

Anti-Racism Hacks – Mark Anderson

Before I get into my hacks, there are a couple of assumptions I am making as I enter into this conversation today. Many of my comments are specifically directed at my white siblings who are listening and wanting to find ways to dismantle racism. So to this end, here are a few assumptions. If you don't agree with these assumptions, that's okay, but I would invite you to dig deeper in your learning.

- First: As a white person, you understand that you, we, hold privilege by the very nature of our skin color;
- Second: Racism exists – individually and corporately; the civil rights movement did not end racism in the United States. Racism is institutional and systemic in nature and is prevalent throughout the U.S. and Canada. The Church, also, is not exempt from being a racist institution. My organization that I lead, the National Benevolent Association is not exempt from being a racist institution. And your congregations and ministries are not exempt from being a racist institution.
- And my final assumption: This is hard work, but it is nowhere near the challenges POC have had to navigate in their everyday lives for decades. I believe that if true change is to occur, we, as White People, have to engage in this work deeply. Our siblings of color did not create racism, and it is not their job to solve it. It is our work to do together. I believe you can do this, that we as the Church, can do this. We must be vigilant and deal with our own White Fragility as the conversations get tough and it is too often the case where we, as White People, get to choose to walk away. If you need to take a pause, by all means do so, and at the same time realize our siblings of color never get to take a pause to rest in this White Supremacy Culture. But I encourage you to fight that urge to give up, and to go deeper in this work.

HACKS

- **Be Responsible for Your Own Work** – We, white people, need to stop relying on people of color to do the work for us. By expecting people of color to lead every conversation, every study, about racism, we have once again placed the responsibility of ending racism on the very people who did not create racism and the systems that uphold White Supremacy Culture. So what does “Doing Our Own Work” look like? Read books by experts in the field, watch incredible documentaries, listen to informative podcasts, and engage in hard conversations with other white people on what you are learning. Ensure that the information you are consuming is not white-centered, but truly is reflective of dismantling racism. And yes by all means invite trained people of color to help facilitate deeper conversations, but not for free. Pay people of color for their time and willingness to step into spaces that are all too often not safe. So be responsible for your own anti-racism work, it is not the “job” of people of color to do it for you.
- **Debunk White Exceptionalism** – the belief that I am exempt and I don't need to do anti-racism work. “I'm one of the good white people.” This attitude is rampant in the church; Come to terms that white people, and especially white Christians are not exempt from doing this work for the rest of our lives.

- **Move from Charity to Justice** – The Church, you all, are doing incredible work to care for God’s people in your communities. I can attest to this as the NBA witnesses every day the various health and social service ministries responding to the call to care for people who are disenfranchised, shut out, and living on the margins – food pantries, visiting people in prison, health clinics, feeding and community garden programs. And yet, there is more to do. What are you or your ministry doing to get at the root causes of why your outreach exists? Fighting to change legislation, engaging in advocacy on local, state, provinces/territories and national levels is crucial to bring about justice. In the work of Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker she references a Justice Buffet. She talks about this very notion of moving us from just doing charity, but to actually engage in the messy work of justice. This engagement is anti-racism work. So, I encourage you to not just do the Mercy work, that is oftentimes seen as pitying people in poverty and people of color, but to add to your ministry justice work, of actually changing the systems that create injustice towards people in poverty and people of color.
- **Follow People of Color** - Where in your life are you following POC as they lead? I have to confess, as I was thinking about this, I never had a person of color as a supervisor or as pastor. Many white folks, and people of color can, unfortunately, say the same thing. So, how do we go about changing the fact that we are only following white people? It is important for us to find avenues that allow the amplification of POC voices, even if their focus isn’t on anti-racism work. My Board of Trustees, who I report to at NBA, is diverse with a number of the Chairs during my tenure being POC. We also need to check our privileged space so POC can be heard. A couple of possibilities is engaging in protests against police violence oftentimes resulting in the death of black and brown people – most of these actions are led by black and queer people. Support POC lead organizations – either health and social service ministries and/or advocacy and activism entities. Search out these organizations and support them with your time and money, and then truly follow and engage in their work.
- **Eliminate White Silence** – Our silence can be deafening to our siblings of color. Have you heard the phrase - “White Silence is Violence”? We must speak up and call people out when we witness racism. And sometimes we have to call people IN when they are being silent and possibly in positions of power and not doing anything to change systemic racism. And, we must speak from our pulpits about the sin of racism and what we are going to do to dismantle the White Supremacy Culture.
- **Anti-racism Work is not Perfectionism**, it is the intention to commit to ongoing learning – keep showing up, learning, and keep doing what is necessary so POC can live with dignity and equality – (Me and White Supremacy) I’m going to get things wrong on a daily basis, but it is my job as a White Person to keep showing up and doing the work.
- **Commit to Anti-Racism Work** - Make a conscious commitment that you and your ministry will engage in this lifelong work of anti-racism. This isn’t a one-time training, that we get to check the box on being anti-racist, and say “Check!” Remember earlier when I said this is going to be hard work? This is where the rubber meets the road. We have to hit this at the individual, congregational and institutional levels. And then also, how do you plan to hold yourselves accountable to these commitments?