Join the Movement

All-Church Read

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

COP Discussion Guide

Introduction & Chapters 1-6

# My Racist Introduction

*“…the movement from racist to antiracist is always ongoing – it requires understanding and snubbing racism based on biology, ethnicity, body, culture, behavior, color, space, and class.*

*And beyond that, it means standing ready to fight at racism’s intersections with other bigotries” (10).*

*Note to Facilitators – Use the introduction resource as a starting point – allowing for some feedback before determining how many chapters to cover for the second session. The outline below is intended to cover one meeting on the Introduction chapter. The remaining chapters offer scripture, prayers, and reflection questions for your adaptation and use.*

 *Before each subsequent session, review the reflection questions ahead of time and determine how many questions you want to cover. Keep in mind that you may need to adapt based on your group’s engagement. You are encouraged to let these conversations take as many sessions as needed.*

Centering Time (5 minutes)

*As we engage in conversations around difficult topics, it is helpful to remind ourselves that these discussions are holy ground and that we are entering a sacred journey, connected to God and to each other as beloved ones of the Holy One. At the same time, one of the most important capacities we can grow as part of our antiracism practices is the ability to center (and recenter) ourselves. Practicing grounding ourselves in breath, prayer, and intentions helps us develop the ability to return to that centered place when we experience distress or harm. It also helps us to reconnect to the “why” of our practice, to what keeps us coming back, even when things are*

*difficult or overwhelming. So, begin your time together with grounding, symbolic action, and prayer.*

* + Once folks have gathered, invite everyone to take some deep breaths and ground themselves in their intentions for this place and time.
	+ Light your candle(s) as a reminder of God’s presence in and among us as we gather. If using, take a moment to pour water into the bowl and invite participants to remember the baptismal promise in which we all share: that we are all, uniquely and equally, beloved children of God, welcomed, loved, cherished, and valued in this space and every space.
	+ Offer the prayer provided in the discussion guide, or another of your choosing.
* Covenant (5 minutes\*) – How does your covenant help you engage in the topic of anti-racism? Are there specific changes or additions to your COP group covenant that need to be included for this topic?

*Attending to the “how” of your gathering and fostering accountability are both important antiracist practices. Take a moment at the beginning of your time together to re-read your covenants and invite a moment of check-in about how you are doing at keeping them and if any more should be added.*

* Check In (5-10 minutes – depending on how many people you have)

*Offering a time for participants to check in helps build community and foster relationships which is part of practicing antiracism. As Audre Lorde reminds us, “Without community, there is no*

*liberation.”*

* + Invite participants to respond briefly (in a sentence or two) to one of the following check-in prompts:
		- Where is one place/what is one moment in which you caught a glimpse of a future of justice for all?
		- What’s something you are grateful for or lamenting today?
		- What challenges and/or joys are you experiencing in your life?

Scripture: I Corinthians 12:4-13 The Message, adapted

 God’s various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:

wise counsel

clear understanding

simple trust

healing the sick

miraculous acts

proclamation

distinguishing between spirits

tongues

interpretation of tongues.

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. The Spirit decides who gets what, and when.

**12-13**You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you’re still one body. It’s exactly the same with Christ. By means of the one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which *God* has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—the Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.

Discussion Questions

* Kendi argues that to say something is inferior about a racial group is to say a racist idea (7). What aspects of your faith, beliefs and values, refute ideas of racial inferiority and superiority?
* What would it take for you to hear “racist” as descriptive rather than derogatory or pejorative (9)? Would it change how you react if a non- European descended person were to describe something you said or did as racist?
* How do you think our world, your church, your community, your family would be different if we succeeded in the “struggle we’re all in, the struggle to be fully human and to see that others are fully human” (11)?

Prayer

Search my heart, O Love,

and lead me in the ways of solidarity.

Help me to lay down my defenses

and grow beyond the edges of my knowing that I may move more deeply into practices of care,

of right-relationship,

of liberation and transformation.

Grounded in the truth of my inherent worth, planted in the knowledge of my power, mindful of the stories,

and legacies,

and systems that shape me, I pray my becoming unfolds in the direction of freedom:

Mine. Others. Ours. This planet’s.

May this day be my teacher

and my learning sincere. Amen.

