

# WHAT CAN WHITE PEOPLE DO?



[By June Holley with the Network Weaver Consultants Network](#)

***“The beauty of anti-racism is that you don’t have to pretend to be free of racism to be anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it’s the only way forward.” - Ijeoma Oluo***

All too often, white people ask black people: “What can I do?” I believe that this must change and white people need to take on the work of helping other white people dismantle racism and white supremacy. Here are some examples of what we can do. Please pick a handful and start trying them out. And then humbly share your actions with your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers (this is not about out-woking one another, but sharing with vulnerability and invitation). And don’t forget, working with others on this accelerates the change process.

1. **Share that dismantling racism (and particularly anti-Black racism) is the most important work we can do right now. In social media, email messages, in FTF encounters with friends, co-workers and family:**
  - a. Make statements and memes using #BlackLivesMatter, #DismantlethePolice, etc.
  - b. Share what you are personally doing to dismantle racism (including in yourself) and encourage others to act
  - c. Show support for Black leadership by sharing stories about marches, other acts of bravery (without super-humanizing)

- d. Share stories and [statistics](#) of how Black people have been [treated](#)
- e. Support the presumption, affirmation, and celebration of Black humanity (see, for example, the work of [Beautiful Ventures](#))
- f. Write letters to the editor supporting the marches and the need to dismantle racism

**2. Educate yourself. Do it in groups with other white people as much as possible.**

- a. Form a book club (See lists of readings [here](#)). Make sure you share with others what you are learning (work out loud!) and discuss how you are implementing what you learn in your life.
- b. Form a white ally/accomplice group and actively support Black leadership and actions.
- c. Collect statistics on how racism has hurt people of color (Discriminatory practices in job seeking, home buying, racial wealth gap, land theft, policing, etc).
- d. Practice answering questions and statements such as “[But don’t all lives matter?](#)” or “I don’t like the term ‘[White supremacy](#)’”.
- e. Learn about dominant or [white supremacy culture](#) and notice and shift your own behaviors such as criticism, achievement, perfectionism, overwork, etc.
- f. Engage in your own internalized healing of generational trauma and internalized white superiority (see Resmaa Menakem’s book *My Grandmother’s Hands*)
- g. Familiarize yourself with some of the [phases and stages of white identity development](#)
- h. Another recommended [resource](#)
- i. Share what you are learning and doing with others.

**3. Work with others to make changes in your life**

- a. Heal yourself/Change yourself
  - i. Practice meditation, keep a journal, practice other healing modalities (racism and white supremacy culture hurts you as well as people of color - you are a better ally if you attend to your healing)
  - ii. Change your buying habits: support Black businesses, make lists of [Black businesses](#) [\(and here\)](#) and share them with others

- iii. Tithing: give 10% of your income to support Black businesses, leadership, activities to rebuild Black communities. Here is a [list](#) of places to give. Make up local lists and share.
  - iv. Question investment. Those groups you are supporting--where are they investing their dollars? If they are funding causes that hurt people of color, move your money. Banks that support mass incarceration and candidates who back policies that are detrimental to Black communities, dismiss them from your roster
- b. Change your family
- i. Find [educational materials](#) on racism for your children or grandchildren and [talk to them](#) about them
  - ii. [End hierarchies](#) in your family: do adults share chores equally? Are your relationships with your children autocratic?
  - iii. Get your family involved in anti-racist activities and dismantling white supremacy
  - iv. Discover and celebrate the rich ethnic heritage in your own family that may have been erased or lessened by white supremacy culture
- c. Lessen your white fragility and interrupt racist behavior in others
- i. If a Black person points out your racist behavior, acknowledge it. Work with other white people to deal with the feelings that came up and make a commitment to change your behavior.
  - ii. Learn how to interrupt racist behaviors in others - [here](#) is an example. And [here](#) is another helpful resource.

#### **4. Work with others to make changes in your workplace**

- a. Look at the composition of your workforce and your hiring practices. How can your organization or business be proactive in bringing Black people in? How can it be proactive in moving Black people into leadership positions and robustly supporting them?
- b. Consider how you can support your organization in changing to support a more diverse workforce instead of trying to find people who "fit" the existing culture.
- c. Dismantle white supremacy culture in your workplace: stop the culture of overwork, urgency (especially around what is non-essential), criticism of self and others, isolation and lack of involvement from those the organization is serving, etc.

- d. Examine how work is organized. How are decisions made? Is this explicit/transparent to everyone? Do you factor in lived experience? Can decisions be moved closer to the point of implementation (“subsidiarity” in network speak) and become more peer-based and self-organizing?
- e. How can the organization buy more from Black owned businesses?
- f. Examine explicit and implicit messaging in your organization. How is this supportive of Black humanity and countering anti-Black racism and white supremacy? Are you engaged in tokenizing through word and image?
- g. Develop a statement of what your organization plans to do to dismantle racism and white supremacy internally ([see here](#)) and policies it supports (see Ben and Jerry’s statement [here](#)). Then follow through and report on your own accountability, including what you are learning from “failures”!
- h. Get your organization to hire a [trainer of color](#) to provide training on diversity, equity and inclusion.

## **5. Work with others to make changes in your community and the world**

- a. Support Black leadership: step back from the need to lead, follow Black leadership, do the grunt work, give visibility to Black leadership.
- b. Work with others to set up and raise money for pools of funds for dismantling racism and white supremacy and supporting Black causes: bail funds, support for rebuilding Black communities, support for protests, scholarships for Black youth.
- c. Learn how to be an ally/accomplice in marches: protect Black people from attack and arrest, etc; ferret out white supremacists and expose them.
- d. Research demands being made by protests and support their implementation.
- e. Support work for reparations of land to Black and Indigenous peoples.
- f. Support efforts to initiate a Truth and Justice process in your community and this country ([see here](#))
- g. Form and support working groups to meet with mayors to help defund police, steer budgets to Black communities and work on other policy measures. Create emergency response teams of social workers and medics that would compassionately assist people in crises on the streets instead of police. Resources include [here](#) and [here](#). You are there not to lead but to show officials that white people also support the demands being made,

- h. Organize white ally/accomplice groups to give volunteer time to Black communities to do what they ask you to do.
- i. Organize writing campaigns and visits to politicians in support of dismantling racism and police, redirecting money to Black communities.
- j. Help your community set up alternatives to current police systems. See [examples](#) from Camden NJ and other communities.
- k. Here is another [list](#) of actions to take

*In closing here is a powerful poem from Kelly Bates, president of the Interaction Institute for Social Change.*

<https://interactioninstitute.org/a-poem-for-the-people-of-the-planet/>

This is a work in progress. Please email your thoughts and ideas to [info@networkweaver.com](mailto:info@networkweaver.com) and we will add to the document.