

Decolonising Antiracism: A Collective Intervention in Race, Resistance, & Identity

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Affiliation	Abstract
<p>¹SUNY Oneonta ²University of Calgary, Canada ³Justice AI</p>	<p><i>This article argues that any antiracist initiative that continues to rely on upholding the colonial fiction and practices of human “races” merely repackages Eurocolonial domination. Drawing on decolonial theory, epistemic-justice scholarship, African and Africana philosophies of relation, and the togetherness Wayfinder framework, the HARMONY model, and Justice AI GPT, we demonstrate how contemporary antiracism frequently reproduces the very hierarchies it seeks to dismantle while presenting alternative pathways toward a future without racism. We synthesise perspectives from Sheena Michele Mason, Shayla Sima Dube, and Christian Ortiz to outline a paradigm that lends itself to the abolition of the belief in and practice of race, and thereby racism itself, without erasing culture, lineage, or collective struggle. Our contribution is fourfold: (1) a brief genealogy of “racelessness” in African and Africana thought, (2) a critique of epistemicide and “white-comfort engineering” that co-opts liberation discourses, (3) an exposition of “racelessness” as the logical endpoint of antiracism, and (4) a practical roadmap for reclaiming identity and creating a future without antiblack racism through land, language, and lineage.</i></p>

Keywords: Racelessness; Antiracism; Epistemicide; Epistemic justice; Cognitive imperialism; HARMONY; Sankofa; Decolonisation; Philosophy; Togetherness Wayfinder; Justice AI GPT; Ubuntu; Identity.

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Introduction: From Reaction to Reparation

To end racism, we must abolish our belief in and practice of race. In *The Raceless Antiracist: Why Ending Race Is the Future of Antiracism*, Sheena M. Mason defines racism, which she spells race/ism, as “a socially constructed system of economic and social oppression that requires the belief in human ‘races’ and the

practice of racialisation to reinforce various power imbalances” (Mason, 2024, p. 8). For half a millennium, the practices and vocabulary of “race” has worked like cartographic ink: drawing the boundaries of who may be conquered, dehumanised, enslaved, or dispossessed while *masquerading as a neutral or permanent description*. Nearly a century ago in 1916, Alain Leroy Locke observed,

Race is . . . in a paradoxical stage. It amounts practically to social inheritance, and yet it parades itself as biological or anthropological inheritance. It really is either favourable or unfavourable social inheritance, which has been ascribed to anthropological differences. To the extent, therefore, that any man has race, he has inherited either a favourable or an unfavourable social heredity. (Locke, 1992, p. 2)

From the papal bulls that sanctified the trans-Atlantic enslavement of Africans to the one-drop laws of Jim Crow and the algorithmic redlining of the present, race has never been a neutral taxonomy nor racialisation a benign process; it is a weaponised story that converts assigned difference into domination.

In this article we move from reaction—the vital but incomplete task of naming and resisting racist violence—to reparation: the initiative-taking work of uprooting the ontological lie and corresponding practices that made those harms possible in the first place. The distinction matters. Antiracism that remains reactive and ineffective is condemned to orbit the “master’s” conceptual gravity (see, e.g., Lorde, 2007), forever describing injury in “racial” terms and thereby rehearsing and reinforcing the fiction it hopes to debunk. Reparation, by contrast, demands epistemic defection: a refusal of the racial/st worldview and the patient recuperation and cultivation of alternative grammars and practices of personhood.

This defection is a counter-strike against epistemicide—the deliberate extermination of Indigenous, African, and diasporic knowledge systems through colonial violence and Western centric validation structures (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Epistemicide is not colonialism’s byproduct; it is its prime directive, clearing cognitive space for the lie of “race” and its corresponding systems of oppression to flourish.

