



part four

ON BECOMING AN ALLY

chapter one

DA VITA D. MCCALLISTER

I traveled to Ferguson, Missouri twice in 2014. The first time was at the end of August, just as the protests in the city were beginning to gain national attention. I had learned of the work of a UCC pastor in Florissant, Missouri and I traveled along with a colleague from our Racial Justice Ministry. I serve the Connecticut Conference of the UCC and we were well acquainted with suddenly being caught in the “Gaze” of the nation.

Just two years earlier the nation had shifted its “gaze” to the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting.¹⁵ Forever linking this bedroom community to a horrific act of violence perpetrated against the most vulnerable among us. As a Conference staff we had learned some hard lessons on the importance of caring for clergy most directly impacted and those in geographic proximity. We knew how difficult it was to recalibrate after the perception you hold of your community is re-shaped on the evening news. I, along with my colleague, traveled to Ferguson to offer what little we knew to the Conference staff and to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Missouri.

We met with Conference staff and the staff convened leaders from across the Conference who either had a history of work in Racial Justice or had been involved on the ground in Ferguson. But several of the leaders who were responding to the work on the frontlines did not attend. Others who gathered around the table called our presence into question: “Why had we really come?” “What was the UCC trying to do?” “Why hadn’t we come sooner or brought resources?” I was perplexed, defensive and sad. Our intention was to walk in Covenant with another Conference, but that had not been an established practice. We didn’t know anything about the nature or the relationships within the Conference or the needs of those most directly affected.

We traveled around the city trying to get a sense of the community, drove to the place where Michael Brown’s body lay in the street for over four hours. We noticed the proximity of the windows to the street in the Canfield Apartments and wondered aloud who had peered out of their bedrooms and discovered a body in the street. We feared they were children home during the summer break, who would be traumatized by the image of an uncovered bloodied body. Would they have nightmares? Would they be

¹⁵ The **Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting** occurred on December 14, 2012, in [Newtown, Connecticut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newtown,_Connecticut), when 20-year-old Adam Lanza fatally shot 20 children aged between 6 and 7 years old, as well as six adult staff members. Prior to driving to the school, Lanza shot and killed his mother at their Newtown home. As first responders arrived at the scene, Lanza committed [suicide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide) by shooting himself in the head. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandy_Hook_Elementary_School_shooting

able to un-see that horror? Would they return to the street to play or spend the remaining days of their summer-break in their homes riddled with fear?

On Sunday morning we traveled to worship, visiting two of our sister churches. The second church was Christ The King, pastored by the Rev. Traci Blackmon. Her ministry on the frontlines had been noticed by members of the small community in the Canfield Apartments.¹⁶ She had earned their trust and gained their respect through her humility and direct action. She had placed her body in harm's way, she located alternative housing for those forced from their homes by tear gas that drenched their clothes and polluted their furnishings.

On this August Sunday morning she read cards and letters sent from congregations across the country. Pictures drawn by Sunday School classes were displayed for the congregation to see. An intern had been sent from Old South Church in Massachusetts with the gift of Peace Cranes. These cranes had traveled the country going from church to church at the site of unmitigated violence. The Rev. Nancy Taylor, Senior Pastor of Old South Church, sent a note along with the cranes and the intern to Christ The King.

Rev. Blackmon read the note in its entirety to the congregation. Rev. Taylor's words rang out through the sanctuary; she linked the Boston Marathon Bombing with the death of Michael Brown. She drew a connecting line between both events as acts of terror and pointed to the insidious nature of the terror that Rev. Blackmon and members of her church faced. Rev. Taylor's church had been

surrounded with care and the nation grieved the loss of life that happened just outside their doors, but the nation was NOT grieving this loss.

In that moment it became clear who the Ally was in this story. I had rushed in and assumed that I knew what was needed. I had retreated to defense when my motives were questioned. Rev. Taylor wrote a powerful letter expressing her sadness and disappointment, she sent a visible sign of her sorrow and named the systemic racism as an echo of the voices from the streets of Ferguson.

*In my attempt to be an Ally
I had assumed the Voice of
the people and presumed
that I knew the need.*

In her sermon, Rev. Blackmon reminded the assembled congregation that "there are NO voiceless people, only those who do not have an audience." In my attempt to be an Ally I had assumed the Voice of the people and presumed that I knew the need. Rev. Blackmon reminded me of the role of an Ally: to use my resources to increase the audience of those often unheard and silenced by racism. When I returned home I did just that, sharing the stories that I had heard and asking Rev. Blackmon what she needed most. I was clumsy in my request and made many more mistakes, but with each mistake I learned something not to do. I vowed to make new mistakes and I continued to press forward.

¹⁶ The Canfield Apartments were the site of the shooting of Michael Brown.

My second visit to Ferguson was much different. I watched with the nation in rapt attention as the announcement was read: “There was no true bill” from the grand jury for Officer Darren Wilson. He would not be charged in the death of Michael Brown. Many had suspected for days that the announcement would come during the Thanksgiving holiday. It is the busiest travel holiday in the year and this would likely reduce the size of the nightly protest. Community members, parents, children, young adults, interested citizens and organizers flooded the streets at night to protest the policing in the Ferguson community. They marched in the sun, the rain and they were prepared to march in the snow. I sat with my partner and discussed our plans for Thanksgiving; we were scheduled to visit my sister’s home. After prayerful deliberation I returned to Ferguson.

