

Congregational Coaching: Dismantling Racism & White Supremacy

Two On-Ramps to the Journey toward Justice

Historically white congregations must explore how to dismantle racism and white supremacy for at least two basic reasons: 1) they are energized by God’s mission to connect with a diverse mission field, and 2) they seek to live out their baptismal vows to “resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves” (UMH 34). We offer two “on-ramps” for those who want to know more about how to combat race and white supremacy. Cultural Intelligence may be a good starting place for those who are new to discussions about race and culture. Dismantling White Fragility can be considered an entry-point for those who already know racism is a problem, but who want to dive deeper into working on issues that are race-related. Either “on-ramp” points one toward racial justice and is a step in the right direction! We offer coaching and congregational training options that feature these two options, and more.

Cultural Intelligence

Cultural Intelligence can be understood as the capability to relate and work effectively across cultures. It is an inner journey, never ending and always moving toward others. If broadening the scope of your place of influence beyond diversity is your goal, Cultural Intelligence will assist you in that journey.

At its heart, cultural intelligence is the belief that every one of us has a primary cultural language that scripts our behavior and communication. But we can learn “new” languages. And the more languages we speak, the more effective our communication becomes.

“The ultimate goal of cultural intelligence is to ensure that each of us have the ability (and motivation) to identify, analyze, and appropriately respond to changing cultural contexts by becoming effective communicators by creating shared meaning.

Why this could be the Church’s game changer....

It emphasizes the fact that we all have ‘cultural languages’ we need to learn.

It takes the emphasis off shame and guilt—to efficacy and collaboration.

It might allow us to finally become the “headlights” rather than the taillights on the issue of race.”

- Rev. Dr. Maria Dixon Hall

Cultural Intelligence is about knowing the communication needs of the people we are in relationship with so that we can work together more authentically and effectively. To do this we have to be aware of our own invisible cultural scripts and know that our biases can blind us and prevent us from successfully engaging in cross-cultural relationships and ministry.

Please contact Associate Director, Jurrita Williams Louie to learn more (jwlouie@ntcumc.org; 972-526-5016)

Dismantling White Fragility

Author and multicultural education professor, Robin DiAngelo coined this term. She offers this helpful introduction:

*“...whites are often at a loss for how to respond in constructive ways, as we have not had to build the cognitive or affective skills or develop the stamina that that would allow for constructive engagement across racial divides, leading to what I refer to as White Fragility. **White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.**”¹*

It is very difficult for white people to even speak of race, which prevents progress on racial justice. We need to move beyond getting stuck in thinking racism is only actions bad racist people do, when it’s really a much broader system that affects even people of goodwill.

Living into our Wesleyan vision of a perfect love of God and neighbor means engaging in the ongoing work of resisting effects of racism that do continue to be present in our lives, but to which we are often blind. It is important for white Christians to do their own homework on racism and white supremacy, and not force persons of color to do all the work of teaching them.

To learn more, please contact Associate Director, Rev. Andrew Fiser (fiser@ntcumc.org; 972-526-5018).

¹ Robin DiAngelo, web introduction to [White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism](https://robindiangelo.com/publications/) (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018). <https://robindiangelo.com/publications/>