

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

UNITED AGAINST RACISM:
CHURCHES FOR CHANGE

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
UNIT 1: AWAKEN	9
Session 1: Cultivating Brave Space	11
Session 2: Exploring Historical Realities in America	17
UNIT 2: CONFRONT	25
Session 3: What Is Justice? Whose Justice?	27
Session 4: Justice Has a Price	35
UNIT 3: TRANSFORM	41
Session 5: Adapt, Change, or Transform: Spiritual Practices to End Racism	43
Session 6: Next Steps in Action and Practice	49
<i>Additional Resources</i>	55
<i>Appendix A: Covenant Making</i>	57
<i>Appendix B: Sample Footprints</i>	59
<i>Appendix C: Body Prayer</i>	61
<i>Appendix D: Icebreakers and Closing Ideas</i>	63

INTRODUCTION*

This facilitator’s guide for *United Against Racism* grows out of a profound awareness that embedded deep within the Christian faith tradition is a call to justice as a precursor to unity. Where there is no justice, there can be no authentic unity. It may seem trite, but it is a fact: if you take away “unity” from “community,” we are left with nothing. Our ability and willingness to unite is a marker of the beloved community to which our faith calls us. Today in the United States, unity is a wistful hope—especially when it seems that justice seems further and further from reality. Even as we prepared this document, eleven people in a Pittsburgh synagogue were gunned down with an automatic rifle because of anti-Semitic thinking. Countless black and brown bodies continue to fall because of fear, hate, and ignorance, and our nation’s leadership is preoccupied with building a wall and creating barriers to keep people out.

What you are about to engage in through this guide is very difficult mind, body, emotional, and spiritual work. If it seems easy to you, then perhaps you need to lean in and dig deeper. This work will involve seeing things from different perspectives and in new ways. It will involve looking inward and being able to name your own places of power and privilege. It will involve looking at events happening around the world and not only naming them as racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and so on but taking the time to analyze the systems that are in place that allow such things to happen. Yes, this work will take all you are and all you will be—it is an ongoing and lifelong process that we must all commit to in order to effect the kind of change that leads to the liberation of all people.

Despite our best intentions, there will be failures and pain, and there will need to be apologies made and forgiveness granted at the appropriate time. The road to doing this work is bumpy and broken, but we are called

* It is important to note that this guide was created with all communities in mind but particularly communities of power and privilege, both known or unrecognized, that struggle with issues of racism. Depending on where your community enters this conversation, you may want to adjust the format, sequence, and/or delivery of the content.

by our faith to traverse it together. We must start by acknowledging that we will never know enough, we will never do enough, and we will never arrive. And yet it is the process of doing this work that can bring transformation: personal, communal, and systemic. Transformation requires challenging what we think we know—which is profoundly an act of bravery. It requires benevolence—having compassion for one another, hearing one another generously, and welcoming challenge in partnership with accountability. This requires allowing the transformation to continue to take place, not stopping because of discouragement at not having arrived; it requires proclaiming boldly that this work is worth risking comfort, privilege, and pride. At every turn, we will need to be brave and make the boldest claim we can about the truth that transforms us; we must be willing to say and do the most we can.

We, the authors of this study, are on the journey with you, and we believe in you and in the power of God to transform! In the midst of all that seems wrong, this work is profoundly an act of hope. We pray you are able to live into that hope!

Rev. Dr. Lynne Caldwell	Rev. Dr. Joseph Crockett
Rev. Dr. Lakisha Lockhart	Rev. Dr. Denise Janssen

Preparing Yourself before You Enter

Congratulations, you have made a great decision to engage and unite against racism. With this decision comes great responsibility and intentional work. In order to effectively facilitate this conversation, you will want to be sure to do your own personal inventory and assessment of where you are in this process.