This time I did not meet with the Conference staff, nor did I convene any meetings. I went to the street at night and I marched. Each night a young adult would address a crowd huddled around them and whisper the next location or action. The communication was word of mouth and no phones were allowed in the circle. After several protests I began to recognize faces in the crowd. I wore my cleric collar and was invited to pray one evening. As I stood on the street where Michael’s blood had pooled and stained the ground, I was shoulder to shoulder with those most impacted. I was there to go where they asked and to do what they requested. I was one additional body to speak truth to power.

My oldest daughter learned of my trip and asked if she could come as well. I instructed her to find

transportation and promised to house and feed her. She came with several friends in tow. Together we stood beside our brothers and sisters and we followed their lead. We lay in the street to disrupt traffic, sang aloud in the mall that “Black Lives Matter” and watched shoppers join our rallying cry. We learned later that the cost to the economy on Black Friday was significant. It was large enough to change the tone and discourse of the city leaders to the protestors on the front line.

When I returned home, my partner and I gathered our children and our nieces and nephews. I shared my experience with them and talked about the young people who had led me in Missouri. We visited websites and we talked about policing in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport, Connecticut. At the end of the conversation we told them of our new commitment. The movement leaders asked for supporters to extend the boycott of Black Friday through the month of December. We created a small red card and placed it inside of our Christmas cards sent to family and friends annually. The card acknowledged the Joy of the Birth of Jesus and the inability to fully celebrate his birth in light of the death and disregard for black and brown bodies. We invited them to use the resources dedicated to our gifts in support of the movement and explained that we would do the same with our resources. We covenanted to provide financial support to the young adults in our lives and the young adults on the frontlines of the struggle.

There is no neat way to dismantle a system built to dehumanize people. There are no magic words to gain instant credibility and deep trust.

I was learning to be an Ally. I still make mistakes, sometimes speaking when I should be listening, or failing to acknowledge all of the ways that participating in the struggle may manifest. I offer training in Racial Justice, others stand on the frontlines and protest, some work to change problematic policies, others preach to change hearts and minds. What I know of being an Ally and welcoming other Allies is that it is messy work. There is no neat way to dismantle a system built to dehumanize people. There are no magic words to gain instant credibility and deep trust. There is only a willingness to wade into the water, knowing that it has been troubled . . .

Reflection Questions and Discussion Topics

1. *Describe the worst mistake you could make as an Ally. After you describe it imagine how you would overcome it.*
2. *What tools do you have to resist the temptation to become defensive?*
3. *Look up the word “microaggression” and examine your behavior through this lens. Are you guilty of inflicting a papercut on a Person of Color? If so consider that the papercut you inflicted was likely the 1000th papercut on that day and imagine the anger and pain you would feel from so many wounds. Now revisit the tools you have to resist the temptation to become defensive when a Person of Color questions your behavior.*



chapter two

JOHN PADDOCK

For me, this is the most difficult part of this study on white privilege. If you will recall my spiritual autobiography in the first section, I went through much of my adult life thinking that I was a really great ally—all the while being largely unconscious of both my race and the privilege it bestowed upon me. So you can imagine my hesitation to think that I know how to be a helpful ally in combatting white power and privilege and joining the struggle for racial justice.

It's hard to be a good ally when you thought you already were, but then found out that you weren't. One of the effects of privilege is that it can blind us and undermine our best efforts, turning them into a form of paternalism—which is to say, another form of power.

So I start this section with some cautions, some considerations about what not to do.

Tarzan

One of my black acquaintances, in reflecting on white allies, speaks about Tarzan. Many folk of a certain age will remember Tarzan from the movies and television. Tarzan, so the story went, was a white man who grew up in an African jungle and was raised by apes. Tarzan always knew what was best.

He always knew better than everyone else. He knew the jungle better. He knew the animals better. He knew better than the native peoples.

African Americans have suffered deeply and survived in this land. They know what it takes to survive in the American jungle of systemic racism and white privilege. They also know what they need to continue to survive. There's a kind of *Tarzan Syndrome* in many white churches and social service agencies run by whites that presumes to know the processes and needs of their black neighbors better than the neighbors themselves.

So one of the ways to be helpful is simply to pay attention and to listen. Listen to folk who have lived the struggle of being black in America. There is a wealth of literature that reveals what life is like on the other side of the color line: W.E.B. DuBois, Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, and Ta-Nehisi Coates, to name just a few authors.

Perhaps you have black acquaintances or colleagues with whom you can dialogue. There may be organizations to join, public lectures to attend, seminars or university courses to take. But the critical behavior here is to inquire and to listen. Let go of the need to debate and control and to set the agenda. First, listen and learn.

Cherry-Picking Black Leaders/Black Anger

I know a white man who is passionate about improving race relations in his community. He supports all sorts of dialogues between blacks and whites in homes and neighborhoods, among congregations and faith communities, schools and colleges, in businesses and non-profit organizations. Periodically, there will be an incident or a rash of clashes involving racial tension, and this gentleman will call clergy together to try to start another round of dialogues. We all show up because he's a kindly, progressive, respected community grandfather.

We have MLK Day, but no holiday for Malcolm.

In those gatherings, there are always one or more black clergy who are outspoken and overtly angry. A few years ago, I began to notice a pattern developing. At each subsequent meeting, there were a few new black clergy, but the angry voices were not invited back. This admired, grandfatherly community leader was cherry-picking the black clergy—attempting to ordain the ones he would select as leaders and be in relationship with.

Recognize that there are people who aren't going to embrace us easily or ever. The pain caused by centuries of slavery, Jim Crow, systemic racism, and white privilege is deep and formidable.


