



“But, What Can I Do?”

Combating Racism – Getting in the Game

As white people, effectively confronting racism requires a journey from a known world down a path with a lot of unknowns and challenges. To be successful and “hold the course” we have to (1) let go of old ways, such as beliefs, behaviors and self-image; (2) discover new ways; and (3) deal with being in-between for a long time (“inbetweenity”).

On such a journey developing awareness and becoming educated is “essential, but not sufficient.” That awareness and understanding must be in service of committed sustained action. Those actions will rely on awareness and understanding - but we must avoid the trap of getting stuck in becoming aware and educated.

“Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.”

William James

Act - You do Not Need to Wait

The chart below is designed to help each individual or group choose the initial actions that best fits them. It has a wide variety of actions in categories from family and neighborhood to the political system and national issues. Many of those actions can be taken in parallel with increasing awareness and understanding. You do not need to wait to act.

“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we have led.”

Nelson Mandela

It’s a Different Challenge for Different People

There is no formula or recipe for white people acting to combat racism. Some people are barely keeping their heads above water in general. Some people have resources and energy that they can redeploy to make a difference. Some people are more comfortable dealing with the unknown than others. Some people have knowledge and skills that better

match the challenges than others. Some people have family and friend groups that are more likely to support them than others.

In other words, “getting in the game” is a radically different call to action and challenge for different people. There is no single “right way” to confront racism. Each person needs to find their own path. The key is to act and play a role, even a small role. Small roles matter. Small roles can grow. Staying on the sidelines, however, is supporting racism.

*“A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi
to come back – but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us.
It is up to you.”*

Marian Wright Edelman

Just Start

Choose actions where you feel competent and start immediately. Add actions as you are ready. **Note.** “Being ready” does not mean feeling comfortable. It means being ready to take the risks and take the next steps. Our comfort zones will expand, but we need to keep pushing the edges to make the difference we can make.

The action chart below is not a giant profile of what you “should” be doing to be anti-racist. It is a set of possible actions that you can take. It is designed to make it easier for you to choose the actions that fit you, who you want to be, and your current situation. **These are examples to make it easier to begin. There are many more potential actions and you will find many as you go.**

*“If you can’t fly, then run.
If you can’t run, then walk.
If you can’t walk, then crawl.
But whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.”*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

<p>Areas of Potential Impact</p> <p>Where differences can be made</p>	<p>Possible Actions</p> <p>Many actions can be done on a small or large scale. Small matters.</p>
<p>Self-awareness, awareness of racism, awareness of “others” & relevant competencies</p> <p><i>“The secret of getting ahead is getting started”.</i> Mark Twain</p>	<p><i>Self-awareness, education and developing competencies will be, in most cases, an essential part of making a difference. However, it can happen in parallel with a lot of the possible actions that can be taken.</i></p> <p><i>Some actions will require increased self-awareness, education or development to be effective. Many will not – and those should not be delayed.</i></p> <p>Topics for Learning</p> <p>There are a surprising number of topics – choose 2-3 and start.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. About being white – the white experience. This is deceptively important and mostly overlooked. 2. About racism – history and impact 3. About the Black experience – from daily experience and safety to wealth creation and the overall systemic impact of racism 4. About [privilege and bias 5. About change – leading and following 6. About competencies to develop 7. About myself – my own racism (probably internalized from birth to 3 years of age) 8. About my family, my community, my organizations <p>Ways to Develop</p> <p>There are also a surprising number of ways to learn and develop:</p> <p>Imagine. As you go through your day imagine what it would be like for you to be a black man or woman – doing what you are doing – driving, walking down the street, entering a store or elevator, asking for assistance, walking into a heavily white workplace or school, going to a hospital, entering a courtroom, etc.</p>

Watch. There are videos on racism, black movies (not black exploitation films), plays, courses online, etc.

Listen. There are an increasing number of podcasts, recorded lectures, speeches, etc.

Read. There is a large selection of readings, from books to articles. Find what speaks to you. There are enough comparisons, reviews, and recommendations to make that possible.

Discuss. With individuals or groups -face-to-face and online. Discussions can be with other whites, black people or mixed groups – each with its purpose.

Visit. There are museums, memorials and historical sites that can be visited to provide a different perspective/experience. They address racism, slavery, genocide, the holocaust, etc.

