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Theology with the help of
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Support and Solidarity During a Pandemic

A starter guide for people who want to learn about
and fight systemic racism.

These are difficult, but not unprecedented, times we're living in. The centering of violence against Black people is something we've faced before. All of us have witnessed moments of this unveiling whether through Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor or George Floyd to name a few.

As this week has progressed I have heard people ask, what can I do? What should I do? What will be helpful? So, I reached out to a couple of friends who do the work of regularly standing in solidarity with others and asked for their advice.

Consider this guide a 101. It will get you going in the right direction. The most important thing is that you start to move. If we stand still and just keep asking the same questions, the answer won't change. If we start to read, think, and investigate, change can emerge.

This will be some of the hardest work you've ever done. As you find answers, your thoughts may change in other areas as well. That's to be expected. Keep going.

This list may feel overwhelming and that's normal. So I'm going to start you off with some possible entry points to the conversation. If you don't know what else to do, start there. Then go deeper. We've included lists for you and links other to significant lists. Work hard and bring someone along with you. The work is easier together.

Places to Enter the Discussion

- Watch [13th](#) on YouTube - This is a film adaptation based on *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander. If you want to know more, [grab the book](#).
- Watch [Just Mercy](#). It is free right now. If you want to go deeper, read [Just Mercy](#) by Bryan Stevenson. You can also learn more at: [The National Memorial for Justice and Peace and The Legacy Museum](#).
- Peggy McIntosh's [Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) helps us learn about things we take for granted and how they aren't available to everyone.
- [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) site will let you see some of the exhibits at the Smithsonian.
- Listen to the [1619 Project Podcast](#). A historical look at American slavery and the impacts that still inform life today.
- [Between the World and Me](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates - A father answers questions from his son.
- Look to black artists, musicians, athletes, theologians, and scholars. Subscribe to their social media channels and listen to what they are saying right now.

Steps Along the Journey

- **Learn what people mean by...**As part of your process of learning, gain a deeper understanding of the terms used in the discussion. Privilege is one of the key words. You might watch this [4 minute video](#), and reflect on [these questions](#), or read Peggy McIntosh's *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* for an introduction. The same goes for [being an Ally](#). There are other terms you learn along the way; [here's a glossary](#) to help out.
- **Educate yourself. While this is a hard truth, you have to do your own work.** That's why we're providing this list. Please don't ask Black and other POC to explain things to you. Use this, and other resources, to do the work. Prioritize reading one of the following books, listening to podcasts, or watching documentaries. Listen to lectures by black scholars and theologians. Take notes, reflect on what inspires you and what challenges you, and share quotes.
- **Confront Your Own Assumptions.** This is hard but necessary work. Sit down and list what you think about race. Just let it flow. You might/will bump into some ugly stuff. Once you have your list, start working to change your thinking. Keep reading and learning. Reach out to people that do this work, and ask for their help.
- **Have conversations.** See below for guidance. Be patient. Ask lots of questions. Listen. Changing people's hearts and minds takes time. Be okay with being wrong. Keep trying.
- **Learn how to use your privilege.** Come alongside black people. Listen to them and **ask** how you can help. Put your body between them and harm. March together. Be vocal in the all white spaces you find yourself in.
- **Reach out to your representatives.** Contacting our leaders does count. Let them know what bothers you. See Andy's advice below. Simple and focused outreach is best.
- **Ask your black friends and colleagues how they are doing.** And listen. Don't offer solutions. Listen and be present.
- **Show Up.** It matters what we do with our bodies. Showing up to support our black sisters and brothers, makes a difference. It may be a march or rally, a learning opportunity, or meeting, but being present matters.
- **Donate.** Support organizations that are doing the work to end racism and bring justice. The Movement for Black Lives, SURJ, and AFSC are all good options.

Things to Know if You're New to This Work

- This is uncomfortable, hard, and painful.
- You may have privilege that you didn't realize.
- This is a lifelong process that will continue to reveal deeper issues that need work.
- You will need to sacrifice in order to make a difference.
- You will make mistakes. Learn to apologize quickly and sincerely.
- You will annoy people. You may develop rifts between family and friends.
- You may be harassed and called names.
- You may choose to put your body between someone else and harm.

EFFECTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Follow Black folks and listen to what they have to say.** If a post makes you uncomfortable, ask yourself why. If you get called out/in, take it as an opportunity to do better rather than a reason to get defensive.
- **Be careful with images.** Dead and dying Black bodies are not a spectacle, and White folks shouldn't be thrusting images/video of them in the faces of our grieving Black neighbors. If you post an article with a photo/video embedded in it, give a content warning.
- **Know who you're posting for.** Was that meme really about alleviating injustice or was it just to show how woke you are?
- **Pick your battles.** Every reaction/response - even ones calling out racism - elevate the likelihood of the post showing up on more timelines. Be intentional about how and where you engage.
- **Don't be afraid to use that block button!** There are some people who will feed off of your frustrations and have no intention of actually engaging in thoughtful dialogue. There's nothing wrong with blocking them 👍

EFFECTIVE CONVERSATIONS: A STORY & SOME TIPS

But, in all seriousness, this is one of the hardest aspects of anti-racist work, and for many of us it's the long game. *I first started talking to my mom about the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, and yesterday was the first time she's ever used the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter.*

Tips

Be honest, but also be direct. If someone used a racist term or makes a racist assumption in front of you, ask them why they chose that specific language. Believe that they have the power to change, and then work with them towards that goal.

Have empathy. Empathy involves taking a step outside of your world in an attempt to understand the perspective of someone else. We must be willing to meet our loved ones where they're at with as much understanding as we can.

Listen. No one will listen to you if you won't listen to them. This advice is ever true: "People act in ways that make sense to them." Learn where and why your loved ones developed their beliefs.

Find common ground. You may be surprised by the things you and your loved ones agree on, especially if you allow yourselves to explore outside the boundaries of bipartisanship.

Speak up. Have the difficult conversations. Don't let any racist or oppressive language go unmentioned. Be okay with the discomfort it creates. Be bold, be calm, be truthful.

Persist. As the story above illustrates, not everyone changes over night. Share informative resources with enthusiasm and curiosity. Keep having conversations. Keep speaking up.

ENGAGE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Holding our elected officials accountable is always helpful - whether you're in a pandemic or not but there are ways to increase the impact of your call. Here are a few pointers:

- **Do your homework!** Before you call or email anyone, find out who you're talking to and why. I like to look up committee assignments, voting records, and legislative scorecards from groups that I trust, and I always bring notes/research with me to the meeting or call.
- **Reach out through as many channels as possible.** When I contact an elected official, I usually start with social media (FB/IG/Twitter), then send an email to the official, CCing their admin and any other relevant staffers, and then I call. This way, by the time I'm making a phone call I can say things like "I'm clearly not the only one who thinks this way because I tweeted the same comment and got ___ number of likes/shares/rts/etc in the last 24 hours.
- **Make sure your messaging matches the person you're contacting.** (DON'T JUST COPY AND PASTE FROM SOCIAL MEDIA). Your communication is going to be screened by a low-level staffer before it gets anywhere near the elected official, so make it personal and make it compelling!
- **When emailing, texting, or writing, address one topic at a time.** That will make sure it gets counted in the correct area of concern.

ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE AND CHANGE

- **Start Local:** I guarantee that there are laws on the books in your local city/county that actively uphold white supremacy. I already said it above, but DO YOUR HOMEWORK. Find out if the makeup of your local law enforcement agency matches the demographics of the population that they are policing. Find out if they are trained on implicit bias and use of force. And if the answers you get are unacceptable, ask why!
- **Participate:** Show up at the training events, demonstrations, art shows, town halls, celebrations, and funerals.
- **Know Your Officials:** Get to know your local elected officials (City Council, School Board, Commissioners, etc) and make sure that they know who you are and that you aren't going away.
- **Mutual Aid:** Fill in the gaps in your community where your leaders and governments have failed. City refusing to fill potholes? [Grab some asphalt](#) and do it yourself! Kids going hungry? Organize a [free breakfast program](#).
- **CO Specific:** Some local issues worth looking into and asking your reps about
 - **Denver:** Urban Camping Ban and the criminalization of homelessness, rapid gentrification and displacement.
 - **Aurora:** Murder of Elijah McClain by Aurora PD, immigrant detention contracts with GEO, lack of independent oversight of police and sheriff.
 - **CO Springs:** No police oversight body, body cameras not required by all officers at all times.

Guide for Protest and Direct Action

Special note for Early June 2020:

If you go out to participate in the next few days, I'd expect to encounter teargas, pepperballs, and concussion grenades. Hearing protection can be super helpful, and water is best for flushing eyes. They all suck, but the burning/ringing goes away in a couple hours.

When Protesting

- Never go alone (I always go in groups of three)
- Pack a bag with water and snacks (dehydration/low blood sugar are real)
- Wear durable clothing and footwear (I always wear long pants and closed toe shoes/boots.)
- Be prepared to stand/walk for hours. Find a local legal defense line and write down the number in Sharpie on your body. [I typically write it on my leg so that a) it won't rub off during an arrest and b) because cameras can't see it.] You may choose to include an emergency contact as well, but make sure they know that you are protesting.
- Turn off your phone's Face ID or thumbprint unlock, so only a code can open it.
- If you choose to post photos or videos on social media, do not tag your location and protect others by blurring the faces of ALL the protestors in your photos.
- Wear a wristwatch and have a time/place planned to regroup if you get separated from your crew.
- Mask up! In this time of COVID19 I urge you as strongly as possible to wear a mask. The majority of our neighbors who are most impacted by police violence are also being hit hardest by this disease.
- Remember that your whiteness can be leveraged against law enforcement to protect your neighbors with marginalized identities. If you have to physically place your body between police and the bodies of your Black and Brown neighbors in order to absorb state violence, do it.
- (NOTE: I won't tell people how they should defend themselves and their communities, but I'd leave weapons and illicit substances at home. If you are arrested and they find either in your possession, you're almost certainly looking at a felony.)

When Participating in Direct Action

- Expect to have your photo taken and your name added to a police report - even if you don't get arrested yourself.
- Know what laws you can be charged with breaking, and what punishments they carry.
- Know where to find Legal Observers and Medics (once arrests start, they're the only ones who are going to be able to get anywhere near you).
- Have a plan for bail support.

Bibliography of Resources

READING

START HERE

- [“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”](#) (article) - Peggy McIntosh
- [Overview of White Supremacy Culture](#) (pdf) - Tema Okun
- *Between the World and Me* - Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Just Mercy* - Bryan Stevenson
- *How to be an Anti-Racist* - Ibram X Kendi
- *So You Want to Talk About Race* - Ijeoma Oluo
- *The Cross and The Lynching Tree* - James Cone
- *Towards the Other America: Anti-racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives* - Criss Crass

ADVANCED

- “The Case for Reparations” (article) - Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *The Eight Years We Were in Power* - Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Liberation: A Black Theology of Liberation* - James Cone
- *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo and Michael Eric Dyson
- *A Theology of Liberation* - Gustavo Gutierrez
- [1619 Project](#) - The New York Times Magazine and Podcast
- *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World* - Rebecca Todd Peters
- *Against the Fascist Creep* - Alexander Reid Ross
- *Sisters in the Wilderness* - Delores S. Williams
- [“Why I No Longer Talk to White People About Race”](#) by Reni Eddo-Lodge