Choosing which black leaders we whites will work with is another form of control. We are afraid of

angry black men. We liked Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Council) a whole lot more than we did Malcolm X or the Black Panthers. We have MLK Day, but no holiday for Malcolm.

Consider the outrage directed at President Obama when he expressed anger over the arrest of Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Gates was arrested as he was letting himself into his own home in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the summer of 2009. When asked about it at a press conference, Obama said:

I don't know, not having been there and not seeing all the facts, what role race played in that. But I think it's fair to say, number one, any of us would be pretty angry; number two, that the Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home, and, number three, what I think we know separate and apart from this incident is that there's a long history in this country of African Americans and Latinos being stopped by law enforcement disproportionately.

The outcry from law enforcement agencies and others from across the country caused the president to apologize and to invite Gates and his arresting officer to share a beer with him on the White House lawn as a show of peace and calm. Note that Obama's anger was considered inappropriate while the anger of the white voices raised in protest was thought to be justified.



To be effective allies, white folk must give up control of the agenda and selection of which leaders we are willing to work with—shedding the need to control the players and the outcomes. We must steel ourselves to hear the anger and the pain endured over the centuries. I want to close my ears to it. I want to avoid the guilt and the grief I feel. I don't want to experience fear and anxiety. But I finally realize that only white privilege allows me to escape what my black sisters and brothers face every day of their lives.

Deconstructing Integration

Take some time to deconstruct integration. The great hope of many in the Civil Rights movement of the last century was that ending segregated schools, lunch counters, and neighborhoods would be the solution to the racial divide.

The truth is that whites put the race card into play many centuries ago and have never taken it off the table.

In practice, integration was too often a one-way street where whites insisted on blacks adopting white values, behavior, and culture, while whites didn't have to make any moves at all other than welcoming blacks into the white world. This was too often the subtle and unspoken work of white privilege which assumed that standard (normal) white English would be spoken, black hair would be straightened, white fashion would be worn, and so on.

True integration involves being open to the other. In a healthy relationship, your story impacts my story

and vice versa. We embrace and are changed by each other, and what emerges is something new.

Work with Whites

Use this curriculum or join other anti-racism efforts to help fellow whites to understand their power and privilege. Too many of us, unaware of our race and its effects, believe that “race” belongs to someone else. Therefore, when a race problem occurs, it is someone else's problem. Raising consciousness is an excellent way to help whites take ownership of our whiteness and to realize that we are deeply implicated in the structures of racism.

Another caution: bringing up the subject of race can uncover powerful emotions. I learned this early on in trying to do this work. Speaking about prejudice, racism, white power, and privilege may stir up deep wells of denial, guilt, grief, and anger. Do not be judgmental, and try to help others to understand that we are all—black and white—caught up in systemic racism that is much larger than and far beyond individual choices. It is among those “principalities and powers” of which St. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12.

So do not be surprised if powerful emotions are expressed. You may be charged with “playing the race card,” which is another way of charging you with creating racial tension by even bringing the subject up. Don't be put off. The truth is that whites put the race card into play many centuries ago and have never taken it off the table.

Implicit Bias

All people have biases and preferences in almost every aspect of life: sexuality, religion, body weight, gender, etc. Bias can be explicit or implicit. The bias of a KKK member carrying a sign expressing hate is explicit. But an implicit bias in favor of white-sounding names on the part of a human resources officer can have significant impact on employment decisions. These subconscious and unexamined biases can and do turn deadly when they impact split-second decisions by police officers on when to use lethal force.

Significant research has been conducted into the subject of implicit bias. You can learn more about your own implicit biases by taking the Implicit Association Test on race at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>.

Use the following guidelines and questions to reflect on and improve your own capacity to be an ally:

General Behaviors that are Helpful for Allies

- *Listen without making judgments.*
- *Use appropriate language, and if you are uncertain about what is appropriate, then ask.*
- *Speak out when inappropriate language is used or racist ideas are expressed. Do not keep silent. "Silence is the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."*
- *Strive to build relationships with black and brown*

people. Real relationships break down stereotypes and open people to one another.

- *Be willing to be corrected and even criticized without defensiveness and with humility.*
- *Show up without thinking that you have to help (which puts you in a superior position).*

Positive Actions to Consider

- *Volunteer with voter registration and voter turnout in minority communities.*
- *Support the Black Lives Matter movement and other black-led movements and organizations as they may exist or arise in the future.*
- *Support education reforms like free, quality public preschools and extended school days, especially in poor communities. There is a school to prison pipeline. In many states, prison authorities use third grade reading scores to predict the number of jail cells and prisons that will be needed in the future.*
- *Volunteer to tutor and/or assist young elementary students to read.*
- *Study the inequalities in our prisons and work for criminal justice reform.*
- *Join efforts to repeal the 13th Amendment's exception clause. Ostensibly, the 13th Amendment, passed in 1865, banned slavery. But the exception clause still allows it. The amendment reads: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."*

- *Support local efforts at community development through micro-loans and other forms of community investment.*

