

Building Resilience for Anti-Racism by Knowing What's at Stake for You

Making Your Personal Racial Justice Case Statement

Background

Like anything worth doing, racial equity work can be hard. It can be mentally and emotionally exhausting. It will ask you to face hard truths about society, the organizations you are part of, and even yourself.

At times you might even feel like quitting.

One practice to help you maintain your stamina is to document the case for why you specifically are committed to racial equity. While platitudes about “fairness” and “the right thing to do” are true, they do not have the vigour to maintain a commitment through adversity. Crafting a Personal Racial Justice Statement challenges you to go deeper and get personal. How does racial equity work align with *your* personal values? How does racism affect *specific* people in your life? In what ways does white supremacy harm you personally, and in what ways does working for racial justice help you find life, joy, and healing?

Your racial equity case statement is also a chance to reflect on the famous words of Lila Watson, “If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” How is your liberation bound up with eliminating racism and white supremacy?

Instructions

Set aside 15-30 minutes where you will be undisturbed. Turn off notifications. Journal on the prompts below. Feel free to list more than one response for each prompt. Tell stories. Get specific. The more specific this statement is to you, the more aspects of your life you bring into it, the more it will help you stay motivated. Try answering the questions for yourself first, before looking at the examples, then revisit your answers if new insights emerge.

Make your Personal Racial Justice Case Statement a living document. As your racial equity journey continues, your values commitment will clarify. Your relationships will deepen. The ways you personally are harmed by racism will become more apparent, as will the joy and healing that can come from your racial equity process. By recording these insights into your case statement you can both see how your practice evolves and become more resilient in your journey.

Your Personal Racial Justice Case Statement

Values: How does working for racial equity align with your values? What situations trigger the discomfort of seeing or doing things out of alignment with your values? Where do you experience the clarity that comes from acting in alignment with your values?

Relationships: How are people in your life negatively affected by racism? Be specific about who in your life is harmed by racism and how they are harmed. How do you feel seeing these impacts?

Self: How are *you* specifically harmed by racism and white supremacy? Where do you find joy in the work for racial justice?

Community: What is at stake for other communities you belong to in challenging racism? How are you impacted by this community harm? This may include your faith community, neighborhood, school, profession, etc.

Sample Personal Racial Justice Case Statement

Values: How does working for racial equity align with your values?

As someone committed to integrity, I recognize that when I benefit from unearned racial privilege, I'm essentially getting ahead by cheating. For example, when teachers have scored me higher due to implicit bias and their stereotypes of what an ideal student is like, I did not earn my position near the top of the class. I cannot live a life of full integrity while racism persists.

Relationships:

My son's friend is Black. I have seen how he gets stereotyped by kids and teachers. It breaks my heart to know that he will likely face stiffer penalties for misbehavior than my son will (and my son knows how to test boundaries!).

My friend L. works so hard to face racism unflinchingly and with compassion, and I see that maintaining this posture takes a toll on his health, his family, and his personal life. He is pre-diabetic. I grieve for the burden he carries.

Self:

Harm: I know that my racism creates a distance in my relationships with people of color that we constantly negotiate. These relationships are not as close as I would like them to be.

Harm: I am aware that, because of white supremacy, I cannot escape causing harm by my actions and inactions. I have felt paralyzed by shame from this.

Joy: I have found tremendous joy in the relationships with people of color and white people I have made along the way. In particular, I appreciate how my anti-racism work has helped me expand my emotional engagement, become a better listener, and find resilience I didn't know I had.

Community:

As Quakers, we pride ourselves in our work for the abolition of slavery and for civil rights, but we resist examining how our own culture fails to be inclusive. We can be cliquish, unduly tied to history, and conflict-averse in ways that undermine our values. Not only does this impede our ability to have the impact on the world that we seek, it also deadens our spiritual experience as a faith community.