



Combating Racism – Getting in the Game

“But, what can I do?”

“But what can I do?” is an extraordinarily important question. It can be a question that leads to committed action and it can be a question that leads to inaction. For it to lead to committed action we have to get past the natural barriers that exist in countering racism, particularly:

- Feeling indicted as a White person
- Concerns about potential losses (most of them ill defined, but lurking)
- Fears of being incompetent – being ineffective or making things worse
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If we deal with those natural barriers, then the “what can I do?” question leads to a wide range of possible actions that can make a difference. However, if we don’t face those barriers the “what can I do?” question leads to paralysis and essentially an excuse for not acting.

You do Not Need to Wait - Act

The chart below is designed to help each individual or group answer the “what can I do?” question in a way 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

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 deploy or 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 – Act

Choose an action or two 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.

“Getting in the Game”

How I Can Act

Act Where?

Your actions may have an impact in a number of areas - from education, police/justice and neighborhoods to the workplace, wealth creation and politics (and more). Because of the

number of potential actions, it can be helpful to focus on one or more of these areas of impact. Your actions may also simply be focused on areas where the greatest opportunity for impact exists.

Focus on Your “Worlds”

We are all members of various worlds and our actions can influence any of them – family, friends and acquaintances, neighborhoods, communities (local, national or international), organizations and corporations,, etc. We can collaborate, donate, role model, educate, protest and/or advocate, connect, etc. If you are in position of authority, you may be able to create policy (HR, financial. etc.), set directions, instill values, commit resources, etc.

“Thou shalt not be a victim. Thou shalt not be a perpetrator.

Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.”

Holocaust Museum, Washington, D.C.

Act How?

Actions can range from educating and developing self-awareness and self-management to protesting/challenging, advocating, donating, volunteering, collaborating, coaching/mentoring, teaching, setting policy, etc. There are lots of places to act and lots of ways to act to make a difference – large or small.

Connections. You have connections to others – individuals, family, groups, organizations and networks. Those connections may be face-to-face, digital, etc. They may be connections to funding, political influence, individuals or groups of influence within specific organizations or communities. They may be connections to journalists, individuals or groups with information or data, or specific groups in a community, such as police or faith communities. Whether they are powerful or not so powerful, they are still connections and can still be used.

Money. Money matters because it makes things happen. You can’t fund everything, so make a plan about where you want your money to go. Do some research to ensure that

your money will be likely to result in desired outcomes. You can donate individually or recruit others to donate with you.

You can also patronize black businesses and businesses that are operating in anti-racist ways or making genuine efforts to get there. And you can avoid businesses that are not actively anti-racist or that advertise on racist platforms. That can include how you invest as well as being a customer or client.

Time and Energy – Volunteering. You have professional and personal capabilities. Volunteering where your capabilities match need can be a major contribution. There is an extraordinary range of capabilities that can make a difference - from fundraising and senior administrative or clerical support, to childcare, transportation, and getting out the vote. There is a broad range of need and a broad range of capabilities. Finding the fit is the key and that may take some effort.

Make sure to leave “I’m just a volunteer” at the door. Bring the same commitment and professionalism that you would for a highly paid position. And, if the organization doesn’t take volunteers seriously, challenge them or move on.

Time and Energy – Being Present – Being Counted. This is very straight forward. Make your presence matter. Vote (and bring others with you). Advocate for people, policies, communities, desired organizational reforms etc. Protest when advocacy doesn’t work or in synch with advocacy. Write, march, campaign, use social media, etc.

Confronting Instances of Racist Behavior. We all encounter instances of racist behavior – whether it is conscious or not. It can happen on the street, in stores, in schools and organizations, etc. The dual challenge is to (a) be aware of instances of racist behavior (see them) and (b) confront them when they happen.

*“The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high,
and we miss it, but that it is too low, and we reach it.”*

Michaelangelo

Committing to Individual Action

There is a common statement that, “Countering racism will require systemic change and individual action is not enough.” That statement is both true and deceptive. It is true that systemic change is required to counter racism. And any single individual’s actions will not be enough. The deceptive part is that individual action is also required because:

1. Systemic change is totally dependent on focused individual action by a critical mass of individuals
2. Changes in individual behavior and actions focused on families, neighborhoods, schools, and organizations make a difference and create the ground in which systemic change can take root.

Some of these actions are solo actions, such as confronting racist behaviors, contributing financially, or educating family members. Many will be done in collaboration with others, such as changes in policies and laws or influencing corporate behavior. Even the collective actions require individual commitments to action.

In other words, our actions, whether focused on systemic change or not, matter – so we must act where we can.

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

William James

The Action Chart

The following chart provides examples of actions that can be taken starting with awareness and impact on family and increasing in scope up to impact on organizations and communities.

It also has a column where you can identify the actions that you want to take in whatever area(s). There are a surprising number of opportunities to make a difference, so the challenge is really to make a choice about where to start. You can always add or change actions as you gain experience.

There are lots of ways to think about choices:

- You can choose an action in each area, from awareness to national policies

- You can choose one area in which to focus, from individual to national in scope
- You can choose a topic on which to focus, such as closing the racial wealth gap or the criminal justice system
- You can choose to focus on supporting and working with an organization whose mission you are passionate about
- You can scan the possible actions and commit to those that fit your interests and competencies

Wherever you start - the key is to simply start. Choose and act. Learn from the experience and keep deciding what to keep doing, start doing and stop doing. Countering racism is a tough complex journey and we all learn the way.