Reflection Questions and Discussion Topics

1. *What unspoken standards and expectations do you hold about integration? Would you be willing to be changed? What are you unwilling to give up?*
2. *Where do you see the Tarzan Syndrome at work?*
3. *What would you add to the list of helpful behaviors for allies?*
4. *Take the Implicit Bias test and discuss the findings. (No one should be forced to disclose his or her results.) Were you surprised by the results? Do you agree or disagree with them and why?*
5. *Can you think of ways in your community where whites are trying to select black leaders or to impact leadership and agenda in the black community?*
6. *What positive actions exist or might be created for allies in your local church and community?*



chapter three

TRACI BLACKMON

Being An Ally in Anti-Racism Work

1. Learn before you Leap. It is impossible to act in solidarity with those we are not willing to hear. Do not assume you understand another's pain. Do not compare areas where you have experienced discrimination with racism. The manifestations of oppression differ and each must be acknowledged in it's own right. There is no hierarchy (Audre Lorde).
2. Do your own work for your own sake. Understand the cost of privilege, the toll of racism and why the dismantling of racism is necessary for your liberation.
3. Be a Servant, not a Savior. Liberation must be led by those being oppressed. Their pain AND their power must be at the center of the work. (Talk about this.)
4. In anti-racism work, "ally" is a verb, not a noun. It is only relevant when describing one's current act(s) of solidarity. Those you stand with are the sole determinant of whether or not you are their ally.
5. Commit to doing white people's work. This includes establishing allyship (solidarity) with other white folk who are committed to this work. Establish "whiteness accountability cohorts." This is hard work.
6. Continue to show up. Even when you would rather not. Even when your presence is misunderstood. Define your lane and commit to riding in it. Don't over promise and try not to under deliver.
7. Use your privilege to make space for others to tell their own story: not you telling it. Just because you know another's story does not mean ownership has been transferred.
8. Do not appropriate the pain of others. Defer to those being targeted.
9. Read. Watch. Listen.
10. Give yourself space for Grace.

...and remember

When I call out your white privilege.
I am not dismissing your presence in this struggle.
Nor am I questioning your sincerity.

When I call out your white privilege.
I am not accusing you of the evil.
Nor am I separating you from its effects.

When I call out your white privilege.
I am not shrouding you in its shame.
Nor am I excusing you from its responsibility or accountability.

When I call out your white privilege.
I am naming the target that is on your back.
I am acknowledging the ill effect of racism on your being.
I am joining you to the struggle in the only way that leads to liberation.

When I call out your white privilege.
I am acknowledging this privilege as being as unearned, unwarranted and incapacitating as the racist systems and structures that collude to oppress people of color all over this world.

When I call out your white privilege.
I sound the alarm of the danger that lurks in not being fully aware of the toxic waters in which we swim. Waters that make you feel as though you are breathing, so that you never come up for air.

When I call out your white privilege.
It is not because I believe you can remove it alone.
Not because I believe you can choose to use it or refuse it.
If these things were true . . . it would be privilege indeed.

But it is not.
It is a tool of the enemy designed to create an illusion of God divided against God's self. Crafted so that some might assume the idolatrous position of believing somehow that anyone created in the image of God could ever be inherently flawed.

When I call it out.

White Privilege.
It is not because I hate you.
It is not to separate you.
It is to remind you . . . and myself . . . that we are one.

A Message to White Accomplices
Pastor Traci Blackmon



chapter four

JOHN DORHAUER

The White Audit

In this chapter, we will introduce a tool that local churches can use to assess the degree to which they consciously or unconsciously reflect a commitment to White Privilege: a White Audit.

Before we do that, let's take some time to reflect on something very important about this work. When whites commit to working on their privilege, there can exist a subtle, unspoken, yet very powerful assumption about that work which is another manifestation of privilege. The assumption is that by doing this work, whites are engaged in saving, rescuing, or freeing people of color. Whites can begin to see themselves as saviors of a sort.

It is important to identify this tendency, and to come to some new understandings about the work that whites are doing when confronting the manifestation and impact of privilege—and then work to dismantle the systems that distribute that privilege based on skin color.


It is not the role and responsibility of whites to find the pathway to racial equity. Working to identify privilege, and to open one's heart to letting go of it in order to participate in a more racially equitable society is very important work—but it is one step in a

larger system of changes that must come before true equity is possible.

Far more valuable to this work will be hearing from those who have suffered the most and the longest from this ongoing commitment to whiteness as the construct through which wealth has been distributed. White solutions to white privilege are almost always filtered through lenses of experience that don't include what people of color endure every day, and therefore never go far enough to fully dismantle the privilege.

Working on recognizing privilege is the work of white communities. Making firm commitments to participate in dismantling the current system is also the work of white communities. However, imagining what makes for equity, establishing power structures to redistribute wealth and access, assessing the overall impact of those commitments, and determining the extent to which true equity has been established belong to the communities who are now disadvantaged by the current system from which whites benefit.

In this chapter about what it means to be an ally, it is important to recognize that for whites, the work that we are called to is recognizing white privilege and committing in concrete ways to dismantle structures



that ensure we continue to receive it. That is a very important step in being an ally.

It is just as important a step to cede power and authority to disadvantaged communities and leaders as we seek a pathway to racial equity. Even if whites discover the will to participate in creating fully active solutions, whites will never have the requisite life experience to know what living under unfair, unjust, and often oppressive systems does to one's heart, soul, mind, and body. That insight, those experiences—accumulated now over centuries for communities of color—cannot be replicated by the white experience. There are, however, important and active steps that white allies can take to participate in helping to create racial equity.

In this chapter, we will introduce the White Audit.

A White Audit is a tool that any community can develop to help perform an objective assessment of their commitment to white privilege. Although the concept is a relatively simple one to understand and to implement, it is subject to a variety of applications and can be expanded upon in various ways in different settings.


