Anatomy of Racism in the US

by Guadalupe Guajardo, SNJM, PhD & Kathleen Saadat

I hold two master's degrees and a PhD, but when traveling as a Latina, I often get mistaken as the hotel help. I will walk out of my room and be asked, “Can you please get me more towels?” Or I might be told, “My room is so clean. You do a really nice job.” A white person would most likely not get asked or told this. They get the privilege of respect, while I am denied respect and stereotyped.

In the United States racism can be defined as the systematic mistreatment of people based on their membership in a group founded on skin color and/or racial and cultural characteristics including language. This abuse is supported and enforced by society and all its institutions.

What makes it difficult to discuss racism—much less dismantle, reduce or eliminate it—is its complexity.

Its anatomy is threefold: Racism has a purpose, content and structure. Approaching its elimination on just one level will not be effective. Racism is a complex phenomenon and therefore planning and carrying out its elimination will be complex and confusing. Even greater difficulty arises when the intersection of gender, class, abilities and sexual orientation are added. Ultimately, we must address these complexities; racism's elimination must be comprehensive and implemented at all levels. Perhaps a good place to start is naming that race is a social construct: a myth, if you will. Thousands of years ago, all different compositions of the world’s people existed, but people didn’t feel the need to organize into races. Who set out to determine that it was important to decide how many races we have? The subsequent myth of racism is that white people—another social construct—are superior in intelligence, character and ability to people of color and therefore entitled to manage, manipulate, rule, exploit and control them.

...race is a social construct: a myth...

The purpose and function of racism is to privilege the lives of those in the dominant racial group at the expense of non-dominant racial members of US culture. We can see this from European settlers running indigenous people of North America off their land and trading impractical objects such as beads for their valuable fur. This pattern of inequity has continued down the centuries. Racism continues to manifest itself in managing, exploiting or excluding the skills, abilities and labor of non-dominant groups in US society for the benefit of the dominant group.

These patterns of inequality get re-packaged each century with variations affecting every group of color who has lived on the land we call the United States. The only changes are in the implementation. We can see current gradations of these attempts at social and economic control in all institutions: in employment disparities in housing discrimination.
in financial and real estate practices through red-lining communities-of-color neighborhoods so they are not eligible for housing loans
in education through disparate drop-out rates in high schools
in law enforcement through unjustified shooting and imprisonment of black and brown men
in food systems by placing lower quality food in low-income grocery stores and making stores inaccessible by putting them miles from communities of color
in protection by reducing fire stations in communities of color

It is easy to see these patterns and practices that make racism a system that is part of everyday life in America.

The content or stereotypes of racism are based on the wide range of excuses used as rationale for the active abuse and discrimination of communities of color. One of the most frequent attacks is on our intelligence. A standard of thinking for the dominant western world is linear thinking. Methods of thinking that do not adequately parallel that method are considered defective, deficient and wrong.

For example, I was called to consult on a worker’s compensation case to explain the “rules” of conversation among immigrants. I told them in Latin America, adults often speak in an indirect, contextual fashion, such as by telling a story. This is expected when one is speaking to an intelligent adult who is able to follow along.

They asked, “When is it okay to speak to someone directly?”

“This is done only when speaking to children,” I responded. This is because they don’t yet know how to surmise or connect dots and draw conclusions.

Yet, in the United States, indirect speaking is often considered inefficient and unprofessional. The myth of the superiority of white linear thinking provides the excuse for why people of color are excluded from full participation in society and denied many opportunities given to other US citizens.

The structures of racism are in the ways society and all its institutions intentionally or unintentionally have implemented policies, procedures and practices that dehumanize, limit or exclude people of color. These socio-economic injustices are nested in employment hiring practices, resource distribution, how decisions are made, who sits at the table and how and who gets promoted or elected into positions of authority. The alignment of these structures makes it very difficult to change systemic racism. Policies created to maintain the status quo must be revised or eliminated and replaced entirely. Allies to people of color who have learned how to leverage their privilege must be knowledgeable about the impact of policy and practices on institutions’ racism. Policies—which outlive the human life cycle, becoming embedded in the culture of institutions—go unquestioned and unchallenged in our thinking and appear “normal” in the fabric of everyday life.

Racism’s close cousin is classism. When we intersect race with class, we get the same complex overlay of purpose, content and structure. For capitalism to thrive, US culture has to have an underclass of low-income and working-class people. Many, but not all, are people of color. Poor white people are encouraged to believe they are better off than people of color and cling to the theory of white supremacy by declaring, “At least I’m white.”

Bigotry and biases discourage poor white people and people of color from seeing themselves as allies on the same side of the economic equation.

...in the mix of money and politics, who profits from racism?

Derek Bell, the first tenured African American professor of law at Harvard Law School, argues that racism is a distraction from our own economic exploitation, and those at the highest level benefit from the ways we are pitted against each other. We must ask ourselves, in the mix of money and politics, who profits from racism?

