Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener’s Tale

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Abstract
The author presents a theoretic framework for understanding racism on three levels: institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized. This framework is useful for raising new hypotheses about the basis of race-associated differences in health outcomes, as well as for designing effective interventions to eliminate those differences.

She then presents an allegory about a gardener with two flower boxes, rich and poor soil, and red and pink flowers. This allegory illustrates the relationship between the three levels of racism and may guide our thinking about how to intervene to mitigate the impacts of racism on health. It may also serve as a tool for starting a national conversation on racism.