Purpose

This guide is designed for use in conjunction with *United Against Racism*. The intent of the project is described in the introduction:

The Church of Jesus Christ aspires and strives to be an inclusive, beloved community. For this to be achieved, Christians must become agents of love, safety, and openness toward the “other” as much as people are instinctively loving, trusting, and open to those with whom they share likes, dislikes, and other

characteristics. Authentic Christianity is personal *and* it's relational. Authentic Christianity requires the loving inclusion of all God's creation. An inclusive, beloved community is a community free from racism. *United Against Racism* is a call to an authentic Christianity, a religion that strives to become God's inclusive, beloved community. It summons Christians to pray, think, and act to end racism.

This resource is developed to support leaders of small groups, congregations, and communities that desire to end the scourge of racism and to work toward becoming agents of God's beloved community. In the unit on "What Is the Church to Do?" (*United Against Racism*), Jim Wallis suggests three important steps:

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1. to have "focused, honest, serious, and disciplined conversations on race between white people and people of color" and to believe each other's experiences;
 2. to change the "geography" of racial segregation by one's own choices in where you live and whom you befriend;
 3. to have "a new conversation about race" in our daily lives, such as in schools, sports, and churches.
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Directed toward practicing authentic Christianity to become an inclusive, beloved community, these are just the "first" steps. We are confident, however, that if these steps are taken sincerely, horizons of other possibilities will unfold.

Continue Assessments

1. Do some research on the complex historical reality of racism and the role that power, privilege, and prejudice play in our society. This is particularly important if you are not a person of color. A good place to start is <https://blackpast.org>. Keep in mind that this website does not cover everything—there are much deeper intricacies to the historical racial realities in the United States—but the website does give a brief and concise place to start.
2. Reflect on the Jim Wallis quote above and consider his points honestly.

3. Consider how your own experiences with race and racism inform your perspectives. Why do you believe what you believe about race?
4. As a facilitator, how might this reality and your social location affect the group you will be facilitating?
5. Each session in this guide concludes with a “footprint” activity. You are encouraged to work through these activities as part of your preparation to lead these sessions. In what ways do you hope to grow as you lead this study? What are your learning goals?
6. Commit to training for Awaken, Confront, and Transform Now (ACT Now) to earn a facilitator certificate.

Writers' Assumptions

None of us ever recognizes all the assumptions we carry and act on as we go about the tasks of everyday life. Becoming aware of our assumptions is a requirement for learning and intentional change and growth. As authors of this guide, here are a few of our assumptions in the development of this resource. We invite you to reflect on these assumptions and then to develop a list of assumptions for yourself. You may want to invite your learning group to join you in making your list as you prepare to engage with the ideas in *United Against Racism*. Here's where we started:

- Everyday experiences that are suppressed or seem unimportant or irrelevant—subjugated knowledge—are a central part of the content we hope participants will uncover, investigate, and discuss.
- Words, signs, symbols, and codes influence our feelings, thoughts, and actions.
- All participants possess memories, experiences, and relationships that can become instrumental tools for change and transformation.
- Power and privilege are no longer exercised by physical force only. Tradition, rules and policies, cultural practices, a majority bloc, and money and media are channels for exerting power and privilege.
- Teachers, facilitators, and other leaders have some degree of hidden or revealed power by the sheer nature of the position. Awareness can help group leaders discern when and when not to use it.

- Investigating our experiences, assumptions, values, and relationships “under a microscope” is a necessary form of critical thinking for dismantling racism, sexism, and other *-isms* that cause harm to the human community. When faced with ideas that challenge your assumptions or paradigms, get curious and seek to deconstruct and understand.
- For change and growth to happen, action and reflection must be wedded regardless of which comes first. Praxis is the art of wedding these two; it is the heart of this work.

Now it's your turn to review and critique our assumptions and make a list for your own growth and transformation.

Methodology

This work requires a reciprocal relationship with action and reflection. We think to inform our actions. We reflect on our actions to carry forward those activities that align with our deepest values and to correct the behaviors, activities, and actions that cause harm. All action should be done only after critical consciousness-building reflection has taken place. Reflection and action—praxis—must go hand in hand in order for this work to become transformative.

