



Listening and Reflection Guide

Jessica Vazquez Torres (Atlanta 2016)

Take a deep breath.

*Let it out.**

Insights

Jessica offers four insights in addressing racism that the church needs to be clearer about:

1. Racism cannot be understood aside from white supremacy.
2. History matters.
3. Racism is structural, not relational.
4. All of us are made complicit in racism.

Thinking about your own context or your own life, which of these insights is most recognizable to you? Which is the most daunting?

Wonderings

What stories of history have you learned later in life that you didn't learn as a child? Which stories did you have to re-learn with new eyes?

What are the stories you are still curious to explore and interrogate?

What do you know about white dominant culture and what are you curious to learn?

Consider the ways your church's programs, products, and services advantage white dominant culture. What do you notice?

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Action

Jessica offers four actions to take:

1. **Own your complicity.**
2. **Develop a thicker, more complex, intersectional analysis of racism.**
3. **Be political** (because racism is lived out in the public sphere).
4. **Talk about whiteness** and the benefits to white people, not just the oppression of people of color.

Which of these actions could you lean into as an individual or as a congregation? What's one action you/your church could take?

Which of these actions would be the most difficult to lean into? What is holding you back?

This work will not be solved by a few steps. It is on-going, communal, and generational. And it begins with one courageous and faithful step. What courageous step are you being called to take next?

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Let it out.

**Jessica Vazquez Torres is a gifted facilitator of anti-racism training. One technique she is known for is asking her learners to take a deep breath and let it out repeatedly during her sessions.*

Are you stuck? How about these?

Wondering about **complicity**? Read the [Belhar Confession](#) or the [Sarasota Statement](#) and consider how the confessions of the past also speak to our current complicity.

Or check out this guide to [White Supremacy Culture](#) and notice how these characteristics pop-up in your organization/church. Which antidotes can you begin to cultivate?

Looking to dig deeper into **intersectionality**? [Read](#) or [listen](#) to Audre Lorde's "There is No Hierarchy of Oppression." Reflect on the ways your social justice work is intersectional or is not.

Trying to figure out how to talk about **politics** without partisanship? Watch [Ana DuVernay's 13th](#) and consider how slavery has played out in the public sphere for centuries.

How do we start talking about **whiteness and white privilege**? Consider these 50 conditions from [Peggy McIntosh's Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#). Working in groups of at least 2, how many can you check off as things you experience?

Or read Robin DiAngelo's book [White Fragility](#). Commit to read and discuss with others.