

Unwrapping Racism

Dealing with Differences

Chuck Grose

Series in Social Equality and Justice



VERNON PRESS

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www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street, Suite 1200
Wilmington, Delaware, 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Series in Social Equality and Justice

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023937188

ISBN: 978-1-64889-679-8

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Table of Contents

	Acknowledgments	v
	Introducing Unwrapping Racism: Dealing with Differences	vii
Chapter 1	Thinking and Feeling about Differences as a Guide for Race Relations	1
Chapter 2	Empathy – The Lens to Guide Dismantling Racial Experiences	11
Chapter 3	Advantage and Privilege Focused through the Lens of Peggy McIntosh’s “Invisible Knapsack”	27
Chapter 4	Is Talking about Race Still a Discussion Topic?	43
Chapter 5	Everyday Violence and Its Alternatives	71
Chapter 6	Early Social Change Movements	95
Chapter 7	Current Social Movements for Social Change	113
Chapter 8	How Many Ways Can We Undo Race and Racism?	129
	Index	139

Acknowledgments

For me, it took many communities to raise this author and to write “Unwrapping Racism.”

Current Family members. Sons Justus, Pete, Mark, Paul, Daniel, daughters Mary Ruth, Lenoska, Johnnie, Jane, and my wife, Trish, recognize that my passionate pursuit of racial issues can nurture a more equitable world. Nephews and nieces, near and far, respect my risk-taking and activism as embodied in my book.

Dean, professor and support for teaching opportunities. Dean Walter Muelder ventilated the profound issues of life and articulated the Good News for individuals and the structures of society. The Dean introduced me and other students to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Howard Thurman at Boston University School of Theology. King elucidated social ethics and the study of God in action in Muelder’s classes as a PhD candidate. Howard Thurman, University Chaplain, lived and preached a mystical inner joy. He added depth to life and became the inspiration for the substance and style of my writing.

Colleagues and friends. No friends were better supporters of my justice advocacy than Margaret Preska, Don and Pat Renner, and Patty Sho’s family in Belize.

Initiator. Dennis Crow, friend and colleague, motivated me to add a section on journaling to my book.

Nudger. Lee H. Hamilton, an international educator and national administrative political leader, coached me to be the best of what I have learned.

Administrators. At Huston-Tillotson College, Austin, Texas, my administrators trusted me with essential priorities and leadership roles. Women leaders, in particular, taught me to be a servant leader.

Encouragers. Faye Kanne, Tim McGlennen and Cindy Saufferer keep raising our level of friendship to a higher standard and inspire my book to excel.

Model. Doug Wingeier was a role model, scholar, author, activist and friend who stimulated the individual and institutional racial actions that bring my book to everyday life.

Healers. Bretnie Eschenbach, Maureen Lunde, Rochelle Bauman and Karin Ryan elicit a different type of sense to my senses. Granddaughter Bretnie’s deeply caring and technological expertise lift my life in unanticipated ways. Technical expert Maureen Lunde relieves stress and restores energy for my book as an advisor. Rochelle Bauman needs my needy muscles while guiding

my body therapy. Karin Ryan addresses my emotional issues and highlights empathy and decision-making.

Editors. Argiris Legatos, Blanca Caro, Kimberly Rude and marketing director Javier Rodriguez, like no one else, understand the imminent need for my defining racial messages to be heard and implemented.

Church members. These churches of color nourished my spirit with reciprocity and generosity: Wesley United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas, Hmong Community United Methodist Church, St. Paul, Minnesota, Bad River United Methodist Church, Odanah, Wisconsin, and Barker Road Methodist Church, Singapore. Mayflower UCC, Minneapolis continues my zest for unequivocal racial redemption.

Introducing Unwrapping Racism: Dealing with Differences

Strategic to today's topsy-turvy democracy is why skin color still enflames pain and violence. We, and our groups, can change that racial hierarchy in the U. S. and beyond (Grose 2023). You, the reader, empower the hero of your racial actions (Hemendez, 8 Nov, 2022).

Author's Experiences and Overall Perspectives on Race

My in-depth, powerful experiences with people of color is the lifelong source of my passion for all racial encounters. This passion for racial justice began more as a journey in which I was trying to understand myself in terms of the whole world. In my gut, I intentionally sought face-to-face interactions with persons of different racial backgrounds. It meant I would learn from them in their own communities!

A telegram came to me in Singapore from a Black college president in Austin, Texas. He recruited me to teach sociology at Huston-Tillotson College, a historically-Black college. I was warmly received by its students, faculty and staff; it was challenging for me as their only white colleague. That entire experience continues to motivate my passion, understanding and focus on race relations.

Out of classroom experiences included participation in civil rights marches, demonstrations against the Ku Klux Klan, leading in Austin's City Council meetings with Black community members, serving as a community organizer in Black communities, and lecturing with Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). Also fascinating for me was to live in a Black community and lead in a Black church for 11 years.

Hired by other groups of color, I co-led a Hmong institution, served as an American Indian community worker, and taught in the only two colleges of the diverse country Belize, Central America.

