

Diversity Dinner #2 - Saturday 10/12/19

Comments

- Approximately 35 people present
- Pitch-In - STA provided the entree
- Tim Nation - Facilitator
- Mixture of Small & Large Group Discussion

Discussion Question #1

1. What is the traditional definition of racism? What is a more current definition of racism? How does the traditional definition of racism stifle improved racial relations?
 - Old definition was “individual acts of meanness, that puts others at a disadvantage”, usually perpetrated by someone who was uneducated and from the South.
 - The old definition was more narrow, personal; easy to say “not my problem”, so that white people didn’t feel any urgency to do anything about it.
 - The new definition goes broader; it’s not just personal acts, but also systemic acts that all white people are a part of.
 - The newer definition encompasses us all.
 - By 2050, 49% of the US population will be white; 51% will be people of color - this scares some Americans; feel that they are losing power.
 - A false dichotomy - African American will point out racist acts; the typical white response is “I can’t believe you called me a racist (meaning “I’m not an uneducated person from the South”) or “I didn’t mean to”
 - The new approach for an aware white response is “Thanks for pointing this out to me. Our society makes us form unconscious racist thoughts. How can I work on my erroneous thinking?”

Discussion Question #2

2. Both articles address the benefits of White Privilege. In “How I Benefit from White Privilege”, thirty-three benefits are listed. In “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”, twenty-six benefits are listed. Share any personal experiences you have had with White Privilege.
 - Many participants shared personal stories.
 - Memories were shared of how African Americans were not allowed to eat at the L. S. Ayres tearoom.

- African Americans were not allowed to try on clothes at the L. Strauss Department Store.
- Often African American feel that they have to represent the entire race; feel isolated; feel that they must do better than others in every venture they are involved in; all of these things are a daily burden.
- There was a comment that “White Advantage” may be a better term to use than “White Privilege”.

Discussion Question #3

3. The “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” article states that “... work(ing) from a base of unacknowledged privilege, I understood that much (of their) oppressiveness was unconscious ...” Discuss.
 - When one starts to look at American society through the lens of an African American, it becomes easier to see the White Privilege systems that are in place.
 - It is hard to start the process of looking at things from a different point of view, but once you start, you become bombarded with the inequity of many things in our society.
 - Some examples inequity are skewed history textbooks that fail to tell the truth about land acquisition in the early US; incarceration rates for African American men; statistics of mothers of color who die from childbirth; infant mortality for people of color; banking and property inequities; the fact that African Americans could not take advantage of the GI bill; inequity of availability of public swimming pools (which caused many Blacks to drown, having to use creeks or rivers to swim).

Discussion Question #4

4. How does the belief in meritocracy contribute to ongoing racism?
 - The overall feeling that “I made it because I deserve it”; this does not take into account innate white privilege in the US.
 - The belief that “If a large number of a population is in prison, they must deserve it; they are a criminal group”.
 - Often meritocracy is not about merit, but who you know and blood lines.
 - Eleanor Roosevelt was instrumental in integrating the military (1947). The military was based on meritocracy that truly worked.
 - Embracing the idea of meritocracy does not allow deeper reflections on racism. It keeps one stuck in old thinking.

Discussion Question #5

5. What are the dangers of not addressing White Privilege? What are the benefits of addressing White Privilege?
 - Learning about White Privilege is not a reason for white people to beat themselves up about being white. It serves more of a purpose by becoming aware of what whites have available to them, compared to people of color. If it is not examined, it fails to recognize an invisible systems that confers dominance over a group.
 - Once you become aware of White Privilege, one's eyes are open, and world views change. It becomes easier to spot the benefits that come with it. One starts to appreciate why it matters, and to begin to figure out what can be done.
 - Steel against the blame and shame that is connected with thoughts of White Privilege; this keeps people divided, instead of working together to find solutions to inequity.
 - Use White Privilege to do something good with it. Ex. Help an African American in need; look for solutions in your everyday world.
 - If White Privilege is not addressed, there will be a continuation of unearned racial advantage and conferred dominance.
 - Training in White Privilege helps us see ourselves as oppressors, given unfair advantages, and participation in a damaged culture.
 - Addressing White Privilege results in a more just society.

Participants were left with this message:

5 Ways to Grow into a Anti-Racist Champion for Justice:

1. Pray - for insight into race relations.
2. Face the concept of White Privilege - by giving up the myth of meritocracy.
3. Examination of Conscience - Reflect how White Privilege has impacted my life.
4. Become a Student - Do a self-study. Read, listen to speakers, discuss with others as I journey.
5. Pray - for strength and wisdom in understanding God's will in helping me develop skills as an anti-racist.