

## **2014 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 2014 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 #7 on the Mission Today activities list.
- How: By using this prepared program in your local unit/organization/circle.

### **“Got Privilege? Understanding and Confronting White Privilege”**

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

**Left side:** BECAUSE WE BELIEVE (#2) racism is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ;

**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

Sing or read aloud the words to: “They’ll Know We are Christians by Our Love”—*The Faith We Sing* #2223 or “Help Us Accept Each Other”—*The United Methodist Hymnal* #560

Instructions: Have a leader read the scripture passage. The same or a second person may read the reflection. All should read the prayer in unison.

**Scripture:** The Greatest Commandment...Mark 12:28-34

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” The most important one, answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

**Reflection:** As we ponder “Who is my neighbor?” consider the “Good Samaritan” story. Think of other stories and experiences that help us realize a neighbor is not just the family or people in our apartment building, those on my block, or those who look like me. Jesus stated, “Everyone” is our neighbor. At the store, checking out recently, the lady ahead did not have enough money, but the fellow just checking out said he would pick up the rest of her tab. What a shock for this woman, since the man was from a neighboring ethnic group. She wanted his address so she

could repay him, but he told her to “pay it forward” and help another person at her next opportunity.

We, as Christians, can be quick to help those in need... both the neighbor and the stranger. It is great to let the love of God show through in our deeds of love.

**Prayer (unison): As we come this day realizing our many differences, may we also realize how you, O God, pull us and keep us together striving to be your hands and feet where we live, work, play, worship and share in life. AMEN**

What is White Privilege?

Instructions: Enter a time of learning and discussion.

**Definition:** Tim Wise says, “Racism is a system of inequality, based on race. White privilege refers to any advantage, opportunity, benefit, head start, or general protection from negative societal mistreatment, which persons deemed white will typically enjoy, but which others will generally not enjoy. White privilege is simply the flipside of discrimination against people of color.”

**Read the following background on white privilege:**

December 2013 saw a lot of debate in our country’s churches. The *New York Times* had an article entitled, “The Race of Jesus: Unknown, Yet Powerful” which reported that many across the country were wondering whether Jesus was a white man. The belief that Jesus was white seems to have been something that many people have simply uncritically assumed; in other words, that assumption is simply never questioned. Assuming whiteness, according to Peggy McIntosh (“Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”) represents the reality of what she calls “white privilege.” McIntosh says, “As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.”

The identification of Jesus’ race is one glaring example of the white privilege that McIntosh describes. Edward Blum, co-author of the book *The color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of race in America*, finds it fascinating that Americans want to know the race of Jesus, given the fact that there is no question that Jesus was born a Jew about 2,000 years ago in an area that is now in Palestinian territory. This means, as many scholars such as Doug Jacobsen, professor of church history and theology at Messiah College says, in today’s categories, “we would probably think of [Jesus] as a person of color.” In contrast, Fox News host Megyn Kelly, contests the view that Jesus was a person of color, arguing instead that Jesus was a white man. Jacobsen says, “It’s just an incorrect statement. It’s an ignorant statement, not an intentionally false statement.” Jonathan Merritt in the *Atlantic* wrote that if Jesus “were taking the red-eye flight from San Francisco to New York today, Jesus might be profiled for additional security screening.” If we were to analyze the pictures of Jesus hanging in many of our churches, what would we find? I am guessing that many of them would show Jesus with light brown hair and bluish eyes. This in itself is a form of privilege that McIntosh addresses.

Actually, whether Jesus was White or a person of color should not be a big deal to many of us. But what should be a big deal to us is how our fellow brothers and sisters experience their

color. Those of us who are White or considered European Americans have benefits that those who are not White do not have. McIntosh lists 26 benefits, including:

- I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods, which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
- Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
- I can swear or dress in second hand clothes or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
- I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.
- I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

The list goes on, but I hope you get the picture. As many of us have been part of the church for a long time and want equity for all, it just is not the case for many of our friends of color in this country. We claim along with Paul that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) and that "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:13).

But somehow these verses don't speak to the discrimination faced by many folks of color on a daily basis. I recall a few years ago when my pastor at the time went to McDonald's with another friend. The friend ordered first and paid by check. Then my pastor ordered, also writing a check, but was asked to show his ID. Why, you say? He is of Cuban descent. Just because of the way he looked he needed to show his ID and yet the friend did not. These differences affect the quality of one's life. It has become so commonplace that there is now a phrase "DWB"—"Driving While Black." When I was working on my doctorate, I studied this and talked to a then Minnesota state senator. She said that the number one issue that Minnesota (that is where I lived at the time, but feel it is the same here in Wisconsin) faces is that of white privilege.