Picture in your mind my many experiences associated with teaching in historically-white institutions like Olivet College in Michigan, and Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota. Seated in a circle, the racially diverse student groups engaged each other and me while learning by discussion. Most of the students of color respected how I dealt with racial issues and were empowered by my leadership.

Many of us are unclear about how we deal with human differences. Some see differences as only a way to seek common understanding – not as ends in themselves. Others view racial differences as relationships that need minimizing or hiding for whatever reason or no reason.

Consider my approach. Differences are not the problem. Rather it is how our feelings and thoughts address social differences. That is challenging, complex and changing.

Each chapter in this book is filled with numerous paragraphs which show how the reader may vitally act on race. All the designed projects, exercises and some of the questions also may be utilized with other issues of the book. The final chapter exclusively approaches how to make a difference with our racial conundrum.

Our Background to Multi-Racial Excellence

You, I, and everyone desire to achieve the utmost in our lives, and for our offspring. One profound approach to this goal is to equip ourselves for that to happen. So we anticipate, prepare, plan, and act upon our goals that dynamically include viable racial relationships. This contextual background inspires others to join us in exploring that racial part of our goals, including racial engagements.

You and I bring ourselves to the vibrant and volatile daily experiences with race. Our questions, biases, memories, lingering thoughts, and personal “baggage” of awkward scripts present the context for our encounters with racial relationships. There is singular and plural power in that background.

And, we pull up the societal frameworks for our present-day racial context. These fundamental structures include where and when we were born, family life, friendship patterns, political systems, spiritual frames of reference, educational environment, and media connections.

Journaling

Neurological Journaling

Basically, the neurons of the brain initiate the optic nerve through the neurological pathways to connect with the hand. Simplified, this process illuminates thinking to create new insights and understanding throughout the body systems. That interplay within the neurological process brings meaning to what we call journaling (Ryan, Oct. 25, 2022).

An in depth, scholarly description of this journaling is presented by Dr. Karin Ryan.

Journaling has neurobiological benefits, including increased neuroplasticity, allowing your brain to grow and adjust. When you write, you are activating many parts of your brain, including your frontal lobe for interpreting words and language, your occipital lobe as you see your writing, and your motor cortex as you move your arm and hand (Ryan, Nov. 17, 2022).

Psychological Responses with Journaling

Some of our awesome moments, creative ideas, and deep feelings bubble up while journaling.

It permeates our intellectual juices with newly discovered inspirational ideas.

It awakens our sluggish feelings that stimulate tender, heartfelt experiences.

When both head and heart resonate, we may touch the keys of harmonious blending.

All these beautiful experiences are similar to hearing those all-encompassing musical sounds while sitting inside an orchestra.

Our individual writing insights may be less glorious, and may only clarify an anticipated word or expression.

Often our journaling thoughts seem routine, stale, stuck, trite, or we may “call timeout.”

And our feelings may be shallow, dull, lacking empathy or distracted by our dominating thoughts.

They may become like the string instrument that strikes a shrill note.

Or we may dispel our feelings, and launch a few questions. Our journaling may grow through questions we dismiss, or expedite.

Kinds of Journaling

In essence, our journaling may be eclectic, multi-directional, probing, and it uses critical thinking.

Eclectic journaling accepts the greatest variety of persons and circumstances and sees them in their unique and disjointed experiences. For instance, persons with disadvantaged backgrounds and the privileged elites are recognized in their less powerful and more powerful characteristics.

Multi-directional journaling has the ability to imagine the impact of social forces on individual lives, and include empathy. For example, this kind of writing goes beyond either/or thinking and looks for multiple approaches to persons frequently unnoticed or hidden, or obscured from our vision.

Probing journaling investigates a layered background of what is behind issues. Thoughts, feelings, change and connections to each day's experience are addressed. For example, what are our own decision-making behaviors around the racial hierarchy?

Critical thinking journaling weighs various viewpoints by way of comparing and/or contrasting an issue or issues. Through skepticism, curiosity and doubt, this thought process questions an argument or conclusion. For instance, are there alternative views about race that are based on new evidence or heartfelt feelings?

Other journaling initiatives by the reader also are encouraged. For example, the reader is challenged to journal with any questions not designated in my book's list. All phases of journaling are appropriate for group experience and/or individual opportunities. If the journaling needs to be read by others, they may expect a formal, grammatical approach. Confidentiality may be needed. Otherwise, a free-flowing style without commas and periods will suffice.

Journaling Action

Effective and genuine journaling may occur in a single sentence or phrase, or within a paragraph. Consequently, it may reflect only one type of journaling. For greater insight and development, the reader can plan to adopt all the above kinds of journaling by the time of completing the book.

