

In his book [\*Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice\*](#), Paul Kivel writes that while "racism does produce material benefits for white people . . . the costs of racism to white people are devastating":

*They are not the same costs as the day-to-day violence, discrimination, and harassment that people of color have to deal with. Nevertheless, they are significant costs that we have been trained to ignore, deny, or rationalize away. They are costs that other white people, particularly those with wealth, make us pay in our daily lives. It is sobering for us as white people to talk together about what it really costs to maintain such a system of division and exploitation in our society. We may even find it difficult to recognize some of the core costs of being white in our society.*

Here's a summary of the costs of racism that Kivel says white people commonly suffer. Kivel points out that because of racism, white people tend to:

- lose contact with our ancestral traditions and cultures (and often romanticize other cultures as a result)
- receive and believe a false sense of history, one that glorifies and sanitizes white actions and leaves out non-white contributions
- "lose the presence and contributions of people of color to our neighborhoods, schools, and relationships"
- feel "a false sense of superiority, a belief that we should be in control and in authority, and that people of color should be maids, servants, and gardeners and do the less valued work of our society"
- live, work, and play in settings that are largely white, and are thus "distorted, limited, and less rich" environments
- suffer in our relationships, with both white and non-white others, because of racial tension and/or bigotry
- suffer stress and anxiety induced by unrealistic fears of non-white people (and suffer at times as well from injury at the hands of certain white people, whom we'd been led by racist fear of non-white people into perceiving as relatively trustworthy)
- fail to see that we're being economically exploited by those who divert our aggrieved attention and energies into mistrust and hatred of racialized scapegoats
- suffer spiritually, to the extent that we've lost touch with our people's original spiritual traditions -- and thus suffer morally and ethically, to the extent that those traditions no longer encourage us to intervene when we "witness situations of discrimination and harassment"
- feel a lowered sense of self-esteem, due to our "feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, or inadequacy about racism and about our responses to it"
- become cynical, despairing, apathetic, and pessimistic when we do acknowledge the ongoing existence of white racism, and then realize that it "makes a mockery of our ideals of democracy, justice, and equality"

Again, as Kivel points out, to say that whites suffer from racism is not to say their suffering is anywhere near the devastating effects that it still has for many non-whites. Also, there is at least one danger in this method of eradicating racism: it could be taken by white people engaged in discussions of racism as an invitation to make everything all about themselves again.