Bias and bigotry, translated into systemic policy and law, ensure that people of color will continue to be disadvantaged and underrepresented in all of the institutions and systems that make up our society. The exploitation of people of color helps members of the dominant culture in their quest to live healthy, materialistic lives denied to many people of color.
Thoughts and Actions to Eliminate Racism

Those that promote the elimination of racism have come to recognize the need for systems thinking. Systemic thinking proposes we can start to change a system from any point in an institution, from the janitor to the CEO. Systems thinking gives us room to explore the incredibly complex intersection of social constructs that support discrimination and bigotry. Without systems thinking, we will again and again fall into a trap of thinking “either-or,” which will cause us to fall short in designing new systems which are inclusive and foundational for actualizing Dr. King’s vision of Beloved Community.

Steve Biko, an anti-apartheid activist in South Africa, said, “The greatest weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.” Relentless racism and ongoing discrimination haunt many people of color with feelings of “not being good enough” or “smart enough” to effect change. I feel this all the time: If I’m the only woman of color in a room full of white people, everyone will be listening to see whether I am articulate. To address some of these insecurities and build new leaders, organizations such as the Latino Leaders Program, the Global Majority Project and the American Leadership Forum in Oregon are implementing leadership development and training programs.

There appears to be increased interest in the real racial history of the United States. Several films in the last few years reflect a more in-depth exploration of the lives and experiences of some people of color in this country, such as Cesar Chavez and Twelve Years a Slave. Gaps still remain in the portrayal of American Indians and of Asian people who helped build this country. These films, and the presence of America’s first African American president, support what appears to be a greater willingness by white people to discuss race among themselves and with people of color. Many people are asking, “What can I do to make a difference?”

Everyone has a role to play...

People in the United States and around the globe are actively calling for an end to bigotry and discrimination. People in Beijing, France and Africa, far from recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, were seen chanting “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” in support of those protesting the shooting of unarmed black youth like Michael Brown.

Everyone has a role to play in dismantling America’s racial systems. We can make a difference by stepping into roles of leadership on both profit and not-for-profit boards of directors, serving on governmental committees, working with community-based organizations and assuming positions with authority, responsibility and influence.

White allies who understand the dynamics of privilege and the matrix of oppression are a necessary part of dismantling racism. Those who are aware and have accepted the reality of white privilege can use their privilege to bring equity and inclusion to the workplace. To be an effective ally, white people must examine their discomfort about race and explore their fear of being ostracized by other white people or losing promotions or even jobs. Ultimately the most meaningful work will come from the collaboration of people of color and white allies who understand how the oppression of people of color affects their lives, the lives of their children and the life of our country. Racism hurts everyone!

When we make coffee, the water becomes coffee one drip at a time. Change needs to happen, and the slow drip method is probably the most realistic way. If everyone does one thing every day to interrupt racism, it will be eliminated, but we need to do it now.

“Hope dies last” is a common saying in Spanish. Hope is an essential ingredient in our efforts to eliminate the impact of racism and fear on our lives. We must provide hope for one another. Hope is the catalyst for change. I try to live in the understanding that we all have suffering, we all have pain—we are all moving through the world with our own wounds—and we are all asked to heal each other. I have good days and bad days, but on good days I can remember; there’s only one way that is true—the human way—and that gives me hope.

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A MATTER OF SPIRIT 3

Mural in Worcester, MA
It is how we use both power and privilege which builds up or destroys...

In order to understand how racism works, we need to want to become aware of our white privilege, and to ask for the grace to do so will lead to doing some serious homework. We have discovered the work required is not a once-and-for-all exercise, nor is it a fleeting theme that once we've figured it out, life goes on. Rather, we carry the responsibility of engaging and building up the whole community to realize who has been excluded from laws enacted in our country and who is not included in our organizational/congregational mission statements, our hiring and educational policies, our formation policies and practices. This is the conscious and intentional work of a lifetime.

Those of us from communities of color also have homework, but it is a different kind. From personal experience and from being the recipients of unjust laws and practices, we know firsthand the crushing reality of white power and privilege. Thus we approach life from a different perspective. We have been socialized to understand and recognize white privilege in order to survive within the dominant culture. Some of us have adapted so we can fit in, get along, be accepted and benefit from some of the crumbs that have fallen from the table of those in power. Others of us have pushed against white power and privilege for our whole life trying to confront our internalized racial oppression and reclaim our heritage and dignity. This is the conscious and intentional work of a lifetime.

Once we honestly want to work to dismantle racism, we face some formidable barriers:

اآ We still live under the cloud of mistrust and suspicion from institutions committed to the well-being and safety of all

اآ Our US educational system does not provide equal access to resources

اآ The on-going push back against the Voting Rights Act is making it harder and harder for us to exercise our right to vote

اآ The “stand your ground” principle allows the use of deadly force in perceived self-defense without attempting to retreat
Our prison system criminalizes a disproportionate number of people of color.

