff, watch an online NRPA Equity in Practice talk:
  - <https://learning.nrpa.org/equity-in-practice>

- Learn about your local immigrant community and their connection to your spaces
  - A Glimpse into Chinese Immigrants and Yosemite NP.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kdyrfXGz90>
- Pick up a good read and learn more about race in parks and recreation. Recommended reading list includes:
  - “Race, Riots and Roller Coasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America.”
  - “The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together.”
  - “Landscapes of Exclusion: State Parks and Jim Crow in the American South.”
  - “American Indians and National Parks.”

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND HEALING ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY PARKS AND RECREATION AGENCIES

- Engage and empower teens in developing, planning and facilitating your community’s participation in the National Day of Racial Healing.
- Hold a community cultural day and invite people of different backgrounds to share their culture, language and traditions.
- Host a play day or family engagement event that focuses on community connection and relationship building for children and caretakers.
- Display your agency’s commitment to racial equity and inclusion.
- Find and connect with a local chapter of outdoor groups like Latino Outdoors, Outdoor Afro, GirlTrek, Black Girls Run, Indigenous Women Hike and Outdoor Asian.
- Host a resource fair at a local park for local outdoor chapters to connect with community members.
- Collaborate with local artists, teens, community-based organizations and other community allies to create and display local, culturally reflective art in your parks.

## Faith Communities

Many people trust their faith institutions to set the tone for moral and ethical choices, making faith communities a great venue for observing the National Day of Racial Healing. [The Golden Rule](#) found in many different religions teaches essentially the same thing: to treat others as you’d like to be treated. It’s just one example of how faiths share common beliefs that can form the basis for understanding racial equity and the need for racial healing.

## WORSHIP

- Consider incorporating messages of respectful truth-telling, repentance, racial healing and reconciliation into your services, prayer gatherings, meditations or study groups the weekend before the National Day of Racial Healing.
- Hold a special service, prayer gathering or meditation on the National Day of Racial Healing (the day after Martin Luther King Jr. Day).
- Learn what other nearby organizations are doing for the National Day of Racial Healing and announce events to your congregation or community.

## INTERFAITH FELLOWSHIP

- Extend the reach of your safe space by inviting your community's faith leaders and laypeople – of all denominations and viewpoints – to break bread together.
- Ask members or leaders from another faith background to give a presentation on their beliefs to your congregation or community.
- Host an interfaith panel discussion on the themes of: diversity, acceptance, healing and reconciliation.
- Co-create a National Day of Racial Healing event with your local interfaith coalitions or a like-minded civic organization.

## DONATE

- Take up a collection to support interfaith groups or like-minded organizations working toward racial equity, racial healing or social justice in your local community.



## DEFINITIONS

### WHAT IS RACIAL HEALING? WHAT IS RACIAL EQUITY?

We offer these definitions as you and your collaborators think about ways to observe the National Day of Racial Healing. Racial healing and racial equity are terms gaining a lot of traction right now, but sometimes it's easier to brainstorm ideas when everyone starts from a place of shared understanding.

**Racism** keeps us disconnected and prevents us from living in a country where everyone has an equitable shot at opportunities.

**Racial healing is at the heart of racial equity.** It is about people building relationships and trust to develop shared goals and a collective will to create and sustain racial equity.

**Racial equity** affirms that all people, regardless of their racial or ethnic group identification, skin color or physical traits, deserve an equal opportunity to experience well-being in a just society. Achieving racial equity means that a person's identity would not determine how they are treated or predict life outcomes.

**Racial healing** is a process that restores individuals and communities to wholeness, repairs the damage caused by racism and transforms societal structures into ones that affirm the inherent value of all people.

When people come together to build relationships based on trust and mutual respect, they are better able to bridge divides and work together to transform systems and structures.