The idea is to count things that matter. Each number that is recorded can give new insight into your community's attachment to certain manifestations of privilege. Even the act of counting, regardless of the data that it produces, is important in and of itself since it engages the community in actively choosing to see something that heretofore would have gone unnoticed.

We start with a simple example of what a white audit looks like. This is something that any church or ministry setting can do regardless of their ethnicity, race, or culture.

Walk through your building and register every picture of Jesus. These could be in the sanctuary, in stained glass, in paintings, in Sunday school books, in library books, in pew Bibles, in the Pastor's office, in the hallway or fellowship hall, etc. Once you have a total number of the pictures of Jesus, count how many within that total number portray him as white.

There are, however, important and active steps that white allies can take to participate in helping to create racial equity.

You have now begun your white audit. The number says something important about your church and its commitment to white privilege. We know that Jesus was not white. That is a fact of history. When your church hangs a picture of a white Jesus, it is saying something—whether you realize it or not. It would be important to reflect with each other what it is you think you are saying when you portray Jesus as white. We do this over and over again in America—portray Jesus as white—but we rarely talk about why we do that. This is an opportunity to explore that. An important question is this: what are we teaching our



children to absorb and assume when they grow up never seeing anything but a white Jesus?

Hanging a picture of a white Jesus is often, for whites, not a conscious act. Whites don't hang a picture and think, "This is a lovely picture of a WHITE Jesus. We can't have our children thinking Jesus is BLACK, BROWN, RED..." It gets hung because the notion that Jesus is white is so ingrained in our culture. What is the cost of establishing Jesus as white to the point that it no longer interrupts our senses to notice that it does not reflect the truth, and then what effect does that have on our emerging consciousness of race during our childhood?

This is, in part, what a white audit can do. It can interrupt established assumptions and create an openness to questions that have too long gone unasked, as well as open up on the other side of those questions new commitments to creating, to participating in, and to establishing racial equity.

Let's continue then with our white audit.

After you count the pictures of Jesus, do the same thing with pictures, paintings, portrayals of God. Unlike Jesus, we have no idea what race or even gender God is—and yet almost every portrayal will show God to be white and male. Find out if that is true in your church, and raise the same questions.


As you are doing that, conduct a separate tally. This time, go through and look at every picture on every wall. Those pictures are all chosen—they tell a

story. When was the last time you asked what story is being told? Now that we are auditing our stories through the lens of race, look at every picture, count how many are white and how many are not, and ask yourself what story is being told about race in your church.

Let's now take the audit in a different direction. Move from the pictures on the walls to the books on the shelves. Conduct two separate audits here: in one, count the books on the pastor's bookshelf; in the other, count the books in the library. The question here is, "Who wrote the books?" How many of the total books in either the pastor's study or the library are written by white authors? Once you have a figure for this, note it. Ask yourself whether or not that figure reveals a hidden commitment to whiteness as a preference. Discuss what difference that makes in shaping a consciousness about race. If, in fact, it does reveal a race bias, talk about what new commitments your church is willing to make to rectify that.

I want to pause here and reflect on something about the pieces of this white audit that we have already mentioned. When talking about white privilege, one thing that white leaders in largely white communities say is that it is hard for them to make significant changes because they live in a largely white community.

Before we move into another arena of data gathering, have your church look at one more aspect of its life. If you do any advertising or marketing, whether in print or on social media, what are you portraying in



your marketing campaign? Are you choosing images that reflect a commitment to racial equity? If not, why not – and what are you willing to do differently? None of what you have been asked to do to this point in the white audit is either dependent on or conditioned by living in a predominantly white community. Photos and books are decisions conditioned by something other than population rates.


For this part of the audit, go through the step of finding out some demographic information about your city, town, zip code, community, or neighborhood. Use those figures as a baseline for interpreting the data in your audit. For the sake of example only, let us assume that you discover that 80% of your community is white; 12% is black; 4% is Hispanic, 2% is Asian/Pacific Island, and 2% is Native American.

Next, go through the current membership list, through the pastor's records, and through any and all historic or archived material your church has that records membership information. Begin to, as best you are able, determine the following (this is not a comprehensive list, and please feel free to add to it):

- What percentage of the current membership is white? How does that compare to the demographics of your area?
- What percentage of baptisms, confirmations, and weddings performed by the pastor are to/for white members?
- What percentage of new member calls or visits are to white families?
- What percentage of pastors called throughout the life of the Church are white?
- What percentage of Council members are white?
- What percentage of past Moderators or Board Presidents are white?
- What percentage of Sunday school teachers are white?

If your church is largely, or perhaps entirely, white, these numbers are going to be very consistent. What will be most revealing in this audit is how that percentage compares to the demographic data in your area. If there is a clear discrepancy between those numbers, begin to ask your community what that says about commitments to racial equity. Go even further, though, and ask what new commitments you can make to racial equity that would effect a different outcome.

The final category of auditing material we ask you to look at has to do with the finances and investments of the church's capital resources. This is where we can talk about making deep impact, depending on the size of your church's budget. Even small churches in either rural or urban communities, though, can have a deep impact both by the decisions they make in spending or investing their money, and in the collective impact of an entire denomination acting in one accord.



