

HOW TO WRITE AN **ANTI-RACISM**
ACTION PLAN
A SELF-PACED GUIDEBOOK



COLLEGE OF THE
Holy Cross

Office of Diversity,
Equity & Inclusion

We are called in the current moment to actively move from non-racist thinking to anti-racist actions.

This guide is targeted for those who are beginners to engaging in anti-racism work.



INTRODUCTION

We are called in the current moment to actively move from non-racist thinking to anti-racist actions. This guide is targeted for those who are beginners to engaging in anti-racism work. Our goal is to illuminate that in order to do this work thoughtfully, we both need to be reflective in how prepared we are to engage with anti-racism work and that we need to have a concrete action plan to live by our commitments.

This guide broadly focuses on racial justice. However, we have built in, and encourage, particular focus on anti-Black racism. Anti-racism planning needs to be intentional, and it will take time and thoughtfulness. We encourage users to be self-reflective and be attentive to areas of growth.

We have written this guide so that people of all racial or ethnic backgrounds might be able to adapt the guide for their own needs. We encourage users to think of this as a guide, and not as something that is set in stone. It is also important to note that this guide is to help individuals engage in anti-racism planning. It does not replace the need for institutional level anti-racism planning, but complements it. As a starting point, we encourage you to think through some key terms and definitions. A helpful resource is available from the Aspen Institute – <https://bit.ly/Structural-Racism>.

In our search, we did not find such a guide readily available for individuals to use. This is our first attempt to create one. If you have ideas on how we can improve it, please submit feedback using this online form – <https://bit.ly/ARAP-Guidebook-Feedback>.

Best wishes on this journey –
Amit Taneja and Kasey Catlett

Structure of the Guide

This guide has nine discrete sections. Most sections have a list of suggested readings or resources, followed by an activity and/or reflection questions. Each section builds on the previous section and we encourage users to follow the structure of the guide.

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WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT RACE?

In this section, you are invited to think deeply about your understanding of race, racism, and anti-racism. We encourage you to make notes for each of the following reflective questions. Please do not rush through this as this is a foundational activity. We also encourage you to be honest in acknowledging areas where you might need to engage in more self-reflection and education.



SUGGESTED READINGS/ RESOURCES FOR THIS SECTION:

We have compiled a list of resources on race, racism and anti-racism – <https://bit.ly/HC-Resources>



REFLECTION QUESTIONS¹:

Suggested activities for reflections

- ▶ Have a private conversation and reflection with yourself
- ▶ Writing your responses, even if it is in bullet form, might be a helpful
- ▶ Optional: Find someone who is also participating in anti-racism planning to have a conversation with on these questions

WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST- LEARNINGS ON RACE?

- ▶ Think back to a time in your life when you first noticed that people were different from you – that their skin was a different color, or their hair looked different, etc. What do you remember about that time?
- ▶ When, from your earliest memory, did you observe or engage in your first conversation around race? With whom? What context? Did something precipitate the conversation? What messages did you receive?
 - a) What did the significant adults do or say that helped you to understand and appreciate these differences?
 - b) What did the adults do that got in the way of your understanding and appreciating these differences?
 - c) How did these early experiences shape your understanding of race and racism?
 - d) What would you have liked the adults to do in that situation? What would you do differently?
- ▶ Repeat the question above to be specific to your first conversation about Black or African-American individuals (if that was not part of the conversation)?
- ▶ What was your first meaningful interaction with a person of a different race?

- ▶ When was the first time you interacted with a person of color in an authority position (such as a teacher, government official, etc.)? When was the first time you interacted with someone who was Black/African-American in an authority position? How did these interactions shape your understanding of race, if at all?
- ▶ Were you ever taught or encouraged to be “color blind” - i.e., that you should not notice race or treat people differently on the basis of their race? Has your thinking on this changed over time, and how?

WHAT ARE YOUR MOST SALIENT MEMORIES ON RACE, RACISM AND ANTI- RACISM?