Look at Yourself. Look at your childhood and the ways you might have been socialized – how you might have internalized racism before you were 4-5 years old. Accept that internalized racism, and then determine how you want to consciously act to counter racism now that you are a teen or adult. This is about responsibility now – not blame for childhood.

Develop Skills. Competence matters when trying to make a difference – from interest-based negotiation, effective listening, having difficult conversations, and problem solving to organizing and project management. You don't need to master all the competencies, but there will be some competencies where it will be important to have some competence in order to contribute and feel good about the involvement.

Be Vigilant. Watch for instances of your personal racist thoughts or behavior – or tolerating racism – and remedy them. Remedy them, but don't beat yourself up as they will happen in the process of growth).

Learn from Experience. As you act and gain experience, there will be a lot that can be learned on a lot of topics. The reality is that, whenever we are on a journey of change – individual, group, organizational or community – we “learn the way.” Preparation is important, but learning from the experience can be the make-or-break factor over time.

	<p>Remember. <i>Some actions will require increased self-awareness, education, or competency development to be effective. Many, however, will not – and those should not be delayed.</i></p>
<p>Impact on My Family</p> <p><i>“I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.”</i> Helen Keller</p>	<p><i>It’s OK to not be an expert before engaging your family. Learning together is a good way to go.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Let your family know what you are doing as an individual to confront racism and what the experience is like. 2. Make awareness/education resources and experiences easily available (age appropriate). 3. Don’t let racist statements go unchecked at home. 4. Educate your kids about racism and how to counter it at an early age if possible, but at any age if they are no longer young. 5. Consciously be a role model - “model the way.” 6. Take actions together.
<p>Impact on My Friends and Acquaintances</p> <p><i>“May your choices reflect your hopes and not your fears.”</i> Nelson Mandela</p>	<p><i>As with families, it’s OK to engage friends and acquaintances in countering racism while in the process of becoming more educated and competent. Acting and learning together is almost always a good thing to do.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Let them know what you are doing as an individual and what the experience is like. 2. Don’t let racist statements go unchecked in friend groups. 3. Share resources and opportunities for action. 4. Ask for support where you need it – and offer support. 5. As a member of a group, encourage the group to act in a thoughtful way. 6. Take specific actions together with friends.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Talk with friends and acquaintances about the experience and “learn the way” together. 8. Use your social media platforms to share your thoughts/beliefs, experiences, possible ways of acting, stories of successful actions, etc.
<p style="text-align: center;">Impact at School</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Do your little bit of good where you are. It’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”</i> Desmond Tutu</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>This can vary dramatically from school to school - and depending on your role.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support black teachers and administrators. 2. Ensure black students don’t get closed out of opportunities – from specific schools to specific programs. 3. Find out how slavery, the Civil War, Jim Crow, etc. are being taught in your local schools – and offer appropriate resources where possible. 4. Contribute to Black students’ college funds. 5. Support Black colleges and universities. 6. Don’t let racist statements go unchecked at school or among parents, faculty, or students outside of school. 7. Volunteer at school – from mentoring or tutoring to fund raising and assisting in small ways. 8. Donate needed supplies. 9. Assess whether layoffs or furloughs impact Black workers disproportionately. 10. Ensure recruiting channels do not penalize black recruits.
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>This can vary widely from workplace to workplace – and</i></p>

Impact at Work

*“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”
Alice Walker*

depending on your role.

1. Confront situations at work when a person of color is not included in a meeting/distribution, not listened to, or not taken seriously.
2. Acknowledge the contributions of Black colleagues (yes, that actually needs to be said).
3. Use your connections to connect people, influence policies, develop systems and processes, ensure inclusion, etc.
4. Provide support specifically to Black employees during times of crisis or major transition.
5. Ensure that managers know how to support Black colleagues.
6. Foster inclusive spaces for Black employees.
7. Implement clear mechanisms for responding to and resolving discrimination against Black workers.
8. Set recruitment targets and align processes to address any discrepancies for Black employees.
9. Ensure appropriate development opportunities and paths and appropriate performance management processes.
10. Conduct an analysis to confirm that you are paying Black employees equally.
11. Participate fully in DEI initiatives.

