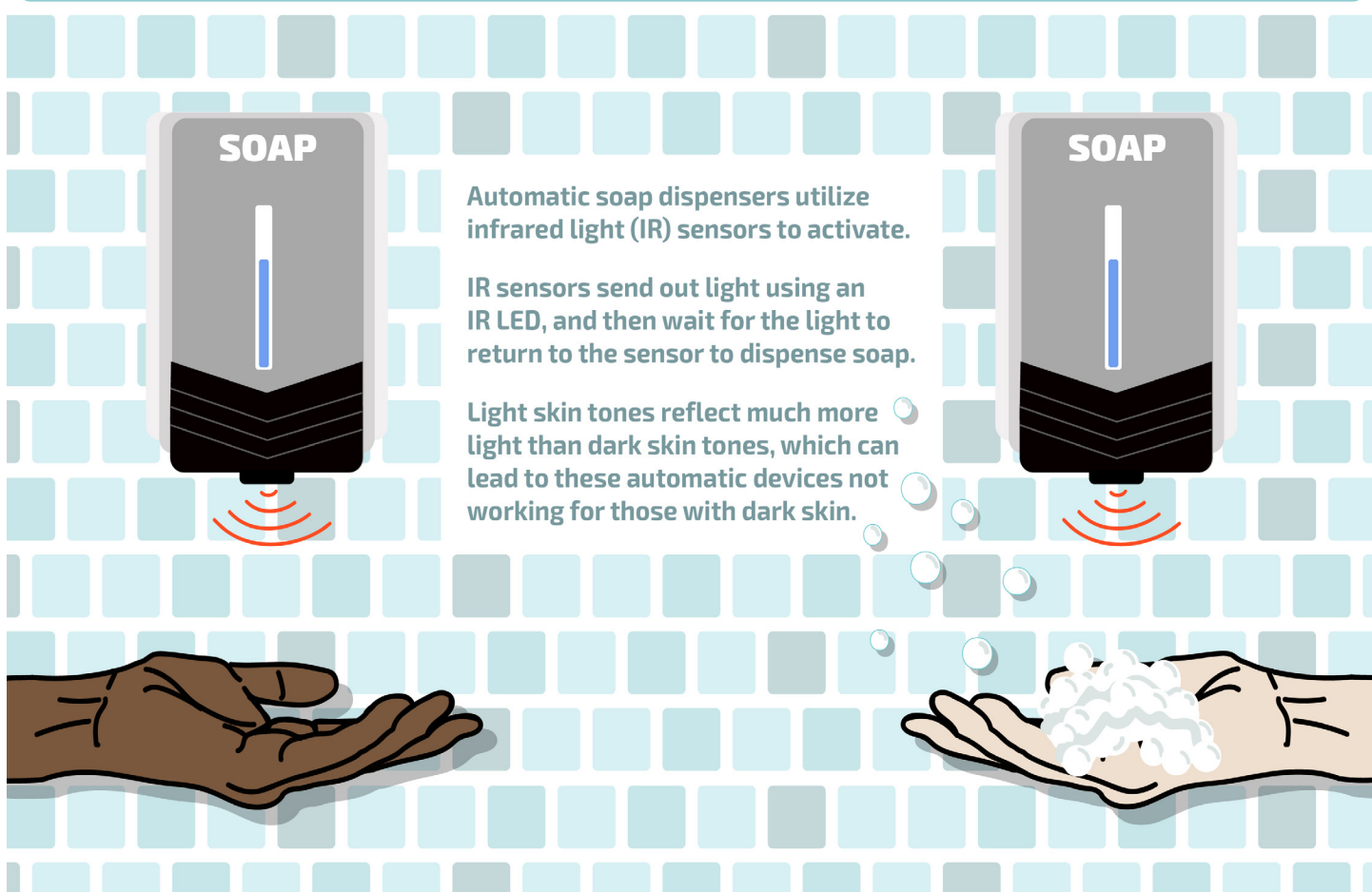**"By calling attention to discriminatory design —** the human decisions, assumptions, values, that shape the process of tech development **— we are able to see the harm."** — *Dr. Ruha Benjamin*

SOAP

SOAP

Automatic soap dispensers utilize infrared light (IR) sensors to activate.

IR sensors send out light using an IR LED, and then wait for the light to return to the sensor to dispense soap.

Light skin tones reflect much more light than dark skin tones, which can lead to these automatic devices not working for those with dark skin.

Race to the Future?
Reimagining the Default Settings of Technology & Society
University of Northern Iowa - Quest for Racial Equity Project

Dr. Ruha Benjamin, Princeton University Professor of African American Studies, primarily researches, writes, and speaks on the intersection of technology with health, equity, and justice. She is the author of: Race After technology: Abolitionist Tools for the Next Jim Code and People's Science: Bodies and Rights on the Stem cell Frontier.

In this 35-minute presentation, Dr. Benjamin discusses and provides examples of how the design and implementation of technology has intended and unintended consequences which support systematic racism. She asks the audience to imagine a world in which socially conscious approaches to technology development can intentionally build a more just world.

Your Tasks:
- Watch Race to the Future? Reimagining the default settings of technology and society, Dr. Ruha Benjamin's presentation from the 2020 NCWIT Conversations for Change Series.
  (https://www.ncwit.org/video/race-future-reimagining-default-settings-technology-and-society-ruha-benjamin-video-playback)
- Together with 1 or 2 other Quest participants, have a discussion using one or more of the question groups below. If you are questing on your own, choose 2-3 questions and journal about each question you choose for 7 minutes.
- Finally, make a future technology pledge. Your pledge could be about questioning new technologies, changing your organization's policies about technology adoption, or something else.

Questions posed by Dr. Benjamin
- What does it mean (on our campus or in our organization) for more people to participate in the shaping of technology? What would this look like?
- What is my responsibility as a leader (on my campus, in my organization, in my community) to broaden participation of those who choose and shape our technology and its use?

Reflection or Discussion Questions for Students/Individuals
- Have you ever benefited from a bias in technology? How did you benefit and what were the consequences?
- Describe a time when you used/encountered a technology that was bias against a group. Try to describe what that technology would look like and be like if recreated to become less bias.

Reflection or Discussion Questions for UNI/School Faculty, Staff, and Administrators
- What technologies are in place at the university/school which have intentional or unintentional consequences for non-whites?
- What processes are in place or need to be put into place to allow for identification and adoption of technologies that create bias outcomes for different groups?
- How can the university be intentional about technology adoption to insure equity and justice?
- Is striving for equity in technology enough?

Reflection or Discussion Questions for Business, Government, and Non-profit Leaders/Staff
- What technologies are in place in our organization which have intentional or unintentional consequences for non-whites?
- What processes are in place or need to be put into place to allow for identification and adaption of technologies that create bias outcomes for different groups?
- How can the organization be more inclusive about who decides upon & who creates the technology we use?
- Is striving for equity in technology enough?

Resources:
- NCWIT other videos: https://www.ncwit.org/summit/speakers/28551
- Dr. Benjamin about why she wrote Race After Technology: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2552843144966492
- 10 principles of worker data rights: http://www.thefutureworldofwork.org/media/35421/uni_workers_data_protection.pdf
- Advancing Racial Literacy in Tech Handbook: https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Racial_Literacy_Tech_Final_0522.pdf

Dr. Benjamin's Books:
- Race After Technology: https://www.ruhabenjamin.com/race-after-technology
- People's Science, Bodies & Rights on the Stem Cell Frontier: https://www.ruhabenjamin.com/peoples-science