The selective re-districting in some white communities makes it impossible for us to live where we want.

There is a recent lack of accountability to communities of color in the killing of our youth by white officers... and the list could go on.

These are major barriers that communities of color face when we lay claim to what is rightfully ours and begin to address our internalized racial oppression together as communities of color.

If we continue on this course, we risk being transformed—and with transformation there is no turning back.

As members of the white collective, our common barriers to dismantling racism, if taken seriously, will require transformation, which is difficult, uncomfortable and for some, way too much work. Initially, we do not see any benefit in putting in the time and effort to confront our unearned power and privilege. We let ourselves off the hook by believing we are not the ones who play the “race card,” when in fact we do all the time.

If however, we do begin on this journey, there is a price to pay for those of us who are white. Some will perceive us as having betrayed our “tribe,” and we stand to lose friends who do not understand why we are so committed to dismantling racism and privilege.

If we continue on this course, we risk being transformed—and with transformation there is no turning back. It will require of us decisions regarding where we live, where we put our energy, how we pray and read Scripture, as well as how we interpret the front page of local newspapers. We will begin making connections between immigration, torture, poverty, trafficking and seeing that the common thread through all of these social issues is racism. In confronting our internalized racial superiority together as a collective, we can begin to see life as it really is.

When each of our collectives intentionally works on our internalized racial oppression and superiority, then we can begin the work of dismantling racism together. We bring to this journey our different perspectives and life experiences as well as our values and core beliefs regarding oppression and superiority. We develop a style of decision-making that offers a voice and a wholeness to everyone and avoids categories of either-or. We begin to reverence both-and decisions and slowly begin to build the trust that leads to right relationships among us.

This is work we must do together; no one group can dismantle racism alone.

We have been heartened and hope-filled by two recent experiences in our work at Pax Christi USA (PCUSA). This past year PCUSA gathered Catholic communities of color in six major US cities to review Catholic Social Teaching and dialogue with local Pax Christi members on ways to be in solidarity with communities of color in addressing issues in their neighborhoods. At each site, we brought together a group of 30-40 individuals from the Latino/a, African American and white communities. We intentionally invited Catholic facilitators who were African American and Hispanic to present the corrective history of these communities within the Catholic Church. Through shared dialogue and mutual respect, those gathered have begun to take collective action to address the issues identified by the communities of color.

The other very encouraging sign has been in the privilege of working with young adults from a local university who engage in service as part of their curriculum. When students are exposed to working within diverse communities and are open to processing their experiences, they begin to question the “why” of the injustices they see. They are open to looking honestly at racial oppression and white privilege and confronting it within themselves and others. Thereby, they are becoming equipped to engage in critical social analysis which moves them to action.

These experiences give us hope and the strength to continue the work entrusted to us by a God who is good, gracious and desiring of justice for all peoples.

Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, is the Executive Director of Pax Christi USA in Washington, DC & Anne-Louise Nadeau, SNDdeN, is the Program Director of Pax Christi USA in Washington, DC.
When Deborah Thomas sees young people in trouble with the law, she doesn't hesitate to tell them to finish their high school education. In fact, she orders them to do so.

Thomas, a judge on the Wayne County Circuit Court in Detroit, believes in the power of education to open doors to better opportunities. A former high school teacher, lawyer and one of the first African American women elected to the county court, she credits education—along with a “can-do” attitude—for her success.

Thomas sentences young offenders to complete their diploma or GED as part of their probation. They also must do community service, undergo drug testing and check in with their probation officer.

“They’ll be looking over my shoulder, saying, ‘I’m going to get mine up there, too.’”

Thomas sentences young offenders to complete their diploma or GED as part of their probation. They also must do community service, undergo drug testing and check in with their probation officer.

“Poverty and lack of education go hand in hand,” she says. “They come from families where they are the first to get a high school diploma…. The encouragement may not have been there.”

Thomas also educates the broader community through bi-monthly public forums on legal topics. On February 5, she took part in a panel with police and prosecutors in Battle Creek, Michigan, attended by 200 high school students and parents.

She urged the young people to anticipate the results of their actions, the same way they plan their moves in a computer game. When interacting with police, say “Yes, Sir,” or “Yes, Ma’am,” and keep your hands in view.

“Back in Detroit,” she said, “When you’re sitting in church, you raise your hands to the Lord. When you come into contact with the police, I can’t think of a better time for you to be calling on the Lord.”

Thomas has overcome her own share of obstacles. Her father, a postal employee, died of cancer when she was 10. Her mother went back to school and became a licensed nurse. She encouraged her daughter that more education meant a better job.

“I had the benefit of growing up under Dr. King and the Kennedy administration when it was said, ‘You can do it,’ and you refused to take no for an answer.”

Thomas received a bachelor’s in sociology from Western Michigan University, a master’s in criminal justice from the University of Detroit and a law degree from Valparaiso University. She worked for UAW Legal Services, the Michigan State Department of Labor and the Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority before going into private practice in 1984.

