

LSTC's Antiracism Transformation Team (ATT), formed last summer, has completed its monthly trainings with Chicago ROAR (Regional Organizing for Antiracism). It is in the process of organizing internally, developing strategies to engage with different parts of the LSTC community, and developing relationships with external partners.

The team is now looking toward a formal commissioning or launch when the fall semester begins. Two ATT members reflect on the commitment and discomfort of this transformational work.

By Katrina L. Steingraeber

The first time I faced my white culture through the theological lens and what my culture means to and does to people of color was in the Theological Reflections of Intersectionality class taught by Dr. Linda Thomas. I read the book *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving, which a classmate and I presented to the class. I felt as if the book was written for me or about me. This book clearly laid out characteristics of white culture: conflict avoidance, defensiveness, either/or thinking, valuing formal education over life experience and being status-oriented, to name a few. This book put unwritten white privilege right in my face. All of which I benefited from (and still benefit from) without being consciously aware of it.



It was in this class that I first heard about a new team soon to begin at LSTC, the Antiracism

Transformation Team (ATT). After joining the ATT, I again faced my white culture in a white caucus breakout group which took place several months into the training. Our CROAR trainer explained "Caucusing seeks the cultivation of behavioral change." People of color and white people meet separately to examine ways Internalized Racial Oppression (IRO) and Internalized Racial Superiority (IRS) are showing up on the team.

In this breakout meeting we listed several of the same things the book named and then some. It is an uncomfortable process to name all the stuff we carry and inherit with our culture. I had not experienced caucusing before this training. I am thankful to the CROAR leaders who walked us through this process. Caucusing can be used whenever needed to hold ourselves and others accountable. Even though this is a hard and uncomfortable process, it is helpful to name and work on our own IRS, and ultimately change a behavior.

Going through the ATT training was not easy. It took hard work and commitment to the work of antiracism. During the trainings I felt many emotions. I got angry but remained quiet about my anger; I cried but hid my tears, which I recognize is what is expected of my culture. I am working on allowing myself to show my emotions, name them, and embrace them. Being a part of the Antiracism Transformation Team has been challenging and a blessing to me. The team provides a space for me to be brave (still working on this), a space to hear others' perspectives and stories, and a space to work on making institutional changes. We have work to do, my friends. 🌱

By Vickie Johnson

I had mixed emotions when asked to serve on the LSTC Antiracism Transformation Team. Knowing that there is continuous work to be done to tear down the walls of racism and its lasting effects, I wondered why me?



Langston Hughes describes how he was feeling in *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*: "I've known rivers, ancient, dusky rivers. My soul has grown deep like the rivers." I have lived through the ills of racism growing up in the rivers of Chicago's Hyde Park community from my youth—attending local schools, Murray, Bret Harte, and Kenwood High School, and taking band at Ray. I know the rivers of this community, living just two blocks from LSTC, playing in Nichols Park until dark. I am aware of the good that the people of this neighborhood have done in the fight against systemic racism as well as the actions of white privilege that continue to oppress. Is it because I know these

rivers and how my soul has grown deep like the rivers that I am asked to serve?

After being made aware of the amount of time the team would need to invest, I came in kicking and screaming! Who has time to attend multiple three-day/all-day trainings that included a Sunday and Holy Week? Who has time to do multiple one-on-one's while pastoring during a pandemic? It is so inconsiderate and inconvenient. But the "rivers" that I know that have carried racism on its waves are both inconsiderate and inconvenient. This realization caused my eyes and heart to be opened to the work that must be done on this team. It is a call, one that requires much of one who has been given much. We are called to ride on the rocky rivers of racism, asking and answering the hard questions, tackling the difficult task, and celebrating every pebble of success that causes a ripple effect for more of the same. Not only is this team called, we are all called to the river of work that must be done drop by drop to eradicate racism here and wherever we find ourselves. 🌱

reflections

from LSTC Antiracism Transformation Team members

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Vickie Johnson,
LSTC Antiracism
Transformation Team
member