



1.3 Government violence against communities of color

Key building blocks

Dog whistling, more than White racism in general, is at the root of the massive government violence against communities of color over the last half century. Really grappling with this idea is key to understanding why a race-class approach may be the best way to move forward on racial justice.

Discussion Guide

Sample questions	Potential answers
DOG WHISTLING IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF SYSTEMATIC GOVERNMENT VIOLENCE AGAINST COMMUNITIES OF COLOR	
1. What is the relationship between dog whistle politics and the rise in mass incarceration?	Dog whistling frequently uses a threat script that depicts people of color as violent and dangerous. Once elected, dog whistling politicians turn this rhetoric into government policy, including by militarizing the police and building prisons
2. The video talks about mass surveillance against Muslims here in the United States, as well as mass deportation. How are these connected to dog whistling?	Muslims as terrorists and immigrants as illegal aliens are different versions of the threat script. Again, once elected, dog whistling politicians turn this rhetoric into concrete policies.

3. The video talks about “systematic violence against communities of color” and then says the root cause is not White racism in general, but dog whistle politics in particular. Do you agree?

The key word is “systematic.” While simple bigotry has had devastating impacts on individuals of color, it’s codifying that kind of bigotry and allowing it to be replicated many times over that creates large-scale violence against communities of color.

Dog whistles mentioned

- Crime; crime victim
- Law and Order
- Illegal aliens
- Thugs
- Terrorists
- Super predators

Anti-racist protip

As we saw in video 1.1, calls for law and order operated as a dog whistle to undermine the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, and this same dog whistle is widely used today. Even when the same precise words are not used, we see the same basic storyline told over and over about supposedly violent and undeserving people of color. This is because dog whistles are designed to trigger entrenched racist stereotypes that have endured for decades and even centuries.

This means that advocates can use past dog whistle scripts to anticipate present and even future racist messaging, and can create their own playbook with enough flexibility to respond to new permutations while still swatting down the recycled stereotypes.