Believing they could get more community representation on the county court, Thomas tried to talk her colleagues into running, but no one thought a black judge could be elected countywide.

Finally, she recalls, an attorney said, “If you’re so certain, why don’t you do it?”

“I put my hand on my hip, and I said, ‘Fine, I will!’”

That was 1994. She’s been on the bench ever since.

What keeps her coming back? “I truly believe I am helping people. I help both on the victim side and the offender side. Sometimes the victims need an opportunity to say, ‘This is what happened to me.’ And for offenders that are in need of services—substance abuse, education, literacy—I’m able to provide information.

“As a whole, it makes for a healthier community.”

Christine Dubois is a widely published freelance writer and writing instructor who lives with her family near Seattle. Visit her at www.christinedubois.com
Black Lives Matter: Eliminating Racial Inequity in the Criminal Justice System

by Nazgol Ghandnoosh, PhD

“Every time you see me, you want to mess with me,” Eric Garner told the group of approaching New York City police officers. As they wrestled him to the ground to arrest him for selling untaxed loose cigarettes, an officer placed Garner in a chokehold and maintained his grip despite Garner’s pleas for air. One hour later, Garner was pronounced dead. The unarmed black man’s death and the white officer’s non-indictment despite videotape evidence have heightened concerns about police practices and accountability. In the wake of the fatal police shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and that officer’s non-indictment, a growing number of Americans are outraged and demanding change.

“Black lives matter” has become a rallying cry in light of evidence that the criminal justice system is failing to uphold this basic truth. Official data, although woefully inadequate, show that over half of those killed by police in recent years have been black or Latino. Officers involved in these killings are rarely indicted, much less convicted, for excessive use of force. And official responses to recent protests have spurred further controversy: militarized police forces disrupted public assemblies in Ferguson, and New York City’s police union blamed pro-reform politicians and nonviolent protesters for the killing of two officers by a mentally unstable man.

The criminal justice system’s high volume of contact with people of color is a major cause of African Americans’ disproportionate rate of fatal police encounters, as well as of broader perceptions of injustice in many communities.

This article identifies four key features of the justice system that contribute to its disparate racial impact and presents recent best practices for targeting these inequities drawn from adult and juvenile justice systems around the country.

Causes of Racial Disparities Throughout the Criminal Justice System

Policing is by no means the only stage of the justice system that produces racial disparity. Disadvantage accumulating at each step of the process contributes to blacks and Latinos comprising 56% of the incarcerated population, yet only 30% of the US population.1

The roots of this disparity precede criminal justice contact: conditions of socioeconomic inequality contribute to higher rates of certain violent and property crimes among people of color.2 But four features of the justice system exacerbate this underlying inequality.3

1. Many ostensibly race-neutral policies and laws have a disparate racial impact.

Police policies such as “broken windows” (aggressive policing of low-level offenses to prevent future violent crimes) and stop, question and frisk have disproportionately impacted young men of color. In New York City, blacks and Hispanics made up half of the population over age 16 between 2001 and 2013, yet they represented four-fifths of those who were stopped and frisked, received summonses and were arrested for misdemeanor crimes.

In addition, prosecutorial policies, such as plea bargain guidelines that tie plea offers to arrest histories, disadvantage blacks and Latinos, as do sentencing laws that dictate harsher punishments for crimes for which people of
Once pulled over, people of color are three times as likely as whites to be searched.

A criminal conviction creates a barrier to securing steady employment, and those with felony drug convictions are disqualified from public assistance and public housing in many areas. In addition, allocating public resources to punitive programs comes at the expense of investments in crime prevention and drug treatment programs. Because of their higher rates of incarceration and poverty, people of color are disproportionately affected by these policy choices.

Best Practices for Reducing Racial Disparities

Following are some of the programs and policies, drawn from adult and juvenile justice systems across the country, designed to address the criminal justice system’s high rate of contact with people of color. In many cases, these practices have produced demonstrable results.

1. Revise policies and laws with disparate racial impact.

New York City curbed its “stop and frisk” policy after successful litigation and the election of a mayor with a reform agenda. Mayor Bill de Blasio vowed that his administration would “not break the law to enforce the law” and significantly curbed a policy that was described by a federal judge as one of “indirect racial profiling.” Thus far, the reform has not adversely impacted crime rates. The Mayor and Police Commissioner William Bratton remain committed, though, to broken-windows policing.

2. Address implicit racial bias among criminal justice professionals.

In Milwaukee, prosecutors previously filed drug paraphernalia charges against 73% of black suspects but only 59% of white suspects. Working with the Vera Institute of Justice, the office was able to eliminate these disparities by reviewing data on outcomes, stressing diversion to treatment or dismissal.
and requiring attorneys to consult with supervisors prior to filing such charges.

