

FROM DENIAL TO DISPROPORTIONALITY: HISTORY OF RACISM IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM



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WE ARE AT A CROSSROADS

Interdisciplinary 'helpers' at every point along the child welfare continuum, operate from a position of privilege and unconscious stereotypes about Blacks children and families of color.

- ⌘ Almost two system – Saw the bias play out among judges, lawyers, caseworkers and supervisors
- ⌘ White – Support and Resources, benefit of the doubt, return kids as quickly as possible
- ⌘ Black – Punish and Correct, assumed the worst, had to ensure everything was addressed before reunification could happen.
- ⌘ COMAAC





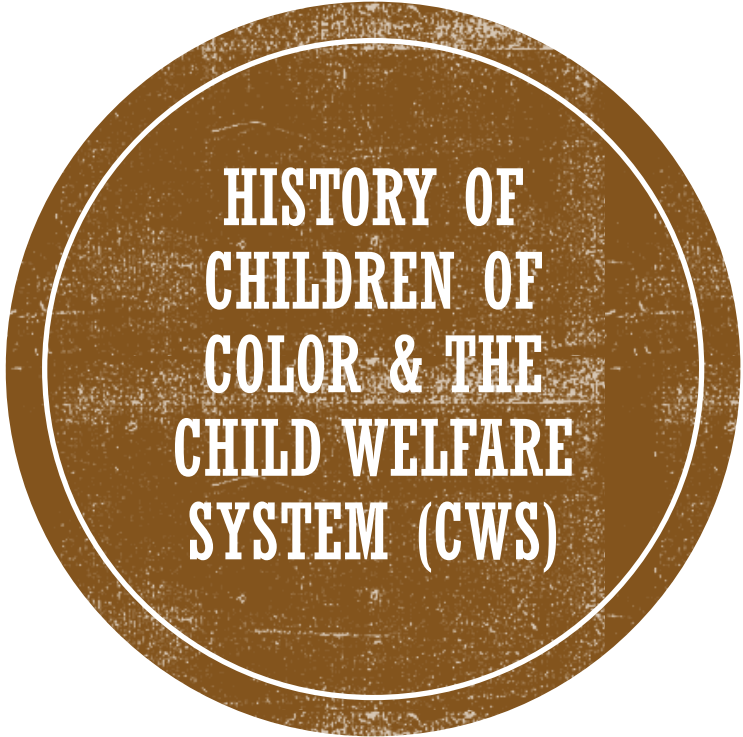
**“A SYSTEM
CANNOT
FAIL THOSE
IT WAS
NEVER
BUILT TO
PROTECT.”
~ UNKNOWN ~**



Date	Chronological Events – Histories of Race and the Child Welfare System
1812	Thomas Jefferson states white people should drive every Indian in their path “with the beasts of the forests into the stony mountains.”
1830	Indian Removal Act authorized the president to “negotiate” and exchange lands . . . which actually meant . . . seize Indian land and remove Native Americans from their ancestral and sacred lands; territory of Oklahoma set aside as “Indian Territory.”
1848	Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed between U.S. and Mexico, which promises to protect the lands, language and culture of the Mexicans living in ceded territory (future states of California, Texas, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, parts of Colorado and Wyoming). Congress substitutes a “Protocol” which requires Mexicans to prove in U.S. courts that they have ‘legitimate’ title to their own lands; the “Protocol” becomes the legal basis for the massive U.S. land theft from Mexicans in conquered territories.
1863 - 1865	Emancipation Proclamation – Freed the slaves. It took almost two and a half years to fully enact it. Almost immediately Jim Crow Laws started to emerge.
1875	Creation of the NYSPCC, the world’s first entity devoted entirely to child protection. Child protection was created for the protection of White children.
1882	Chinese Exclusion Act passed by Congress to keep Chinese immigrant workers from coming to the U.S., the first time a nationality had been barred expressly by name.
1896	Supreme Court declares in Plessy v. Ferguson that separate but “equal” facilities are constitutional.
1944	Supreme Court opinion upheld Roosevelt’s Executive Order authorizing relocation and detention of all people of Japanese ancestry, including U.S. citizens, in “war relocation centers” regardless of “loyalty” to



- Organized child protection emerged from the rescue in 1874 of 9-year-old Mary Ellen Wilson, who lived with her guardians in one of New York City's worst tenements, Hell's Kitchen from routinely beaten and neglected.
- New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC)



HISTORY OF
CHILDREN OF
COLOR & THE
CHILD WELFARE
SYSTEM (CWS)

- ✂ Black children were excluded from child welfare services until the end of WWII.
- ✂ The few colored orphan asylums were woefully inferior and overcrowded.
- ✂ By 1923, 31 northern states reported a total of 1,070 child caring agencies. Of these agencies, **35 (3%) were for Black children only**, 264 (25%) accepted all races, 60 (5%) took non-whites except Black children, and 711 (66%) were reserved for White children (Billingsley & Giovanni, 1972, p. 76).
- ✂ Once African American children entered foster care during the 1950's, their numbers soared...It is no coincidence that foster care policies became more punitive precisely when African children entered the system (Cooper, 2013, p. 234).



- ***We live in a racially structured society, and that that is what causes racial inequity.***
 - Racial inequity looks the same across systems,
 - Socio-economic difference does not explain the racial inequity; and
 - Inequities are caused by systems, regardless of people's culture or behavior.
 - Embracing these truths forces leaders to confront the reality that **STRUCTURAL RACISM IS THE ROOT CAUSE** for the outcomes experienced by people of color.

- White children and white families continue to be the norm or the standard by which all children and families are measured.

- **INTENT VS. IMPACT** – We tend to focus on intent and that people do not intend to be racist/bias. The impact suggests that intent has no bearing.

"In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist.

We must be anti-racist."

Angela Davis



DISMANTLE RACISM IN CHILD WELFARE

RACISM HURTS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OF COLOR

- **Become an Anti-Racist Activist**
- **Power** The ability to define, set, or change situations. Power can manifest as personal or collective self-determination. Power is the ability to influence others to believe, behave, or adopt values as those in power desire.
- **White Privilege** The unearned power and advantages that benefit people just by virtue of being White or being perceived as White. See: White Fragility; White Supremacy.
- Key Equity Terms Glossary created by Center for Social Science Policy (CSSP): <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-voll.pdf>





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