

2016 Charter for Racial Justice Program Wisconsin Conference United Methodist Women

- Who: For all units/local organizations/circles in Wisconsin Conference.
- What: A program geared to Wisconsin about issues of race. Duration 30-45 minutes.
- Where: At any place that United Methodist Women meet.
- When: Any time in 2015 and after.
- Why:
 - *To become aware of what is happening in our own communities.
 - *To become more aware of people hurting around us.
 - *To be able to live peacefully in our neighborhoods, both local and extended.
 - *To get credit for Mission Today tasks.
- How: By using this prepared program in your local unit/organization/circle. Feel free to adapt this program in order to make it useful for your particular situation and time constraints.

“Micro-Aggressions”

Focus statement from the Charter for Racial Justice: (read together as directed)

Left side: BECAUSE WE BELIEVE (#7) Our strength lies in our racial and cultural diversity, and we must work toward a world in which each person’s value is respected and nurtured.

Right side: WE WILL (#2) Create opportunities in local churches to deal honestly with the existing racist attitudes and social distance between members, deepening the Christian commitment to be the church where all racial groups and economic classes come together.

Worship

OPENING HYMN (choose one)

O God of Every Nation #435

Help Us Accept Each Other #560

Jesu, Jesu Show Us Your Love #432

SCRIPTURE (Choose readers for each scripture)

1 Cor 13:1-12 (NRSV)

13 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only

in part;¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Prov. 15:23 (The Message)

²³ Congenial conversation—what a pleasure!
The right word at the right time—beautiful!

Prov. 25:11-12 (The Message)

¹¹⁻¹² The right word at the right time
is like a custom-made piece of jewelry,
And a wise friend's timely reprimand
is like a gold ring slipped on your finger.

Col. 3:16-17 (NRSV)

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ^[a] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.^[b] ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Responsive Reading (Choose a leader)

(Prov. 8:6-13) (NRSV)

Leader: Hear, for I will speak noble things,

All: and from my lips will come what is right;

Leader: for my mouth will utter truth;

All: wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

Leader: All the words of my mouth are righteous;

All: there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

Leader: They are all straight to one who understands

All: and right to those who find knowledge.

Leader: Take my instruction instead of silver,

All: and knowledge rather than choice gold;

Leader: for wisdom is better than jewels,

All: and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

Leader: I wisdom, live with prudence,

All: and I attain knowledge and discretion.

Leader: The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.

**All: Pride and arrogance and the way of evil
and perverted speech I hate.**

All: Good Counsel and common sense are my characteristics. (The Message)

Prayer (**Unison**): O God, you created all people in your image. We thank you for the astonishing variety of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of friendship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

What are Micro-Aggressions?

Instructions: Enter a time of learning and discussion. Select a leader and two readers.

Devotion on Microaggressions (read by **Leader**)

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (NASB)

16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer. **17** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. **18** Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, **19** namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

These verses tell us that if we have accepted Christ into our lives, we are new people who have been reconciled to God and have been given the ministry of reconciliation. That means that we should have great relationships with everyone. There are two dimensions here – the vertical one which is our relationship with God and the horizontal one which is our relationship with other people.

So what has happened to our relationships with others? We in the church should be different from the world. We should be the righteousness of God. But we participate in something called microaggressions.

Reader 1:

Microaggression is a term coined by psychiatrist and Harvard University professor Chester M. Pierce in 1970 to describe insults and dismissals he said he had regularly witnessed non-Black Americans inflict on African Americans. In 1973, MIT economist Mary Rowe extended the term to include similar aggressions directed at women; eventually, the term came to encompass the casual degradation of any socially marginalized group, such as the poor and those with disabilities.

Psychologist Derald Wing Sue defines microaggressions as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership." A microaggression is a subtle visual, verbal or nonverbal insult, whether

intentional and unintentional, directed toward people of marginalized groups.