US District Court Judge Mark W. Bennett spends 25 minutes discussing implicit bias with the potential jurors in his court. His jurors watch video clips demonstrating bias in hidden camera situations, receive instructions on avoiding bias and sign a pledge. Although the impact of this approach has not been measured, mock jury studies have shown that increasing the salience of race reduces biased decision making.

3. Create a fair playing field by reallocating resources.

In 2014, New Jersey reformed its bail system to emphasize risk assessment over monetary bail, a reform that is expected to increase rates of pretrial release. Previously, the decision to detain defendants was based on their ability to post bail, regardless of their risk level. Judges may now release lower-risk individuals who cannot afford bail and may deny pretrial release for high-risk individuals.

Berks County, Pennsylvania reduced the number of youth in secure detention—who were primarily youth of color—by 67% between 2007 and 2012 in part by increasing reliance on alternatives including non-secure shelters and expanding use of evidence-based treatment programs. Because many of these youth had committed technical violations of their probation terms, this broader range of alternatives made it possible to keep them out of detention without harming public safety.

4. Revise policies that exacerbate socioeconomic inequalities; redirect public spending toward crime prevention and drug treatment.

In 2014, California voters approved Proposition 47, which reclassifies a number of low-level offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. This allows 10,000 incarcerated individuals to petition to have their sentences reduced. Moreover, a significant portion of projected state prison savings—estimated to be $150-$250 million annually—will be allocated to mental health and substance abuse treatment, programs to reduce school truancy and prevent dropouts and support for victim services.

To reduce barriers to employment, many jurisdictions now “Ban the Box”—or remove the question about conviction history from initial job applications and delay a background check until later in the hiring process. Twelve states—including Maryland, Illinois and California—and 60 cities—including Atlanta and New York City—have passed these reforms.

Advocates have urged states to end denial of federal cash assistance and food stamp benefits for people convicted of felony drug offenses. These bans primarily affect low-income women of color. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act that created the ban also permitted states to opt out or modify its terms. To date, 13 states have fully opted out of the cash assistance ban and 9 from the food stamp ban. Others have opted out in part through smaller changes, such as making access dependent on type of drug offense or enrollment in treatment.

Despite substantial progress in achieving racial justice in American society over the past half century, racial disparities in the criminal justice system have persisted and worsened in many respects. Among African American men born just after World War II, 15% of those without a high school degree were imprisoned by their mid-30s. For those born in the 1970s, 68% were imprisoned by their mid-30s.

The racial gap in incarceration rates has begun to narrow.

The country has made progress on these issues in recent years. New York and other large states have significantly reduced their prison populations and the juvenile justice system has reduced youth confinement and detention by over 40% since 2001. The racial gap in incarceration rates has begun to narrow. The Garner case has also sensitized many white Americans to problems in the justice system, with 47% of whites nationwide and half in New York City stating that the officer should have been indicted.

But demonstrators have echoed Garner’s final words—“I can’t breathe”—and the message attributed to Brown—“Hands up, don’t shoot”—in public protests because there is much left to do. As proven by the jurisdictions highlighted in this article, reforms can improve criminal justice outcomes by targeting the four key causes of racial disparity. We must now expand the scale and increase the speed of these efforts.

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# Becoming an Ally for Social Justice

This table is a tool for better understanding different stages on the path to becoming allies for social justice. Examining our motivations and beliefs behind our actions for justice is essential. Our growth toward ally-ship does not always manifest itself linearly—someone acting as an ally for social justice in one experience might respond out of self-interest in the next interaction. We choose daily to live increasingly as allies for social justice. This table depicts the paradigms out of which allies work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspiring Ally for Self-Interest</th>
<th>Aspiring Ally for Altruism</th>
<th>Ally for Social Justice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Selfish—for the people I know</td>
<td>Other—I do this for them</td>
<td>Combined Selfishness—I do this for us</td>
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<tr>
<td>and care about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ally to...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ally to a person</td>
<td>Ally to target group</td>
<td>Ally to an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship with Members of Oppressed Groups</strong></td>
<td>Working <em>over</em> members of the target group</td>
<td>Working <em>for</em> members of the target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victims of Oppression</strong></td>
<td>They are victims</td>
<td>All of us are victims—although victimized in different ways and unequally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection are or could be</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>victims—my daughter, my sister,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>my friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of Problem</strong></td>
<td>Individuals—overt</td>
<td>Others from the agent group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perpetrators</td>
<td></td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View of Justice</strong></td>
<td>These incidents of hate are exceptions to the system of justice</td>
<td>We need justice for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual or Moral Foundation</strong></td>
<td>I may be simply following doctrine or seeking spiritual self-preservation</td>
<td>I believe helping others is the right thing to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>I'm powerful—protective</td>
<td>I empower them—they need my help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of Ongoing Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Motivator (my daughter, my sister, my friend) must be present</td>
<td>Sustainable passion—for them, for me, for us, for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mistakes</strong></td>
<td>I don't make mistakes—I'm a good person, and perpetrators are just bad people</td>
<td>Has difficulty admitting mistakes to self or others—struggles with critique or exploring own issues—highly defensive when confronted with own behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks critique as gifts and admits mistakes as part of doing the work and a step towards one’s own liberation—has accepted own <em>isms</em> and seeks help in uncovering them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to the System</strong></td>
<td>Not interested in the system—just stopping the bad people</td>
<td>Aims to be an exception from the system, yet ultimately perpetuates the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks to escape, impede, amend, redefine and destroy the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of the Work</strong></td>
<td>Perpetrators</td>
<td>Other members of the dominant group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My people—doesn’t separate self from other agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Privilege</strong></td>
<td>Doesn't see privilege—wants to maintain status quo</td>
<td>Feels guilty about privilege and tries to distance self from privilege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sees illumination of privilege as liberating and consciously uses unearned privilege against itself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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We know more about the people of Africa than of the Black Catholics across town.

