



Caucusing

An Essential Strategy for Building an Effective Anti-Racism Team

Caucusing creates a foundation upon which to build concrete organizing strategies for People of Color and Whites to work as anti-racist allies in order to accomplish the mission of the North Texas Conference Anti-Racism Team: *to organize to transform the North Texas Conference into an anti-racist multicultural institution.*

In caucusing, team members work within their respective racial identity groups. In these two groups team members find needed freedom and support for the individual and collective struggle to understand and confront the effects of internalized racist oppression for People of Color and internalized racist superiority for Whites. When the two caucus groups come back together as a team they are better able to understand, confront, and dismantle racism within the Team and within the North Texas Conference.

Caucusing for People of Color

The caucus provides a safe and liberated environment in which to explore Internalized Racist Oppression (IRO) and its effects individually and collectively. Crossroads Ministry offers the following definition of IRO:

a complex, multi-generational socialization process in which People of Color ACCEPT, BELIEVE, and LIVE OUT negative societal definitions. These behaviors support and help maintain the racist construct.

These behaviors can be grouped into four areas: self concept and self esteem; within the racial group; between racial groups; and within institutions. Only by intentionally surfacing and confronting these dynamics can POC build the relationships and alliances necessary to confront and dismantle institutional and cultural racism.

Part of the work of caucusing for People of Color, then, is to look deeply at each of these four groups of behaviors to identify their toxicity, and to collectively work toward new, life-giving behaviors with the support of the entire Anti-Racism Team.

Caucusing also builds collective POC voice and power so that individuals (especially leaders) are not abandoned or sacrificed and also are accountable to the Team for actions and decisions.

Ongoing questions for People of Color caucusing

- What strategies does the church/Conference use to keep us divided and competing with one another for access and resources? How can we collectively resist these dynamics?
- In what ways do we, as individuals and as a group, perpetuate racism in the North Texas Conference and in our churches?
- In what ways does IRO interfere with the functioning of our Team?
- What does it mean for POC to hold the North Texas Conference accountable?
- What relationship do we have as individuals and as a group to POC communities of resistance?

Caucusing for White People

Caucusing provides a safe and open environment in which Whites can be made aware of Internalized Racist Superiority (IRS) in our lives, culture, churches and the Conference. Crossroads Ministry has developed the following definition of Internalized Racist Superiority:

a complex multi-generational socialization process that teaches White people to believe, accept, and/or live out superior societal definitions of self and to fit into and live out superior societal roles. These behaviors define and normalize the race construct and its outcome: white supremacy.

When combined with Internalized Racist Oppression that People of Color experience, IRS serves to support and maintain the race construct in our culture, nation and institutions, including the North Texas Conference. IRS also depends on remaining invisible to Whites individually and collectively and is often cloaked in the “colorblind” ideology of the post civil-rights era. Nevertheless, People of Color experience it as a powerful white collective force.

Through caucusing, anti-racist Whites gain greater clarity about white power and privilege, the identity-shaping power of racism (power³), and anti-racism. Gaining clarity about racism’s hooks – how we act out of these narrow and limited identities – is an important part of claiming our anti-racist identity. The caucus is a place where we define, design, plan, develop, dream, and envision what it means to be anti-racist Whites contributing to transforming the North Texas Conference into an anti-racist multicultural institution.

Ongoing questions for Whites caucusing

Individual IRS

- Recalling the lies and liars (“I remember” exercise from Phase 2 training) how did IRS get “baked” into me?
- How does IRS affect my participation on the Team; in leading a caucus?
- What are some of my/our “looking good” strategies as individuals, teams, churches and the Conference?

Collective IRS

- How do you see white privilege and power (Power²) working in the ART and/or Conference?
- What is the White culture in the ART and/or Conference?
- What is welcoming, affirming, and inviting about ART and/or Conference for white persons?
- What about ART and/or Conference looks “white”?
- How does white individual IRS come together in ART and/or Conference (at meetings, in organizing, everyday life)?

Ending Caucus

- Check in (debrief) on where people are.
- Note issues that are still on the table for future discussion.
- Decide what will be reported back to the whole Team.
- Summarize items to think about and apply for the next gathering ... commit to areas in which you will heighten your anti-racism and IRS consciousness.

Adapted from Crossroads Ministry *Racial Identity Caucusing: A Strategy for Building Anti-Racist Collectives*.