Social scientists Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino (2007) described microaggressions as "the new face of racism," saying that the nature of racism has shifted over time from overt expressions of racial hatred and hate crimes, towards expressions of aversive racism, such as microaggressions, that are more subtle, ambiguous and often unintentional. Researchers say this has led some Americans to wrongly believe that racism is no longer a problem for non-white Americans.

Reader 2:

Microaggressions can appear to be a compliment but contain an insult. They occur because they are outside the perpetrator's level of consciousness. An example could be, "You know you speak excellent English." This comment would imply that the person is not a true American. Another example would be to continue to mispronounce someone's name after they have corrected you over and over again. Another example would be to assume that all Latino's/a's speak Spanish. The comment, "When I look at you, I don't see color" denies the significance of a person's experience. Microaggressions can also be delivered non-verbally, such as a woman clutching her purse when she sees a person of color. Each and every microaggression is hurtful and can have a cumulative negative effect on individuals.

The microaggressions that we have been discussing revolve around race. Racism, a component of oppression, has been defined by David Wellman as a system of advantage based on race. There are other types of oppression as well, such as sexism. In dealing with oppression, there are four roles that one could take.

We can be the **agent** or oppressor who makes the comments. We can be the **target** who gets the comments made about them. We can be the **bystander** who watches or listens to these comments without saying a word, or we can be the **ally** who speaks up and makes these microaggressions visible. During our lives, we take on all four roles. But as Christians and Christ's ambassadors on earth, we want to be the ally most of the time. We need to train ourselves to notice these microaggressions taking place.

(You may either ask each person read one line or use readers 1 and 2 to read these alternately).

Some comments we might hear:

- No, where are you really from?
- Use the phrase "ghetto" for poverty.
- So, like, what are you?
- You are a credit to your race.
- You are so articulate.
- I don't see you as a Black person.
- Where do you come from?
- I'm not racist. I have several Black friends

Some words we might use:

- "Indian giver," "She welshed on that," "I jewed him down," "That's so White of

you,” “You people...,” “We got gypped”

Actions we might take or see:

- Imitating accents or dialects.
- Mistake a person of color for a service worker
- See a taxi cab pass a person of color and pick up a White passenger
- See a clerk help a White customer while a person of color is ignored

Take some time to look at the photos in the resource part of this packet (pg. 11) or online at our Racial Justice page (<http://www.wisconsinumw.org/charter-for-racial-justice-programs.html>) for images of micro-aggressions identified by people in Wisconsin.

Leader: (allow time for discussion)

Reflection Questions:

Do you see these behaviors as micro-aggressions?

Now that you have heard some different examples, can you think of other microaggressions that we say or do to those who are different from us?

How does this harm our interactions with others?

What do you think Christian faith says to us about these behaviors?

What can we do to stop these microaggressions and be reconciled to our friends of color?

Leader read this final thought:

Remember that we are the righteousness of God. We need to be reconciled to our friends of color and become aware of these visual, verbal or nonverbal insults, whether we mean them or not.

Experiences in Wisconsin

Instructions: If you have someone present who is comfortable sharing their own experience with prison, policing or profiling as a non-White racial/ethnic person in Wisconsin, feel free to share that story in place of or in addition to these below. Otherwise, choose 1 or more of these stories as time allows to be read to the group. Use the discussion questions or other questions which arise to guide you in spiritual discussion.

African Immigrant/African American:

Micro aggressions in a community are ways of making a minority group in a community feel unwelcome. There are various ways which aggression is directed at people with less or no voice in a community. We now live a world where minority groups are marginalized or bullied because of the color of skin, body shape or voice tone when they speak. The perception Africans have in Africa about United States is totally different from the experience Africans have upon arrival here in the USA. From the words of the national anthem this country is ‘the land of the free and home of the brave’ immigrants are eager and look forward to living the ‘American dream’.

