



FFLIC

A CONTEXT OF RACE AND POWER



Before we go into information about knowing, challenging, or changing the system, we want to be real about what we are dealing with. If we look at the history of any system in America, whether it's our healthcare system, criminal justice system, or education system, it was founded upon racism and racist beliefs. This is what we mean when we say "institutional racism." The individual racist beliefs of people get baked into our institutions. Privilege, power, and oppression have been baked into our nation's laws, policies, institutions, and societal beliefs, and this has resulted in the lack of access to power, wealth, and opportunity for Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color. On the flip side, a disproportionate distribution of power, wealth, and opportunity has gone to white people and continues to be maintained by white people. Additionally, in this context, we can define power as "the ability to impact or influence the outcomes of others."

When we look at the education system in New Orleans we can see that racism is ingrained in every aspect of it. A recent article in *The Atlantic*, titled "Schools Are More Segregated Today Than During the Late 1960s," outlines some of the realities that many New Orleans parents know from experience. For example, predominately Black schools get less funding and resources than predominately white schools.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of how policy decisions in education have been made to advantage white students and disadvantage Black students. As Frederick Douglas once said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand." So we can't expect the system to willingly work for us. We have to learn how to utilize the system for our own needs as much as possible and in order to do that we have to know how it works. Once we are able to navigate the system for ourselves, we can also begin to work with others to increase our impact and try to change the system. The only real power is the power of the people. Organizing is key to impacting and influencing the outcomes of the children in our community. When we are trying to fight the system alone, it might seem disheartening and useless to know how the system works. But alongside others, it can seem possible.



[Need help advocating for your child?](#)

Call or Email 504-708-8376 or fflic@fflic.org