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PAGES MISSING
FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Index

A

activist, 66, 118
advocate, 64
ally, 64
Anthony, Susan B., 96
Anti-Defamation League, 89
Antifa, 87
Anti-Lynching Act, 76
antipathy, 59
Asian Americans, 46, 57
assimilation, 62, 101

B

baggage, 61
becoming anti-racist, 132
Black Lives Matter, 88, 117-120
Black styles of communication, 74
Black Women's Movement, 96-97
boarding schools, 102-103
bullying, 84-86

C

challenger, 65
change movement different, 121
characteristics of privilege, 33-34
Charlottesville, Virginia, 86-90
Civil War statues, 88-89
colonialism, 47-49
colorblind racism, 50-51, 133
colorism, 51-52
Colvin, Claudette, 103
compassion, 18, 98, 104, 106
Confucius, 8
costs of privilege, 35-39

counter bullies, 85
cultural pluralism, 62

D

Davis, Angela, 113
Densley, James, 83
diagram, 5
differences that are the problem,
135
discrimination, 53
Douglas, Frederick, 97, 107
Du Bois, W.E.D., 36, 97-98

E

empathic action, 19-21
empathy, 11-24, 65, 106
empowerer, 66
enslave Black Africans, 48
ethnocentrism, 47
Eugenics Movement, 98-99
extremism, 86

F

First Nation people, 101-102
Floyd, George, murder, 77
Freedom Democratic Party, 100-
101
Freedom Riders, 106
Freedom Schools, 100
Freire, Paulo, 67

G

Gandhi, Mahatma, 71-72
Goleman, Daniel, 11-12, 16

gunning, 80-81, 84

H

Hamer, Mary Lou, 100-101

I

identity, 1, 3, 6-7, 29, 136
 Immigration and Customs
 Enforcement, 99-100
 Indigenous, 49, 74, 101, 103
 informed empathy, 17-19
 institutions, 53, 56, 134
 inter-group relationships, 61
 Invisible Knapsack, 29-31

J

Justice Kenanji Brown, 75

K

Kendi, X Ibram, 119, 135
 King, Jr, Martin Luther, non-
 violence, 72, 107-108
 King, Coretta Scott, and violence,
 73-74
 Klein, Naomi, 90
 Klobuchar, Amy, 20
 Kochman, Shaun, 74
 Ku Klux Klan, 86-87, 90

L

Latinos, 24, 52, 56, 98
 Lawson, James, 104
 Leaderful, 11
 League of Women Voters, 98
 Lens to guide, 11
 Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 108
 Levels of power, 132
 Lewis John, 106-107

Liberal Arts Leaders Alliance for
 Racial Equity, 125
 Lynching, 75

M

Make good trouble, 107
 Marching for Our Lives in D. C.,
 114-115
 Martin, Trayvon, 68, 117
 mass execution of Dakota, 74
 mass murders, 80
 McGhee, Heather, 35-36, 132
 McIntosh, Peggy, 27-30
 McKinney, Karen, 56-57
 melting pot, 61-62
 Middle Kingdom, 47
 Mitchell, Tania, 6-7
 Montgomery, Alabama, 103-104
 Moving Walkway, 129-130

N

National Peace and Justice
 Museum, 75
 National Rifle Association, 81
 Nazi Germany, 98
 Neo-Confederates, 85-86
 Neo-Nazis, 85, 90
 non-Native perpetrators, 75
 non-violence, 72, 108
 normalization and non-
 normalization, 124
 normalized or non-normalized,
 126-127
 Novak, Karen, 19-20

P

Paired racial differences, 125
 Parkland High School massacre,
 113-114

Parks, Rosa, 103-105
people of color, 38, 46, 50, 124
Peterson, Julian, 83, 114
Pope Francis, Canada, 101-102
power, 1, 39-40, 67, 67, 118, 132,
136
predict gun violence, 80
prejudice, 59
privilege, 27-41, 60-61
privilege system, 32
problem solving, 21, 58-59
protestors and government, 110

R

race, 1, 77, 134
racial formation, 55
racial microaggressions, 133
racial minorities, 51
racial hierarchy, 131
racial profiling, 78
racial myth or reality, 53
racism, 2, 57-59, 132-13
reciprocity, 7-8
replacement of our system of
racial hierarchy, 131
residential schools, Canada, 101-
102

S

Sanger, Margaret, 99
satyagraphi, 72
school to prison pipeline, 79
shooters, 83, 114
slave trade, 48
Smart, Ninian, 17
social change, 95, 105
social construction of race, 54
social justice, 97
social movements, 95
social system, 32, 124

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, 96
stereotypes, 60-61

T

Tatum, Beverly, 129
The Titanic, 27
Till, Emmett, 103
triangles, 125
Truth, Racial Healing, and
Transformation, 132
types of questions, 135-136

U

unarmed black males killed, 71-
78, 123
Uvalde, Texas, 81

V

values, 1-4, 45
Violence Against Women Act, 75
voting and protests, 98

W

Wells, Ida B., 96
Westerman, Gwen, 74-77
Where do you come from? 134-135
White dominant group, 34
White, Lori, 125
White nationalists, 85-86, 89, 134
White Nationalists on college
campuses, 89
White Women's Suffrage
Movement, 95-98