One more thing that many of us well intentioned white folks need to be aware of is called color blindness. We usually mean it in a positive way (if there is such a thing). We think we mean that we treat everyone the same, but that is not how it comes across. It denies the reality of our friends of color. They are not treated with the same privilege that whites are. So when we say we are oblivious to the color of their skin, it is actually quite insulting and minimizes their experiences. A person's race and ethnicity are central to her sense of self, but it is not her entire identity. Who she is in Jesus is also key.

The intent of our devotional today is to make us aware of how others might be treated. Our friends of color don't talk about this all of the time, but most of them do not have this privilege. So at this point, if this is a new concept to you, start thinking about it more. Notice how your friends of color get treated. Are they followed in the stores? Did they get to the

restaurant before you and yet you are seated first? If you now see anything like this, speak up. Our goal is to be one like the Bible verses state. So challenge your self to speak up for those who might not have the privileges that some of us do.

**Role play (Needs two readers):**

White Privilege—a conversation of 2 white friends talking on the way to a UMW meeting

- #1: Oh, boy. The program at the UMW meeting today is going to be on white privilege. I just don't get it—this white privilege stuff. I've worked hard all of my life and I don't feel like I have been given any special treatment. You see poor white people in this community all the time—if there really was white privilege I don't think you would see this.
- #2: Well, I think white privilege is much more subtle than that. You know that at our work place everyone looks like us. I don't know how a person of color would feel coming into an environment where they looked different than everyone else. How welcoming would we be? Would we wonder if he/she could do the job even if they had the same knowledge as everyone else?
- #1: I don't know—I haven't had that many experiences with individuals that look different than I do. I feel that others have as many opportunities as I have. They just need to work harder.
- #2: I know that there are things as a white person that I take for granted and don't even think about. Like the nylons that I buy that are labeled suntan/nude. This is based on a white/fair skin person and not a person that has dark skin tone. And flesh colored band aids—have you ever thought about how this is a subtle way of telling others that you do not have the right flesh color?
- #1: Wow! I never thought of that. I've never really thought about my skin tone before. This program should be very interesting. I want to know more about how white privilege affects individuals of color.

Questions to consider:

1. What questions about our society and your own experience does this reflection raise for you? Who benefits from white privilege? Who is hurt by it?
2. Have you experienced white privilege or been negatively impacted by it or know of those who have had such experiences?
3. What is our role as Christians towards white privilege and how might we live this role out?

Experiences in Wisconsin

Instructions: If you have someone present who is comfortable sharing their own experience 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 2 or more of these stories as time allows to be read to the group. Use the discussion questions or other questions that arise to guide you in spiritual discussion of the impacts of white privilege in Wisconsin.

## **NATIVE AMERICAN:**

Let's be in solidarity as we walk beside our Native American brothers and sisters, in Northern Wisconsin between Lake Superior and the Penokee Hills where the Gogebic Florida Corporation is planning to develop an open pit taconite mine. This is in the watershed for the Bad River Reservation of the Anishinabe Nation (Chippewa Indians). By The Treaty of 1837 they have rights to hunt fish and gather on these lands.

What are the unforeseen dangers? Are we breaking treaties again? How will this affect the water that flows from the hills to Lake Superior through the Bad River Reservation and the Bad River itself? What about sulfite pollution and its effect on the delicate eco-system, on the wild rice, animals and babies? What about the potential for asbestos contamination? If you would like to learn more, look up [midwestadvocates.org](http://midwestadvocates.org).

Our Native Brothers and Sisters have urged us to think about our next generations. How will this water poisoning affect them?

For more information contact the tribal web pages:

Lac Court Oreilles: [www.lco-nsn.gov](http://www.lco-nsn.gov)

Bad River: [www.badriver-nsn.gov](http://www.badriver-nsn.gov)

Midwest Environmental Advocates: [www.midwestadvocates.org](http://www.midwestadvocates.org)

Give to Wisconsin Advance #7510, memo "Odanah Solidarity UMW"

Jasper Saunkeah, member of the Cherokee Nation, says "*Treat the earth and all that dwell there on with respect.*"

Let us follow his direction as we go forward.

## **HISPANIC POPULATION – "An Invisible Work Force":**

The concept of being a "minority" in this country did not occur to me until I started working with the Hispanic population in Iowa, and Grant and Lafayette counties in southwest Wisconsin. Born and raised in Mexico as a Methodist, I went to a church high school in Georgia. After my marriage we lived in Oregon, Hawaii, Arkansas, Illinois and Wisconsin. I was never treated differently.

I started working as a volunteer in the area schools when young Hispanic immigrant dairy workers who had small children needed interpreting assistance to enroll their children in school. "Word of mouth" in the Hispanic community soon created a flow of phone calls from other families requesting help on "how to" make appointments, fill out forms, get medical and eye check-ups, get insurance, drivers' license, legal services, housing, social services, etc. In other words, to help them navigate the system of daily life. I have been doing this for the last 15 years.