Today, I see the depth that 500 years of the crushing weight of racial dysfunction in the Western Hemisphere has made on nonwhites and whites alike. But lessons from our Catholic history are the same as society in general—leadership is the answer. The battle is in the circle of elites whether in the Church or society. In every age there are signs of hope when leadership finds its sober voice to deliver the Church from racism—to deliver us from thinking, feeling, praying under the influence of racial dysfunction.

The racial dysfunction paradigm for the US Church was founded on the Church elite’s response to Rome’s insistence on evangelizing the newly freed Blacks following the Civil War. The US bishops resisted the change of focus and resources, opting to remain committed to the progress of European immigrants. The response was to have a national collection each year, even unto this day, for the Negro and American Indian Mission Fund. This money was given to missionaries from religious orders to fulfill the request from Rome.

This decision made Black people a mission project of the American White church, not a part of it. In its deference to European ethnocentrism, this effort reinforced white supremacy culture in the Catholic Church. The Church, knowingly or unknowingly, adopted the cultural model of “separate and unequal.” It also entrusted the Black community to missionary orders of whites who became social lepers among other clergy and religious. These heroic and holy missionaries were considered “race traitors” for evangelizing, befriending and educating “those people.”

At the time of European immigration from Catholic countries, the various incoming groups were not considered “White” people. They were listed as ethnic groups, just as the Spanish-speaking Catholics today. It took until the 1950s for all the Catholic ethnic groups—Germans, Irish, Italians, etc.—to become “White.”

St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians frames the issues of race, gender and class at the birth of the Christian experience. He observed the racially dysfunctional behavior of St. Peter. In Antioch, Peter lived and ate with the Gentile converts. However, upon the arrival of other Jews from Jerusalem, he avoided the Gentiles. Paul’s letter is a witness to his intervention on Peter’s behavior of supporting the supremacy of Jewish culture over constructing a new Christian culture of inclusion and enfranchisement through baptism. The core Christian message on racism is that there is no place for it: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Racism is a sin against God, the creator of the human family, and against God’s children, our brothers and sisters.

In my ministry of Racial Sobriety, we invite people to create a Racial History

We know more about the people of Africa than of the Black Catholics across town.
Journal. The purpose is to demonstrate that each of us has been formed and nurtured in a racialized culture and are shaped by countless experiences. The goal is to show that we are not responsible for the racism all around us, but we are responsible for our response to the present racism that impacts us.

Racial Sobriety is witnessing to ourselves and others that our thinking, feeling and acting reflect our commitment to seeing each person as a member of the same human family. We need self-awareness to free ourselves of racial dysfunction—the improper relationship with members of the same human family—in order to become a fully functioning human being.

The ministry of racial sobriety begins with the commitment to “become the change you want to see.” It transforms the culture around us. In our interpersonal relationships, S-O-B-E-R means Seeing Others as Being Entitled to Respect. From a social perspective, S-O-B-E-R means Seeing Others as Being Equally Regarded. From a global perspective, S-O-B-E-R means Seeing Others as Being Extended Relations in the human family.

Our voice of racial sobriety is needed to talk ourselves sober. There is little support in our society, schools or churches to find or develop this voice. Leaders who seek to find their voice will need courage in a culture in which r-a-c-e is treated like a four-letter word. Overcoming any fear takes courage, which can emerge when we identify the origin of our anxiety. The journey toward racial sobriety is challenged by forces within and outside of ourselves.

Toward a Culture of Racial Sobriety

What can the Church do to find its voice today? In sharing this healing ministry, I have witnessed leadership seeking to establish cultures of racial sobriety in more than 70 dioceses and archdioceses. It is a ministry of supporting the efforts of leaders who engage their diocese, educational settings, religious communities and national Catholic organizations in transformative change.

One province chose to publish a wall calendar to unite members in the healing process from the daily racial dysfunction in our lives. A major denomination now requires a certification in racial sobriety for ordination to ministry. The leadership sees this as necessary as St. Paul would in his day. These religious leaders are agents of the Church promoting the voice of the Church. Racial sobriety opens our capacity for personal and spiritual development of our personal voice and our corporate witness.