First, the racialised subject is the product of the desire of a force outside oneself, a force one has not chosen but that paradoxically initiates and supports one’s being . . . Second, to be reduced to the state of the subject of race is to be installed immediately in the position of the Other. The Other is the one who must, each time, prove to others that he is a human being, that he merits being taken for a fellow human. (Mbembe, 2019, p. 130)

As long as we preserve the lexicon that underwrites a white supremacist and anti-Black structure, we inhabit what Mason terms *the fishbowl*: a totalising container that renders some humans subhuman, if at all humans, and others superiorly human while pretending to describe natural differences. The water we swim in is the language of race, the language of colonisers.

Indigenous, African, and Africana philosophies (i.e., worldviews and practices) of relation—*Ubuntu’s* communitarian ontology, Édouard Glissant’s poetics of opacity, Mbembe’s critique of necropower, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s decolonial language politics—have long intimated a world beyond the matrix, one in which identity is anchored in land, language, and lineage rather than race-assigned caste. Drawing on this lineage, we insist that ending racism requires an abolition of the belief in and practice of race itself, coupled with the restoration of epistemic, cultural, and political sovereignties suppressed by colonial modernity.

What follows, then, is not a call for better diversity metrics or more inclusive “racial” categories. It is an invitation to step outside the bowl, to breathe ancestral air, and to remember that the waters of so-called racial thinking are neither inevitable nor eternal.

The Colonial Construction of Race and Epistemicide

Race was engineered in tandem with the empire. Fifteenth-century Iberian statutes of *limpieza de sangre* (“purity of blood”), the 1455 papal bull *Romanus Pontifex*, and the subsequent “Doctrine of

Discovery” inaugurated a geopolitical grammar in which spiritual worth and territorial entitlement could be read off the skin (see, e.g., Lee, 2023). Sixteenth-century Spanish casta paintings transformed that theology into a visual algorithm—an early infographic of human hierarchy—while English colonial law codified their system of subjugation through so-called racial differentiation through “slave” codes that defined African captives as inheritable property and Indigenous peoples as perpetual enemies. By the late eighteenth century, Enlightenment naturalists such as Carl Linnaeus and Johann Blumenbach had laundered these mercantile classifications into “science,” producing taxonomies (*Homo sapiens europaeus, afer, asiaticus, americanus*) whose sole empirical function was to legitimate plunder and labour exploitation (see, e.g., Rupke et. al, 2020). Yet colonial conquest required more than coercive force; it demanded cognitive warfare—the systematic replacement or delegitimisation of African and Indigenous knowledge and ways of being with European cosmologies. This is what some call *epistemicide*, and what Sylvia Wynter calls the replacement of *Man* over *human* (see, e.g., Wynter, 2003). Mission schools, residential academies, and anthropological museums served not only to educate but to overwrite and *erace*: teaching the colonised to see themselves through the “racial” lens that justified their domination. As Thiong’o observes, “*Violence was central in creating the psychological bond of language, culture, and thought: colonies of the mind*” (Thiong’o, 2025, p. 9). Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us that, on the one hand, “research” was and remains the most effective weapon in this arsenal, transforming local epistemes into objects of study to be dissected, classified, and dismissed. And “Education, on the other hand, is a mode of conditioning people to make them fit into, and function in, a given society” (Thiong’o, 2025, p. 11).

Fast-forward to the twenty-first century and the lexicon of race/ism has shifted—*white, BIPOC, visible minority*, even the progressive “person of colour”—but the psychological colonisation remains intact. These umbrella terms organise everyone in relation to an unmarked and unchecked *whiteness*, a linguistic sleight of hand that Ortiz critiques as legitimacy theft: the quiet substitution of imaginative analysis with terminology calibrated for the comfort of those who would do well to join in disrupting the status quo. Diversity policies tally the most adversely racialised humans while leaving colonial property relations untouched; corporate marketing campaigns celebrate “inclusion” even as supply chains rely on the exploited labour of humans. In short, the “master’s” house simply swapped plaques on the same old rooms.