- ▶ Please think of (or write down) the 3-5 most critical memories you have about race, racism and anti-racism.
- ▶ What was your reaction? What did you do (or not do) in that situation?
- ▶ Is there a time when you did not speak up or intervene in a situation? What prevented you from speaking up or intervening? How did that make you feel?
- ▶ Is there a time when you did intervene or speak up? What were the challenges and outcomes of that conversation/act? How did that make you feel?
- ▶ Was there a time when your actions, thoughts or words were received as being racist or discriminatory against people of a different race (or ethnic background)? How was the feedback provided? How did it make you feel? Have you, if at all, changed your thinking or behavior as a result of that feedback?

¹ Adapted from “Conversations About Race and Ethnicity” as part of the Intergroup Dialogue Program at Syracuse University

SECTION 1:

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT RACE?

HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN RACIAL AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND?

The following reflection questions are different based on your racial identification. We understand that race and ethnicity might be different from how we understand ourselves, and how others might perceive us. For example, some members of racialized groups might think of themselves as members of a marginalized group, but be perceived as “white passing” by others. Additionally, bi-racial and multi-racial individuals may find their experiences reflected in either or both of the sections listed below. Please answer the questions that make the most sense for you - regardless of which section they are listed under.

For those who self-identify as a person of color or a member of a racialized group

- ▶ How do you understand your own racial background? Is there one or more specific ethnic (or national origin) group(s) that you most closely identify with? What does it mean to be a member of those racial/ethnic groups in the USA today?
- ▶ What other ethnic (or national origin) groups are part of your race? What messages did you receive about members of those groups? Were these positive or negative messages? What were the sources of these messages? Have your views on these groups changed over time? How and why?
- ▶ What messages did you receive about lighter or darker skinned individuals that are part of your racial or ethnic group?
- ▶ What messages did you receive about other racialized groups?

For those who self-identify as white

- ▶ How do you understand your own racial background? Is there one or more specific ethnic (or national origin) group(s) that you most closely identify with? What does it mean to be white and/or a member of your ethnic group in the USA today?
- ▶ What other ethnic (or national origin) groups are part of your “race”? What messages did you receive about members of those groups? Were these positive or negative messages? What were the sources of these messages? Have your views on these groups changed over time? How and why?
- ▶ What messages did you receive about lighter or darker skinned individuals that are part of your racial or ethnic group?

WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF RACE, RACISM AND ANTI-RACISM NOW?

- ▶ Where did you get the information necessary to develop your understanding on these topics? What sources of information did you use?
- ▶ Are there individuals whose stories helped shape that understanding?
- ▶ What do the terms “anti-racism” and “allyship” mean to you?

ANTI-BLACK RACISM & BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

- ▶ How do you understand (or experience) anti-black racism?
- ▶ How is anti-black racism similar or dissimilar from racism experienced by other racialized groups?
- ▶ What do you know about the Black Lives Matter movement?
- ▶ Has your understanding of the Black Lives Matter movement changed over time? Why and how?
- ▶ What do you want to know more about the Black Lives Matter movement?

INTERSECTIONALITY

- ▶ How do other identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, (dis)abilities, socio-economic status, etc. intersect with race?
- ▶ Which of your identities are you reminded of/do you recognize daily? What internal or external factors make you recognize those identities?
- ▶ Which of your identities do you not recognize on a daily basis? Why do you think that is?



ACTIVITY: DO YOU HAVE IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS?

Before you proceed to the next section, we encourage you to take the Harvard University Implicit Association Test – <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>. This test measures any implicit bias that you may hold in a number of categories. We especially encourage participants to take the “Race IAT” test. This should take 8-10 minutes.

SECTION 2: SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Before we set out to create change, it is important to understand the different areas of our life and how much influence we might have in each of those areas. It might also be important to note in which of those areas we hold formal or informal power. The “Spheres of influence”² diagram below summarizes the areas where we might be able to influence change. These broad areas generally include:

- ▶ **Self:** Educating yourself, understanding your values and feelings, and examining how you want to change.
- ▶ **Friends & Family:** Our ability to influence the people who are closest to us.
- ▶ **Social, School & Work Relationships:** Friends and acquaintances, co-workers, neighbors, classmates, and people we see on a regular basis.
- ▶ **Community:** People with whom you interact infrequently or in community settings
- ▶ **Greater Society:** People that you might not interact with at all, but you share something with (e.g. everyone who lives in your state, your country, etc.)

² Adapted from From Goodman. D. & Schapiro. S. (1997) Sexism curriculum design. In M. Adams, L.A. Bell, & G. P. Griffin (Eds.). Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook (pp.110-140). New York: Routledge

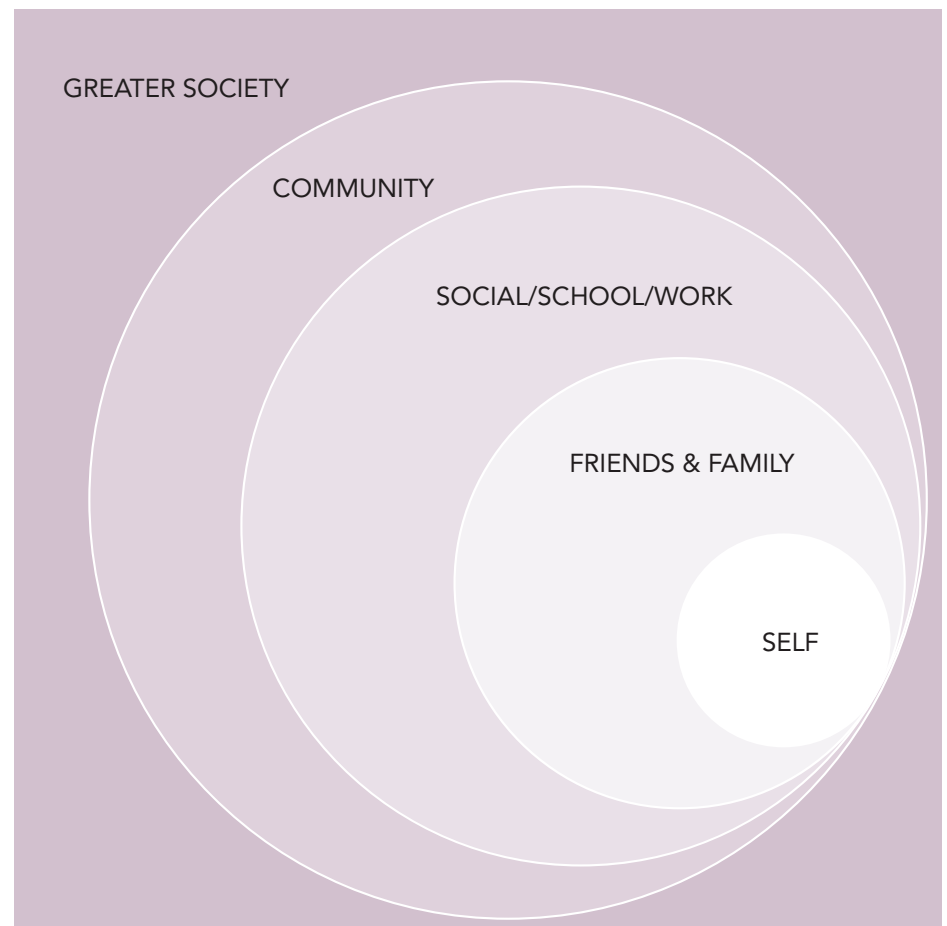


ACTIVITY #1

In the diagram below, write the names of people, communities, organizations, etc. that are part of your “spheres of influence”.

After you’ve identified these entities/individuals, reflect on the following questions.