Other leaders in the Church are also finding their voice. An example is Archbishop Robert Carlson of St. Louis, who gathered people to witness to the power of solidarity in the face of the shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri that captured the world’s attention. Organizations within the Catholic Church are also acting, such as the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus which issues statements about the racial crisis of today, inviting “men and women of good will to join us in prayer and action for peace, justice and reconciliation in our nation.”

The National Office of St. Vincent de Paul published the most comprehensive guidelines and multicultural training available in the Catholic Church today, naming the importance of diversity within their own organization: “The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is great because it’s made up of people of many cultures, many races, many walks of life, many points of view. Our diversity, like that of the nation’s, reflects our strength.”

There are voices of racial sobriety today in the Church. But so many more are needed. If we only had the vigilance, commitment of leadership and devotion of resources to protect all of God’s children, what a voice we would be in answering the prayer of Jesus “that they all be one.”

One hurdle is the “Don’t Talk Rule.” This rule describes “the elephant in the living room,” where a family or group colludes to deny its existence. Racism is the elephant in the American living room; and by extension, in the White House living room. The “Don’t Talk Rule” discourages any conversation on this topic. We need the voices of those who have moved beyond denial, the voices who have taken to the streets, to be heard over the deafening silence of social collusion within...
our white supremacy culture of today.

A second hurdle is racial anxiety within ourselves. Three elements of racial anxiety are Fear, Ignorance and Guilt—the FIG complex. The fear is of not knowing what might happen if we break the silence. The ignorance is of not knowing how to respectfully refer to someone’s race, nationality, ethnic group. How do we begin the conversation? The guilt is in feeling that we should be better at dealing with the subject and responding to situations. Unfortunately, the more guilt we feel, the more fearful we become, and our racial anxiety forms an emotional cage which imprisons us. But, when we identify any element of our racial anxiety, it loses its power over us. We break a leg of the stool and topple our cage. We are set free in that moment. Racial sobriety as a spiritual exercise continually calls the FIG devil by name and provides grace-filled moments of deliverance from living under the influence of our racial dysfunction.

The Ministry of Racial Sobriety

The ministry of Racial Sobriety begins in discipleship and ends in apostleship. The discipleship requires a formational journey to the heart of Jesus. Jesus’ prayer for unity in the human family as seen in the Holy Trinity—“so that they may be one just as we are” (John 17:11, 21)—is the heart of the ministry. The apostolic ministry is one of transformation. It is a process by which we transfer our racial sobriety formation to those around us.

Let us enjoy the graces of racial sobriety and share them with our brothers and sisters.

Fr. Clarence Williams, CPPS, PhD, presents lectures and workshops on racism to civic, educational and religious leaders around the world and is pastor of the multiracial and multilingual parish St. James the Less in Columbus, OH. He has his MA in Black Catholic History, established the Institute for Recovery from Racisms and authored Recovery from Everyday Racisms and Racial Sobriety: Becoming the Change You Want to See.

“We will be heard!”

“We have a voice! We have a story!” Undocumented high school students in Oakland, California were growing tired of the media’s portrayal of young immigrants. The only two narratives told were of violent youth in gangs and, to strike contrast, of those who rose above all circumstances to be valedictorians. Most undocumented youth do not fit into either story, and instead, as one said, “We’re invisible, in the shadows and unheard.”

A study by the Migration Policy Institute estimated that 67% of the 2.1 million eligible undocumented youth will be unable to gain legal status from the DREAM Act because of application fees and education attainment requirements. This information motivated the students to create 67 Sueños (Dreams) to tell the stories of the youth who make up this 67%. Many have been personally affected by deportations of family members and have never talked about their experiences, afraid of being deported themselves.

The group organizes “Encuentros,” or “Encounters,” where undocumented youth meet and share their stories. Without revealing identities, they publish videos to illumine the voices hidden in the shadows and collect information on their common experiences. They want others to “know that they are not alone in this country” while carrying out their mission of raising “underprivileged migrant youth voices to expand the debate and legislative possibilities.” Their powerful stories are spreading their message: “We’re just like you, and we will be heard!”
Women’s Justice Circles

Cashmere to Cambodia

Our new Justice Circle at St. Francis Xavier in Cashmere is addressing bullying prevention and intervention with Latino children. The women are going to be using the ¡Alto al Bullying! brochure created by the women of the Bothell Justice Circle. The Spanish brochure provides facts, warning signs and tips for speaking with children about bullying. Bothell Circle participants are thrilled that the resource they created will be used in Chelan County!

In Cambodia women are meeting at the Royal University of Phnom Penh for our newest international Justice Circle! The Circle is conducted in their own language of Khmer.

Natural Leaders

In April, Giselle Cárcamo, Justice Circle Coordinator, will provide a workshop for Natural Leaders, a program of the Washington Alliance for Better Schools. The current cohort has leaders from seven school districts—Edmonds, Everett, Marysville, Monroe, Mukilteo, Northshore and Shoreline. Ninety-four percent of the leaders are Latina.

