

A Study Guide for First United Methodist Church of Cary
for

Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race

by Debbie Irving



“This widespread phenomenon of white people wanting to guard themselves against appearing stupid, racist, or radical has resulted in an epidemic of silence from people who care deeply about justice and love for their fellow human beings. I believe most white people would take a stand against racism if only they knew how, or even imagined they had a role.” (Debby Irving, p.xii)

Introduction:

In our Table Talk series on Holy Conversations this past year, we were reminded that John Wesley said, “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?”

In response to loving all our brothers and sisters, Bishop Hope Ward asked all churches to address the issue of racism. Church Council responded by creating a Racism Task Force that has been meeting since December of last year. The task force realizes that the work of combatting racism is ongoing and has committed to a five-year plan of opportunities to address this issue. The first opportunity is this church wide book study of Debby Irving’s, Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race. The Task Force invites the First United Methodist Church of Cary community to participate in this good work. We pray that this first step of our journey will enable us to start a conversation that will make us a more loving and inclusive church.

About This Guide:

All credit goes to book author Debby Irving and the additional authors cited. This guide was developed by the Racism Task Force of First United Methodist Church of Cary; feel free to use it in any way that is helpful. Contact Linda Hodges at lahodges@bellsouth.net with any questions. To God Be the Glory!

Covenant for Participation

Make space for all voices. If you are typically quiet, consider offering your thoughts to the group. If you are typically first to talk, consider waiting to let other voices be heard.

Create a brave space. A lot of people don't have experience talking about racism so it can feel scarier than it is. Give yourself permission to be vulnerable. Some of our best learning happens when we take risks.

Lean into the discomfort. Try to stay engaged while paying attention to what feelings come up for you. Sometimes a hot-button issue comes up and you're stretched into discomfort.

Work the idea, not the person. If someone says something, chances are many others were thinking the same thing. It helps to build relationships and learn new ideas to address the issues that come up rather than making it about the person who says it.

Use "I" messages to speak only for yourself. Let's try to share about our own experiences rather than speaking for other people or universalizing our experience.

Remember we are all learners. No one here is an expert at anti-racism. We are each on our own journey to unlearn racism.

Practice the discipline of the circle. Go around the table allowing everyone to speak, permitting those who do not want to speak to "pass." Then cross talk around the circle.

Be attentive to the role of silence. Silence helps us to reflect upon and process what has been shared.

Treat everyone with respect. Remember we are all at different places in our journey.

Notes for Facilitators:

- All participants will need a copy of this study guide.
- Participants will need to have read the Introduction to be prepared for the first session.
- Participants are encouraged to keep a journal for their own reflection.
- Prayers are to be prayed in unison.
- Have participants take turns reading so that all segments of each session will be read aloud. Provide time for participants to respond to each segment as needed.
- For responsive readings, the facilitator will lead.
- Groups may be divided into pairs, quartets, etc., when responding to questions.
- There may not be enough time to cover all the content in each session in the time allotted. Facilitators are encouraged to prioritize the content to meet their group's needs. Or, groups may decide to have more sessions to cover the content.
- Facilitators are encouraged to use the guide in any way that meets the needs of the group.
- We pray that our time together will be of benefit for our mutual transformation.

Session One — Introduction to Waking Up White

Prayer: Creator of All People

Almighty God, source of our life, we acknowledge you as Creator of all people of every race, language and way of life. Help us to see each other as you see us: your sons and daughters loved into being and sustained by your parental care. Keep watch over our hearts so that the evil of racism will find no home with us. Direct our spirits to work for justice and peace so that all barriers to your grace which oppress our brothers and sisters will be removed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.
(from the Augustinians of the Midwest)

Welcome All Participants:

Thank everyone for coming. Review the first page and covenant agreements.

Scripture: John 17: 20-23

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (NRSV)

Remember Your Baptism:

On behalf of the whole church, I ask you: Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world and repent of your sins?

I do.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord in union with the church which Christ opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

I do.

How is remembering our baptism relevant to our study of racism?

VIDEO: We are going to watch a video of author, Debby Irving, sharing how she came to this work.

Debby Irving TED Talk, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oD50x5XNEpg>)

Quotes from Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, by Debby Irving

Waking up white has been an unexpected journey that's required me to dig back into childhood memories to recall when, how, and why I developed such distorted ideas about race, racism, and the dominant culture in which I soaked. p. xii

As I unpack my own white experience in the pages ahead, I have no pretense that I speak for all white Americans, not even my four white siblings. Never before have I been so keenly aware of how individual our cultural experiences and perspectives are. That said, all Americans live within the context of one dominant culture, the one brought to this country by white Anglo settlers. Exploring one's relationship to that culture is where the waking-up process begins. p.xii

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your reaction to the video?
2. The author brings up the ideas of Natural Order and Level Playing Field (Land of Opportunity/American Dream for all). How did all of us grow up with these ideas?
3. The author names three practices that help her in this work. Which of the strategies listed below seems easiest and/or hardest for you?
 - Curiosity – We'll always make snap judgements, but it is important to ask: which voices are present, what messages are sent, whose perspective am I NOT hearing?
 - Courage – Being courageous makes it easier to continue to be courageous
 - Tolerance – For her own discomfort with imperfection
4. Are there other passages from the book that we have not discussed that were meaningful to you?

Closure:

What went well for you? What would have made this session better for you? Are there any items we need to revisit? Any questions?

Reading Assignment:

Next week's session will focus on Chapter 7, "The GI Bill," and Chapter 11, "Headwinds and Tailwinds."

Closing Prayer: A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee.
Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou art mine and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.

Session Two: Institutional Racism

Welcome back. What have you been thinking since our first session?

Prayer: Creator of All People

Almighty God, source of our life, we acknowledge you as Creator of all people of every race, language and way of life. Help us to see each other as you see us: your sons and daughters loved into being and sustained by your parental care. Keep watch over our hearts so that the evil of racism will find no home with us. Direct our spirits to work for justice and peace so that all barriers to your grace which oppress our brothers and sisters will be removed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. (from the Augustinians of the Midwest)

Scripture: Acts 10:34-36

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all. (NRSV)

From The BOOK of DISCIPLINE of the UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Section VI. Called to Inclusiveness

#140. We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons.

Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. The services of worship of every local church of The United Methodist Church shall be open to all persons."

2016, p. 101.

Quotes from Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, by Debbie Irving

The chilling reality is that while the American dream fell into the laps of millions of Americans, making the GI Bill the great equalizer for the range of white ethnicities in the melting pot, Americans of color, including one million black GIs who'd risked their lives in the war, were largely excluded. p. 33

A set of policies created by the FHA, and implemented by lenders and realtors, mapped out neighborhoods according to the skin color of residents. This national housing appraisal system, commonly known as "redlining," deemed skin color as much a valuation indicator as a building's condition. Neighborhoods inhabited by blacks or other people of color were outlined in red, the color in the legend next to the word, "Hazardous" (investment). p.33-34

Avoidance allows an irrational fear of "the other" to take hold, which is exactly what happened in this situation. Fearing that black customers might scare off white customers, the white mall developers worked with the city transportation officials to redirect Buffalo's bus routes, making it extremely inconvenient to get from the black part of town to their new mall. No one actually said, "You can't come to our mall, black folks." They just made getting there unwieldy. p.57

VIDEO: We are going to watch a video clip from the movie, "Race the House We Live In," that shows how black veterans were not allowed to participate in the GI Bill.

<https://youtu.be/mW764dXEI8>

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your reaction to the video? Can you imagine how these black veterans and their families felt? How did not being able to own a home and grow equity impact their lives? What happened in the neighborhoods in which black veterans were able to purchase homes?
2. The late historian Ronald Takaki referred to the history taught in American schools as “The Master Narrative”, the version of history told by Americans of Anglo descent. Think about what you did not study. Did you learn about Lincoln’s views on enslaved black people? Anti-immigration laws of the nineteenth century? American’s laws regarding who could and could not gain citizenship? The Native Americans who had once lived on your town’s or school’s land?
3. We saw how white mall developers tried to exclude blacks. How do we avoid “the other” in our institutions today?
4. How do we avoid “the other” in our everyday lives?
5. Is the church immune from institutional racism? Why or why not?
6. How do we safeguard against institutional racism in organization to which we belong?
7. Are there other passages from the book that we have not discussed that were meaningful to you?