- ▶ What are examples of the verbal and nonverbal messages you received around race, racism, and anti-racism in each of the various spheres?
- ▶ How do you think these individuals or groups developed those perspectives? What life experiences do you think led them to these views?
- ▶ Using these Spheres of Influence, what are the areas where you have expertise where you could meaningfully contribute to change?
- ▶ What strategies, if any, might be effective to use in each sphere of influence that you have?



SECTION 2: SPHERES OF INFLUENCE



ACTIVITY #2

Everyone has their own spheres of influence, and we are all part of someone else's spheres. In the diagram below, **rate the level of influence** you believe you have in the identified areas.

	1 Little to no	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always
Friends & Family	●	●	●	●	●
Social/School/Work	●	●	●	●	●
Community	●	●	●	●	●
Greater Society	●	●	●	●	●



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How did you see/experience race, racism and anti-racism play out in each of the "spheres of influence" in your life in the past:

- ▶ Self
- ▶ Friends and Family
- ▶ Social, School and Work
- ▶ Community
- ▶ Larger Society



WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES, PRINCIPLES, OR CODES OF CONDUCT?

Core principles help us navigate the challenges of life, guide our decision making processes, and influence our behavior. The list below is not exhaustive, but provides examples of common core principles.



ACTIVITY

Circle five to seven core principles or values that are central in guiding your thoughts, actions and decision making on a frequent basis. You can also write down your own principles if the list below does not include the ones that are important to you. Read the whole list before choosing the top five to seven.

Authenticity	Friendships	Pleasure
Achievement	Fun	Poise
Adventure	Growth	Popularity
Authority	Happiness	Recognition
Autonomy	Harmony	Religion
Beauty	Honesty	Reputation
Boldness	Humor	Respect
Compassion	Influence	Responsibility
Challenge	Justice	Security
Citizenship	Kindness	Self-Respect
Community	Knowledge	Service
Competency	Leadership	Stability
Contribution	Learning	Success
Creativity	Love	Status
Curiosity	Loyalty	Trustworthiness
Determination	Meaningful Work	Wealth
Fairness	Openness	Wisdom
Faith/Spirituality	Optimism
Fame	Peace



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ▶ In your own words, write a brief description of the values that are the foundation of your decision making process?
- ▶ Which values need to be present in order for you to feel fulfilled in your life? Why are they important to you? Are there influences in your life that have helped you prioritize these core values?
- ▶ Which values influence your relationships (family, friendships, romantic, co-workers, etc.) with others the most? How so?
- ▶ Which values challenge you in your personal growth? How so?
- ▶ Do you have a clear sense of a "calling" or a higher life purpose? How do your values support you in working towards that calling or purpose?

SECTION 4:

INTERPERSONAL, CULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL RACISM

We often think about racism as individual acts of discrimination on the basis of race that happen between individuals or groups. This is “individual” or “interpersonal” racism. However, Cultural Racism and Structural Racism (sometimes also referred to as institutional racism) powerfully shapes racial disparities and outcomes. Before proceeding, it is important for participants to get a deeper understanding of the differences between the different types of racism.



REQUIRED READING

Please see this website to learn more about Interpersonal, Cultural and Structural Racism: <https://bit.ly/Types-Racism>.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED READINGS

USA Today News – 12 Charts show how Racial Disparities Persist across Wealth, Health, Education and Beyond – <https://bit.ly/12Charts>

The assumptions of white privilege and what we can do about it, Bryan N. Massingale, National Catholic Reporter, 2020 – <https://bit.ly/NCR-WP>.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How has your understanding of “interpersonal”, “cultural” and “structural” racism evolved over time?
- ▶ Reflect on a time when you saw/experienced/were told about an account of “interpersonal” racism. What elements of cultural or structural racism might have enabled that behavior to occur?



ACTIVITY

Can you think of examples of racism or racial disparities in any of these broad areas? Have you witnessed or experienced any of these disparities? How knowledgeable are you in any of these areas? Please try and think of examples that are closer to your spheres of influence, as well as broader examples. Please write down any examples that you can think of.