Young Adult Justice Cafés

New Café site:
Juneau, AK!

Good News for Infants and Toddlers
Living with HIV/AIDS

On February 24 Merck & Co. licensed its pediatric drug raltegravir, a key medicine approved for children living with HIV four weeks of age and older, to the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP). This new license makes it possible for generic companies to develop, manufacture and sell low cost versions of the medicine in low- and middle-income countries where 98% of children with HIV live. Without treatment, 50% of infants living with HIV/AIDS will die by the age of two, and 80% by the age of five.

NWCRI leads the dialogue with Merck on global health issues. Faithbased shareholders have been instrumental in moving pharmaceutical companies to make HIV/AIDS drugs accessible in low- and middle-income counties and to give critical licenses to the MPP.

Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment

Calls on Shareholders to Vote Proxies

When the proxies of corporations arrive in the mail in the next few months, be a Socially Responsible Investor and vote! Every vote not cast by a shareholder is a vote for management. Support the resolutions filed by NWCRI members!

- **Bank of America**—Climate Change Report to assess GHG emissions and exposure to climate change risk from lending, investing and financing activities
- **Chevron**—Report on Shale Energy Operations (fracking) of adverse impacts on water and communities
- **ExxonMobil**—Greenhouse Gas Emissions Goals to reduce total GHG emissions from products and operations
- **Facebook**—Human Rights Risk Assessment designed to protect young consumers from threats to privacy involving commercial use of personal information or from harmful advertising
- **Kroger**—Human Rights Risk Assessment of Kroger’s operations and supply chain for 3,600 supermarkets, convenience and jewelry stores and 37 food processing plants
IPJC Resources

Take advantage of the many resources that are free or affordable!

Web Resources: www.ipjc.org

Parish Contemplative Dialogue Circles

- Bring people together across issue & ideological divides
- Learn & practice contemplation
- Engage contemplative dialogue on the dignity of life
- Share transforming stories
- Build community

Climate Change: Our Call to Conversion

4 Session Booklet:
- Our Earth Community
- The Science of Climate Change: Call to Change Course
- Ecological Conversion
- Eco-Imagining Our Emerging Future

Reading, prayer, process, invitation to action!

Donations

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In memory of: Elaine Parisi, Marion Melius, Margaret Read, Rose Teresa, SNJM, Peggy & Harvey Walters

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10 Things Everyone Should Know About Race

1. **Race is a modern idea.** Ancient societies, like the Greeks, did not divide people according to physical distinctions, but according to religion, status, class, even language. The English language didn’t even have the word “race” until it turns up in 1508 in a poem by William Dunbar referring to a line of kings.

2. **Race has no genetic basis.** Not one characteristic, trait or even gene distinguishes all the members of one so-called race from all the members of another so-called race.

3. **Human subspecies don’t exist.** Unlike many animals, modern humans simply haven’t been around long enough or isolated enough to evolve into separate subspecies or races. Despite surface appearances, we are one of the most similar of all species.

4. **Skin color really is only skin deep.** Most traits are inherited independently from one another. The genes influencing skin color have nothing to do with the genes influencing hair form, eye shape, blood type, musical talent, athletic ability or forms of intelligence. Knowing someone’s skin color doesn’t necessarily tell you anything else about him or her.

5. **Most variation is within, not between, “races.”** Of the small amount of total human variation, 85% exists within any local population, be they Italians, Kurds, Koreans or Cherokees. About 94% can be found within any continent. That means two random Koreans may be as genetically different as a Korean and an Italian.

6. **Slavery predates race.** Throughout much of human history societies have enslaved others, often as a result of conquest or war, even debt, but not because of physical characteristics or a belief in natural inferiority. Due to a unique set of historical circumstances, ours was the first slave system where all the slaves shared similar physical characteristics.

7. **Race and freedom evolved together.** The US was founded on the radical new principle that “All men are created equal.” But our early economy was based largely on slavery. How could this anomaly be rationalized? The new idea of race helped explain why some people could be denied the rights and freedoms that others took for granted.

8. **Race justified social inequalities as natural.** As the race idea evolved, white superiority became “common sense” in America. It justified not only slavery but also the extermination of Indians, exclusion of Asian immigrants, and the taking of Mexican lands by a nation that professed a belief in democracy. Racial practices were institutionalized within American government, laws and society.

9. **Race isn’t biological, but racism is still real.** Race is a powerful social idea that gives people different access to opportunities and resources. Our government and social institutions have created advantages that disproportionately channel wealth, power and resources to white people. This affects everyone, whether we are aware of it or not.

10. **Colorblindness will not end racism.** Pretending race doesn’t exist is not the same as creating equality. Race is more than stereotypes and individual prejudice. To combat racism, we need to identify and remedy social policies and institutional practices that advantage some groups at the expense of others.