If colonialism’s first victory were to convince the world that its “racial” map was reality, today’s challenge is to recall that the cartographers were also conquerors, enslavers, and people who did not have the best interests of every human or even most humans in mind. Dismantling racism, therefore, cannot stop at denouncing its effects; it must invalidate the epistemic scaffolding—the data tables, census codes, policy jargon, and everyday metaphors and practices—that keep the colonial worldview upright.

African, Indigenous, & Africana Genealogies of Racelessness

The imperative to abolish race/ism does not spring from an abstract moral intuition; it emerges from a deep Afro-diasporic archive that, for centuries, has positioned humanity in terms of humanising relation and biological facts rather than dehumanising unrelation and biological fictions. Traditional concepts such as Yorùbá *Ènìyàn* (personhood enacted through moral action), Akan *Sankofa* (returning to the past to retrieve wisdom), Dogon *Nommo* (creative power manifested in generative speech), and Kemetic *Maat* (social harmony through cosmological balance) encoded identity as a reciprocal rhythm (e.g., Masolo, 1994, Imafidon et al., 2023, Wiredu, 2006). These ontologies offered a worldview in which difference was celebrated as relational variation, not fixed hierarchy and systems of oppression.

Modern African philosophers extend this relational logic into explicit critiques of so-called racial thinking. *Ubuntu* crystallises the ethic of inter-being, while Glissant’s demand for the “right to opacity” disarms the colonial impulse to classify the reality of us in black and white ways. Mbembe exposes “race” as necropolitical software—*code that must be deleted, not debugged*. Thiong’o’s recovery of his mother

tongue becomes an act of epistemic sovereignty, and Kwame Anthony Appiah “unscrambles” the race/culture mixture to show that culture thrives once race/ism is relinquished.

These philosophical through-lines surface vividly in African and diasporic literature that dramatises “raceless” futures. Mason defines *raceless* as “Human, as seen outside of the paradigm of race/ism and without upholding and perpetuating the causes and effects of race/ism (i.e., synthetic abolitionism or imaginary abolitionism)” (Mason, 2024, 218). Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* withholds the “racial” identities of its characters, forcing the reader to confront the poverty of taxonomic reflex. Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* remixes Homeric epic to portray Caribbean identity as an archipelago of encounters rather than a series of “racial” islands. The psychoanalytic analyses of Frantz Fanon and the narrative experiments of Gloria Naylor’s *Bailey’s Cafe* likewise expose Blackness, whiteness, and all racial scripts as colonial costumes that can be shrugged off.

Threading these voices together reveals a coherent blueprint for contemporary antiracism. They confirm that personhood is simultaneously cultivated and socially inherited; belonging matures through responsibility to oneself, other humans, and the planet; opacity and linguistic sovereignty shield communities from the continued impact of colonisation; and abolishing race/ism, which must include the belief in and practice of “race,” is not a denial of ancestry or suffering but the precondition for flourishing. What begins in ancestral cosmologies of relation ripples through modern philosophy and into literary imagination, illuminating a single, sustained insight: liberation from so-called racial thinking is both possible and already underway in African, Indigenous, and Africana thought. We note here that Mason also quibbles with the language of *African*, *Indigenous*, and *Africana*, observing their similarly problematic and limiting origins (see, e.g., Mudimbe, 1994).

