



How Will We Start? Entry Points to the Racial Justice Journey

There are many pathways and entry points to working on one's own racism and becoming an anti-racist community. These four examples are by no means meant to be exhaustive but simply to spark your thinking:

1. Kolot Chayeinu/Voices of Our Lives, Brooklyn, NY: Start by Looking Inward

The Kolot Race Working Group writes:

Kolot began its work by establishing a working group, made up of equal parts white members and members who were people of color. This initial group established three goals: to develop shared language analysis; to wrestle within the task force before doing so in the larger congregation; and to address internal congregational needs first. Two questions that were at the core of the first discussions were: how was this work Jewish? And how and to whom to be accountable in the work?

Over the course of eight years, the group became the Race Working Group, which has had rotating leadership, and a staff member part of whose time includes organizing meetings and other actions and making new connections in the wider Jewish and New York worlds. Using the [Continuum on Becoming and Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization](#) as a metric and guide, over the years the working group has gradually expanded its work to the broader community and to teaching others how to engage in this work--but at the beginning, the focus was deliberately, tenaciously, and solely on internal behaviors and dynamics.

Read more: "[Why Must We Work To Undo Racism as Jews](#)," by Rabbi Ellen Lippmann:

2. Congregation Beth Elohim, Brooklyn, NY: Start by Reading

Rabbi Rachel Timoner writes:

At CBE, we had the extraordinary privilege of welcoming Toni Morrison in February 2016. We decided that we would use her visit as an opportunity to begin a study series on race in America. We read four books over the four months after her visit: *Between the World and Me* (Ta Nehisi Coates), *Just Mercy* (Bryan Stevenson), *The New Jim Crow* (Michelle Alexander) and *How Jews Became White Folks* (Karen Brodtkin). Two hundred people participated in the series and eight CBE members facilitated small group dialogues. The plan was to form a community organizing team out of the series. They called themselves the Dismantling Racism Team. That team led our congregation's engagement with two successful statewide campaigns; they have also engaged the community in education around racism through film screenings, book readings and issue forums.

3. Congregation Dorshei Tzedek, Newton, MA: Start with Coalition and Action

Member Alan Epstein writes:

We began with a Criminal Justice Reform task force that joined the Jobs not Jails coalition. When Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), a Metro IAF affiliate, began organizing for legislative changes, we were an early participant. As we won campaigns, took on new ones, read together, and hosted formerly incarcerated men and women to speak about solitary confinement and mandatory minimum sentencing, it became clear that our congregation also needed to focus on dismantling racism. This independent but related group engaged in self-education through book discussions and participated in a 12 class seminar using materials from United to End Racism (<https://www.unitedtoendracism.org>), while also doing programming for the larger congregation.

4. Kehilla Community Synagogue, Piedmont, CA: Start with Affinity Groups

Rabbi Dev Noily writes:

We convened an Experts' Circle made up of a majority of People of Color Kehilla leaders and asked them for guidance to design a process to address our goals. The thing that emerged most strongly from the Experts' Circle, and the conversation among everyone who came to listen and to share, was a desire among People of Color, Sefardi, Mizrahi and Indigenous heritage people in our community to be together, to share stories and experiences and to build connection. The [Affinity Group model](#) that we have now was developed in response to these needs and desires. There are six Affinity Groups – five POC, and one for people with white privilege. Each of the five POC-focused groups (People of Color, White Parents of Kids of Color, POC Families/Kehilla School-Involved Kids of Color, Sefardi/Mizrahi-heritage Jews, and Indigenous-heritage Jews) has a facilitator who identifies with that group, and is also assigned a support person from the Folks with White Privilege affinity group.

Read more: "[Hiring a Part-Time POC \(People of Color\) Organizer as the Next Step in Kehilla's Belonging and Allyship: Racial Justice Initiative!](#)" by Rabbi Dev Noily