COLLECTION OF LINKS

- Shareable [Anti-Racism Resources](#)
- [Curriculum for White Americans to Educate Themselves on Race and Racism](#) - Jon Greenberg
- More [Anti-Racism Resources](#) (UNC Chapel Hill)
- Ways to Educate Yourself and Others on Racial Issues:
<https://bobbyberk.com/ways-to-educate-yourself-and-others-on-racial-issues/>
- First Listen, Then Learn:
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/juliawuench/2020/06/02/first-listen-then-learn-anti-racism-resources-for-white-people/#bb287f616ee3>

WATCH

- [13th](#) (free on YouTube)
- [Just Mercy](#) (free)
- [I Am Not Your Negro](#)
- [The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975](#)

FOLLOWS

- Austin Channing Brown (Black Christian author and faith leader) [@austinchanning](#)
- Micky Scott Bey Jones (Womanist, Doula, Brave space) [@iammickyjones](#)
- Alicia Crosby (womanist, mental health) [@aliciacrosby](#)
- Bree Newsome Bass [@breenewsome](#)
- Layla Saad [@laylafaad](#)
- Nikole Hannah-Jones [@nhannahjones](#)

PODCASTS

- [Scene on Radio](#) (Particularly the [Seeing White](#) series)
- [Code Switch](#)
- [Hidden Brain](#) - How Unconscious Bias Operates

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Please see this list of resources for white parents to raise anti-racist kids:
<https://diversity.unc.edu/yourvoicematters/anti-racism-resources/>

NEWS SOURCES

- **Newsone** - <https://newsone.com/> - News and information for and about Blacks in America. Filled with original stories, diverse opinions, photos, videos and polls, NewsOne is dedicated to deepening our audiences' understanding about current events and their impact on black lives.
- **ColorLines** - <https://www.colorlines.com/> - (magazine on race, culture, and justice) COLORLINES is a daily news site where race matters, featuring award-winning in-depth reporting, news analysis, opinion and curation.

Anti-Racist Organizations and Events

ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZATIONS

- **AFSC - American Friends Service Committee** - American Friends Service Committee is a Quaker organization devoted to service, development, and peace programs throughout the world. Our work is based on the belief in the worth of every person, and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice. <https://www.afsc.org/>
- **Center for Policing Equity:** CPE is a team of research scientists, race and equity experts, data virtuosos, and community trainers that partner with police departments to diagnose the roots of disparate policing in order to eliminate them. <https://policingequity.org/>
- **Equal Justice Initiative:** Founded by celebrated civil rights lawyer Bryan Stevenson, EJI works to end mass incarceration and excessive punishment, stop the prosecution of children as adults, aid the mentally ill in the criminal justice system, confront the history of racial inequality in America and provide free legal services to the poor, incarcerated and condemned. <https://eji.org/>
- **Live Free:** Live Free works to address gun violence and mass incarceration. They have also started a Masks for the People campaign to transform their national network of community organizers in the most marginalized Black communities across the country and created their own PPE supply chain to distribute masks and sanitizer to essential workers. <http://www.livefreeusa.org/>
- **Movement for Black Lives** - The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) seeks to reach millions, mobilize hundreds of thousands, and organize tens of thousands, so that Black political power is a force able to influence national and local agendas in the direction of our shared Vision for Black Lives. <https://m4bl.org/>
- **Race Forward:** Race Forward catalyzes movement building for racial justice. In partnership with communities, organizations, and sectors, we build strategies to advance racial justice in our policies, institutions, and culture. <https://www.raceforward.org/>
- **SURJ - Showing Up for Racial Justice** -SURJ is a national network of groups and individuals working to undermine white supremacy and to work toward racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability. - <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/>

EVENT

Facing Race: <https://facingrace.raceforward.org/> - Facing Race: A National Conference is presented by Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation. A unique collaborative space for racial justice movement making, Facing Race is the largest multiracial, inter-generational gathering for organizers, educators, creatives and other leaders. Facing Race offers local community precedented access to information and resources on racial equity, includes over 70 workshops and access to over 180 presenters. November 12-14, 2020.