Impact on My Clubs and Organizations

*“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”
Many Authors.*

Clubs and organizations come in many forms, many of which can be surprisingly exclusive, often in small, but high impact, ways.

1. Recruit Black members (in sufficient numbers to not be isolated)
2. Determine how to make the club or organization welcoming.
3. Change any symbols, policies or language that is racist.

	<p>4. Affiliate/partner with comparable black organizations.</p>
<p>Impact in My Immediate Neighborhood</p> <p><i>“Let your lives speak.” Quaker principle</i></p>	<p><i>There will be some overlap with the “community” section.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Don’t participate in and accept zoning that is “snob zoning. “ 2. Don’t let racist statements go unchecked. 3. Volunteer in your neighborhood - bring your professional expertise to bear in large or small ways. 4. Donate to neighborhood organizations or projects, particularly those supporting communities of color. 5. Find ways to support families – from transportation to childcare – on your own or through formal or informal groups. 6. Welcome new black neighbors – or connect with black families you have not yet gotten to know. 7. Watch for the sneaky thoughts like, “Does that person belong here? Are they a threat?” 8. Patronize black businesses/professionals. 9. Patronize businesses that clearly support anti-racist action and model it in their operations. 10. Don’t buy from companies that exploit people or advertise on racist platforms.
	<p><i>There will be overlap with the “neighborhood” section. This is a larger scale.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Don’t participate in and accept zoning that is “snob zoning “

**Impact on My
Community
(town/city/state)**

*"We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee."
Marian Wright Edelman*

2. Advocate for policies, funding and programs that confront racism or support black communities. And challenge/protest those that don't.
3. Organize a group (formal or informal) to meet a community need.
4. Let elected officials know you exist and what you support or object to.
5. Don't let racist statements go unchecked.
6. Use your connections.
7. Support initiatives strengthening predominately black neighborhoods – safety, public transportation, stores and businesses, education, green spaces, schools, etc.
8. Donate to families who have had a member killed.
9. Join or donate to a group fighting for equitable treatment in the justice system – police – courts – jails – post-release.
10. Bring your professional expertise to bear – from paid to volunteer.
11. Find ways to support families – from transportation to childcare – on your own or through formal or informal groups.
12. Join community groups addressing racism or healthy communities.
13. Patronize black businesses/professionals.
14. Patronize businesses that clearly support anti-racist action and model it in their operations.
15. Don't buy from companies that exploit people or advertise on racist platforms.

There is a wide array of types of action here.

Impact on the Political System

*"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing."
Albert Einstein*

1. Send letters/emails to local, state, and national representatives, and attend their town meetings
2. Demand racial impact studies for major legislation, policies, etc.
3. Join groups addressing racism in the political system(s) and follow their recommended actions.
4. Work to get qualified black politicians nominated and elected.
5. Donate to groups with a focus on the political system, particularly fighting for voting participation and against voter suppression.
6. Use your connections.
7. Confront voter suppression – call it out, challenge representatives and media, mobilize groups (neighborhoods, faith communities, organizations/companies...).
8. Drive others to register to vote or to vote or help with mail-in voting.
9. Vote – and bring someone with you.
10. Canvas and campaign.

Impact on Systems/National Level

*"The key to realizing a dream is to focus not on success, but on significance and then even the little victories on your path will take on greater meaning."
Oprah Winfrey*

This is a complex challenge. Some actions can be individual, some need to be done with others or as part of a group or organization.

1. Join and/or donate to groups addressing systemic racism on a national scale.
2. Challenge any bias in national or professional organizations of which you are a part.
3. Challenge bias in journalism and the media.
4. Use your network to find resources, connect people and organizations, etc.

5. Bring your professional expertise to bear.

Remember

#1 Awareness and education are essential – but not sufficient. To be an anti-racist we must act with intention – and persevere to sustain our actions. We can start small, but we need to start. We will “learn the way.”



#2 There is a lot to learn, but we bring a lot of competencies, experience, and personal and professional qualities developed over a lifetime. So, we can bring a combination of confidence and humility to the challenge – and look forward to growing and making a difference as we meet the challenge.



#3 We will often be outside our comfort zones, but that’s where the difference gets made and the growth happens. “Discomfort” is different than “damage” and we can tolerate a good deal of discomfort, particularly if we are connected to others for support.

