



The Damascus Road
Anti-Racism Process

Damascus Road Newsletter

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Youth have much to teach about anti-racism work

"Do you still believe you're better than black people?" The question rings clear in my mind, despite the passing of 2½ years. It was posed by an 11-year-old African-American to my white colleague during People's Youth Freedom School. The discussion was around internalized racial superiority, and it was hitting close to home. The student was bringing an honesty to the discussion that demanded an answer—a straightforward answer devoid of politically correct jargon.

I had the immeasurable honor of teaching and organizing with the People's Youth Freedom School (PYFS) in New Orleans. It was here I began to learn that youth play an essential role in the process of dismantling racism. PYFS was created by People's Youth Agenda, an initiative of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, committed to anti-racism youth organizing for social transformation. We modeled PYFS after the Freedom Schools in Mississippi, taking six weeks to build the "undoing racism" analysis in a way that makes sense to youth ages 10-17. Combining classroom lessons and activities with various field trips, youth were able to experience an education too often lacking in our schools. In the process, I found that it was often I, the teacher, who learned invaluable lessons.

The lessons youth can teach us adults about dismantling racism are literally too many to count. The one that consistently reoccurs for me, however, is this issue about honesty. I find it much more difficult to skirt an issue or change the subject when a young person is looking at me, waiting expectantly for truth. The polite social mores and sacred spaces labeled "private" rarely apply—especially for

youth who are so hungry for an understanding. Youth are not blind. They are not oblivious to the reality of racism that saturates every part of our lives. They experience racism in raw ways, just the same as adults. And they want answers. Aren't adults supposed to have the answers?

When I attempt to articulate an answer, it is in those moments that I feel like I'm conscious of every syllable I pronounce. There is a unique responsibility about passing on information to the next generation. Am I adding to the vast amount of misinformation? Or am I passing on the truths that have been passed on to me in a way that truly will transform this society? As I work with youth, I am challenged to be very clear about what it is I believe and what it is I wish to pass on.

"I want to talk about racism with my friends at school, but it's really hard to talk about," said a 12-year-old white youth to me while we ate pizza. How many times have I had that same thought? How can I share with her that it is also hard for me to talk about racism with other white folks?

For me, youth have a way of keeping me true. It is too tempting in this process of dismantling racism to convince myself that I'm doing enough or that I'm well on my way to becoming some self-actualized anti-racist. The truth is, this is a lifetime commitment full of setbacks and growing edges. Youth have been the ones who consistently have peeled away my defenses and rationalizations and have asked my very core: What are you about? And how much do you really believe in anti-racism? And do you believe in this so deeply that you're willing to pass it on to me?

This is just one of the many reasons that youth are essential to this process. Are we adults willing to open ourselves to what youth can teach us? I hope we can answer with a resounding, honest yes.

Brenda Zook

Another Damascus Road quiz

For those teams looking for a way to review the Damascus Road analysis, take this quiz together. It may frustrate or elucidate, but could also be fun. Click on the question number for a link to the answer.

Multiple choice:

1. One of the most dangerous results of Power1 (oppressive power):
 - A. White people never look at their power and privilege.
 - B. Racism is not talked about.
 - C. People of color are not hurt by white institutions.
 - D. All of the above.
2. Power2 (white power) can be expressed in:

- A. Institutional forms only;
 - B. Cultural forms only;
 - C. Individual forms only;
 - D. Only in institutional and cultural forms;
 - E. Institutional, cultural and individual forms.
3. Power3 (identity power) refers to which key concepts?
- A. Racism's ability to give power and privilege to white people.
 - B. Racism ability to hurt, disempower and damage people of color.
 - C. Internalized racist oppression and internalized racist superiority.
 - D. Cultural racism and white cultural identity?
4. Internalized racist oppression is described as:
- A. Accepting and living out a definition of self that is given by those who dominate you.
 - B. The multigenerational accumulation of the disempowerment process turned inside and lived out.
 - C. Determining your identity by others' definitions.
 - D. All of the above.
5. A key idea about internalized racist superiority is that:
- A. We need to remember the lies about racism and the liars who told us so that we can seek them out and blame them.
 - B. Most white people have been socialized into being racists somewhere on a continuum between overt racism and liberal racism.
 - C. White people are not part of a collective. They need to be responded to only as individuals.
 - D. All of the above.
6. Which central idea makes observations about systemic oppression of poor people ("the feet of oppression") into an analysis of racism ("Big Foot")?
- A. All major institutions affecting and trying to define the life of an oppressed community are controlled by white people.
 - B. Most poor people are people of color.
 - C. The welfare system was originally designed to break down African-American families and now has the same affect on Hispanic, Native American and Asian families.
7. On the six-stage continuum chart that describes a racist congregation (or institution) through to an anti-racist congregation, what is not true about stage three-the symbolic/open church?

- A. It is highly unstable due to the inherent contradictions of racist multiculturalism.
 - B. Some people try to keep the congregation where it is, some try to move back, some try to move forward.
 - C. The congregation thinks the continuum chart goes no further than stage three.
 - D. The congregation has moved to that stage primarily by inside forces.
8. Which list of activities best describes organizing efforts as promoted in Damascus Road trainings?
- A. Educate, motivate, agitate, propitiate, help people gain a sense of their own power
 - B. Appease, motivate, agitate, provide technical assistance, control
 - C. Educate, motivate, manage conflict, control, provide technical assistance
 - D. Educate, motivate, agitate, provide technical assistance, help people gain a sense of their own power
9. One way that anti-racist, multicultural diversity is different from racist multicultural diversity is that:
- A. white people have no role to play in bringing about change.
 - B. institutions have very little to do with how change takes place.
 - C. institutions need to examine all aspects, from mission and identity up to personnel
 - D. All of the above.
10. Individual race prejudice is not just a matter of individual examination because:
- A. Individual racists are systemically created.
 - B. Socialization is experienced so consistently.
 - C. By the age of 3 or 4, children are already making value judgments based on race.
 - D. All of the above.

True or false:

11. Whiteness is a cultural identity that requires power and privilege to exist.
12. For 64 percent of the history of Europeans in North America, institutions were permitted and often mandated to serve white society exclusively.
13. Accountability to the oppressed community is best done by placing representatives from that community onto powerful white boards.

14. Power is expressed in institutions primarily through control and access.
15. A primary difference between systems and institutions is that institutions have written rules for changing them and systems don't.

Bonus:

White people are to Power1 (white power) as a hound dog is to

- A. The fox being chased.
- B. A red herring drug over the trail.
- C. The hunters chasing the fox.
- D. I have no idea what you're talking about and I don't like analogy questions anyhow.

Answers:

- 1. A. One of the most dangerous results of Power1 (racism's power to oppress people of color) is that white people never look at their power and privilege.
- 2. E. Power2 (racism's ability to give white people power and privilege) can be expressed in institutional, cultural and individual forms. This is the purpose of racism.
- 3. C. Power3 (racism's power to shape our identities) refers to the key concepts of internalized racist oppression and internalized racist superiority. Power3 is where racism claims the ability to tell us who we are and whose we are.
- 4. D. All of these descriptive statements are correct.
- 5. B. A key idea about internalized racist superiority is that most white people have been socialized into being racists somewhere on a continuum between overt racism and liberal racism. We need to be aware of our collective identity not to blame those who have taught us but to name and dismantle the racism around us.
- 6. A. The fact that all major institutions affecting and trying to define the life of an oppressed community are controlled by white people makes observations about systemic oppression of poor people ("the feet of oppression") into an analysis of racism ("Big Foot").
- 7. D. All statements are true except D. White congregations and institutions move to stage 3 primarily by outside forces (laws, civil rights movement, etc.).
- 8. D. The list of activities that best describes organizing efforts as promoted in Damascus Road trainings is educate, motivate, agitate, provide technical assistance and help people gain a sense of their own power (originally developed by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond).

9. C. One way that anti-racist, multicultural diversity is different from racist multicultural diversity is that institutions need to examine all aspects, from mission and identity up to personnel.
10. D. Individual race prejudice is not just a matter of individual examination because individual racists are systemically created. Socialization is experienced so consistently that by the age of 3 or 4, children are already making value judgments based on race.
11. True. Whiteness is a cultural identity that requires power and privilege to exist.
12. False. In actuality, for 91 percent of the history of Europeans in North America, institutions were permitted and often mandated to serve white society exclusively.
13. False. Damascus Road promotes the idea that accountability to the oppressed community is best done by developing accountability relationships that include identifiable veto power by the oppressed community.
14. True. Power is expressed in institutions primarily through control and access.
15. True. A primary difference between systems and institutions is that institutions have written rules for changing them and systems don't. We change systems by changing institutions.

Bonus: B. White people are to Power1 as a hound dog is to a red herring drug over the trail. Just as the dog gets off the scent, so too does white people's fixation on the oppressed community keep our attention of the power and privileges we receive. (Apologies to all analogy haters out there.) (question)

Damascus Road takes on all training responsibilities

As Damascus Road continues to grow and expand, many changes have become necessary. Among them have been a larger, more involved steering committee, new staff members, an expanded core training team (now six members large), regional training events. Our growth and development have also led to a significant change in our relationship with Crossroads Ministry.

During the last five months, Damascus Road has made a decision to no longer use Crossroads Ministry staff in any of our training events. As we worked through this decision to separate from Crossroads, it also became clear that we hold differing philosophies of how we work together in the midst of dismantling racism. This decision pushes us to develop new training models that ground our training thoroughly in the Anabaptist community.

At the end of February, the Damascus Road core training team met for five days in Cleveland to shape what this new training model will look like.

We are deeply grateful for the analysis and insight we have gained from our five-year partnership with Crossroads. In the course of our ongoing work, we will look for other ways to stay connected and involved with the broader anti-racist ecumenical community, but it will no longer involve a training relationship with Crossroads.

