

## Transcription - Systemic racism explained

Jamal is a boy who lives in a poor neighborhood. It's a friend named Kevin who lives in a wealthy neighborhood. All of Jamal's neighbors are African American and all of Kevin's neighbors are white, because Jamal's school district is mostly funded by property taxes. His school is not very well funded. His classrooms are overcrowded. His teachers are underpaid, and he doesn't have access to high quality tutors or extracurricular activities. Kevin's school district is also funded by property taxes, so his school is very well funded. His classrooms are never crowded. His teachers are very well paid, and he has access to high quality tutors and lots of extracurricular activities. Kevin and Jamal live only a few streets away from each other, so how come they're growing up in such different worlds with such different opportunities for success? The answer has to do with America's history of systemic racism. To understand it better, let's look at what life was like for Kevin and Jamal's grandparents. Decades after the Civil War, many government agencies started to draw maps dividing cities into sections that were either desirable or undesirable for investment. This practice was called redlining, and it usually blocked off entire black neighborhoods from access to private and public investment. Banks and insurance companies used these maps for decades to deny black people loans and other services based purely on race, historically speaking, owning a home and getting a college education is the easiest way for an American family to build wealth. But when Jamal's grandparents wanted to buy a house, the banks refused, because they lived in a neighborhood that was redlined. Grandparents were not able to buy a home, and because colleges could prevent them from attending through legal segregation, their options for higher education were really scarce. Kevin's grandparents, on the other hand, had a low interest loan to buy their first house and get accepted into a handful of top universities, which traditionally only accepted white students. This opened up a wealth of opportunities that they were able to pass on to their kids and grandkids. Then as late as the 1980s an investigation into the Atlanta real estate market showed that banks were more willing to lend to low income white families than to middle or upper income African American families. As a result, today, for every \$100 of wealth held by a white family, black families have \$5.04 a 2017 study confirms that redlining is still affecting home values in major cities like Chicago today. This explains how Kevin and Jamal inherited vastly different circumstances. Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there. A big part of systemic racism is implicit bias. These are prejudices in society that people are not aware that they have. Let's go back to Kevin and Jamal. Against all odds, Jamal manages to be the only student from his high school to get accepted into a great university, the same one that Kevin and his high school friends are attending. But after Kevin and Jamal both graduate, Jamal notices that his resume isn't drawn as much interest as Kevin's, even though they graduated from the same program with the exact same GPA, unfortunately for Jamal, studies show that resumes with white sounding names get twice as many callbacks as identical resumes with black sounding names. Implicit bias is one of the reasons why the black unemployment rate is twice the rate of white unemployment even among college graduates today, you can see evidence of systemic racism in every area of life, the disparities in family wealth,

incarceration rates, political representation and education are all examples of systemic racism. Unfortunately, the biggest challenge with systemic racism is that there's no single person or entity responsible for it, which makes it very hard to solve. What can you do? The first thing you can do is work towards becoming more aware of your own implicit biases. What are some prejudices that you might hold that you're not aware of? Second, let's acknowledge that the consequences of slavery and Jim Crow laws are still affecting access to opportunity today. As a result, we should support systemic changes that create more equal opportunities for everyone. Increasing public school funding and making it independent from property taxes would be a great start, so that poor and wealthy districts can receive equal access to resources. Systemic problems require systemic solutions. Luckily, we're all part of the system, which means that we all have a role to play in making it better place.