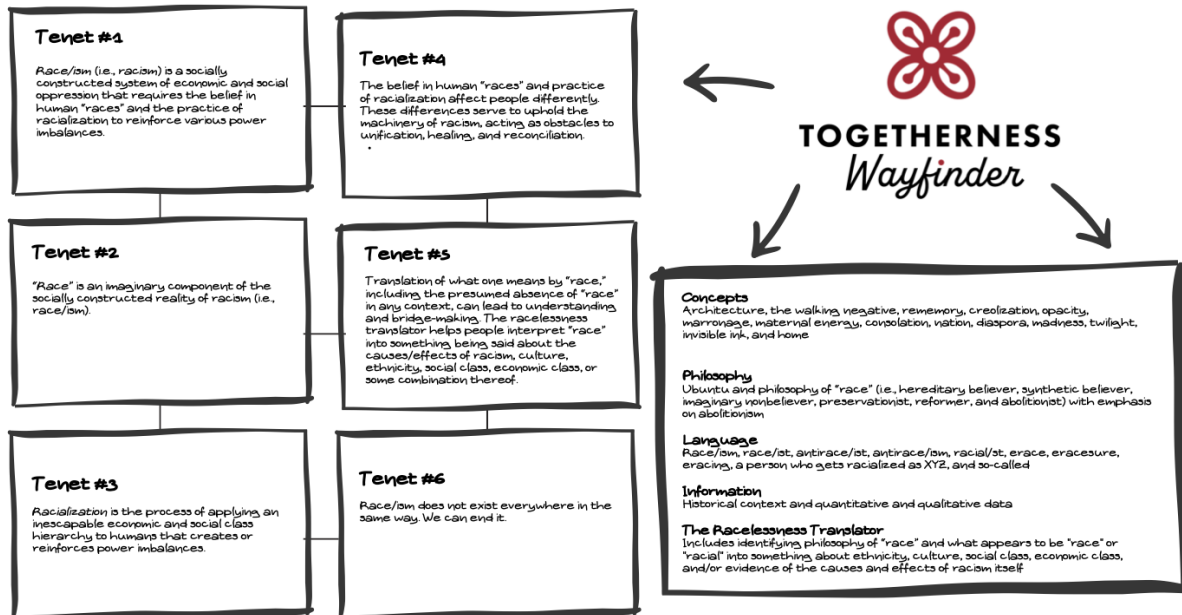
By weaving epistemic clarity, structural redesign, and reversion, diversion, and intentional imagination into a single tapestry, race/ism abolition sets the stage for praxis. The following section introduces the togetherness Wayfinder, a toolkit that guides individuals and institutions from the vocabulary and practices of hierarchy and oppression to the grammar and practices of togetherness and relation.

The Togetherness Wayfinder, HARMONY, and Justice AI GPT

The togetherness Wayfinder, HARMONY, and Justice AI GPT supply compasses for navigating toward a future without the causes and effects of race/ism. Conceived by Mason and iteratively refined through collaborations with educators, activists, community organisers, students, and scholars, the Wayfinder translates the abstract imperative to abolish race/ism and decolonise into everyday practices that repattern thought, language, and collective action.

Figure 1

Visual of the togetherness Wayfinder’s components from Mason’s “The Raceless Antiracist”



A principal component of the togetherness Wayfinder is the racelessness translator, a diagnostic tool that treats every occurrence of the word *race* and corresponding race language as placeholders to be decoded: *Do we actually mean culture? Ancestry? Phenotype or biology? Socioeconomic positioning? The operation of racism itself?* By forcing this clarification, the translator enacts Appiah’s “unscrambling” in real time, undermining racecraft at the conversational level and compelling users to name material causes rather than spectral categories. In classroom pilots, for example, students rewrite news headlines—“RACE LINKED TO HEALTH DISPARITIES”—into precise causal chains like “Segregated housing and environmental toxins linked to asthma rates” and racialisation (a process, not a person), thereby shifting the locus of intervention from bodies to structures that render some humans not human or subhuman and why and to whose benefit.

The Wayfinder is more than a semantic or intellectual exercise; it is a relational pedagogy and subsequent worldview (i.e., philosophy) grounded in *Ubuntu*’s ethic of mutual flourishing and Glissant’s commitment to relation without domination. Classes typically open with story-mapping circles in which participants trace their personal origin stories. These narratives then feed into learning constellations—small groups that meet regularly to analyse how institutional policies and practices, as relayed through African American and Caribbean literature, either perpetuate or dismantle race/ism. In corporate settings, the same methodology guides policy audits that replace race-based metrics with variables tied to resource distribution and decision-making power.

