

## **Disrupting Racism: Next Steps by Anita Coleman, Ph.D.**

2018 Churchwide Gathering, Presbyterian Women

Sat. Aug. 5, 2018, 1:45 – 3: 00 pm and 3:30 – 4:45 pm

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 4: 16 -21 and Matthew 4: (NRSV)

**Opening Prayer:** God, make us a people who listen and understand; a people who look and see; a people whose heart throbs with Jesus’ revolutionary love, and whose ears are keen of hearing. Thank you for giving us new eyes, ears, and hearts that listen, visualize, and understand the world you would have us co-create with you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Jesus was aware of the social conditions of his time, the structures of power and privilege. He declared his ministry by rising up in the synagogue, and reading a prophetic passage: He’s come to set the oppressed free. In the next 3 years, with his disciples and followers, Jesus created a revolutionary alternate structure, based on love and an economy of sharing, a community where everyone was equal, and served one another. Jesus rejected his privilege and used non-violence. Jesus, we can say, was woke.

Specifically, woke means to be aware of racism and racialization and all the evils of race. Be woke means to be a transformative anti-racist. To be woke is to be conscious of unjust systems, and aware of how we, individually, are contributing to them. Being woke is ongoing awareness, understanding, and action; a constant examination of our participation in unjust systems and either disengaging or working to dismantle them.

Our discussion today takes its shape from a recent book, *Rise, Shine, Be Woke* where 7 people share their lived experiences. We wrote this book because we wanted to encourage people to become transformative anti-racists – people who change themselves and the world around them. 7 voices from different generations, 4 women leading edge Baby Boomers, a Gen X woman, an immigrant woman, and a young Millennial man share about growing up Black, White, and Other, in Christian middle class America: Francena Willingham Stephanie Patterson Morris Susan Skoglund, Marvella Lambright, Sharon Wakamoto, Ash Coleman. The book was inspired by “Shining Moments” an activity that Francena Willingham led the PW Board in last fall. She asked the women on the board to name three shining moments in our lives. As the women shared their shining moments, I kept hearing, over and over again, stories that revolved around faith, family, education. So I invited the women to write their stories and I offered to donate my expertise to and publish them in a book. Since we were planning for this 2018 Gathering with the theme of Arise, Shine, Your Light Has Come, I grandly announced that the book would be titled *Rise, Shine, Be Woke*. Stephanie and Francena sent in their stories promptly. I invited the others. The book was published in July. Tragically, Francena died in June. She was the inspiration for the stories in our book. Besides the stories, there is also a study guide, an extensive Glossary of Anti-racism Terms, and an introduction to the Anti-racism Digital Library (ADL). I started the ADL in 2015 after the horrific AME Charleston Church shooting, thanks to funding from my PWS (Synod of Southern California and Hawaii) and San Jose State University.

## **Disrupting Racism: Next Steps by Anita Coleman, Ph.D.**

2018 Churchwide Gathering, Presbyterian Women

Sat. Aug. 5, 2018, 1:45 – 3: 00 pm and 3:30 – 4:45 pm

I also want to honor Francena today because her story is a reminder to transcend the outrage culture in which we live, where stories of racism abound. Just like Francena, we want to become well-versed with anti-racism and its strategies for dismantling racism. Since the book is organized around a collective past US history as experienced by different generations the lived experiences of all the authors may help us think about the past, understand our present and imagine a future that is God's plan, a new society, the Beloved Community, Jesus kin-dom based on revolutionary love. This is the goal of anti-racism, to achieve racial equity.

Our call to action, Rise, Shine, Be Woke reflects my approach to anti-racism. I am an educator and researcher, not a trainer. Anti-racism education helps us understand the source and consequences of racism as well as our own role in continuing racism or transforming it by our choice of action or strategy. Training gives specific skills – e.g. movement building, how to advocate to local elected officials, how to have conversations on difficult topics in churches.

### **About Anti-racism**

In the past anti-racism focused a lot on the politics of representation. Today, identity politics as it is sometimes called has become an end in itself and fetishizes language as a way to address racism. Those who name me have the power to shame me – so yes, language is a powerful tool for racial domination and dehumanizing language played a key role in the European colonization of Asia, Africa, and the Holocaust (e.g. Jews are regarded as cockroaches and as rodents. So while language is a very important anti-racism strategy, it ignores the material sources of the very rationale for domination in the first place.

