

Join the Movement

All-Church Read

***How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi***

COP Discussion Guide

Chapters 7-11

# Chapter 7: Culture

*“Whoever makes the cultural standard makes the cultural hierarchy. The act of making a cultural standard and hierarchy is what creates cultural racism” (83).*

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

Discussion Questions

* At the beginning of the chapter, Kendi makes an important statement about the development of cultural racism. He says, “When the reaction to the Nazi Holocaust marginalized biological racism, cultural racism stepped into its place” (83). Unpack this statement as a group. What does it tell you about what he means by cultural racism? How do you see cultural racism showing up in your own communities?
* Put Kendi’s discussion and definitions of cultural racism in conversation with his arguments in Chapter 3 on Power. How might you use ideas from these two chapters together to contest claims of “reverse racism” often used defensively by people of European descent?
* In the parable of the Good Samaritan from the gospel of Luke, Jesus tells his listeners a story that would have challenged their cultural assumptions. In it, the people his listeners would have admired and respected (the priest and the Levite) behave badly, and the person his listeners would have culturally denigrated or seen as inferior turns out to be the one doing the most Godly thing. How might you retell this parable for your context, given the ways you witness cultural racism showing up in your communities?

Prayer

Creative Spirit, like clay in the hands of a potter, you shape our lives and bring us into being. Each of us, creative expressions of Divine intention. Sacred art. Glorious wonders. We are of beauty. We are from love. We come home in justice. Expand our faith in these holy capacities, letting them lead us to all that we must face, all that can be transformed, all we hope to become. Amen.

- Adapted from M Jade Kaiser, [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/)

# Chapter 8: Behavior

*“To be antiracist is to think nothing is behaviorally wrong or right – inferior or superior – with any of the racial groups. Whenever an antiracist sees individuals behaving positively or negatively, the antiracist sees exactly that: individuals behaving…not representatives of whole races. To be antiracist is to deracialize behavior, to remove the tattooed stereotype from every racialized body. Behavior is something humans do, not races do.” (105).*

Scripture: Luke 18:9-14

Discussion Questions

* What distinctions does Kendi make between culture and behavior in this chapter (see esp. 95)? Why is that distinction important and how does it help you understand behavioral racism?
* Dig deeper into the nuances of the section in the chapter where Kendi

discusses what he calls “oppression inferiority” (95-98). In what ways have you participated in the kind of behavioral racism he describes here, specifically attributing behavioral characteristics to an entire racial group? How has that impacted your affirmation of individual human dignity?

* Kendi writes: “As long as the mind things there is something behaviorally wrong with a racial group, the mind can never be antiracist. As long as the mind oppresses the oppressed by thinking their oppressive environment has retarded their behavior, the mind can never be antiracist. As long as the mind is racist, the mind can never be free” (104-105). Take some time to imagine how you might experience a “free” mind/antiracist mind. What are some examples of thoughts the free/antiracist mind might have?

Prayer

There is no me without you. We shape one another.

The Sacred that birthed us weaves our lives together

so that we can only find ourselves through shared becoming.

For my journey and all its winding ways, for yours,

for all the saints who labored for what is,

all the kin whose lives made ours possible,

for all those yet to come for whom living our truths today will mean breaking possibilities open for them tomorrow:

we pause; we acknowledge; we give thanks. Amen.

# Chapter 9: Color

*“To be an antiracist is to focus on color lines as much as racial lines, knowing that color lines*

*are especially harmful for Dark people” (110).*

Scripture: Psalm 51 and John 1:1-5 (9)

Discussion Questions

* How has the Christian practice of associating light or whiteness with goodness, purity, righteousness and darkness or blackness with evil, defilement, sinfulness contributed to colorism as Kendi defines it (110)?
* How is anti-Dark colorism related to behavioral racism? cultural racism?
* Give some examples of how you’ve witnessed colorism or color antiracism around standards of beauty in public media. How might you make use of examples of color antiracism in your church, family or community?

Prayer

Try praying with Padraig O’Tauma and the Corrymeela Community’s [Litany for the](https://friendsofsilence.net/quote/2022/12/liturgy-night) [Night](https://friendsofsilence.net/quote/2022/12/liturgy-night):

“On the first night God said: 'Let there be darkness.' And God separated light from dark; and in the dark, the land rested, the people slept, and the plants breathed, the world retreated. The first night.

And God said that the darkness was Good…”

# Chapter 10: White

*“We must separate the warlike, greedy, bigoted, and individualistic cultures of modern empire and racial capitalism from the cultures of White people…To be antiracist is to never mistake the global march of White racism for the global march of White people. To be antiracist is to never mistake the antiracist hate of White racism for the racist hate of White people.” (128-129).*

Scripture: Romans 12:1-8 Discussion Questions

* Who do you imagine Kendi is writing this chapter for? What difference does

that make in how you interpret it and position yourself as a reader?

* In this chapter, Kendi argues, “We must discern the difference between racist power (racist policymakers) and White people” (129). How would you describe that difference? What makes it difficult or complicated to discern?
* For people of European descent: It might be tempting to use some of the arguments Kendi makes in this chapter as a defensive response to alleviate responsibility for racist actions, practices and policies or to distance oneself from “those other racist (bad) white people.” How will you resist that temptation and help others to resist? How does close attention to the particularities of Kendi’s argument help you?

Prayer

May today offer you what your spirit needs to evolve, to expand, to unfold.

May it stretch you, but just enough. Not by force nor demand,

but like an invitation that opens slowly, too careful to be rushed.

May you be brave enough to loosen your grip on what you know and perceive –

on what you have learned from fear or inherited from lineages of cruelty.

May you give thanks for all the sources that gifted you with survival and wisdom, perspective and protection –

but not let your gratitude unnecessarily wed you to them forever. May this day feed you and challenge you,

surprise and comfort you,

that you might have what you need to be courageous, to be humble, and to let your soul grow. Amen.

- M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed

# Chapter 11: Black

*“Every single person actually has the power to protest racist and antiracist policies, to advance them, or, in some small way, to stall them.” (141).*

Scripture: I John 3:1-3, 11-17

Discussion Questions

* Take some time to unpack what Kendi means by the “powerless defense” and why he disagrees with the argument that undergirds it (140-144). What are the problematic results of the “powerless defense” according to Kendi?
* How does the history of racial terror, violence and harm in the US and the structural and systemic racism that has both supported and grown out of that history effect the way you understand this chapter? Does this analysis challenge Kendi’s argument in your view?
* What would it look like for you to take responsibility for and create accountability around racists ideas and policies you have supported regarding people within cultural groups you share an identity with? What would loving your sibling, as we are called to as Christians in the letter from John, look like in this context?

Prayer

Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, your kindom come.

Empower us to bear the heavens among the earth. Turn us from supremacies.

Teach us to claim each other as kin.

So that Love’s will may lead us to liberation. Amen.

- Adapted from M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed