10 Steps to Being an Effective Anti-Racist

At the heart of it the challenge is to consciously commit, get past the natural barriers; act with intent; and continuously learn and build capabilities.

These actions will have different levels of importance for different people.

- For those who have been acting with intention to counter racism for years, you will probably recognize actions you have already taken. Simply review – affirm and find edges in some steps
- For those who have begun acting, either starting small or "jumping in the deep end", most of these steps will offer some opportunities to strengthen your foundation.
- For those on the sidelines, who have not yet committed to action these steps can provide a roadmap to successfully acting and "holding the course."

Overview of the 10 Steps

Commit

1. **Decide to be an Anti-Racist - Commit to Action**

   Ant-Racists act with intent. It's the difference between being an anti-racist and someone on the sidelines that says, "I'm not a racist", but doesn't act.

2. **Create a Personal Vision- Picture of Benefits that Could Be Achieved**

   If we are to commit ourselves and persevere in being active anti-racists, we must add some "vision led" energy to the natural "threat driven" energy that comes with racism. Racism is wrong and that "wrong" energy simply exists. We need to create the "right energy" that can exist if we counter racism. The challenge is to define what that looks like – for individuals, groups, organizations, communities, the nation, etc.

   "A vision is not just a picture of what could be; it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to become something more."
   Rosabeth Moss Kanter

3. **Accept the Challenge of the Journey Required**

Becoming an anti-racist is a journey – it's not an event or project. It's a heroic journey because we must leave our known world (comfort zone) and go forth into the unknown where we will be tested (and grow in the process) and eventually create a new known world for ourselves.

Bust the Barriers

4. **Get Past the 3 Guardians of the Threshold**
   These are the three natural and unavoidable forces that try to turn us back – right at the beginning of the journey. Feeling indicted; being confronted by a great deal of unknown and the possibility of a variety of losses; and the specter of incompetence are each powerful and "gang up" to turn most White people back. There are, however, practical strategies for getting past all three.

5. **Acknowledge the Other Barriers on the Path and Deal with Them**

   Along with the initial 3 Guardians of the Threshold, there is a set of natural barriers that we need to deal with on the path. Fortunately, there are also practical strategies for dealing with these barriers. The key is to acknowledge them and deal with them directly.

"When confronted with a challenge, the committed heart will search for a solution. The undecided heart searches for an escape."
Andy Andrews

6. **Connect with Others – Individuals and Groups/Organizations**

   Connecting with others is a critical, yet underappreciated, capability. Being an anti-racist is not a solo activity. We need to be connected to other individuals or groups. Bringing about the systemic changes required to counter racism also requires collective action, particularly advocacy – and that requires connecting with organizations. Connecting with 2-3 individuals (even one other) is easy. Finding the right fit with an organization(s) is more difficult – like a job search.

Act With Intention

7. **Choose Your First Set of Actions and Envision the Actions You Would Like to Work Up to**

   The key is to get into action – even small, limited action. Starting small is fine. It is the starting that matters. Beginning actions can be individual behaviors, family focused, group or organization focused. or community focused.

These actions may be evident right at the beginning, or they may emerge as we gain experience. You may be able to take them on as you evolve naturally as an anti-racist or you may need to commit to specific knowledge and/or competency building to take them on.

"Your purpose doesn't at all have to be something BIG, either. The value of your impact on others and on the world has nothing to do with its scale. There's a saying I learned while living in Mexico: "Hay gente para todo." This means "there are people for everything", and refers to the fact that in order for our world to function, we need people living and contributing at all kinds of different levels. If we each could find and inhabit the sphere where we're supposed to be, and contribute what we were made to contribute, what a beautiful world it would be!"
Susan Biali, M.D.

8. Add Value in the Advocacy Process

Countering racism involves taking on the bigger more complex systemic issues and that involves the process of advocacy. Most of us don't see ourselves as "Advocates", but we bring a lot of the competencies required for the advocacy process to work (and it is a process). We can bring those competencies to the advocacy process and make a difference. We can also learn as we go and make a bigger difference.

9. Choose the Attributes that Go into Your Profile as an Effective Ally

The key to being an effective ally in countering racism is to consciously and unapologetically bring the competencies and character that we have developed in our lives to the desired group or organization – with genuine and unapologetic humility. We are not the saviors, but we bring capabilities and qualities that can add-value – and we can develop the understanding and skills that are missing to continuously add more value. But we need to know what we are bringing initially.

Continuously Improve

10. Identify the Resources to Support You in Continuously Learning and Developing Competencies

Being an effective anti-racist is a matter of continuously learning and building capabilities. It's a never-ending process – and that's exciting. There are a lot of resources available, particularly online, that can support that development. It starts with you identifying what you want to learn and what you want to be able to do.

Let no one be discouraged by the belief that there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills -- against misery and ignorance, injustice and violence...
Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.

It is from the numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man (or a woman) stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he (or she) sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

Robert Francis Kennedy
Day of Affirmation, University of Capetown