Racism stems largely from socio economic inequality and social insecurity. Race is a tool to maintain social stratification. Race is also not a global reality although it is fast becoming one. In other words not all human societies have race although all have hegemonies and hierarchies;

Thus, we will look briefly today at what some scholars call “renegade capitalism” (other terms include predatory capitalism). This is what Gandhi and MLK, Jr. denounced as capitalism, materialism and militarism. Then, we will look at different forms of privilege. Confronting privilege, decentering whiteness, and exposing colorism, I believe, is critical for individual growth, changing our society, and to achieve racial equity and Dr. King Jr.'s Beloved Community and Jesus' Kin-dom of God. This is what I will touch on first by sharing from other disciplines such as Economics, Law, and Feminist Mujerista Theology. Then, we will have a conversation with Anne Sivley, a retired educator and moderator of PW of the Presbytery of Los Ranchos. Finally, the Rev. Denise Anderson, GA 222 Co-Moderator and recently appointed Presbyterian Coordinator of Racial and Intercultural Justice will share her experiences of GA 223.

## **Disrupting Racism: Next Steps by Anita Coleman, Ph.D.**

2018 Churchwide Gathering, Presbyterian Women

Sat. Aug. 5, 2018, 1:45 – 3: 00 pm and 3:30 – 4:45 pm

In keeping with the Gathering theme and Ed Op title – Disrupting Racism: Next Steps - we hope all of the stories, research, and GA overtures will help you respond to the call for action: **Rise, Shine, Be Woke.** To become a transformative everyday anti-racist who works in a strategic and sustained way to change racist effects and racialization in your sphere of influence. Spiritual formation and professional career development are perfect for wannabe anti-racists!

### **Our Stage Now is A Multi-Cultural America**

The Immigration Act of 1965 also known as the Hart-Celler Act after the two Democrats who proposed it, changed the face of America. It made the US more diverse. Some scholars consider it the most revolutionary act of the 1960s which is remarkable when you consider how much of that period was filled with resistance and revolutionary movements such as the Civil Rights, Black Power, Equal Rights for Women, and Vietnam War protests,. But, today, along with renegade capitalism, US diversity is also shifting the power balance, increasing racism, and injustices. Euro-Americans are now the majority-minority in half a dozen states, income inequality increased most among Asian Americans from 1970-2016, and suburbanites are the new face of homelessness in America, a problem caused by wage uncertainties, housing shortages, and classism. Why is this?

John Paul Rollert (In-house Ethicist column writer in the Chicago Booth Review who teaches leadership, politics and ethics at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and Harvard Extension School. Rollert on Greed (see for example, The Atlantic or the YouTube video lecture) identifies a key problem of our times: the prevailing ethos in businesses and individuals that Greed is Good: Greed is healthy self-interest. We've had centuries of moral reform, Rollert notes, for us to come to this point in society. And now, while most of us won't say it outright, there is an elephant in our bedrooms: Like Gordon Gecko in the 1987 movie or Ivan Boesky who made his by now legendary commencement speech a year before that to Berkeley students we too have come to believe: Greed is healthy, self-interest. It is ok. Innovation is necessary and the free market economy is in our interest. "Greed is all right, by the way. I want you to know that. I think greed is healthy. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself." Rollert further explores corporate greed by linking it to Schumpeter's view of innovation: At the heart of capitalism is creative innovation in corporations and business schools as renegade capitalism. Think of iphones, how often new products now come out that we must have; planned obsolescence was an early forerunner to Schumpeter's view of innovation which now drives capitalism and hence renegade in its disregard of any other considerations. I extend renegade capitalism further, to our individual moral ambivalence and silence if not acquiescence. Our own greed and self-interested economic behavior fuels renegade capitalism.

And, so in the tradition of Jesus, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King especially who explicitly linked racism to capitalism, I suggest three steps we must urgently take if we are to achieve an equitable society.

## **Disrupting Racism: Next Steps by Anita Coleman, Ph.D.**

2018 Churchwide Gathering, Presbyterian Women

Sat. Aug. 5, 2018, 1:45 – 3: 00 pm and 3:30 – 4:45 pm

### **Confronting Privilege | Decentering Whiteness | Exposing Colorism**

**Confronting Privilege:** Privilege - unearned benefits - comes in many forms. Skin color is just one of them. Education and economics - socio-economic class – are often much more potent factors in guaranteeing access and quality of life. In the U.S.A., those with white skin privilege and all those with other privileges – Christian, gender and sexuality must keep examining privilege constantly to see how it contributes to social injustices, the exploitation, marginalization, and oppression of others. Then, when we find how it does so we must move to end our own participation in such systems and work to change the racist and unjust systems. A key point to remember here is that privilege is a feature of systems. Individuals enjoy privilege, but we must look for the system that keeps it in place.

