

From White Racist to White Anti-Racist: the life-long journey

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<p style="text-align: center;">I'M NORMAL also known as the innocence/ ignorance stage</p>	<p>In this stage, we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not see ourselves as white • assume racial differences are unimportant • are naive about the connection of power to race and racism or oppression (we do not have a power analysis) • do not have much experience with people of color • believe people of color want to assimilate • see all issues of race as individual
<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT ARE YOU? also known as first contact</p>	<p>In this stage, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have our first contacts with people of color • notice they are not like us (happens as early as the age of 3) • work to make sense of the difference, particularly if we associate the difference with additional information about unfairness or discrimination • begin to notice our own prejudices, or those of our family • continue to see issues of race as individual and still have not developed a power analysis
<p style="text-align: center;">BE LIKE ME also known as: 'we're all the same, you're the problem'</p>	<p>In this stage, we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • want to be seen as an individual • begin to sense white privilege with little or no awareness yet of power • believe we can 'flatten out' differences • believe in importance of 'fairness' • feel apologetic, guilty, or fearful towards people of color • see racism as a problem between individuals • either over-identify with people of color or think people of color should 'just get over it' • can see the differences as 'exotic' or 'erotic' • don't see ourselves as part of the problem
<p style="text-align: center;">DENIAL and DEFENSIVENESS also known as 'I am not the problem'</p>	<p>In this stage, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are forced to see ourselves as part of the dominant group • blame people of color for creating their problems • deny any privilege or power we have as members of the white group • believe people of color aren't trying hard enough • look for evidence of reverse discrimination • insist the playing field is level • believe in the power of individual above all

<p>GUILT, SHAME, and BLAME also known as: 'white is not right, I'm bad'</p>	<p>In this stage, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • really feel and think that racism is a very big problem and that we are part of that problem • understand at some level that we are racist • feel guilt and shame, often deeply • blame people of color for racism as a way of avoiding our guilt and shame • either feel extremely responsible for racism (sometimes taking it on as our primary issue) or deny any responsibility at all for racism (I am not racist)
<p>OPENING UP/ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT also known as: 'Houston, we've got a problem'</p>	<p>In this stage, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see racism as illogical • relate to people of color who are like us • are often frustrated by separation (by caucusing, for example) • feel apologetic for our privileges • have a general understanding that racism is a problem without a strong analysis of the ways in which it is personal, institutional, and cultural • see racism as a result of flaws in the system (as opposed to understanding that the system is founded on racism) • can over-identify with people of color • are enthusiastic about 'celebrating' diversity, without understanding the power dynamics of racism
<p>TAKING RESPONSIBILITY/SELF- RIGHTEOUSNESS also known as: 'white can do right, especially me'</p>	<p>At this stage, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see ourselves as part of the white group • understand and begin to take responsibility for our power and privilege as part of the white group • are comfortable with separation • continue to have feelings of guilt, anger, frustration, but also of joy because of deepening relationships and increased multicultural experience • distinguish between commitment and perfection • see challenges as teachers • participate in individual and collective action • value self-reflection • use our racist thoughts and behaviors to deepen understanding and change thoughts and behaviors • think of ourselves as separate from and 'better' than most other white people • feel our commitment to anti-racist work very deeply, leading to self-righteousness

<p style="text-align: center;">COLLECTIVE ACTION</p>	<p>In this stage, we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate in individual and collective action to address racism on the personal, institutional, and cultural levels • work to make strategic changes in organizations/communities consistent with anti-racist analysis and vision • are thoughtful about building alliances with people of color and white anti-racist activists • seek structural change to address institutional racism • work collectively with other white anti-racist allies and people of color • claim our identity as a white person in a racist society • admit that this work requires learning from mistakes and are more forgiving of our mistakes and those of others
<p style="text-align: center;">COMMUNITY of LOVE and RESISTANCE</p>	<p>In this stage, we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persist in the struggle in the hope and realization of an increasingly multiracial and multicultural existence” that are all still seeking to completely achieve • are living and working in strong anti-racist organizations and communities, with all the complexities and challenges such a vision brings • are consistently organizing and building a community that has the power to heal the remnants of racism, internalized racist oppression, and internalized white supremacy • are constructing organizations and communities that can help us think critically and develop an analysis and understanding of the community, country, and world • are constructing organizations and communities with cultures which balance the needs of the individual with those of the community and which sustain life.