

Notes on Antiracist Actions

RACIAL EQUITY

Take small steps, but take them now

There are many ways to combat systemic racism. This is my advice.

By STEVEN BELTON

Two months have passed since George Floyd's final eight minutes and 46 seconds and white people still are asking me, and others who serve and lead Black organizations, "How can we help?" "What should we do?"

Like no other event in recent memory, the killing of George Floyd has ripped curtains of indifference and bashed barriers of otherness in this community and across the country. Young and old, Black and white, urban and rural, gay and straight — all who watched the video were leveled and equalized by our collective horror and outrage.

There has been no shortage of advice from Black folk to white folk on how to invest their resources and leverage this seminal moment. The advice tends to follow one of two streams: 1) Go big, meaning partner with an individual or organization that promises to disrupt systems and catalyze transformative change; or 2) go slow — that is, recognize that white supremacy and systemic racism were nurtured and built over centuries and will require strategic and sustained measures to dismantle. Figure out what part of dismantling racism you and your organization are good at doing, then do it.

Both strategies have appeal. The former offers delegation of the heavy lifting to an intermediary. The latter buys time. But sustainable systems change will happen only when the people who control, perpetuate and benefit from the systems engage and commit to personal change.

Fifty years ago, poet and singer Gil Scott-Herron sang, "The Revolution will not be televised." It also will not be fought by remote.

Instead of go big or go slow, I would offer a different and complementary guidance:

Go small; start now.

The single, most powerful unit of capacity for transformation and good is yourself. Start there. Social system change begins with personal disruption. And the good thing is, you don't have to wait for a consultant or committee to propose metrics, recommend a strategy and allocate resources. You can start small, with yourself. And you can start now.

Here are five steps guaranteed to catalyze your capacity to lead and serve the work of dismantling racism. They are not easy steps, but they are essential and minimal requirements for personal transformation.

First, select a Black neighborhood as your primary destination for personal commerce, including groceries, pharmacy, hair care and personal grooming, hardware, etc. Forgo your favorite mall, internet peddler and local eatery. Instead, shop where Black folk shop.

Second, choose to worship at an African American church, mosque or other spiritual center and give your tithes and offerings there. If you are

not a person who worships, recognize that the Black church is oxygen for African American life. Scholar James H. Cone said, "religion has been that one place where you have an imagination that no one can control." Volunteer at a Black worship center. Ask to clean windows, drive a bus or teach a class.

You will stop seeing Black people as "them" and Black communities as "there." Instead, you will see people you know.

Third, join the board of a Black-led and -missioned nonprofit in the Twin Cities where Blacks are the majority on the board. Find a cause that aligns with your skills or interests and get involved.

Fourth, direct your personal philanthropy to Black led and missioned organizations. Support organizations and leaders you personally know and those recommended by your Black friends.

Fifth, develop personal friendships with African Americans who reside in a Black community. Not mentorship, but a relationship based on mutual respect and interests and the expectation of mutual learning and benefit.

This five-step challenge is not for everyone, but it can be. It promises to disrupt routine, waive privilege and dislodge comfort. The benefits will not be quickly realized, and no dashboard will guide and mark progress or achievement. The natural reflex will be to eschew personal change in favor of systems change from a distance. It is easier to write a check and wait for change.

But for those who are up to the challenge, the dividends will be substantial. Soon, and very soon, you will stop seeing Black people as "them" and Black communities as "there." Instead you will see people you know, places you shop and experiences you have shared. When you read or hear about a celebration or success, a part of you will share in it. When you hear about crime or violence, you will experience concern for your friends, wonder how and if they were involved, and perhaps call them.

More important, you will be able to stop outsourcing judgment about Black people to media, intermediaries and subordinates because you can rely on your personal experience and relationships. And, when the next atrocious assault on a Black life happens, you won't have to ask how to help. You already will be helping.

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Mapping Prejudice

We are a team of geographers, historians, digital humanists and community activists seeking to expose structural racism. We have led community members in the work of unearthing thousands of racial covenants that reserved land for the exclusive use of white people. This allowed us to build a map that shows how these racial restrictions were embedded in the physical landscape. We are expanding the geographic focus of our work to incorporate new communities. Please join us in this effort.

<https://www.mappingprejudice.org/>

Volunteer for Mapping Prejudice: Online Transcription Session for Ramsey County

August

19

7:00p.m. - 8:00p.m.

**Other
dates
are
available**

To build community awareness about housing injustice, Mapping Prejudice and St. Catherine University are mobilizing volunteers to document racial covenants in Ramsey County. Racial covenants were legal clauses embedded in property deeds that barred people who were not white from buying or occupying land. Elders have known for decades that covenants were widespread. But even with that community wisdom, there is a lot that we don't know. How common were these restrictions? What areas of our community were reserved for white people only? How much land was restricted in this way? When were they put into place? What did they say? What are the legacies of these practices today?

Help us make a map that can answer these questions. As we do this research together, we will explore the connections between past injustices and present disparities. This is the first step towards meaningful change.

This online training session will teach you what you need to know to contribute to this project.

Two online videos can be helpful as you get ready to do this work. "[Jim Crow of the North](#)" will explain the history behind this map. And this [Mapping Prejudice training video](#) will show you what we need volunteers to do

Online Zoom Meeting

You must register at the link below to receive the Zoom meeting link!

[More Details](#)

Black owned businesses – can we patronize or help promote? Could we have black owned food trucks park in our lot and then promote to neighborhood?

<https://mspmag.com/arts-and-culture/black-owned-businesses-in-the-twin-cities/>

Topic: Drivers Education Access for High School Kids

Notes:

A Driver's License plays a key roll in entry into adulthood. Getting a license before you turn 18 can be very expensive and logistically difficult for low income POC. Driver's Ed classes cost ~\$400 and must be taken if you wish to get a license before you turn 18. Getting practice driving hours can be hard if parents don't own a car or have the money for gas. Can anything be done to help get rid of this barrier?

St Paul Public Schools

Tutor or mentor possibilities?

Leverage church location?