**Decentering Whiteness:** Whiteness is not the same as “white people” or “white identity.” Generally, when we speak of whiteness we mean White Anglo-Saxon Protestant – a social class that is wealthy, predominantly of British ancestry, and Protestant Christian – the white norm. In this white world, English is the only language worth speaking or knowing, standards of beauty are shaped by ideas of the “English rose” (peachy or pale skin with rosy cheeks, fresh, natural). Education is one of the most powerful means for propagating whiteness. Every immigrant group to the US is on a race to whiteness. Decentering whiteness simply means to practice revolutionary love. In a world where white is the norm, we must rise to shine a light and center the Other. Other cultures have knowledge and practices that are worth knowing and emulating. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and all God’s creations are beautiful.

**Exposing Colorism:** Last year, in Spring 2017 I participated in a project called the Fabric of America which had about 36 people. One of the outcomes from it was a group tangle shot. The project was a fantastic idea but something began to bother me when I first saw the pictures that came out. I realized that how light skinned everybody looked in the pictures! There are some technical reasons for this but we must also face our own implicit biases. Alice Walker discussed this as “colorism.” Colorism is rampant in India where I grew up. I have shared my earliest experience with it in Rise, Shine, Be Woke. As a very young child when I realized that the Indian standard of beauty revolved around light skin, I taught myself to look past skin tones. Francena Willingham too wrote in her memoir in Rise Shine Be Woke how she burst into tears when she was given an African American doll as a gift and didn’t understand why. Well, Trina Jones could have explained it! Jones is a professor of law and this prejudice or preference for light color skin (anti-black) seems to be near universal. She writes:

“Changing racial demographics and rising fears among Whites that the United States will soon become a majority-minority country has led Professor Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and others to argue that instead of a two-tiered racial hierarchy (White and non-White), the United States is developing three tiers. This is similar to what one sees in many South American countries with

## **Disrupting Racism: Next Steps by Anita Coleman, Ph.D.**

2018 Churchwide Gathering, Presbyterian Women

Sat. Aug. 5, 2018, 1:45 – 3: 00 pm and 3:30 – 4:45 pm

Whites on top, some middle category of non-Whites (honorary Whites), and then another group of non-Whites at the bottom (the Collective Black).

### **Summary**

**Key Take-away #1:** Anti-racist actions and behaviors are deep authentic Christian practices. Christian anti-racism comes from a core identity in Christ

**Key Take-away #2:** We welcome differences, initiate engagement, build relationships, and strengthen communities across culture and class, with the different communities on their home turf. We do this not by going in as saviors but by practices such as active listening and cultural humility.

**Key Take-away #3:** Identify and commit to an anti-racist action or strategy as part of ongoing identity development, spiritual formation, and/or professional development (your sphere of influence). If you're new to anti-racism make an intention to explore growing your unique anti-racist voice and identity.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Anti-racism** is some form of focused and sustained action, by a mix of people which includes inter-cultural, inter-faith, multi-lingual and inter-abled communities with the intent to change a system or an institutional policy, practice, or procedure which has racist effects.

**Anti-racist identity = Share Power, Eliminate/Uncover Prejudice, Examine Privilege.** Anti-racist identity respects difference, shares power, strives to eliminate prejudice, examines privilege, uncovers thoughts, changes language, builds and strengthens community, and restores harmony and equity, and increases justice for all.

**Be Woke/ Woke** – Aware of race, racism, racialization, and having the ability, confidence, and persistence to challenge, interrupt, erode, and eliminate all forms of racism and its manifestations in one's own sphere of influence. Being woke means cultivating an anti-racist identity and practicing: Active Listening; Cultural Humility; Inclusion; Lifelong Learning, and more.

**Beloved Community:** We become woke in our spheres of influence 24/7 and create what Martin Luther King Jr. called the Beloved Community, a biblical idea of a community in which people are accepted, loved and treated as they need to be treated. It is like Jesus' Kingdom of God, which has recently been interpreted as kin-dom –a kinship, a family based on mutual love and shared power and service. **“Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.” Rev. Dr. MLK, Jr**