- ▶ Education
- ▶ Employment
- ▶ Healthcare
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Immigration/Nationality
- ▶ Legal/Justice System
- ▶ Mass Media Platforms
- ▶ Representation in Government
- ▶ Socio-economic disparities
- ▶
- ▶

IDENTIFYING & PRIORITIZING ISSUES

SECTION 5:

As you are aware, becoming an anti-racist requires ongoing personal development and action focused on anti-racism work. Addressing interpersonal and structural racism can be daunting; but can be manageable, if broken down into parts and in collaboration with others.

Policies can lead to disparities and inequity in resources and institutions including politics, healthcare, criminal justice, education, employment, etc. In the previous section, you brainstormed some examples of systemic racism. **Please choose the top 2-5 areas that are most important for you.** You may want to consider prioritizing the areas that are closer to your “spheres of influences” and those that more closely align with your stated values and calling/purpose.

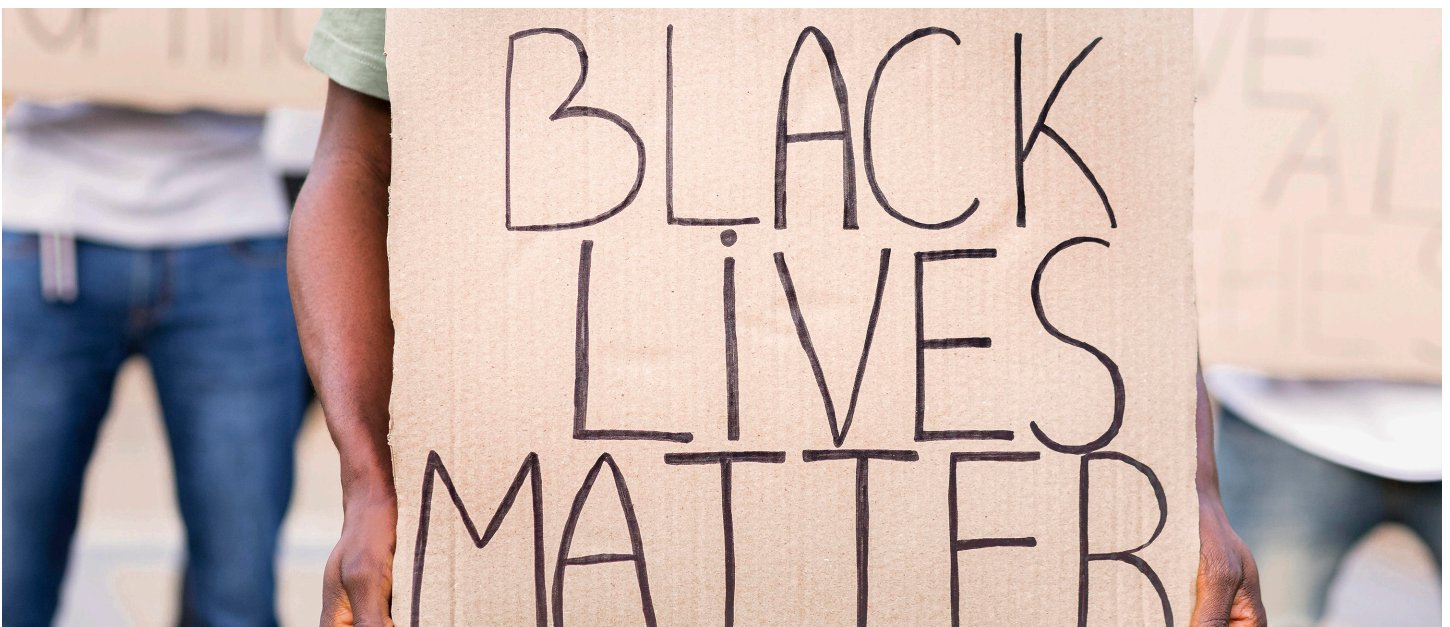


ACTIVITY

For each identified area, we encourage you to closely examine your views, beliefs, and your actions/behaviors.