- by [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/miscellaneous-offerings/)

* Intention Setting (3 minutes)

*Practicing antiracism means challenging and changing the ways we live and move through the world. And making those kinds of changes becomes more possible if we set intentions that we can be accountable to.*

* + Invite participants to use their journals, or paper and writing implements to respond to one of the following prompts:
		- What intentions are you setting for your antiracist practice this week?
		- How do you want to demonstrate your commitment to racial justice this week?
* Deeper check in – as we have focused on anti-racism, how do you see this work reflected in your ministry? (45 minutes)
	+ And/or is there something of urgency that you need to name?
* Shared prayers – invite group to lift up the prayer concerns that they are holding. (10 minutes)
* Closing Blessing (2 minutes)
	+ Engage the group in one of the following sending practices:
		- Invite each person to share one word of how they are feeling or what they are taking with them from the discussion today.
		- Invite each person to share one word of gratitude for this time together.
		- While standing in a circle, invite participants to place their right hand on their own heart, and their left hand on the back of the person next to them (having asked their permission). Take some deep breaths together and invite folks to notice the connections between their beating hearts.
		- Choose one of the [embodiment exercises from Capacitar](https://playandpray.net/capacitar/) to engage the group in. The Shower of Light is a particularly good one to end with.
		- Use one of Cole Arthur Riley’s breath prayers from the [Black Liturgies](https://www.instagram.com/blackliturgies/) project to conclude your time together.

*Note to Facilitators – after deciding how many chapters to cover in the session, review the reflection questions ahead of time and determine how many questions you want to discuss. Keep in mind that you may need to adapt based on your group’s engagement. You are encouraged to let these conversations take as many sessions as needed. Invite a participant to select a scripture translation and read the designated verses. Feel free to repeat check-in questions, intention setting, group prayers, and closing – or adapt as you see fit.*

# Chapter 1: Definitions

*“The key act for both of us was defining our terms so that we could begin to describe the*

*world and our place in it” (17).*

Check-in - how are you coming into this space today?

Or - how are you feeling about engaging with the topic?

Scripture: Romans 12:9-18 (invite participant to read aloud)

Discussion Questions

* Take some time to define racism for yourself. How does it compare to Kendi’s definition? What does your definition show you about how to practice *anti*racism?
* Kendi describes racial equity as “when two or more racial groups are standing on relatively equal footing” (18). Consider what your faith has taught you about racial *justice*. Does your spiritual understanding of justice differ from Kendi’s understanding of equity? In what ways?
* In Romans 12:9-18, the author lays out what are sometimes called the “marks of the true Christian.” Review the definitions of antiracist and racist on pages 22-23 of the book. How might you describe the “marks of a true antiracist” in a similar way as the author of Romans?

Prayer

Holy One, who is Love-made-flesh, Teach us:

to love one another is to protect each other from evil. to love the planet is to protect it from destruction.

to love ourselves is to protect ourselves from systemic lies and practices meant to destroy us in body or spirit.

Remind us:

Love rises before unjust power and declares itself unwilling to comply Love is not an idle bystander; love intervenes.

Sometimes gently, while no one notices. Sometimes extravagantly, with passion. Sometimes rudely, because it is necessary.

Keep us:

abiding in Love,

following the pathways of Love, moving with the spirit of Love

to create a world of more justice, more peace, more love. Amen.

- Adapted from “took on flesh” by M Jade Kaiser at [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/miscellaneous-offerings/)

# Chapter 2: Dueling Consciousness

*“Americans have long been trained to see the deficiencies of people rather than policy…We*

*are particularly poor at seeing the policies lurking behind the struggles of people” (28).*

Scripture: Mark 7:24-30 Discussion Questions

* Re-read the second full paragraph on page 29. Have you ever experienced yourself looking at yourself “through the eyes of another”? How did that impact you? How was it harmful (or helpful)?
* Can you identify a “dueling consciousness” in yourself or do you recognize

any of the ways that Kendi describes such a consciousness that live in you?

* How does your family, your faith community, your theology embody assimilationist or segregationist ideas and practices? What it would it look like to re-pent (turn around) from those ideas and practices?

Prayer

For those weary of sharing their pain. For those who speak but are not heard.

For those whose stories began centuries ago.

For those whose testimonies are deemed a false witness. For those who have nowhere to turn for rest.

For those who refuse to be silenced.

For those who whisper tenderly and knowingly to their kin. For those who shout a holy protest to their oppressors.

For those who wonder if there’s any point.

For those who cannot keep truth to themselves. For those who wail for all that has been lost.

For those who sing for all that we might become. For those who call others to rise.

For those whose voice reaches out like open arms for the hurting. May they be nourished in body in soul.

May they be guided in wisdom. May community uphold them.

Through the lips of prophets your Kindom draws near.

- M Jade Kaiser, [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/miscellaneous-offerings/)

# Chapter 3: Power

*“From the beginning, to make races was to make racial hierarchies” (40).*

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-12 & 4:10-17 Discussion Questions

* How do you self-identify? What role does race play in your identity? Does your racial identity help you perceive yourself politically and historically

(38)? In what ways?

