

Institutional Racism

As we consider the histories of racism, we learn that anti-racism is not just learning how to be nicer and more compassionate with each other.

These structures are still embedded in our society – in policing practices, housing policy, mass incarceration, immigration policy, environmental issues, who we make into enemies to fight wars against.

“You can’t be neutral on a moving train” – Howard Zinn

The invitation into white allyship begins with internal investigation, but it does not end there. As we learn about structural racism, the natural impulse of compassion drives us to want to change these structures, to reduce the unfair measure of suffering meted to people of color.

As we do the readings to prepare for Session 3, notice what’s challenging, and start investigating to see if you can notice how these systems of white supremacy and racism are enacted and expressed in our lives, not just around us but also through us. How are our lives rooted in the institution of white supremacy?

Before your meeting

Please read/watch/listen to these before your meeting:

- [The New Jim Crow Excerpt](#) by Michelle Alexander [pdf]
- [Environmental Justice and Environmentalism The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement](#) [pdf]

- [First He Came Out as Undocumented Then as Gay](#) [pdf]
- [HeteroPatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy](#) [pdf]

Other Resources:

- [13th \(the movie\)](#) [Netflix video]
- [The Making of Ferguson](#) [pdf]
- [Native Americans Fight Junipero Serra Sainthood](#) [pdf]

Facilitation

Your group should choose a facilitator for this meeting. The facilitator role will rotate each meeting.

The facilitator's role is to guide the group through the proposed agenda. The facilitator is not expected to have any special knowledge about the topic, and responds to each question as a participant. The facilitator's role incorporates three jobs:

1. Make sure all voices are heard. We suggest "going around" to have each person speak during most sections of the agenda, rather than open discussion.
2. Keep time and keep the group moving through the agenda.
3. Ensure that a date and facilitator is set for the next meeting

Proposed Agenda

- Sit (5 minutes)
- Review Communication Guidelines that will support your group (5 minutes)

1. Read aloud your group's guidelines developed in the first session
 2. Discuss any revisions to the guidelines
 3. Confirm that all members can abide by the group's guidelines, or at least open to practicing with them
- Mindful Sharing (85 minutes)
 - Instruction: Mindful sharing involves each participant sharing from personal experience. There is no discussion or cross-talk during this time period, only personal sharing.
 - Each person in the group can share 3-5 minutes on each question (gauge the time depending on the number of people in your group)
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- **Discussion Questions**

1. The readings for this section involve institutionalized racism in the contexts of mass incarceration, immigration, and the environmental movement. Were any of your views challenged? Where did you feel uncomfortable? How does being pushed out of a space of comfort actually help you grow?

2. Where has institutionalized racism touched your life? Or in what ways does your life shield you from awareness of institutionalized racism?

3. The Three Pillars of White Supremacy article breaks apart the logics of different threads of racism – slavery, war, and genocide. What are the present day issues where you see these different racisms take form? How might you talk about one of them in your faith community?

4. How is institutionalized racism enacted through us? In what ways do we cling to these systems? What possibilities for change or transformation exist? What would support that change?

- Sit (5 minutes)
- Group Reflection (10 minutes)
 - Instruction: Group Reflection is like Mindful Sharing in that there is no discussion or cross-talk, however the focus is on what kind of experience the participants had during the meeting rather than on the content covered.
 - Each person in the group can share 2-3 minutes about what it was like to participate in the group (gauge time based on number of people in the group)
 - PROMPT: What was it like to engage in Mindful Sharing today? How has this been for you so far?
- Plan the next meeting (5 minutes)
 - How did your technology or meeting logistics work? Any changes you would like to try for the next meeting?
 - When will you meet?
 - Who will facilitate?
- If there's time left, finish with a closing sit (5 minutes)