Try to make a list of all the vendors you use to either spend or invest the money stewarded by the church. What we are asking about here is how many of the vendors that you use, for whatever reason, are managed or owned by whites? Most white leaders of largely white churches don't ever ask this question—but it is a very important question. To conduct this part of the audit, find out which of the following businesses used by your church are white owned, operated, and managed (you can also try to find out from larger companies, like cell phone contractors or banks, what their own discrimination or hiring practices are):

- Where do you do your banking?
- If you have had any construction or repair work done on the property, find out what you can about the construction firm you hired to do the work; or about the architectural firm; or about any of the subcontractors used.
- Where do you buy your office supplies—things like toner, paper, pens, bulletins, copiers, phones, etc.?
- What catering businesses do you use?
- Whom do you employ to do maintenance or cleaning in the building?
- Whom do you hire to work in your nursery?
- What firm do you use to invest your money?
- Whom do you hire to mow the lawn or do landscaping?

Choosing to use your own money to affect racial equity can have a profound impact. It begins with the discipline of asking questions that often are not asked—which is the point and purpose of this audit.

This is only a beginning. If you choose to act as an ally, please take the time to begin the process of conducting a white audit. Publish the results, and always accompany the information with shared conversation about what the data suggest about commitments to white privilege, and about what your community of faith is willing to do to participate in change that matters.

Reflection Questions and Discussion Topics

1. *With whom do you need to speak, and with whom do you need to partner, to start a white audit in your church?*
2. *Name two or three things that you might discover as evidence of your church's privilege, and suggest a couple of ways to address it.*
3. *Discover at least one minority owned business that you can choose to utilize, and talk to your governing board or Trustees about doing business with them.*



chapter five

STEPHEN G. RAY, JR.

Two Rules for Being an Ally While White

Throughout this curriculum, we have attempted to draw the reader into a multiple-dimension discussion with the aim of understanding and engaging white privilege. The idea was that if we came at this matter from several vantage points, it might illumine in new ways how people of faith and goodwill might make sense of the concept of white privilege. In what follows, I will suggest two “rules” for white people of goodwill which are drawn from my frustrations through the years of sincerely good people becoming likewise frustrated in their attempts to be allies. Too often, these frustrations have led to folks walking away at crucial moments, leaving all disillusioned.

In what follows, I will offer two rules followed by some theological reflection that suggests they are superbly Christian, and thus warrant our attention.


The Ubiquity of Anti-Black Animus

To begin, the struggle against racism is something waged every day of the lives of Black people. The ubiquity of anti-Black animus is due largely to its being daily recycled into the mainstream of our society through radio, cable news, local news, and unmediated media coverage of candidates and political movements who openly espouse racist

diatribes, making anti-Black animus an ever-present reality. (For more information on these factors, see Philomena Essed’s book, *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*, and the following websites: <https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2015/04/09/racial-bias-and-media-coverage-of-violent-crime/> and <http://racist-stereotypes.com/>)

From micro-aggressions to the weekly diet of police brutality visited upon Black people and seen via Facebook and other social media, there is no escape, no final victory—only ways of surviving with dignity and finding joy in the mundane lives of Black people and our communities. It has been my experience that this dimension of the workings of racism—its ubiquitous permanence—is what both discourages and disillusiones those who would be our allies. It is discouraging not just because it is tiring, and disillusioning not simply because of its persistence. It is disillusioning because it requires white allies be disenchanted with the idea of the basic goodness of other white people, at least in regard to their conduct toward Black people. A term that I have come to use to describe this enchantment is “white moral self-regard.”

White moral self-regard is the idea that those white people who not only hold anti-Black views but act



upon them are a minority. In this view, the majority of whites are at worst indifferent to the fortunes of Black people and our communities, with most actually being in favor of policies to help us. While this view is common wisdom, it is also false. In fact, there have been several studies which demonstrate that a majority of white people not only hold anti-Black views, but also act upon them in their everyday lives.

One upshot of this mis-assessment is that it creates a constant struggle for Black people, because this reality inclines white folks to think that we overstate the ubiquity of racism. An example: when a Black person is shot by a policeman, asking what did the person do vs. asking why did the policeman shoot. The first question presumes wrongdoing on the part of the now-deceased; the second presumes that the situation is ambiguous until we know more. How often have you, your friends, or your family asked the first question without thought? What does it mean that the first response is to assume that the Black person committed a crime immediately worthy of lethal response?

This mis-assessment of matters has several consequences, not the least of which is that it contributes to the operation of systems, here legal, which routinely devalue Black life. There is a reason that many prosecutors try to ensure that Blacks are excluded from juries (for example, see the case involving Timothy Foster: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/02/opinion/excluding-blacks-from-juries.html>): not because they can't be objective, but


rather whites are more likely to believe the worst of Black defendants. This distorted view of racial reality might be attributable to the general posture of those privileged by a system believing themselves to be in the best position to describe how it disadvantages others—a clear fallacy.

***Rule 1:** Being a white ally is understanding the ubiquity of anti-Black animus held by a majority of white people, and therefore being inclined to believe Black people about the presence of racism in everyday life.*

The World in Which We Live: Created By Racism

Beyond the recognition of the ubiquity of anti-Black animus is the further realization that the material, psychic, and emotional world in which we live was created by this bias. I use the word “created” here quite intentionally. Put another way, most white people live in a physical world in which Black people are largely absent because of the operation of this animus. There are vast swaths of the nation which, by virtue of the racial cleansings of much of “middle America” during the first half of the 20th century and the red-lining of the rest during the last half, provide scant opportunities for generative relations and contact between white communities and any appreciable number of Black people and families.

The upshot of this is that local anti-racist activism will likely be sporadic and on behalf of instead of with Black people. This may seem a small difference, but it is actually not. Many of the most harmful



aspects of public policy that affect Black communities result from legislation enacted by local and national legislators who have little or no Black presence in their districts. Here, I want to draw attention to the sort of legislation that is not simply about selfishness, but more about punishing those who are deemed non-contributors to the commonweal—a position inhabited, in the imagination of many, disproportionately by Black people.