- ▶ Where and how does racism manifest in this area?
- ▶ Have you ever received any data, messages, or beliefs that justified or explained racial inequality in these areas? Has your thinking and knowledge in this area changed over time?
- ▶ What can you do to learn more about the policies that produce these disparities?
- ▶ What changes do you believe need to be made in these areas?
- ▶ Who are key stakeholders in helping create change?
- ▶ What role can you play in creating this change?
- ▶ What challenges/obstacles do you anticipate in engaging in anti-racism work? How can you overcome these - either by your own actions, or in community with others?

Repeat the reflection questions above for each of the areas you identified.



SECTION 6:

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ALLY?



SUGGESTED READING

Aspiring Social Justice Ally Identity Development: A Conceptual Model by Keith E. Edwards – <https://bit.ly/ASJA-KE>.

WHAT IS AN ALLY?

An individual who works with those from the oppressed group in collaboration and partnership, seeks to not only end the system of oppression, but to liberate.³

In order to grow in your ally identity, it is critical to reflect on where you've been, where you are, and where you're going along this journey. The Aspiring Ally Identity Development model, created by Keith E. Edwards, outlines three identities within the spectrum of ally development - Ally for Self-Interest, Ally for Altruism, and Ally for Social Justice. Sometimes well meaning allies can add to or create additional harm, and therefore it is important to learn and think about ally behaviors and models more deeply.



³ Adapted from "Aspiring Social Justice Identity Development: A Conceptual Model," by Keith E. Edwards, 2006, NASPA Journal, Vol. 43, no 4

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ALLY?



ACTIVITY

Please write a short 1-2 sentence response for each of the questions below. This should be a summary sentence.

QUESTION	YOUR RESPONSE
What is your motivation to be an ally?	
To whom do you want to be an ally? What is your relationship with members of oppressed groups ? Be specific.	
Who do you think of when you hear the term " Victims of Oppression "	
Who is the " focus of the problem " – i.e., who is perpetuating racism?	
Who is in need of justice ?	
What, if any, are your Spiritual or Moral Foundation/Principles in racial justice work?	
What power , if any, do you have in racial justice work? How do you think of that power in relationship to marginalized communities?	
What is your source of ongoing motivation to sustain your commitments to racial justice work?	
Are you likely to make " mistakes " while engaging in racial justice work? How do you think you will respond to feedback?	
What is your relationship to the systems/structures that perpetuate racism?	
Which individuals should be the focus of your work in creating a racially just society?	
What privileges , if any, do you have in racial justice work? How do you feel about that privilege? What do you do with that privilege?	

After reading *Aspiring Social Justice Ally Identity Development: A Conceptual Model* (<https://bit.ly/ASJA-KE>) by Keith E. Edwards, and especially the table on page 9 (page #47 as listed on the bottom of the page in the PDF), try to compare your responses in the table above against the model proposed by Edwards. Are you an ally for self-interest, for altruism, or for social justice?

SECTION 6:

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ALLY?

Next, please use this diagram to guide you through the next set of reflection questions.

- ▶ Along the diagram, draw a circle of where you began your ally journey.
- ▶ Along the diagram, draw a star where you currently see yourself as an ally.
- ▶ Along the diagram, draw a square of where you want to end up as an ally.



Note: the symbols can be between numbers to recognize transitions between identities.



1

Ally for Self-Interest

2

Ally for Altruism

3

Ally for Social Justice



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How would you know that you are an ally for racial justice?
- ▶ How have your allyship behaviors evolved over time? What were the significant events or experiences to be a more active ally?
 - If you have not been an active ally, what are the barriers that keep you from engaging in ally behaviors?
- ▶ What challenges have you faced when you have engaged in ally behaviors? How did you overcome those challenges?
- ▶ Moving forward, what are things you can do to be a better ally?
- ▶ What role do mistakes play in the development of an ally? How should you respond to critiques?

