



## **Ending Racism Q&A**

Answers by Verdell Taylor

### **Religion is often very personal. How would you encourage churches to diversify and successfully recruit?**

I agree, religion tends to be very personal. I believe that the church leadership must agree to diversify and actively recruit new members. The church must first establish reasons, as to why they want to have a diverse membership. Is it because it's "the right thing to do"? A committee should be formed to work out details. Let love for all people be your goal.

### **As a white person, I want to change my unconsciously racist language. Based on your experiences, what are some examples of words that should be avoided?**

There are many words that white people should avoid, far too many to list. Avoid the obvious "racial slurs", also avoid terms such as "those people", "you people" & "thug". Avoid using derogatory statements about POC (People of Color). NEVER use the N word, even if you hear in music.

### **How do I get comfortable with having conversations about race?**

Know who you are, be comfortable with yourself. Have your first conversations about race with family members or friends that love you. Be honest, sincere and come from your heart.

### **How can I stand up against racism if I feel like I'm not qualified to have these conversations?**

The only qualification you need to have a courageous conversation about race is to be open, honest, and sincere and decide to stand up against racism because it's wrong.

**Racism is a complicated issue. I'm only one person – how can I make a difference?**

As only ONE person, YES, you can absolutely make a difference. Begin by standing up for a marginalized person, become their mentor. Do not participate in listening to or repeating racist jokes. Practice anti-racist behaviors.

**How can we address racism as a community?**

Encouraging ongoing Town Hall type meetings and focus groups. Doing presentations on racism to social and civic clubs. Consider partnering opportunities with racially diverse groups.

**What do we tell our kids?**

Always be truthful with our children and help them navigate the various racial situations they encounter on a daily basis. Study about racism together and begin practicing anti-racist behaviors.

**Could religious organizations join together for getting acquainted activities?**

Yes, religious organizations could and should get together and participate in getting acquainted activities but it can't be for one time only. There should be an action plan addressing "next steps" to end racism in our community.

**Long time question- Change from within or without of the system. If I follow point #7 and quit a company that is not diverse, I can no longer insist for diversity in leadership (point #8) or create objective selection processes in that organization (point 6). Can you help me think through how to balance that- insisting on change from within an organization vs. leaving dysfunctional organizations? Which is the right choice when?**

Leaving an organization is a life changing event. If it's truly a dysfunctional organization maybe it's best to leave, however, that's a personal choice. If there's hope in being able to turn the organization around, you can be more effective working from within. Establish a diversity council or committee. By working within, you should be able to get help from Human Resources.

**How can we work to ensure our workplace is a place that is safe and healthy for people of color/marginalized groups as we work to diversify our workplace?**

It would be extremely helpful to have an active diversity council. Affinity groups can also be helpful in knowing what people of color and other marginalized people want and need to feel safe and healthy in the work place.

**This is the best presentation that I have attended on this extremely important subject. As a member of a smaller community in Douglas County that does not have a very diverse population, which civic group or organization should lead this conversation to have the most impact? The city officials? The school district? What are your thoughts?**

It should be a consortium of individuals from LMH Health, City Commission, County Commission, USD 497, University of Kansas and Faith Groups. There's major work already being done within many of these groups.

**How do I help other people be comfortable with telling me when I may say something hurtful or a micro aggression that I am not even aware of?**

Be open and honest with these individuals, letting them know that you are sincere and want their feedback. A trust relationship must be established. If you are the boss, this could be challenging, so have a heart and show love.

**Are there local organizations you would recommend white folks join to help us work to be the change?**

The Lawrence Branch of the NAACP is open to all people and have very active committees. There are also several Faith groups, like Lawrence Ecumenical Fellowship Inc.

**Is the purpose of racism to promote conflict so that the status quo will be maintained?**

Unfortunately, causing conflict could be a byproduct of racism to maintain the status quo. Remember that race is a social construct to divide people.

**For white people who are just getting started in this thought process, what reading would you suggest that they start with?**

I often suggest reading "White Fragility" by Robin Diangelo. This is a good thorough read. There are many others. Do a search and see what appeals to you.