Even as we develop a training model that is authentically Anabaptist, we want to be clear that the core principles of Damascus Road have not changed. We are still focused on dismantling racism, naming the realities of white power and privilege, binding the demonic forces that keep racism in place, articulating the realities of internalized racist oppression and superiority, and focusing on the individual, cultural and institutional dynamics of this evil in church and society. Your prayers, questions and insight are greatly desired as we enter into new territory.

Regina Shands Stoltzfus and Tobin Miller Shearer

The Micah Partnership for Racial Justice and Multicultural Education

The Micah Partnership (MP) is a 20-person task force consisting of faculty, staff and students. Chaired by the provost of Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.), the partnership seeks to dismantle racism on the campus and promote multicultural education. MP began in the early spring of 1999 with a one-day retreat. The facilitator, John Lee, emphasized the importance of distinguishing between racism and multicultural education. This distinction has been helpful to MP.

Since February 1999, MP has engaged in the following:

A team of four received Damascus Road training in the spring and summer of 1999.

A second team will participate in training this spring and summer.

As part of the Damascus Road training, MP developed a working draft of five-year goals.

Last fall, anti-racist training was included in the welcome week activities for the 800 first-year students entering Messiah College.

The Micah Partnership developed and approved the following statement of purpose: (1) to develop goals, programs and institutional practices that make the Messiah campus a welcoming and supportive climate for all students and employees, regardless of color;(2) to encourage curriculum development and co-curricular programs that promote racial justice and multicultural learning; (3) to organize training events that develop awareness and understanding of racism and cultural diversity; (4) to seek to dismantle racist practices that exist within the college; (5) to assure prompt and fair procedures for addressing incidents of

racial injustice; (6) to encourage students and employees to become agents of change and transformation on our campus and beyond.

MP also developed a two-page theological statement based on Scripture, the Brethren in Christ theological heritage and the educational philosophy of Messiah College. MP is completing work on a policy statement of racial and ethnic harassment and discrimination. This policy will apply to all students and employees of the college. MP is also developing a "conferencing" procedure involving a justice panel to deal with incidents of racism. This mode of addressing incidents is based on the "real justice" model of conferencing. MP is sponsoring a 2½-day training workshop in Harrisburg, Pa., in April led by Damascus Road trainers. This will involve about 20 employees from the college as well as a dozen pastors and leaders from Harrisburg's community of color. We hope this will build bridges to Harrisburg's community of color and provide an accountability group of people of color in the Harrisburg area.

MP is also making a training video of stories told by students of color about their experiences with racism on the campus of Messiah College. This will be used for training purposes with staff and faculty and will be used in classes to address the reality of racism.

Finally, the Messiah College Community of Educators will focus on racism and the progress of the Micah Partnership in an all-day workshop in May. The training provided by Damascus Road has been helpful in giving focus and direction to the work of the Micah Partnership. Although much remains to be done, we are pleased with the progress to date.

Donald B. Kraybill, provost and chair of the Micah Partnership

Anti-racism: A divine stewardship

Damascus Road emphasizes the importance of accountability to communities of color, and indeed our anti-racism efforts themselves are accountable to God and to our sisters and brothers. Jesus addresses the issue of accountability in a parable in Matthew 25:14-30. A wealthy man goes on a journey, leaving three servants in charge of 10, five and one "talents" of money. Two of the servants invest the money and double it. The third buries the money in the ground.

Like the "talents" entrusted to these servants, anti-racism work is a stewardship, or trust, from God. It is God's own work, not merely a human idea or project. In Jesus Christ God is working to reorder human relationships away from injustice and division to justice and unity. Anti-racism is central to this redemptive work, and in doing it, we are God's servants and instruments.

In Jesus' story the first two servants demonstrate an exemplary faith. They believe in the one who entrusted them with his money and that they can accomplish something with what they are given. Because of their faith they are able to overcome the lethargy, doubts and fears that cause the third servant to stumble. Likewise, those engaged in anti-racism work struggle with many

obstacles. It can be discouraging to see realities that others do not seem to see and to speak a language that many do not at first understand. The word to us from Jesus in this parable is, "Keep on believing! Don't give up! Don't let anything discourage or stop you!"

One lesson of history is that a small number of committed people can bring tremendous social change. Jesus makes this same point. The tiny mustard seed will become the tallest of plants. In due course the good tree will bear good fruit. The wheat will spring forth from the bare seed, almost by itself. Of course, the same is true of the tares. They, too, grow almost miraculously. And the bad tree will in time bear bad fruit.

This tells us that we do not have to worry about whether our work will be fruitful. If we keep at it, it will. The important question is, What kind of fruit will we bear? What kind of seed are we planting? What kind of changes will our anti-racism efforts produce in 10, 15 or 30 years?

Knowing that our efforts will have an impact writ large for good or ill motivates us to pray always, seek the wisdom of God, listen to and learn from one another and, indispensably, to be accountable to those sisters and brothers who understand best of all the importance of this work.

If we take courage and press ahead, we will accomplish great things. If we make ourselves truly accountable, then these great things will also be good things. Like the fruitful stewards in Jesus' parable, we will hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, come and be amazed and share God's own joy at what has been accomplished."

Martin Shupack

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