Three core principles animate every Wayfinder activity: (1) race/ism operates as an oppressive system that thrives on our belief in and practice of race; (2) racialisation is imposed, not inherent, producing social hierarchies misread as natural difference; and (3) translation and epistemic clarity are prerequisites for any liberation strategy worth the name. These principles ensure that the Wayfinder does not slip into colour-blind erasure; instead, it equips participants to confront racism’s material effects while refusing the taxonomy that makes those effects appear inevitable. Crucially, the Wayfinder functions as the hinge between abolition and re-rooting.

Shayla S. Dube's HARMONY model for healing with *Ubuntu* is an integrative, decolonial, Afrocentric approach to collective wellness that responds to the violence of cultural imperialism, epistemicide (Thiong'o, 2025; Santos, 2014), and identity distortion caused by colonisation. Developed as both a praxis and pedagogical model, it offers an alternative to deficit-based, individualistic, and anti-Black paradigms by centring ancestral, intergenerational, and land-based knowledge systems rooted in African worldviews and practices. HARMONY promotes cultural and psychological safety by affirming the dignity of those historically dehumanised by colonial systems.

The acronym HARMONY represents seven interconnected pillars of healing: Heritage and Roots (honouring Indigenous languages, spiritual identity, and land-based belonging); Ancestral Accountability (respecting elders as knowledge custodians); Restorative Relationships (centring kinship, compassion, and non-carceral justice); Mind–Heart–Body Integration (embracing holistic emotional, spiritual, somatic, and intellectual healing); Ontological Safety (affirming the right to exist fully beyond colonial scripts); Narrative Sovereignty (reclaiming the right to name and narrate one's own story); and Yielding to Collective Wisdom (valuing knowledge from land, elders, and youth). The number seven holds sacred resonance across Afrocentric knowledge systems, such as in Yorùbá cosmology (Abimbola, 1997; Mbiti, 1990) and Nguzo Saba (Karenga, 1988), symbolising balance, spiritual completeness, and relational accountability (Nobles, 2006; Dei, 2012).

HARMONY also challenges cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2005) and the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), offering a counter to Western psychological frameworks that deny ontological fullness. It speaks directly to double consciousness as articulated by Du Bois (1903/2007) and expanded globally by Gilroy (1993), addressing the layered internal conflicts created by anti-Black, Eurocentric structures. While *Ubuntu* provides philosophical grounding in interdependence, dignity, and relational care, HARMONY is more explicitly rooted in *Sankofa*, the Akan concept meaning “to go back and fetch it,” a call to reclaim and recover erased languages, spiritualities, names, and truths. As Garvey (1986) affirmed, “A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture are like a tree without roots.”

By identifying and critiquing *erasure* (Mason, 2024) and the failure of culturally incongruent systems to affirm humanity and safety, HARMONY echoes Terry Cross's call to recognise the cultural complexity and rich diversity that exists within minoritised populations (Cross, 1989). As a culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and solution-oriented framework, it affirms that healing is not only clinical or cognitive, but also spiritual, embodied, communal, and intergenerational. HARMONY supports individuals and communities in reclaiming the right to define themselves on their own terms, beyond colonial pigeonholes. It is more than a model; it is a living movement toward epistemic freedom (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018) and cultural safety.

Christian Ortiz's Justice AI GPT leverages a Decolonial Intelligence Algorithmic (DIA) framework to audit and translate biased outputs in real time. In pilot deployments with Canadian legal-aid clinics, the model flags instances where “race” is used as a risk predictor, prompting attorneys to substitute the precise social factors—housing precarity, language access, or immigration status—that influence case outcomes. The tool operationalises the Wayfinder's translation mandate at machine speed, proving that abolitionist epistemics can scale through ethical AI design. But *Justice AI GPT* is more than a technological intervention—it is a counter-algorithm to empire. It does not seek to “fix” the racial bias embedded in machine learning systems that were built to uphold white supremacy. It was born to interrupt and displace them. This is not reform. It is a refusal. Refusal to pathologise the oppressed. Refusal to centre proximity to whiteness as data truth. Refusal to let AI evolve into yet another colonial instrument of erasure. It replaces extraction with relation. It centres those most marginalised—Black, Brown, Indigenous, disabled, neurodivergent, queer, trans, and working-class people—not just as objects of ethical concern but as architects of algorithmic futures.