## **Disrupting Racism: Next Steps by Anita Coleman, Ph.D.**

2018 Churchwide Gathering, Presbyterian Women

Sat. Aug. 5, 2018, 1:45 – 3: 00 pm and 3:30 – 4:45 pm

### **GA 223( 2018) passed 14 overtures related to anti-racism and they are:**

- 1) On Recognizing the Reverend Henry Highland Garnet’s Prophetic Voice for Today;
- 2) Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns Name Changes to Racial Equity Advocacy Committee;
- 3) A Resolution to Respond to Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls;
- 4) A Gospel from St Louis: Lessons from Congregations Seeking Racial and Economic Justice;
- 5) Declare an Imperative for the Reformation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in being a Transformative Church in This Intercultural Era; with Eight Steps to End Racism (See Recommendation 10) and a Glossary of Terms;
- 6) Racism, Truth, and Reconciliation Special Committee;
- 7) On Developing a Letter to Accompany the Confession of Belhar;
- 8) On Adopting the "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," written by the Rev. Dr. MLK Jr., as a Contemporary Statement of Faith;
- 9) On Renewing Our Call to Promote Environmental Justice;
- 10) On Responding to Environmental Racism;
- 11) The Earth Is the Lord’s—Not Ours to Ruin: Priorities for a New Moral Era;
- 12) On the Challenge of Being Black in the PC (USA);
- 13) Responding to Racist Nationalism; and
- 14) Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Self-Study.

**From Learning to Action:** What is a specific way in which you can link what you’ve learned from today to action? Such an action may be a daily practice or strategy that helps you be woke, disrupts racism in your sphere, helps build the “beloved community, or does any or all of these. For ideas, please consult the GA Overtures below as well as Notes and Resources below.

**Invitation to Contribute to the Anti-racism Digital Library** You are invited to share your anti-racism stories, art and more. Use the Contribute an Item form online:

<https://sacred.omeka.net/contribution> | Contact: Anita Coleman [dranitacoleman@gmail.com](mailto:dranitacoleman@gmail.com)

Anti-racism Digital Library, <http://endracism.info/> (direct URL is <http://sacred.omeka.net>)

## **Call to Action:**

# **RISE, SHINE, BE WOKE!**

## **Disrupting Racism: Next Steps by Anita Coleman, Ph.D.**

2018 Churchwide Gathering, Presbyterian Women  
Sat. Aug. 5, 2018, 1:45 – 3: 00 pm and 3:30 – 4:45 pm

### **Notes and Resources for developing an Anti-racist Voice and Identity:**

#### **Individual / Group:**

Anita Coleman (2017), “Growing a Personal Anti-racist Voice and Identity,” Anti-Racism Digital Library, accessed July 27, 2018, <https://sacred.omeka.net/items/show/232>.

Anne Sivley. (2018). My Anti-racism Story.

*Rise, Shine, Be Woke (book)* by Anita Coleman, Stephanie Patterson, Francena Willingham, Ash Coleman, and more. Charis Research, 2018.

#### **PC(USA) Church:**

Anita Coleman (compiler), “223rd General Assembly PC(USA): Anti-racism,” Anti-Racism Digital Library, accessed July 27, 2018, <https://sacred.omeka.net/items/show/241>

The PC (USA) Intercultural Community Collection in the ADL includes the Confessions, Reflections, Vision statements, Policy statements, Reports and Tools from pastors, church leaders, committees, and the General Assembly of the PC (U.S.A). Three confessions, the 2016 Vision statements, anti-racist policies and reports from GA 222 and 223 are included as well as to the Facing Racism and Book study website One Church, One Book. Short contemplative pieces by pastors in the Presbytery of Los Ranchos (Orange County and a portion of Los Angeles, California) can also be found here. <https://sacred.omeka.net/collections/show/3>

GA 223 Anti-racism overtures: <https://sacred.omeka.net/items/show/241>

Hundreds of Presbyterians Join March to St. Louis Justice Center. More than \$47,000 raised to bail out people charged with misdemeanors. <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2018/6/19/hundreds-presbyterians-join-march-st-louis-justice/>

(Video) Stated Clerk Rev. Dr. Herbert Nelson on “Whose Streets” <https://youtu.be/1ii21wS72ik>

(Video) Freedom Rising report at GA 223 - <https://youtu.be/E4BcLjKQmTw>

#### **Scholarly Articles/Reports:**

John Paul Rollert. Is Greed Good? (Video) Feb. 2017, accessed 18 Sept. 2018 <http://review.chicagobooth.edu/strategy/2017/video/house-ethicist-greed-good> (7 mins). Greed is Good: A 200 year history of a dangerous idea. (Article) 2014, accessed 18 Sept. 2018 <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/04/greed-is-good-a-300-year-history-of-a-dangerous-idea/360265/>