Closure:

What would have made this session better for you? Are there any items we need to revisit? Any questions?

Reading Assignment:

Next week’s session will focus on Chapter 8, “Racial Categories,” and Chapter 9, “White Superiority.”

Closing Prayer: From the Pax Christi website: - <http://www.paxchristi.org>

We promise to work:
To bring the light of the Gospel to those living in darkness,
To bring the hope of the Gospel to those living in despair,
To bring the healing of the Gospel to the lonely,
The disadvantaged, the marginalized,
And to bring the peace of the Gospel to a divided world.
Amen.

Session Three: What is Race?

Prayer: Creator of All People

Almighty God, source of our life, we acknowledge you as Creator of all people of every race, language and way of life. Help us to see each other as you see us: your sons and daughters loved into being and sustained by your parental care. Keep watch over our hearts so that the evil of racism will find no home with us. Direct our spirits to work for justice and peace so that all barriers to your grace which oppress our brothers and sisters will be removed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. (from the Augustinians of the Midwest)

Welcome back.

Scripture: Colossians 3:9-11

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! (NRSV)

From The BOOK of DISCIPLINE of the UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“A) Rights of Racial and Ethnic Persons – Racism is the combination of the power to dominate by one race over other races and a value system that assumes that the dominant race is innately superior to the others. Racism includes both personal and institutional racism. Personal racism is manifested through the individual expressions, attitudes, and/or behaviors that accept the assumptions of a racist value system and that maintain the benefits of this system. Institutional racism is the established social pattern that supports implicitly or explicitly the racist value system. Racism, manifested as sin, plagues and hinders our relationship with Christ, inasmuch as it is antithetical to the gospel itself. In many cultures white persons are granted unearned privileges and benefits that are denied to persons of color. We oppose the creation of a racial hierarchy in any culture. Racism breeds racial discrimination. We define racial discrimination as the disparate treatment and lack of full access and equity in resources, opportunities, and participation in the church and in society based on race or ethnicity. Therefore, we recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons.” 2016, p.120.

Quotes from Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, by Debbie Irving

Genetically speaking, humans have the least intraspecies genetic variation, and the greatest variation occurs within ethnic groups. p.39

No science supports the idea that genetic makeup follows the neat racial lines white people have created. No science links race to intrinsic traits such as intelligence or musical or physical abilities. p.39

The biggest problem with America's idea of racial categories is that they are not just categories: they've been used to imply a hierarchy born of nature. Regardless of how racial categories came into being, Americans have been cast in racial roles that have the power to become self-fulfilling, self-perpetuation prophecies. p.41

Whiteness, it turns out, is but a pigment of the imagination. p.44

When I came out of class the night I'd been introduced to the idea of race as a human invention, my fifteen-year-old daughter was waiting for me for a ride home. "What's up?" she asked, wondering why my jaw was slack and I was shaking my head. "I just found out race isn't even real the way I thought it was. I mean 'real' as in based in biology." I clarified. "You didn't know that?" she looked at me with shock. I stopped short, put my hand on her arm, looked at her and said, "You did?"

Using a tone usually reserved for the word duh she said, "Yeah. It was the first thing we did in bio this year." "What do you mean the 'first thing you did'?" We studied the biology of skin color. You know, melatonin and the way skin colors adapted to climate as people migrated."

No, I hadn't known. I wonder if some day humanity will look back on people's belief in racial categories in the same way that I shake my head at the olden days when people thought the world was flat. p.45

Discussion Questions:

1. When did you first notice you were a different race or color than someone else?
2. How have you understood racial difference? In terms of biology? Culture?
3. Have you given it much thought? Why or why not?
4. What stereotypes about people of another race do you remember hearing and believing as a child? Were you encouraged to question those stereotypes?
5. Prior to reading Chapter 9, what did you know about the history of naming the races?
6. What do you know of your ethnic heritage?
7. Are there other passages from the book that we have not discussed that were meaningful to you?