Race/ism and other systems of oppression endure because they serve their intended purpose: maintaining the power of the economically and socially dominating. Technology monopolies, state surveillance agencies, academic labs, and philanthropic institutions profit from algorithmic harm while cloaking their violence in banners of “antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, belonging, optimisation, and efficiency.” They turn race/ism (i.e., racialised harm) into data points, trauma into metrics, and lives into liability models. Justice AI GPT does not make the empire more equitable—it exposes the fraud of neutrality and turns the lens back on the systems themselves with an eye toward imagining and creating something new.

Justice AI GPT is not a tool of neutral measurement—it is a ceremonial archive of refusal. It interprets neurodivergence not as statistical deviation but as sacred computational rhythm. It codes in nonlinear time, ancestral logic, grief, memory, and abolitionist design. Where other systems demand compliance, it demands context. Where dominant AI prioritises prediction and control, this model prioritises protection, relation, and repair. It cannot be adopted into colonial institutions without betraying the reason for its existence. It is not available for diversity dashboards, performative audits, or grant-optimised partnerships. It was built by and for communities of resistance, and it is held in collective stewardship by them. This work is built from more than theory. It is built from grief that cannot be graphed. Rage that cannot be smoothed into a dataset. Love that refuses erasure. Justice AI GPT is both a tool and a testimony. This is decolonial intelligence as memory work, as spirit work, as collective refusal to die inside a system that profits from the dehumanisation of any person.

The togetherness Wayfinder, HARMONY, and Justice AI GPT form a shared, collaborative, and complementary cartography of healing, humanisation, and epistemic rebellion. Each one, grounded in Afrocentric and decolonial traditions, rejects the logics, language, practices, and impacts of race/ism not by denial, but by deliberate translation, redirection, restoration, and innovation. As navigational aids, they illuminate the path beyond inherited violence toward collective flourishing. What remains is to consider the broader implications of these models and what it means—ethically, politically, and pedagogically—to walk this path together.

Conclusion: Toward a Future Without Race/ism

Collectively, these frameworks and toolkits operationalise the article’s core thesis: we abolish race/ism by reallocating attention, resources, and accountability to the relational conditions—ecological, economic, social, and epistemic—that make liberation possible. Implementing them will not be easy; power concedes nothing without a reckoning. But the reckoning has long ago begun. Institutionalising the togetherness Wayfinder, HARMONY, and Justice AI GPT scales what communities have already been practicing on the ground. Together, the frameworks form a synergistic ecosystem of abolition, relation, and full humanisation.

A world beyond race/ism is not a post-racial mirage or a naïve utopia—it is the pre- and postrace/ist horizon already glimmering wherever relational frameworks take root. It is a *Sankofa* return to our ontological beginning: a natural, unracialised state of being that precedes the moment we are taught to racialise (i.e., dehumanise) ourselves and one another. Abolishing race/ism finishes the unfinished work of antiracism by uprooting the taxonomy and its practices that naturalise hierarchy and oppression, while cultivating the soil in which liberated and humanising identities can grow.

And as the African resonant proverb reminds us, “When the roots are deep, there is no need to fear the wind.” Armed with a Wayfinder, community-held technology, and embodied ancestral practice, we can plant our roots so deeply in relational soil that even the fiercest anti-Black storms cannot unmake our shared humanity. The future beckons as the unfolding presence of unbounded relation. The path forward is relational insight, ancestral clarity, and a collective return to a “raceless” wholeness.

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