WHAT AN ALLY ISN'T:

- ▶ An ally doesn't speak for an individual or community. An ally works for and with marginalized communities by providing resources, identifying discriminatory policies and advocating for change, and ensuring that diverse talent and perspectives are included in decision making processes.
- ▶ An ally isn't necessarily an expert. You don't need to have all the answers, but it is important to know your resources and get support when needed. Delegate to appropriate professionals, if the resources needed are beyond your scope of expertise and experiences.
- ▶ An ally doesn't get defensive and welcomes feedback for growth.

SECTION 7: WRITING THE ACTION PLAN

In this section we are ready to write our action plan. By now, we have done the foundational work of exploring our values and calling, understanding different types of racism, identifying the issues that we are most passionate about, and developing what allyship means. Using these reflections as foundational resources, we can now make commitments about the actions we are willing to undertake to fight racism. It is important that you consider writing SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely). If you are not familiar with SMART goals, please see this helpful guide from the University of California – <https://bit.ly/SMARTGOALS-UC>.

Below, you will write your action plan with at least one goal. You can add as many goals as you like. We encourage you to write goals that can be accomplished in a reasonable time-frame.

Goal: What are you trying to accomplish?

Type: Is the issue an example of institutional racism or structural racism?

Action Plan: What are you willing to do in order to address the issue and make change?

Perceived Obstacles: Do you anticipate any obstacles? Policies? People? How will you navigate those obstacles?

Resources Needed: What do you need in order to address the issue and make change? Key stakeholders? Are there community organizations that can help? Financial support?

Timeline: What is the order of events that need to happen in order to achieve your goal?

Accountability: What strategies can you use to ensure you meet your goals? What internal or external accountability measures will be helpful (or are needed)?

ANTI-RACISM ACTION PLAN

Goal	Type	Action Plan	Perceived Obstacles	Resources	Timeline	Accountability

You can download an editable word document for you to type in your responses at <https://bit.ly/HC-ActionPlan>.

SECTION 8:

IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION PLAN; RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES; ACCOUNTABILITY

Anti-racism requires a deep and sustained commitment. You now have a plan, and it is time to put it in action. It is possible, and perhaps even likely that we will both make mistakes and/or experience obstacles in the action plans that we set for ourselves. In this section, we also want to help you move your ideas into action, build relationships based on solidarity and community in your anti-racism work, and find ways to overcome obstacles.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- ▶ How do you define success in the implementation of your plan?
- ▶ As an ally, how will you avoid taking the spotlight with your actions to ensure that your reasons and decisions are grounded in ensuring that the narratives and lived-experiences of marginalized communities are recognized?
- ▶ From where do you expect challenges?
- ▶ What are productive response strategies to those challenges?
- ▶ Who will you consult with if you need more resources or advice?
- ▶ How will you keep yourself motivated to stick to the plan?
- ▶ How will you know if one or more of your goals needs to be altered, modified, or perhaps even abandoned? (hint: see next section)



REVISE & RE-IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

Allyship is ongoing work that requires self-reflection, examining your behaviors, honest conversations with others, continuous education on relevant issues, and actively engaging in anti-racism work. Growth in your allyship should be evident when moving from a completed action plan to structuring a new one. This is not a one and done activity, but a life-long commitment.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ▶ Why is it important to revisit your action plan?
- ▶ What changes or updates, if any, do you anticipate making to your original Action Plan?
- ▶ How will you use your original Action Plan to structure future action plans?
- ▶ What did you learn from implementing your previous action plan? How will that learning shape your next action plan?



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This guide is our first attempt to create such a free, public resource. We welcome your constructive feedback on (1) aspects of the guide that were particularly helpful for you, and/or (2) ways in which we can improve future versions of this guide. Please submit your feedback using this online form – <https://bit.ly/ARAP-Guidebook-Feedback>.