

Engaging the Racial Justice Audit of Episcopal Leadership

Across The Episcopal Church, leaders and members are engaging deeply with Becoming Beloved Community (BBC), our church's long-term, strategic commitment to racial healing, reconciliation and justice.

One of the primary disciplines of Becoming Beloved Community is Telling the Truth about Our Churches and Race. At the church-wide level, we have responded to this charge via the Racial Justice Audit, which gathered and analyzed data across the church's major leadership bodies and across a representative sample of dioceses. The audit findings provide ground-breaking narrative and quantitative data describing the racial, cultural, and ethnic make-up of our church's leadership (WHO we are) and experiences of racial identity and racism in our leadership bodies and systems (HOW we are). Learn more at www.episcopalchurch.org/racial-justice-audit.

Leadership bodies and ministry groups at every level are encouraged to engage the audit findings for themselves. Here are some of the most important ways:

- Read and reflect on the full Racial Justice Audit Report. How does it make you feel? What does it make you think? What stands out? How do these findings relate to your own experience of racial identity and racism in the life of the church? In your own life?
- Reflect specifically on the Nine Patterns of Systemic Racism in Episcopal Leadership, a set of themes gleaned from the audit data by The Mission Institute. Which patterns are most familiar or resonant for you? Which show up most powerfully in your context? What is the impact of these patterns of behaviors and experiences in your leadership body or ministry as a whole? What could you or your leadership body do to transform and influence these patterns?

We have organized further responses into three categories: EDUCATION, RELATIONSHIP, DATA.

EDUCATION

Review the Racial Justice Audit Report findings and identify any terms that are unfamiliar, including those in the report glossary. Conduct research, read books, watch films, etc., to learn more.

RELATIONSHIP

Use the adapted version of the Racial Justice Survey of Episcopal Leadership on the next page to guide an in-depth conversation in your own ministry or leadership body about racial identity and racism. For example, what would it look like to use this with your vestry, Commission on Ministry, staff, etc... to open up conversations around individuals' experiences around race and racism?

DATA

- Gather data on race, ethnicity and culture within and around your ministry (congregation, diocese, etc.) and notice differences in who is a member or leader or engaged.
- Membership
- Leadership (vestry, clergy, staff, other leadership bodies [official and unofficial])
- Engagement (people who may not consider themselves "members" but are part of the church's life and ministry [attend a parents group, 12-Step group, preschool, soup kitchen, etc.]
- Compare your racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup to the local area's demographics (<https://www.generalconvention.org/study-your-neighborhood>). Notice differences between the racial, ethnic and cultural makeup of the ministry and its leadership, and the makeup of the community where your ministry is based. Widen the circle and compare with adjacent geographic areas that may have been designed or zoned to welcome significantly different racial, ethnic or cultural groups.
- Contact missioninstitute.ma@gmail.com about a comprehensive audit of your ministry or leadership body

Reflecting on Racial Identity and Systemic Racism in Your Leadership Body or Ministry

Use this survey – adapted from the Racial Justice Audit of Episcopal Leadership – as a conversation starter for your various leadership bodies and ministries to reflect on their own understandings of racial identity and experiences of racism in your context.

Invite people to complete the survey on their own and then use the reflection questions on p. 5. Remember the goal isn't agreement, but being curious about our varied perspectives and experiences.

1. Please select ALL descriptions that express how you understand your racial and ethnic heritage:

- Indigenous, Native American, or Alaskan Native
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Middle Eastern or Arab American
- South Asian or Indian American
- East Asian or Asian American
- Euro-American
- Latino/a/x, Hispanic American, or Mestizo Latino/a/x
- Hispanic American, Afrodescendiente
- Afro-Caribbean
- African immigrant
- U.S. African Descent
- Black
- White
- Not listed (please describe) _____

2. Please choose ALL that apply to describe your relationship to the United States.

- I was not born in the United States
- I was born in the United States
- I do not live in the United States
- I live in the United States
- I immigrated to the United States after birth
- One or more of my parents immigrated to the United States
- One or more of my grandparents immigrated to the United States
- Other (please describe) _____

3. Which of the following is closest to your definition of race:

- Who you are biologically/genetically or your ancestry
- Physical characteristics (e.g. skin color)
- Human-made categories of people
- Ethnicity or culture
- All of the above None of the above
- Other (please specify)

4. Which of the following is closest to your definition of racism:

- Racial prejudice or discrimination
- A system that grants power to one social group
- Racialized violence or hatred
- All of the above
- None of the above
- Other (please specify)

5. Please use your own understanding of race and racism to describe where and how—if at all—you saw issues of race and racism come up during the process of becoming or serving as a member of your leadership body or ministry.

6. Consider the process of becoming part of the leadership body or ministry on which you currently serve. How did you feel about the following aspects of the process?

Included

Neutral

Marginalized

_____ Access to information provided about the position

_____ Languages used throughout the process

_____ Communication with your diocese

_____ Culture(s) represented throughout the process

_____ Reception by members of your leadership body

_____ Orientation to your role as a member of your leadership body

_____ Other (please describe) _____

7. To what extent have you EXPERIENCED the following things in your time as a leader or member?

Not at all

Occasionally

Frequently

_____ You were treated with less courtesy or respect than other church leaders.

_____ You did not feel supported in your ministry and leadership.

_____ You received feedback on how you speak, dress, or interact with people.

_____ People acted as if they thought you were not smart.

- _____ People acted as if they were afraid of you.
- _____ People acted as if they thought you were dishonest.
- _____ People acted as if you were not as good as they were.
- _____ People did not have knowledge about or were not curious about your culture/context.
- _____ You were called names or insulted.
- _____ You were intimidated, harassed, or suppressed.
- _____ People acted as if you knew less about finances.
- _____ Other (please describe) _____

What do you think was the MAIN REASON for this/these experience(s)?

8. To what extent did you NOTICE the following with your fellow leaders or members?

Not at all

Occasionally

Frequently

- _____ A person of color being treated with less courtesy or respect than other people.
- _____ A person of color receiving less support than other people in a similar role.
- _____ A person of color receiving feedback on how they speak, dress, or interact with people.
- _____ People acting as if they think a person of color is not smart.
- _____ People acting as if they are afraid of a person of color.
- _____ People acting as if they think a person of color is dishonest.
- _____ People acting as if a person of color does not have the full power and authority deserving of a member of the group.
- _____ People not having knowledge about or not being curious about a person of color's different culture and context.
- _____ A person of color being called names or insulted.
- _____ A person of color being intimidated, harassed, or suppressed.
- _____ People acting as if a person of color knows less about finances.
- _____ Other (please specify)

What do you think was the MAIN REASON for this/these experience(s)?

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9. Share additional thoughts about your experience of race and racism as a leader or member in this ministry, or anything else that feels relevant.
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Reflection Questions

After answering each question, provide ample time and space to sit and reflect with what people shared. Remember the goal isn't agreement, but being curious about our varied perspectives and experiences.

1. How do you feel after answering these questions?
2. If people are willing to share, you may ask and reflect on the following questions:
 - Go around the group and share how you racially identify? How did it feel to hear everyone share their racial identity out loud? Have you done that before? Why or why not?
 - Share your definition of race and racism. Are people generally on the same page or are there differences in how individuals define these terms? Discuss how you each arrived at your definition, without attempting to convince or change anyone's mind.
 - Invite people to share their experiences of witnessing or experiencing racism in your ministry context. Was there a difference between People of Color and white people's experience? How does that feel? How do you make sense of it?
3. Take a moment for silent reflection or journaling. Is there anything else that needs to be shared?