

Moving Towards a More Just World

Exploring our “White Fragility”

Based on the book of that name by Robin DeAngelo and M.E. Dyson

Assumptions of the leader, Brian Nelson-Munson

1. Racism is learned.
2. Racism is structural, institutional and built into American society.
3. Racism appears in many forms of discrimination and prejudice.
4. Racism is a sin.
5. Racism can be confronted and overcome... but it's hard.

“The line between Good and Evil runs down the middle of every human heart, and we are loath to tear out a part of our own heart.” Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Chapter 1 “The Challenges of Talking to White People about Racism

1. We don't see ourselves in Racial terms
 - a. Who's race matters?

b. Are we able to sit with the discomfort of being seen racially?

c. To build stamina we must claim our racial identity? Agree/Disagree?

2. Our opinions are uninformed

a. If we are white, are our opinions most likely ignorant?

b. How do we recognize and expose 'White Fragility?'

- Pushback...
- silence
- defensiveness
- argumentation
- certitude

c. Individuality

d. Meritocracy

e. Have we been 'socialized?'

3. How can we understand 'Socialization'?

a. Why does our learning never finish?

b. Why is Racism not individual acts of discrimination by immoral people?

c. Are we objective and unique people when it comes to issues of Racism?

d. Is our individual success or failure connected to our racial identities or the result of our individual character?

e. How much of our identity is formed by comparing ourselves to others.?

f. Do we know who we are by knowing who we are not?

g. If we have a racial viewpoint, does that make us biased?

h. How does my race shape me?

4. We have a Simplistic Understanding of Racism

a. What is Racist?

b. Are all white people Racist?

c. Is it simply a conscious dislike of people of another race?

d. If we are accused of being racist what do we do with our discomfort?

Chapter 2 Racism and White Supremacy

1. Under the skin there is no biological 'race.' Agree or disagree?

2. Social construction of Race in the United States.

a. Is our nation based on

- enslavement?

- abduction?

- displacement and genocide?
- annexation of Mexican lands?

a. Is the question, “Are people of color inferior?” or “Why are people of color inferior”?

b. Race is the child of Racism, not the father.
Agree/Disagree?

b. What is systemic discrimination?

3. The Perception of Race... how do we perceive Race?

a. When was the first time Colonial authorities in the New World coined the legal term “whites”?

b. When did the U.S. Supreme Court begin legally defining people as Non-White?

c. Did the U.S. Supreme Court declare that being white was based on the common understanding of the white man?

d. How is the “Great Melting Pot” metaphor working out for America?

e. How is Race a social construction?

f. How do we ‘pass’ for white?

g. Is Race then, a product of social forces?

h. What was the 3/5ths rule? Was it ever repealed?

4. Racism

- a. How does Racism differ from prejudice and discrimination?
- b. Is prejudice an unavoidable reality? How is it foundational to understanding 'white fragility?'
- c. Is discrimination adequately defined as 'action' based on prejudice?
- d. Is Racism a structure or an event?
- e. When a racial group's collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control, it is transformed into Racism. Agree/Disagree?
- f. Is Racism a system?
- g. What ideas and ideologies are necessary to support Racism as a system?
- h. Does institutional power and authority transform prejudice and discrimination into Racism?
- i. Would you agree that Racism is a society wide dynamic that occurs at the group level?
- j. Can we be against Racism and still benefit from it?
- k. Is 'White Privilege' a system of advantage based on race?

5. Whiteness as a Position of Status.

- a. Should we concentrate on how Racism hurts people of color or how Racism elevates white people?
- b. Are white people 'normal' and people of color abnormal?
- c. Are white people constantly aware of their whiteness?
- d. What if we said "Jackie Robinson, the first black man whites allowed to play major league baseball?"
- e. Why is 'black history' or 'women's history' necessary categories of study?
- f. Would it be accurate to say whiteness is a location of structural advantage, a standpoint whites work from, and unnamed or acknowledged cultural practices?

6. White Supremacy

- a. White supremacy is a term to capture the all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white and the practices based on this assumption. Agree/Disagree/Argue.
- b. Is white supremacy ever acknowledged?
- c. Is whiteness ideal?
- d. Are whites the norm for being human and people of color a deviation from that norm?

e. Do the people controlling the institutions bear the responsibility for the structural Racism in our country?

f. What effect does constantly using the white racial frame to interpret social relations and integrating new media have on Racism?

g. How did parents, friends, schools and churches influence your understanding of Racism?

h. How is Racism 'encoded' in geography?

i. How would you respond to red-lining neighborhoods not being racist but simply a financial decision?

g. Respond to the comment, "white neighborhoods are not outside of race, they are teeming with race."

h. Why do we fear talking about race?

i. How do children learn it is taboo to talk about Race?

j. "If we add all the comments we make about people of color privately, when we are less careful, we may begin to recognize how white children are taught to navigate."
Agree/Disagree?