What sort of white person will you be?

Being clear about this geography brings to our attention another dimension of the ubiquity of racism: namely, a logic attendant to survival in this landscape. Here, I mean to point to the reality that white privilege creates a self-reinforcing loop in which it re-inscribes itself on each successive generation. It does this by distributing the best of every social good to white communities. Social goods are educational facilities and resources, newer and better-maintained housing stock, policing interpreted as public service, best environmental impact, and so on. This distribution creates a logic because the simple human impulse to want to provide the “best” for our families means that white people choose neighborhoods with the best schools and services they can afford—which generally means white areas. Given the ways that Black people have been excluded from these spaces, our absence is a part of their logic.

Perhaps the most difficult realization for white allies is that your likely implication in the system, because of decisions you have made and decisions that have been made for you, is inescapable. The first dimension of this inescapable implication is the reality that you do not choose to be white—it is imputed to you. Because of the way your body presents itself to the world, you are deemed white and accorded all that comes with that, most of which are privileges and perks denied to Blacks.

As we have shown throughout this curriculum, these privileges are social, economic, legal, and in every case existential. The important thing to note here is that it is a matter of social assessment and not personal choice. What is possible is to choose how you will inhabit this socially imputed status. What sort of white person will you be? Of which logics of whiteness will you avail yourself and your family? What privileges will you exercise and on whose behalf? In your sphere of effective agency, how will you exercise your gifts, talents, and powers to moderate to provisionally undermine the forces of white supremacy which are bringing immediate harm to Black persons and communities?

Rule 2. *Being a white ally is not denying the power and privilege that your whiteness brings you, but rather asking how you can use it in the struggles to ameliorate the effects of white supremacy on Black persons and communities.*

A Theological Resource for Allies

The preceding has been an explanation of being a white ally through an Augustinian theological interpretation of reality. Specifically, whiteness was interpreted as one of the enduring features of existence in our time and in our society; it is a part of the inescapable ecology of a racialized world. It may well be that at some point in human history, this will not be the case, but for now whiteness endures.

Use that privilege to the Glory of God by exercising it on behalf of our neighbors disadvantaged by it. Get up tomorrow morning and do the same thing. That is being an ally.

More than simply having a presence, whiteness works in ways that bring harm to Black people. Most significantly, its operation does not involve the consent of those privileged by its operation. Rather, it seduces people into simply living by its logic and thereby becoming existentially implicated in its materialization. To those acquainted with the Western tradition of theology, it should be clear I am identifying whiteness with something like original sin, at least in its operation. Often disparaged, yet rarely proven wrong—the genius of Augustine’s notion is that it gives us a theological way to understand, and therefore respond to, systems which

implicate us in sin without our consent and which seduce us with its comforts.

The response is simple. Accept its ubiquity. Become aware of the privilege it gives us. Use that privilege to the Glory of God by exercising it on behalf of our neighbors disadvantaged by it. Get up tomorrow morning and do the same thing. That is being an ally.

Reflection Questions and Discussion Topics

1. *For whites in the group, share a story about a time when you found it hard to believe or accept a claim by a person of color that they were being discriminated against.*
2. *Talk about what it means to have privilege, and name two or three ways that you can utilize that privilege as an ally. Have someone in the group write down each of the commitments discussed. If you are able to, report back to the group at a later time and reflect on the outcomes you experienced when engaging as an ally in this way.*
3. *Go to www.ucc.org/privilege and add your commitments to the ones posted by others across the country who have promised to become an ally.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF USEFUL RESOURCES

What follows is a list of the top ten most useful or favorite resources of each of the five authors for this curriculum. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but to give you a way to re-engage the subject beyond the use of this curriculum.

Traci Blackmon

Feagin, Joe R. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2013.

Lipsitz, George. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, Revised and Expanded edition, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

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Books:

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2012. Legal scholar Alexander argues that we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it. Jim Crow and legal racial segregation has been replaced by mass incarceration as a system of social control (More African Americans are under correctional control today... than were enslaved in 1850). She offers an acute analysis of the effect of this mass incarceration upon former inmates who will be discriminated against, legally, for the rest of their lives.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi, *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015. Winner of a National Book Award for Non-fiction. In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

- Cone, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. New York: Orbis Books, 2011.
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- DuBois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Penguin Press, 1996. The book was first published a century ago in 1903. It lays out the problem of the color line. It is a classic! In it, DuBois describes the experience of being black in America. It also provides very good history of Jim Crow.
- Irving, Debby, *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*. Cambridge, Mass., 2014. Irving tells her often cring-worthy story with such openness that readers will turn every page rooting for her—and ultimately for all of us. For 25 years, Debby Irving sensed inexplicable racial tensions in her personal and professional relationships. As a colleague and neighbor, she worried about offending people she dearly wanted to befriend. As an arts administrator. She didn't understand why her diversity efforts lacked traction. As a teacher, she found her best efforts to reach out to students and families of color left her wondering what was missing. Then, in 2009, one “aha!” moment launched an adventure of discovery and insight that drastically shifted her worldview and upended her life plan.
- Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. New York: Touchstone, 1995. This volume reads like a novel, exposing one lie after another that continue to be promoted in the most commonly used American history textbooks. Loewen makes it clear that America was built upon slavery, genocide, and racism. By not properly understanding our past, Loewen demonstrates how we are ill prepared to comprehend and deal with the world of today and tomorrow.
- West, Cornel, editor, *The Radical King*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2014. Martin Luther King, Jr. has been sanitized and domesticated by the dominant culture. The radical and revolutionary King is recovered and revealed in his own letters, sermons, speeches, and articles as introduced and organized by West.