As a legal Africa migrant, I have a lot of negative experience on this issue. These have completely changed my perception about the county and I try to disabuse people I know about it. My first experience was with a group I was asked to address. This was an impromptu speech on what's in Nigeria, West Africa with 15 minutes to prepare. Prior to this talk someone asked if I could speak English as there is no translator. I smiled and said yes. After my speech a couple came to ask if I was from a rich family that could afford to send me to a western style school. My reply was no but the official language in my country was English. I wondered if my face interprets dumbness and stupidity to the audience. What really surprised me was the ignorance of the people. The ones who had traveled to Africa could not come to my aid but instead smiled and kept quiet.

I have gone shopping at various retail stores and have come to realize that store employees follow me in the aisles. At first I didn't understand the reason behind this behavior but after a couple of discussion with my spouse and other African –Americans, I came to realize that the color of my skin speaks volumes and that I should be watched. Every African American is a potential shoplifter, purse snatcher or lazy no good free loader surviving on food stamp and other government assistants.

The idea of be your brother's keeper doesn't cut across the board. We now live in a society that is more racially divided on a daily basis. It is okay for a Caucasian to use racial slur in a statements without a backlash from another Caucasian. There is a popular refrain in America 'when you see something, say something' now applies to just a particular race and ethnic minority. When an African American tries to stand up for their rights they are regarded as a noisy, trouble maker, uncivilized and all manner of names. For a country with long history of different races, we are sending the wrong message to the young generation. The world is now a global village but America is becoming more racially divided every day. As Christians, it's our duty to stand for and represent the people without a voice in our communities. United Methodist Women have done a wonderful job on that all over the world and I believe with God we will continue to do more but as individuals the change must start with you! Let's try to be our brother's and sister's keeper. When you see something wrong or right, say something!

Asian-American experience:

Racial microaggressions are apparent but very hard to detect especially from Asian American women. It can be intentional or unintentional and verbal or nonverbal in form. Senders may even be unaware that they are engaging in an offensive communication. Most Asian American women describe feelings of hopeless or defeat, thinking that their personal attempts to call it out would not be worth the time or backlash. The response that emerged here simply perpetuates the problem, and although the messages are not as overt as racial slurs, the subtle nature allows racist and ethnocentric messages to continue. Although acts of ethnocentrism or racism are seemingly micro in nature, they are hurtful on a macro level.

Asian American women do experience plenty of racism, but in ways indicative of both Asian and female. For example, the student model minority myth has affected many Asian American women students as they struggle with not fulfilling the Asian stereotypes of being an overachiever with appearing to be the “dumb foreigner.” Passivity and reluctance to speak up in classes are examples. To add to this, Asian American women often shared how they’ve been overlooked or not conversed with at school, work or social events, not even aware of how this is allowing both parties to fall victim to a model myth way of thinking. Their awareness of exclusion invalidates their own identity and their identity as being American as well. In the end, these very acts result in emotional stress and depression.

Younger Asian American women today could recall times where they tried to directly or indirectly attempted to correct or educate others about how they felt. However, the futility or lack of hope far outweighed the actual attempts themselves. Many times, the women just get exhausted trying and to explain to people who they are or how they felt. Often times, they ask why should they have to? Some even think they can only educate people so much, so they say, whatever, it’s not worth their time. Those who explicitly talked of futility also expressed concern with safety, acceptance, and fear.

The stories shared by some of these Asian American women often revealed an overarching response of negativity, which was expressed as defeat or sadness. The effects in some cases led these women to “give up.” Most Asian American women have expressed that they have experienced at least one incident where they felt pressured or forced to quit an activity (jobs, sports, and clubs) or unwelcomed and rejected from joining activities. These feelings of exclusion and the struggle of being accepted within a predominantly White community is real and exhausting, and may even affect well-being. A sort of identity crisis occurs, with a constant struggle to be open about who they are and simultaneously be accepted, recognized and validated in class, at work, in the community and in society. Microaggressions and racist messages do occur, and most often these messages are subtle. The challenge of making the invisible visible is what will change how race is communicated in our culture as a whole and who we are as Christians.

