



Charlottesville's Catholic Worker Community

911 Nassau Street, Charlottesville VA 22902

cvillecw@gmail.com, 434-409-0804, casa-alma.org

Racism and Our Catholic Response, Session 3

Reading: Psalms 25: 4-9, 14-15

Make known to me your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.

**Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.**

For you I wait all the long day,
because of your goodness, Lord.

**Remember your compassion and love,
O Lord; for they are ages old.**

Remember no more the sins of my youth;
remember me only in light of your love.

**Good and upright is the Lord,
who shows sinners the way,**

Guides the humble rightly,
and teaches the humble the way.

**The counsel of the Lord belongs to the faithful;
the covenant instructs them.**

My eyes are ever upon the Lord,
Who frees my feet from the snare.

Review:

- Group agreements
- To date: dialogue as seeking understanding of self and others; prejudice, bias, bigotry, stereotyping and scapegoating hinder dialogue. Those acts and attitudes of discrimination prevent us from seeing the full humanity of others.
- Definitions of “isms” include an individual component and a social component. We considered racism as acts and attitudes of discrimination based upon race (perceived skin color/group) within a system which privileges whiteness.
- Manifestations of racism: internal, interpersonal, institutional, systemic

Topics: Briefly revisit our definition of racism and manifestations; Power and privilege

Journal Prompts¹

5. What was the cruelest thing someone from a different race or ethnicity did to you? Today, what is your greatest fear about what someone from a different racial or ethnic group do to you? Where do you think that fear comes from?

6. Name a time when you stood up for your rights or the rights of others. What did you do? What do you wish you'd done? Or, name a time when you could have stood up for the rights of others but didn't. What do you wish you'd done?

Introductions - Name + an ability that you have that you value. *This amazing variety of abilities can be leveraged for collective action.*

Topic I: Briefly revisit definition of racism and manifestations

See end of document

Topic II: Power and Privilege

Posted

Power - ability to act to produce an effect; possession of control, influence or authority over others

- Everyone has some measure of power. Nature of being human, being God's beloved ones (Mandela).
- Purpose of our ability to act (power) is for the building of the Kingdom of God as individuals (acts of service) and collectively (acts of justice). Are we using our power? In whose interest and benefit?
- Bringing about change requires the use of power. Many types of power. Read, post online.
- What else can we leverage toward social change? Privilege, or having advantage conferred upon us based upon our identity and the society we live in.

¹ From [Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: Antiracism Training Manual](#) from the Episcopal Church.

Points on privilege - not limited to race

- No need to feel guilty. We didn't create this system, born into it. "...I am responsible for the house I did not build but in which I live." Dorothee Soelle (German theologian)
- Let's do something useful with the privilege we have. Advocate for others, resources to leverage or redistribute (money, social networks, opportunities).
- Outer layers. Privilege in one area might cancel out privilege in another area. We can remain rooted in our deepest identity and recognize other's identity as being beloved by God while we do this work.

Privilege Exercise:

Handout

http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/PERSONAL_PRIVILEGE_PROFILE.pdf

Preview: Next week topics: building beloved community, preparing to engage in action for racial justice around the anniversary of August 11-12 and beyond.

Time to journal/ silence

Closing prayer - Our Father

Definition of racism we considered:

RACISM = prejudice, bias, bigotry, stereotyping, scapegoating (acts and attitudes of discrimination) on the basis of race (perceived skin color/group) within a system that gives power and privilege based upon whiteness.

We brainstormed examples of how racism is manifested at different levels. These were our responses from Incarnation and Holy Comforter. *Note from Laura: I have consolidated and lightly edited the responses, and added some comments in italics.*

Internalized racism: private beliefs about race that are influenced by our culture and experiences

- Thinking that black people are mostly poor and not very educated
- Black people who have internalized the message that white is better
- Not seeing that people who don't understand English are just as intelligent
- Judging people on the clothes they wear
- Belief that African-Americans are more athletic than white people (NBA)
- Belief that Asian people will get positions for being the smartest (valedictorian)

One note listed "Ladies hardworking, men lazy" which could be an example of internalized racism if meaning women of color are perceived as hardworking while men of color are perceived as lazy.

Interpersonal racism: occurs when our private beliefs are made public through our interactions with others

- Person clutches bag closer when a person of another race is near
- Crossing the street if a black man is walking toward you
- Jokes with stereotypes
- Use of the phrase "those people" in conversation
- Judging people of another culture for behavior that isn't accepted in your culture
- Comments a person makes that may be indirect or subtle but imply bias toward a particular group
- Using the "N" word to describe African-Americans (*or any racial slur*)
- In humor - the use of accent or abilities attributed to race or culture
- Saying "Mexicans are rapists" or "Somalia is a shit country"
- An excellent black colleague being fired by white colleagues (*could be interpersonal racism, but not necessarily*).

One note listed "Hispanics getting jobs instead of white people," this appears not to fit the definition of racism that we are using, as people of Hispanic origin do not experience power and privilege across our society because of their race. This could be an example of affirmative action.

Another listed "African-Americans arriving late for meetings" which would be an example of interpersonal racism if held as a negative stereotype.

Institutional racism: policies and practices within an organization that routinely produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantage for whites.

- People who have committed felonies aren't allowed to vote
- Racial profiling on the part of police; "Stop and frisk" rate higher for African-Americans
- Lack of equity in G.I. Bill; African-Americans denied many benefits that whites received
- Closure of black churches in the attempt at integration
- Priest said "No Negroes will be in our schools"
- Placement in advanced courses differing by race in schools, steering high school students toward historically black colleges
- At Incarnation, the relationship between the Hispanic and white communities (*imbalance of power*)
- Catholic Church acceptance of transgender people
- Instances such as: a black teenager pushed harder to defend her point of view than her white friend (*i.e. experiences of people of color perceived as less valid*)
- Travel ban on Muslims (*this was listed under systemic, but placed here since it is a specific policy*)
- Prejudice against Asian Americans in roles in acting in films (*this was listed under systemic, but placed here since it is a specific practice*)

Systemic racism: the complex, cumulative effects of racism across institutions, history and culture.

- Redlining: policy of preventing black people from buying homes in white neighborhoods, denying mortgages to people of color for homes in white neighborhoods, realtors showing homes based upon client's race (*involves interaction between banks, realtors, homeowners, municipal government*)
- White people don't know the histories of other races and cultures; don't know the extent of discrimination faced if it's not included as "official" history (*considering the teaching of history in schools, this involves interaction between textbook authors, publishers, boards of education, educators, parents, etc*)

Questions raised:

How much is racism and how much is "wealth-ism" (classism)?

Important and perhaps unanswerable question. Clearly, wealth, class, race, (and gender) are intertwined. At the individual level, my recommendation is to read, watch, and listen to experiences from the perspective of people are different from the ways in which we identify.

At the social level, we can work simultaneously for racial justice and economic equality, seeking out policy solutions that promote thriving for people of color and people who have limited access to wealth and all those elements of life which wealth ensures (clothing, food, housing, transportation, quality child care, education and job training, health and dental care, mental health services, time for rest and renewal, etc)