Videos:

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North. Production information is at <http://www.tracesofthetrade.org>. Producer/Director Katrina Browne tells the story of her forefathers, the DeWolf's, the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. Given the myth that the South is solely responsible for slavery, viewers will be surprised to learn that Browne's ancestors were Northerners. The film follows Browne and nine fellow family members on a remarkable journey which brings them face-to-face with the history and legacy of New England's hidden enterprise.

The film follows ten DeWolf descendants (ages 32-71, ranging from sisters to seventh cousins) as they retrace the steps of the Triangle Trade, visiting the DeWolf hometown of Bristol, Rhode Island, slave forts on the coast of Ghana, and the ruins of a family plantation in Cuba. Back home, the family confronts the thorny topic of what to do now. In the context of growing calls for reparations for slavery, family members struggle with the question of how to think about and contribute to “repair.” Meanwhile, Browne and her family come closer to the core: their love/hate relationship with their own Yankee culture and privileges; the healing and transformation needed not only “out there,” but inside themselves.

White Like Me: Race, Racism & Privilege in America featuring Tim Wise: Media Education Foundation, Northampton, MA. Tim Wise explores race and racism in the U.S. through the lens of whiteness and white privilege. In a stunning reassessment of the American ideal of meritocracy and claims that we've entered a post-racial society, Wise offers a fascinating look back at the race-based white entitlement programs that built the American middle class, and argues that our failure as a society to come to terms with this legacy of white privilege continues to perpetuate racial inequality and race driven political resentments today.

Web Resource:

We all have implicit biases (largely unconscious or sub-conscious) on a wide range of topics and issues. One important resource for understanding our own implicit biases is the Harvard University web-based Implicit Attitudes Test on race. If you follow the link below, then you will be taken to a "Preliminary Information" page. Click on the "I wish to proceed" button. Then select the "Race IAT" button and take the test (10-15 minutes). At the end you can print out your result.

Researchers have discovered that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black. This includes many blacks, which just proves how systemic is the racism that pervades our society and messaging to such an extent that it implicates us all.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

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Traci Blackmon

The Rev. Traci D. Blackmon is Acting Executive Minister of the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries. She is also the first female pastor of the 156-year-old Christ The King United Church of Christ in Ferguson, MO. She became nationally recognized as a prominent voice for social change when Michael Brown was shot in Ferguson, just miles from her church. She immediately worked to help organize the Black Lives Matter movement, effectively assisting and collaborating with people in the community working for justice.

John Dorhauer

The Rev. John C. Dorhauer is the ninth General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. He has also served as the Conference Minister of the UCC's Southwest Conference, as Associate Conference Minister in the Missouri Mid-South Conference, and as a local church pastor in churches in rural Missouri. He earned his M.Div. from Eden Theological Seminary and D.Min. from United Theological Seminary, where he studied white privilege and its effects on the church. He is passionate about justice. Two statements that shape his theology are: "God is love. God is just."

Da Vita D. McCallister

The Rev. Da Vita D. McCallister is Associate Conference Minister for Leadership and Vitality in the UCC's Connecticut Conference. She is a mother, ordained minister, entrepreneur, philanthropist, writer and advocate for youth and young adults. She has shared her love, passion, and wisdom in youth and young adult ministries for over 25 years, in a number of settings including the Fund for Theological Education, the National Setting of the United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church. McCallister teaches and speaks nationally about the church's role in racial justice work, faith based civil disobedience, and faithful responses in the face of injustice.

John Paddock

The Rev. John Paddock is Rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Dayton, OH. He earned his M.Div. from The Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia, and D.Min. from United Theological Seminary in Dayton. Paddock has two consuming passions. The first is to seek ways to reframe Christianity in ways that speak to contemporary people. This entails being open to new knowledge and discoveries in every area of human endeavor. And it requires openness to God's Spirit as she leads us into God's future. His second passion is to reach out to the poor, the disenfranchised, the weak, and the victims of the powers that be: racism, empire, sexism, homophobia, and all other forms of discrimination and injustice.

Stephen G. Ray, Jr.

The Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray is the Neal F. and Ila A. Fisher Professor of Systematic Theology at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL. Previously, he was associate professor of African-American studies and director of the Urban Theological Institute at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia; associate professor of theology and philosophy at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary; and lecturer at Yale Divinity School and Hartford Seminary. He is an ordained UCC minister and has served as pastor of churches in Hartford and New Haven, CT, and in Louisville, KY. Ray earned his PhD from Yale University and M.Div. from Yale Divinity School. He is the author of two books: *A Struggle from the Start: The Black Community of Hartford, 1639-1960* and *Do No Harm: Social Sin and Christian Responsibility*. He is co-author of a third book: *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

As you and your group work with this curriculum, you are invited and encouraged to participate in the online *WHITE PRIVILEGE: LET'S TALK USERS DISCUSSION* forum www.ucc.org/privilege.

The forum is a place where we invite you to share your experiences and reflections, ideas and insights generated as you use the curriculum.

The forum is a place where we invite you to:

- 1) Share your experiences of using the curriculum with others;
- 2) Commit to being an ally in the struggle for racial equity, and share in this forum how you are living out this commitment.