Brave Space

It is important to note that doing this work will require cultivating brave space. This is not to be confused with safe space, as safe space cannot be guaranteed, nor should it be offered to those doing this work. This work requires courageous risk taking to be open, vulnerable, messy, and honest and to hold each other accountable. This work requires brave space.

Covenant Making

Covenant making is an activity we encourage you to use to set boundaries and establish ground rules for participation and engagement in group life. Most everyone shares the desire to be respected, heard, and appreciated. When group members commit to having their words, actions, and behaviors guided by a shared set of practices, living out those commitments fosters trust. We encourage you to use the “Practices

of Circle of Trust” in appendix A from the Center for Courage and Trust as a starting point for setting standards by which members will share together in the life and activities of the study. We invite you to expand the covenant or write your own covenant practices as time and the willingness of group members permit.

Overall Learning Goals of the Study

Learning goals are an essential part of any study. Without a clear idea of where we are going, the path can be obscure and murky. Several learning goals guided the creation of this study:

1. To empower participants to have intentional conversations about race and take courageous actions as a result
2. To equip participants to learn to live with the understanding that this work to deconstruct racism is never finished or complete but is an ongoing, lifelong process that requires daily intentionality and interrogation of habits and motives
3. To challenge participants to Awaken, Confront, Transform Now (ACT Now)
4. To encourage participants to create their own learning goals individually and as a group as they discover areas for growth and transformation

Format of the Study

There are a total of three units with two sessions within each unit. It is suggested that each session last for one hour and thirty minutes. This can and should be modified to meet the needs and the entry point of your community or group.

We understand that your congregation may have existing time configurations (e.g., one-hour Sunday school classes, half-day retreats, etc.) that may tempt you to shorten the sessions. However, form and structure matter in doing this critical work. Giving each session the full suggested amount of time and focus is critical, as are engaging and being fully present for the entire time. Resist the temptation to cut out parts of the study to make it fit into six weeks of one-hour sessions.

Additionally, this is body, heart, and soul work that requires opening wounds that will need the proper time and space to be expressed so that

participants are not left vulnerable, hurting and bleeding with no hope for future healing. This is why the Enter Bravely and Exit Boldly portions **are not optional**, while the Engage Benevolently portion is more flexible. Please give full time and attention to the Enter Bravely and Exit Boldly activities.

A Word about the Session Structure

Good teaching/learning sessions have a beginning (to “hook” participants and connect their personal experience to the topic), a middle (where the content is explored in a variety of hands-on ways), and a closing or sending (where participants do something or are sent out to do something with this new learning to cement it with practice). We have done this with our Enter Bravely, Engage Benevolently, and Exit Boldly sections.

Enter Bravely empowers all participants to enter courageously, ready to be vulnerable and take a risk while also holding each other accountable to do the hard work that *United Against Racism* requires.

Engage Benevolently encourages all participants to have goodwill and constructive intentions as they join in the conversations and activities of *United Against Racism*.

Exit Boldly compels participants to know, be, and do courageously in the real world as a result of the challenging work of the session.

Other Suggested Options for Using This Study

- one weekend retreat (Friday–Sunday)
- three weekends of three-hour sessions
- three-hour session once a month for three months
- biweekly for two months

Structure of Each Session

- Unit Title**
- Session Title**
- Learning Goals**
- Facilitator Prep**
- Items Needed**
- Enter Bravely** (core, nonoptional activities in varied sequences)
 - Beginning/connecting activities

- Engage Benevolently**
 - Do and Be/Become activities
 - Think and Talk activities
 - Other optional activities
- Exit Boldly** (core, nonoptional activities)
 - Footprint
 - Assignment
 - Body prayer (see appendix C)

UNIT 1

AWAKEN

This unit focuses on creating a brave space in order to begin raising awareness and critical consciousness of the historical and biblical realities of racism, privilege, misunderstanding, and the traumas that have resulted and need to be mourned.