I have spent many hours at the hospital, in the delivery room, at the ER, at the county jail, awaiting the outcome of arrests, at baptisms and birthday parties, and just sharing a meal with young mothers and children who otherwise would not have "another generation" to share their joys and sorrows.

The Hispanic community is "virtually invisible" to their Anglo neighbors. Most families are known only to the dairy employers for whom they work. Sometimes both father and mother work milking cows and take turns keeping house. In our three-county area, nearly 75% of the dairy farm work is done by Hispanic immigrants. These same immigrants do not have the benefits their Anglo counterparts do, because many of them are undocumented. Because they

are undocumented, they are paid less, because they do not have a driver's license, they are likely to be stopped when others are not. Because they do not speak English well, they are shunned or ignored when they ask for help in stores. However, all these undocumented workers pay taxes, encourage their children to be model students in school and inasmuch as possible, attend churches in the area that offer Spanish-language religious services.

In our area we have successfully started an English As a Second Language program. It is run completely by volunteer tutors. The tutors teach mostly women in the safety of their own homes. Some meet at the library or other public space. Some of the tutors have developed bonds with these families and now share family celebrations with their students. This same grassroots group is working to establish a Multi-Cultural Information Center in the area to serve the growing number of families and to involve them and their children in the fabric of our society.

### **AFRICAN IMMIGRANT:**

This was my experience as an African legal residence of the United States as I went in search of a job at an employment agency. After all the forms were filled out and submitted to the lady at the counter, she asked for my identification for proof that I am a resident of Wisconsin, which I gave to her. She then said I have an accent and that I don't belong here [in the U.S.]. She further asked for my proof of residency in the U.S. and a work permit. I was angry and embarrassed all at once, as there was a small crowd there. Luckily for me, I had my green card with me, so I presented it to her. After checking everything out, she still was not convinced, so she asked if I could hold a long conversation in English. That was when I couldn't take the insults anymore. I told her that everything she asked for I had presented, and I had talked to her without an interpreter for the past 10 minutes. I further told her that I have a college degree in business administration, and she was free to check out my story with the result evaluation company that I used upon my arrival in the United States.

### **Hmong Prospective on White Privilege/ Treatment in a White Dominant Culture:**

As a Hmong refugee in the US for over 37 years, the thought of White privilege in this White dominant culture, has never really had a conscious impact on the Hmong. One of the reasons is because we learn to accept and conform to the dominant culture we live in order to survive and be successful.

As a Hmong interpreter in the schools, I have experienced many times how Hmong students are compared to white students in standardized tests. The tests are written for a White student. The scores are based on a white student's performance. This really is not fair nor is it accurate for evaluating minority students' learning disabilities beside white students.

Although there may be many other white privileges, I thought that this one stood out because it involved students.

Questions to consider:

1. Did any of these stories surprise you? Does it surprise you that United Methodist Women in Wisconsin have been impacted and seen examples of white privilege? Why or why not?
2. Can you think of ways in which your unit or you personally can work to combat the impacts of white privilege?

Closing:

Sing or read the words to: “We Are Called”—*The Faith We Sing* # 2172 or “Here I Am, Lord”—*The United Methodist Hymnal* #593

**Prayer (unison): Lord, we know that all people are your children whom you love. Help us to be aware of how our brokenness and the structural injustice in our world hurt our neighbors. Give us hearts of love and hands to do the work of building the kin(g)-dom of God from every nation where all are welcomed, cherished and beloved. All this we ask in the name of our precious Lord Jesus to give honor and glory only to you our Awesome God. AMEN.**

If you want to continue your learning, consider these other resources.

Resources:

From the United Methodist Women's reading list:

- *Dear White America* by Tim Wise
- *A Country for All: An Immigrant Manifesto* by Jorge Ramos
- *Color-blind: The Rise of Post-racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equity* by Tim Wise
- *Lacey and the African Grandmothers* by Sue Farrell Holler
- *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-trading Dynasty in History* by Thomas DeWolf
- *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* by Kao Yang
- *Same Kind of Different As Me: A Modern Day Slave, an International Art Dealer and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Together* by Ron Hall and Denver Moore
- *The Heart of Racial Justice: How Soul Change Leads to Social Change* by Brenda McNeil and Rick Richardson
- *A Credible Witness: Reflections on Power, Evangelism and Race* by Brenda McNeil
- *Can We Talk About Race? And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation* by Beverly Tatum

Linked to Wisconsin Conference United Methodist Women's website ([www.wisconsinumw.org/charter-for-racial-justice-programs.html](http://www.wisconsinumw.org/charter-for-racial-justice-programs.html)):

- *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria" And Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., Basic Books, 1997
- "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh
- Also available on the Internet: *YouTube* videos by Tim Wise

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