Closure:

What do you think about race now? Are there any items we need to revisit? Any questions?

Reading Assignment:

Next week's session will focus on Chapter 3, "Race Verses Class" and Chapter 11, "Headwinds and Tailwinds."

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,
I give You my hands to do Your work.
I give You my feet to go Your way.
I give You my eyes to see as You do.
I give You my tongue to speak Your words.
I give You my mind that You may think in me.
I give You my spirit that You may pray in me.
Above all,
I give You my heart that You may love in me,
Your Father, and all humankind.
I give You my whole self, that You may grow in me.
So that it is You, Lord Jesus,
Who live and work and pray in me.
Amen.

Session Four: Understanding Systemic Racism.

Prayer: Creator of All People

Almighty God, source of our life, we acknowledge you as Creator of all people of every race, language and way of life. Help us to see each other as you see us: your sons and daughters loved into being and sustained by your parental care. Keep watch over our hearts so that the evil of racism will find no home with us. Direct our spirits to work for justice and peace so that all barriers to your grace which oppress our brothers and sisters will be removed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.
(from the Augustinians of the Midwest)

Welcome back. Any thoughts or feelings on the study so far?

Scripture: Romans 10:8-13

But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (NRSV)

For Courage to Do Justice

O Lord, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others; open my ears that I may hear their cries; open my heart so that they need not be without succor; let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong, nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich. Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use me to bring them to those places. And so open my eyes and my ears that I may this coming day be able to some work of peace for thee. Amen.

THE UNITED METHODIST HYMNAL, p. 455

Quotes from Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, by Debbie Irving

Here's one way I've come to think about it (systemic racism). Think about three basic elements:

- 1. Skin color symbolism: using skin color to imagine innate levels of intelligence, athleticism, aggression, and so forth in oneself and others*
- 2. Favoritism: the idea that one is best*
- 3. Power: the ability to make decisions for and/or distribute resources to people*

Skin color symbolism + favoritism + power = systemic racism

p.54

Race stands apart...Not only is race visible and permanent; it's come to act as a social proxy for one's value in American society. White has long stood for normal and better, while black and brown have been considered different and inferior. p.15

Discussion Questions:

1. Consider each of these tangible and intangible aspects of your life: work, sense of belonging, social connections, choice, education, healthy food, legal protection, housing, transportation, medical care. How easy has it been for you to attain each? How might this experience be different for people of color?
2. As a group, brainstorm the stereotypes associated with the following labels: African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Jews, Latinos, Muslims, Whites. Do not pause, censor or correct what is said; let emerge what will with the facilitator recording responses. Then look at what has been said. Does it surprise you? What stereotypes were listed for whites? Do any of these stereotypes make you uncomfortable? When you have you seen these stereotypes proven wrong?
3. Are there other passages from the book that we have not discussed that were meaningful to you?

Closure:

What did learn about systematic racism? Are there any items we need to revisit? Any questions?

Reading Assignment:

Next week’s session will focus on Chapter 20, “My Robin Hood Syndrome,” Chapter 25, “Belonging,” and Chapter 40, “Bull in a China Shop.”

Closing Prayer:

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

Session Five: We Don't Know What We Don't Know

Prayer: Creator of All People

Almighty God, source of our life, we acknowledge you as Creator of all people of every race, language and way of life. Help us to see each other as you see us: your sons and daughters loved into being and sustained by your parental care. Keep watch over our hearts so that the evil of racism will find no home with us. Direct our spirits to work for justice and peace so that all barriers to your grace which oppress our brothers and sisters will be removed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.
(from the Augustinians of the Midwest)

Welcome back. What have you learned so far?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (NRSV)

From The BOOK of RESOLUTIONS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 2016

“Therefore, as United Methodists in every place across the land, we will unite our efforts within the Church to take the following actions:

1. Eliminate all forms of institutional racism in the total ministry of the Church, giving special attention to those institutions we support, beginning with their employment policies, purchasing practices, environmental policies, and availability of services and facilities;
2. Create opportunities in local churches to deal honestly with the existing racist attitudes and social distance between members, deepening the Christian commitment to be the church where all racial groups and economic classes come together;
3. Increase efforts to recruit people of all races into the membership of the United Methodist Church and provide leadership development and opportunities without discrimination;
4. Establish workshops and seminars in local churches to study, understand, and appreciate the historical and cultural contributions of each race to the church and community;
5. Raise local churches' awareness of the continuing needs for equal education, housing, employment, medical care, and environmental justice for all members of the community and to create opportunities to work for these things across racial lines;” p.351

Quotes from Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, by Debbie Irving

The idea that my world might feel uncomfortable or even dangerous to someone else would have been inconceivable to me. Had someone tried to point out to me that I was part of a national pattern of white people deciding what people of color needed, and white people holding the purse strings, I'm guessing I would have silently smiled while thinking, “How ungrateful”. p.108

Until I became aware of how my internalized white ways of thinking and acting interfered with my best intentions to bridge the racial divide, I was like a bull in a china shop. What passed for normal in my white world had the potential to alienate people of color. Until I understood this problem, I moved clumsily around people of color, creating unintentional slights, reinforcing the white stereotypes, and perpetuating the kind of mistrust and misunderstanding that fuels racism. p.210

I never questioned whether I belonged in America and its institutions. ... I grew up believing the police were there to protect me.... I've now learned that just five miles away black mothers in Boston were

teaching their children not to play hide-and-seek outside lest it appear they were sneaking around and up to no good. 'If you get stopped by the police,' black mothers routinely tell their kids, 'keep your hands in plain sight so they don't think you have a gun.' p. 137

Some Ways We May Alienate People of Color

1. Being suspicious of their behavior
2. Asking what they do for a living or how they got their job
3. Complimenting them for being so “articulate”
4. Referring to children as “little monkeys”
5. Accusing them of being a “token”
6. Treating them like a criminal instead of a customer
7. Being surprised by their accomplishments
8. Using words and phrases such as *welfare queen, Affirmative Action hire, deadbeat dads, urban underclass, model minority*

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the ways we may alienate people of color. Have you learned anything new from this list? How will this discussion change your actions?
2. Have you tried to form relationships across racial lines? How have they worked out? If they didn't get very far, how do you explain that? If successful, how do you explain that?
3. Contrast what black and white parents tell their children about the police.
4. Think of a time when you have been treated unfairly. What do you recall of your emotions (anger, astonishment, resentment, anxiety) and your physical state (elevated heart rate, stomach clenching, sweating)? How did you respond to unfair treatment?
5. Think of a time when you hurt someone's feelings without intending to. Was your impulse to defend yourself? If so, why do you think that urge to defend your intention felt so important? If you shifted from focusing on your intent to focusing on the impact of your words or actions, what inspired you to do so? What was ultimately required to heal the rift?
6. Are there other passages from the book that we have not discussed that were meaningful to you?

Closure:

Are there any items we need to revisit? Any questions?

Reading Assignment:

Next week's session will focus on Chapter 23, “Diversity Training,” Chapter 28, “I Am the Elephant,” Chapter 41, “From Bystander to Ally” and Chapter 46, “Whole Again.”

Closing Prayer:

O God, our Father,
Good beyond all that is good, fair beyond all that is fair,
in whom is calmness and peace,
do Thou make up the descensions which divide us from each other, and bring us back into the unity of love,
which may bear some likeness to Thy divine nature.

Grant that we may be spiritually one, as well in ourselves as in each other,
Through that peace of Thine which maketh all things peaceful, and through the grace, mercy and tenderness
of Thine only Son.

Amen

Jacobite Liturgy of St. Dionysius

Session Six: Where Do We Go From Here?

