

Handout

Race and Racism

By knowing one's race, scientists can predict almost nothing else about an individual's physical or intellectual abilities. Despite this fact, it remains common for people to believe falsely in a connection between race and particular and permanent biological abilities or deficiencies. The belief in this connection leads to *racism*. According to scholar George Fredrickson, racism has two components: *difference and power*.

Directions: After reading Fredrickson's definition of *racism* below, complete the following tasks:

- Circle any words that you do not understand in the definition.
- Underline three to four words that you think are crucial to understanding the meaning of *racism*.

[Racism] originates from a mindset that regards "them" as different from "us" in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power advantage to treat the . . . Other in ways that we would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group.¹

Now rewrite the definition in your own words:

Write at least one synonym (or other word closely related to racism) and one antonym:

¹ George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 9.