* What does it feel like for you to hold the tension between race as an illusion or mirage (37) but one that has “life-shaping power?”
* Write some statements of confession or lament about the “powerful economic, political and cultural self-interest” (42-43) that is the root of racist power. How do you feel as you write them? What kind of justice is needed in yourself and your community to address them? What names for/images of God can help guide you in these antiracist practices?

Prayer

God, who is transformative potential, always with and within us, grow within us this resurrection promise.

God, who is the practice of imagination,

inspire us with dreams of futures shaped by justice and joy. God, who is a collective yearning for what liberates,

empower us to nurture the seed of Easter, to bring freedom into full bloom. God, who is all that troubles, disturb those who cling to what destroys.

God, who is all that sustains, uphold the ones who grow weary in labors of love. Amen.

- Adapted from [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/miscellaneous-offerings/)

# Chapter 4: Biology

*“Biological racism rests on two ideas: that the races are meaningfully different in their biology and that these differences create a hierarchy of value” (49). “To be antiracist is to recognize the reality of biological equality, that skin color is as meaningless to our underlying humanity as the clothes we wear over our skin…To be antiracist is to also recognize the living, breathing reality of the racial mirage which makes our skin colors more meaningful than our individuality” (54).*

Scripture: Revelation 7:9-17

Discussion Questions

* What is Kendi’s argument for calling microaggressions “racial abuse” (45-47)? How do either or both terms help you understand the ways that racism plays out for individuals and society?
* How do you reckon with the way scripture has been used to justify biological racism (50)? How does it impact your understanding of the sacredness or holiness of the bible?
* If race is a mirage with no underlying biological grounding, why won’t we end racism just by ending the use of racial categories (54)?

Prayer

So much has been hidden:

To protect narratives and people. To disempower.

To confuse.

Unsatisfied with stories that get us by but never get us free, may we be people who look beyond,

who listen beneath,

who feel through and through.

With courage, we open ourselves to truth. With humility, we endeavor to be transformed. With hope, we hold on to each other.

May Love lead us in the Sacred work of unveiling.

May all that shrouds justice be uncovered and the ways of healing revealed.

- M Jade Kaiser, [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/miscellaneous-offerings/)

# Chapter 5: Ethnicity

*“That is the central double standard in ethnic racism: Loving one’s position on the ladder above other ethnic groups and hating one’s position below that of other ethnic groups. It is angrily trashing the racist ideas about one’s own group but happily consuming the racist ideas about another ethnic group” (68).*

Scripture: Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Discussion Questions

* How does Kendi describe the difference between race and ethnicity? How has your ethnicity been racialized?
* Give an example of ethnic racism that you’ve practiced or encountered. How do US immigration policies create and reinforce ethnic racism?
* If you were going to create an antiracist “commandment” that encourages us to “view national and transnational ethnic groups as equal in all their differences” (64), what would it be? Start with, you shall… or you shall not…

Prayer

Spirit of Liberation,

wise and cunning, determined and gracious,

teach us of loyalty to only love’s ways.

May we become more committed to one another’s flourishing

than to any institution.

May we be released from fears that cause us to hoard resources, power, safety, or control.

May we become convinced of the power you have given us to disrupt, resist, and transform evil and oppression within and around.

- from [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/miscellaneous-offerings/)

# Chapter 6: Body

*“This is the living legacy of racist power, constructing the Black race biologically and ethnically and presenting the Black body to the world first and foremost as a ‘beast’…Americans today see the Black body as larger, more threatening, more potentially harmful, and more likely to require force to control than a similarly sized White body…” (71).*

Scripture: Psalm 139:13-18 Discussion Questions

* + Discuss the connections between body racism, fear, violence and criminality.

What shifts in awareness and perception do you notice in yourself as you do?

* + How does belonging to the Body of Christ impact the way you view and interact with the bodies of others?
	+ How does bodily racism contribute to a culture of fear? In what ways are you complicit in and/or resisting the perpetuating of the culture of fear?

Prayer

May the weary find a soft place to rest. May the searching be met by the Sacred.

May the strangers be encouraged, be fed, be clothed, be received. May the righteous see the fruits of their labor.

May the lonely find comfort in the night. May the privileged choose solidarity.

May the complicit repent.

May the apathetic come to recognize the hardness of their hearts. May the courageous have multitudes behind them.

May the creative be encouraged to embody the truths we all need to feel. May the fearful keep showing up, keep wrestling, keep taking steps.

May the unjust powerful step-down or be torn down. May the mourning not be rushed.

May the caretakers have their cups refilled.

May the Holy One within each of us rise, rise, rise.

- M Jade Kaiser, [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/miscellaneous-offerings/)