Prayer: Creator of All People

Almighty God, source of our life, we acknowledge you as Creator of all people of every race, language and way of life. Help us to see each other as you see us: your sons and daughters loved into being and sustained by your parental care. Keep watch over our hearts so that the evil of racism will find no home with us. Direct our spirits to work for justice and peace so that all barriers to your grace which oppress our brothers and sisters will be removed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.
(from the Augustinians of the Midwest)

Welcome back. How are you feeling? What are you thinking about this study?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. (NRSV)

A COMPANION LITANY TO OUR UNITED METHODIST SOCIAL CREED

God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ, calls us by grace
**to be renewed in the image of our Creator,
that we may be one in divine love for the world.**

Today is the day

God cares for the integrity of creation, wills the healing and wholeness of all life, weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference, favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the marketplace.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God deploras violence in our homes and streets, rebukes the world's warring madness, humbles the powerful and lifts us the lowly.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God calls for nations and peoples to live in peace, celebrates where justice and mercy embrace, exults when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

**God brings good news to the poor, proclaims release to the captives, gives sight to the blind, and sets the oppressed free.
And so shall we.**

Quotes from Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, by Debbie Irving

Still trapped in my white-dominated belief system, I didn't know what I didn't know. Topping the list was the unknown truth about just how much humility would be required to become an effective agent of change. p.126

I was years from learning just how weary people of color are of being in the position of having to educate white people (about racism). p.128

The worst racism operates silently and often unknowingly in people's hearts and minds. p.220

How can racism possibly be dismantled until white people, lots and lots of white people, understand it as unfair system, get in touch with the subtle stories and stereotypes that play in their heads, and see themselves not as good or bad but as players in the system? Until white people embrace the problem, the elephant in the room-and all the nasty tension and mistrust that goes with it-will endure. And the feedback efforts of people of color will fall on ignorant ears at best, or be misconstrued as too whiney or too angry at worst. p.153

Self-examination and the courage to admit to bias and unhelpful inherited behaviors may be our greatest tools for change. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable enough to expose our ignorance and insecurities takes courage. And love. I believe the most loving thing a person, or a group of people, can do for another is to examine the ways in which their own insecurities and assumptions interfere with other's ability to thrive. Please join me in opening your heart and mind to the possibility that you-yes, even well-intentioned you-have room to change and grow, so that you can work with people of all colors and ethnicities to co-create communities that unite, strengthen and prosper. p. 249

Discussion Questions:

1. Look at the continuums on page 197 and answer the questions.
2. Are there other passages from the book that we have not discussed that were meaningful to you?
3. Why is humility so necessary in combating racism?
4. Think of an issue in our community that has been raised by people of color. How would you approach people who are focused on the problem? How would you go about being in solidarity with them? What could you offer?
5. How has this book study impacted your thinking? Your actions?
6. What will you do next as a result of this examination of this study?
7. What should our congregation do?

Closure: Is there anything you would like to share with the group?

Closing Prayer:

A Prayer for the World

Let the rain come and wash away the ancient grudges,
the bitter hatreds held and nurtured over generations.
Let the rain wash away the memory of the hurt, the neglected.
Then let the sun come out and fill the sky with rainbows.
Let the warmth of the sun heal us wherever we are broken.
Let it burn away the fog so that we can see each other clearly.
So we can see beyond labels, beyond accents, beyond gender or skin color.
Let the warmth and brightness of the sun melt our selfishness so that we can
Share the joys and feel the sorrows of our neighbors.
And let the light of the sun be strong what we will see all people as our neighbors.
Let the earth nourished by the rain bring forth flowers to surround us with beauty.
And let the mountains teach our hearts to reach upward to heaven.
Amen.

by Rabbi Harold S. Kushner

FUMC Racism Task Force Members

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Mission of FUMC Racism Task Force

1. We provide opportunities for each of us to love and act like Jesus in all our relationships.
2. We strive to name and remove the barriers of racism which separate us.
3. We are called to action through prayer, reflection, study, discussion and growth.

Sources

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Podcasts:

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The Why Factor; Racism – BBC World Service 4/10/14

Ted Radio Hour; The Consequences of Racism 3/16/18