Discussion questions:

Do these stories surprise you?

What about these stories do you identify with most strongly?

Have you ever said (or not said) or done (or not done) something which you now see as enabling micro-aggressions?

What is the danger of allowing micro-aggressions to go unrecognized and unchallenged?

What do you see as the biggest barrier(s) to eliminating micro-aggressions?

What do we do now? (Choose a leader and readers – you may either keep the same as before or ask for new volunteers.)

Leader:

Response to microaggressions

The first step is to recognize that a microaggression has occurred and that it communicates hostile, derogatory messages to target persons. Recognizing the context of the relationship and situation is critical. Sometimes we say something without thinking how it affects others. Other times we say things that we have heard many times without even realizing that what is being said is offensive to others. We need to be open and hear what is being said when someone tells you what you are saying is offensive to them. Seek to understand why it is offensive from their perspective. It is important to respect and honor their opinion.

For individuals dealing with microaggressions it is important to:

Readers 1 and 2 alternate reading each point:

1. Remain calm and take a deep breath. Find a way to pause from assuming or reacting right away. If it is the first time and the incident is new, you could ask the person to repeat what he/she said or did. Responding with anger will only work against you. Honor and process your feelings by reaching out to those who are in your corner.
2. Give the benefit of the doubt. Start by asking for clarification — after you have taken a breath — and take note of the response. You can take time to think it over and decide how to respond later.
3. Focus on the event, not the person. By directing the conversation to the behavior, event, or comment you will decrease the likelihood of defensiveness. Any attempts to handle microaggressions by making the situation about you — as much as it is about how you are treated — and then guarantees a power struggle that will tilt to favor those in the majority. And if you are complaining about someone microaggressing you, it means you are in the minority.
4. Be clear about the different elements of a microaggression. Who said/did what? Who was in the room? What is the relationship between you and the sender? Was this a first time or is this an ongoing issue? Having a clear understanding of the factors that surrounded the microaggression helps evaluate next steps strategically rather than emotionally.
5. Develop your own way to handle microaggressions. Thinking there is a cookie-cutter approach will sabotage your efforts from the beginning. Do follow suggested steps and customize them to your own situation. Microaggressions and micro inequities that you experience might appear to be similar to what other people are experiencing, but the context that surrounds the event and effects created are not the same. The comment, “you are so smart” is a common phrase heard by many minorities and shows up in different

ways. If you repeatedly point out someone's problematic behavior and they just keep doing it, do not feel bad about ending or diminishing your relationship with that person. You may feel bad about doing so, because you think they're a good person. Remember that you are under no obligation to keep people in your life who make you feel bad, uncomfortable, or upset. It's okay to stay silent if it means prioritizing your safety.

References for dealing with microaggressions: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anna-giraldo-kerr/5-tips-to-handle-microagg_b_5658351.html and <http://www.theprospect.net/how-to-deal-with-microaggressions-29673>

Leader read conclusion:

As United Methodist Women we need to acknowledge that microaggressions occur and be an ally for individuals who are at the receiving end of microaggressions. We can be change agents by listening to, hearing the concerns of individuals targeted, confronting the agents of microaggressions, and speaking up to make the microaggressions visible. We need to there for targeted individuals so they are able to deal with microaggressions in their own way and know that someone is listening to them and is willing to support them.

Closing:

CLOSING HYMN (choose one)

In Christ there is No East or West #548

One Bread, One Body #620

Lift Every Voice and Sing #519

Prayer (**unison**): Gracious God, in Jesus Christ you teach us to love our neighbors, but we build dividing walls of hostility. You show us how to love one another as sisters and brothers but we hide ourselves from our own human family. You ask us to seek out the stranger and welcome the guest, but we lock ourselves up inside our own fear. You want us to share your abundant gifts with the poor, but we cling tightly to our possessions and our privilege. You call us to proclaim good news to all people, but we waste our words and hide our light.

