

What does “actively anti-racist” look like for you?

This is a question only you can answer. Our first suggestion is that you pray with the question and see how God is guiding you to be anti-racist in your group(s). Our second suggestion is that you urge your small group to host a TDTR workshop.

Is once enough?

For any group to become an anti-racist organization, repeated educational presentations accompany the individual commitment of each of us to read books, take advantage of recommended secular training opportunities, and practice prayerful consideration of how we can each work toward dismantling white privilege within our communities, our church, and the world.

Comments received from past workshop participants:

“I need more of this.”

“Thank you for the inspiring opening to our year. You have given me much food for thought for introspection and for action.”

“I appreciate the work that this team is doing for our Synod.”

“More sessions like this are needed.”

“Just too short!”

How can I arrange for a Presentation?

Contact the Metro DC Synod presenters:

Laura McDowell
lauramd32@msn.com
202-332-0570

Martha Sherman
msherman4420@yahoo.com
703-505-7840

The Metro DC Synod Presenters

Laura McDowell:

I am an African-American woman who, being born in the South in the 1930's, grew up with overt racism, known as “Jim Crow.” My parents, especially my mother, taught me to never hate anyone because, they said, true Christians do not hate but love people. Although anger still wells up within me when I see mistreatment of someone because of race or hear racist comments, I try to recall my mother's teaching. So, with love, I believe I must still work diligently to help dismantle racism, whether subtle or overt, and whether against my race or others. I firmly believe that most people do not want to be racist, but it is so woven into the society that many are unaware that certain ideas and actions are actually racist. It is my desire not to place blame or guilt on anyone but to help bring about understanding and therefore bring an end to this blight that still maligns our beautiful country.

Martha Sherman:

I am a white woman. Unlike Laura, who has been aware of the effects of racism her whole life, I first realized the necessity of consciously examining my own preconceived ideas about race and understanding white privilege at age 49. Since that midlife wake-up call, I strive constantly to educate myself about how this culture is racist and how I either contribute to that status quo or can be working to transform myself and the institutions that I am part of. This exploration has profoundly deepened my relationship with God. I hear Jesus calling me to do nothing less than be fully and actively anti-racist. I believe that if I am not part of the solution, I am part of the problem.

“God has a dream...”

Desmond Tutu

“I have a dream...”

Martin Luther King, Jr.



Offered by the
Women of the ELCA
to the Metro DC Synod

About TODAY'S DREAM: TOMORROW'S REALITY

Women of the ELCA's *Today's Dream: Tomorrow's Reality* (TDTR), the network of anti-racism peer educators, has evolved since the first training of over a hundred women in April, 1997. Our trained educators provide multiple small sessions, half-day sessions, full-day sessions, and weekend retreats using Bible studies, videos, discussions, worksheets, handouts, and interactive activities and exercises, designed to suit your group's needs.

What is the goal of TDTR?

TDTR has always had one purpose: to assist Women of the ELCA in becoming an anti-racist organization. But there is no need to limit this education to only the women's organization. It is our prayer that the whole church and every group, small or large, within the church will want to become anti-racist organizations. (And if we learn how to do this in our faith-based groups, with the Gospel to help us bear the pain, we can then envision and work to do it everywhere.)

Why "Anti-Racism"?

People usually ask, "Why anti-racism?" for two reasons:

- (1) Some believe (or hope?) that racism is a thing of the past because they do not see it in their daily lives and hence believe (or hope) that it must not really exist anymore.
- (2) The word sounds negative to some ears (but it is actually a double negative, which makes it positive!)

There are two operating assumptions that TDTR uses in its presentations:

(1) In the US, we are all born into a racist society, with systems and institutions that were set in place by 1865, designed to benefit those who held the power and those who physically resembled the holders of power. We are born into this society without any of us giving our permission or consent. And while none of us living today is responsible for creating this racist society, all of us have an opportunity to be part of transforming it.

(2) Anti-racism is about more than developing sensitivities to the results of racism; it reaches deeper, into analysis of systems and institutions and how racism operates in those institutions, including our congregations, our small groups, and the whole church.

So what exactly is "Racism"?

Racism is a systemic issue. It is racial prejudice plus the power of institutions and systems to support that prejudice.

While racism does affect individual actions, effective solutions escape us if we do not address the powerful, historical socialization and white privilege that characterize our institutions, including our churches and smaller church groups, and our whole culture.

Being a racist is not an individual attribute so much as it is a systemic attribute. White Privilege is an institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions.

What do you think?

How are people taught to be racist?
When are people taught to be racist??
Can people be racist when there are no people of color around or near them?
What does the term "color-blind" mean? Is it really possible or truly preferable to be "color-blind"?

These are just some of the questions that we talk about in TDTR workshops.

Here are some more questions, with answers, which may inspire you to take advantage of what TDTR has to offer.

How are people taught to be anti-racist?...
...Through active involvement in their own learning and unlearning, which exposes how we were all taught to live in a racist society.

Is it possible to live God's justice without being actively anti-racist?...
...NO!! Racism divides God's people and is, therefore, an assault on the very gospel of Jesus the Christ and the family of God. For as long as certain of us obtain benefits because of "race" while others are denied benefits because of "race," the image of God is broken. And like viewing ourselves in a broken mirror, there is no way to make our image whole but to replace that mirror.

Being anti-racist is about replacing that mirror. Dismantling racism requires active discipleship and a heart's desire to see, understand and work to eliminate the walls of hostility we have inherited.