The other key to success is act with others. That may mean acting in collaboration with others on a project, it might mean being a member of a group or organization, or it might mean being connected to a few people that support each other in this challenge. We bring our best, are able to persevere, and have the best experience when connected with others.

*“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>Actions I Will Take</p> <p>My commitments to making a difference</p>
<p><i>Self-awareness, awareness of racism, awareness of</i></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</i></p>	<p>Self-Awareness & Education/Development Actions</p> <p>1 -</p>

<p>“others” & relevant competencies</p> <p><i>“The secret of getting ahead is getting started.”</i> Mark Twain</p>	<p><i>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 impact of racism 4. About change – leading and following 5. About competencies to develop 6. About myself – my own racism (probably internalized from birth to 3 years of age) 7. 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 for a black man or woman to be you – doing what you are</p>	<p>2 –</p> <p>3 –</p>
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	<p>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> <p>Watch. There are videos on racism, black movies (not black exploitation films), courses online, etc.</p> <p>Listen. There are an increasing number of podcasts, recorded lectures, speeches, etc.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Discuss. This is best done with others – individuals, groups, face-to-face and online. Discussions can be with other whites, black people or mixed groups – each with its purpose.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Look at Yourself. Look at your childhood and the ways you might have been socialized – might have internalized racism before you were 4-5 years old. Accept that internalized racism, and then</p>	
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	<p>determine how you want to consciously act to counter racism now that you are a teen or adult.</p> <p>Develop Skills. Competence matters when trying to make a difference – from interest-based negotiation, effective listening, 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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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 key but learning from the experience can be the make-or-break factor over time.</p> <p>Remember <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>	
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<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 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 – and role model anti-racism 5. Consciously “model the way” 6. Take actions together 	<p>Actions Focused on My Family</p> <p>1 –</p> <p>2 –</p> <p>3 –</p>
<p>Impact on My Friends and Acquaintances</p> <p><i>“May your choices reflect your hopes and not your fears.”</i></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>	<p>Actions Focused on My Friends & Acquaintances</p> <p>1 –</p> <p>2 –</p>

<p><i>Nelson Mandela</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 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, possible ways of acting, stories of successful actions, etc. 	<p>3 –</p>
<p><i>Impact at School</i></p> <p><i>“Do your little bit of good where you are. It's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”</i></p>	<p><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 	<p>Actions at School</p> <p>1 –</p> <p>2 –</p>

<p><i>Desmond Tutu</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 your Black workers disproportionately. 10. Ensure recruiting channels do not penalize black recruits 	<p>3 –</p>

Impact at Work	<i>This can vary widely from workplace to workplace – and depending on your role</i>	Actions at Work
<p><i>“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”</i> <i>Alice Walker</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Conduct an assessment of your current workforce demographics. 9. Set recruitment targets to address any discrepancies for Black employees. 	

	10. Conduct an analysis to confirm that you are paying Black employees equally.	
<p><i>Impact on My Clubs and Organizations</i></p> <p><i>“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”</i> Many Authors.</p>	<p><i>Clubs and organizations come in many forms, many of which can be surprisingly exclusive, often in small, but high impact, ways</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 4. Affiliate/partner with comparable black organizations 	<p>Actions in My Clubs or Organizations</p>
<p><i>Impact in My Immediate Neighborhood</i></p> <p><i>“Let your lives speak.”</i> Quaker principle</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 	<p>Actions in My Immediate Neighborhood</p> <p>1 -</p> <p>2 -</p> <p>3 -</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Volunteer in your neighborhood - bring your professional expertise to bear in large or small ways 4. Donate to neighborhood organizations or projects 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 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 11. Join a “white space” to talk about racism and how to take anti-racist actions with other whites 	

<p>Impact on My Community (town/city/state)</p> <p><i>“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.”</i> Marian Wright Edelman</p>	<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 “ 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 	<p>Actions in My Community</p> <p>1 –</p> <p>2 –</p> <p>3 –</p>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Bring your professional expertise to bear 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 16. Join a "white space" to talk about racism and how to take anti-racist actions with other whites 	
<p>Impact on the Political System</p> <p><i>"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of</i></p>	<p><i>There is a wide array of types of action here.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Send letters/emails to local, state, national representatives, attend their town meetings 	<p>Actions Focused on the Political System</p> <p>1 –</p> <p>2 –</p> <p>3 –</p>

<p><i>those who look on and do nothing.”</i> <i>Albert Einstein</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	
<p><i>Impact on Systems/National Level</i></p>	<p><i>This is a complex challenge. Some actions can be individual, some need to be done</i></p>	<p>Actions Focused on the National Level</p>

<p><i>“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.”</i> <i>Oprah Winfrey</i></p>	<p><i>with others or as part of a group or organization.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>1 –</p> <p>2 –</p> <p>3 –</p>
<p><i>“Let no one be discouraged by the belief that there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills -- against misery and ignorance, injustice and violence... Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.</i></p> <p><i>It is from the numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man (or a woman) stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he (or she) sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”</i></p> <p><i>Robert Francis Kennedy, speech at Day of Affirmation, University of Capetown, South Africa</i></p>		