Have mercy on us, loving God. Forgive our sin, open our hearts, and change our lives. By your Spirit, make us holy and whole— one people, united in faith, hope, and love; through Jesus Christ, our reconciler and redeemer. AMEN.

Microaggression References

www.microaggressions.com -- blog provides a visual representation of everyday microaggressions

[Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation](#) by Professor Derald Wing Sue (available thru Amazon)

[Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics and Impact](#) by Professor Derald Wing Sue (available thru Amazon)

www.Psychology Today.com -- blog by Professor Derald Wing Sue (11/17/2010)

[Microaggressions in Ministry: Confronting the Hidden Violence of Everyday Church](#) by Cody J. Sanders and Angela Yarber (available thru Amazon)

["Time" Magazine](#) -- 3/21/2014. Microaggression is the New Racism on Campus by John McWhorter

www.NationalReview.com -- Microaggression by Alex Torres

www.buzzfeed.com -- 21 Racial Microaggressions You Hear on a Daily Basis

www.nytimes.com -- Students See Many Sights as Racial 'Microaggressions' by Tanzine Vega (3/21/14)

www.insidehighered.com -- Report details microaggression on campuses by Jake New (1/8/2015) + multiple other articles

www.wikipedia.org/wiki/microaggression -- Microaggression Theory

www.pbs.org/newshour -- What is a Microaggression by Professor Derald Wing Sue

OR JUST GOOGLE 'MICROAGGRESSION' FOR NUMEROUS OTHER REFERENCES

Micro Aggressions Experienced by People in Wisconsin:
“You speak really good English” “Where are you from?” “You Must be
Chinese/Japanese/Korean”



Suggested Reading List books:

2016

Not Worth Saving: How a Severely Handicapped Boy Transformed Lives by Ann Joyner

Tilly: A Story of Hope and Resilience by Monique Gray Smith

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson

Girls With Swords: How to Carry Your Cross Like a Hero by Lisa Beverly

Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale

2015

Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

A New Dawn in the Beloved Community: Stories with the Power to Transform Us by Linda Lee and Safiyah Fousa

Vicious: True Stories by Teens about Bullying by Hope Vanderberg

Return to Sender by Julia Alvarez

2014

A History of the Romani People by Hristo Kyuchukov and Ian Hancock

On This Spirit Walk: The Voices of Native American and Indigenous Peoples by Henrietta Mann and Anita Phillips

Grace and Grit: My Fight for Equal Pay and Fairness at Goodyear and Beyond by Lilly Ledbetter

Dear White America: Letters to a New Minority by Tim Wise

2013

A Country for All: An Immigrant Manifesto by Jorge Ramos

In From the Wilderness by She-r-man

When Christians Get It Wrong by Adam Hamilton

Fatty Legs: A True Story by Christy Jordan-Fanton and Margaret Pokiak-Fanton

2012

Color-blind: The Rise of Post-racial Politics and the Retreat From Racial Equality by Tim Wise

The Death of Josseline: Immigration Stories From the Arizona Borderlands by Margaret Regan

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander

Thanks to all of the contributors and Charter for Racial Justice Members: Julie Mieke, Conference Nominations Chair for prayers and hymns, Billie La Bumbard, co-coordinator for Native American Language for the biblical passages, Deborah Pattee, Conference coordinator for Spiritual Growth for the section on defining “Micro-aggressions” and photos, Ruby Dow, Conference Social Action coordinator for discussion questions, Cheryl Malko Metro North District President for resources and photo, Kemi Bayiewu for her reflection from the African Immigrant/African American experience, Kady-Herr Yang, Hmong Language Coordinator for her reflection on the experiences of Asian-Americans, and Laura Pfeffer, Conference President for layout and final edit.