

ANTI-RACISM & ANTI-OPPRESSION FACILITATION ISSUES

1. Acknowledge that this is difficult and challenging work.

Believing in the importance of social and personal change is one thing; doing it is another. Ultimately, anti-racism depends on acting on the belief that personal and social change is possible. Unless people act on their perceptions of themselves as having the ability and the power to impact systems, new knowledge and attitudes are impossible. The underlying goal of our work is for individuals and congregations to become self-motivated activists, able to apply their new consciousness to both their personal and their religious lives. It is tempting and easy for people to become stuck in commiseration about how bad, how pervasive, and how hard racism is to confront rather than focusing on taking responsibility for problem solving. It is also important to emphasize the transgenerational nature of this work, so that people understand that this system which it has taken more than 400 years to build cannot be dismantled quickly and easily. This is work for the long haul!

2. There is a tendency to view the issue as only Black/White.

A large number of people see this only as a black and white issue; ignoring all other people of color in their thinking and discussions. Our task is to use the most inclusive terminology possible and keep reminding people that, since our UU history has been largely an issue of black and white, these are the kinds of stories and examples that come up when we speak of our congregational and denominational experience. However, we are looking to the present and future, and our present includes a much wider diversity of people than in the past, and, of course, our hope is that our future will include far more. It is important to include targeted groups in readings, discussions, examples, and statistics. We also need to acknowledge the effects of color as well as culture and language on the treatment of targeted racial groups.

3. It is not useful to argue about a hierarchy of oppressions.

There is little to be gained in debating which forms of oppression are more damaging or which one is the root out of which all others grow. Each form of oppression is destructive to the human spirit. We can identify ways in which specific forms of oppressions are similar or different, and acknowledge that the dynamics of oppression are similar, even though the histories of different oppressed groups are different.

4. All forms of oppression are interconnected or linked.

Each person is a collage of many social identities. Encourage participants to explore the intersections of their social group memberships and also help them understand the similarities in the dynamics of different forms of oppression.

