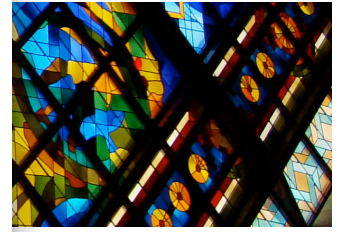




# 40 DAYS OF ENGAGEMENT on *Anti-Racism*



DAY 17

## Curiosity and Openness

*Carla Leon*



### Learning

Curiosity is a combination of admitting that you don't know something and letting go of control; it's being willing to learn something and actively listen, and being willing to be changed. It is impossible to be curious in today's context without acknowledging White supremacy and White centring. How?

- **Letting go of control:** The admission of not knowing something and deferring to others is what is required to be curious.
- **Willingness to actively listen:** Listening is about hearing someone else's story and taking it at face value. Listening without judgement or stereotyping is part of active listening.
- **Willingness to be change:** By admitting that we don't know something and actively listening, we open ourselves up to be changed. Once we have this new knowledge, we cannot ignore it.

This is the same as becoming anti-racist; once you see White centredness and White supremacy, you cannot ignore it. You will be changed and continue to change.

Curiosity is a double-edged sword when it results in Othering—when another person feels unsafe and uncomfortable because they are being treated differently. This can include physical or verbal cues that identify someone as being different. A specific example is when someone asks a person of colour “Where are you from?” This question can have the guise of curiosity, but it is also Othering. This is true no matter the intent, and it is the impact that matters.

Curiosity can be a great starting point for cultural intelligence. Being curious about your own cultural background and traditions, being curious about others, and disbanding stereotypes can be a start.

It takes courage to be curious. Being curious implies that you don't know the answer. Although you might not like the answer, you are willing to explore it anyway.

When we recognize how White-centred our institutions and interactions are, we can start to be curious about what it might look like to not centre White perspectives. We can start to ask questions. What would our institutions look like without White centering? What might an anti-racist society be like?



## Faith Reflection

Read John 21: 3-6, which describes Jesus appearing to the disciples and telling them to fish from the other side of their boat.

After reading, consider these questions.

- What do you wish to know more about?
- When have you last been creative?
- When have you learned something new?
- When did you explore?
- When were you willing to be changed?
- What might all of this have to do with anti-racism work?



## Children's Activity

This activity is best done with a child you know well.

1. Talk with the child about where they were born and what you might know about the day they were born. Talk about where you were born and what you know about the time and circumstance. If you know about your own parents, or the child's grandparents, share what you know about where and when they were born.
2. Ask the child what some of their favourite family rituals or traditions are. Prompt them into thinking about how holidays or birthdays are celebrated and what foods they like to eat as a family. Does your family speak a language at home that isn't spoken at school or with other children? Talk about why your family might have developed these rituals, practices, or ways of communicating with one another.
3. Identify at least one thing that you didn't know before that you have now found out.
4. How does it make you feel? Are you happy that you know this now? Are you sad that you know this? Does this make you feel more whole? Does this make you want to learn more?
5. How would you feel if you lost this new thing that you have learned? How can you keep it?



## Group Commitment

As we start to ask these questions and become more curious about anti-racism, how can we live out anti-racist curiosity?

- How do you feel about admitting what you don't know?
- What is your experience of having to let go of control?
- What are your attitudes about and responses to learning new things?
- How can you listen more actively?
- Are you willing to be changed? What change is needed right now?
- Are you willing to be courageous? What would that look like?
- How might anti-racism work be woven into your daily life and practice?



## Advocacy

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How can you explore anti-racism and curiosity in your context?

- Explore the educational system. What is being taught in schools about the history of Canada and diverse cultural backgrounds and contexts? How can this be expanded to create the space to learn more and listen to a larger variety of stories?
- What is your community doing to create change around anti-racism? At board and council meetings, actively pay attention to who is speaking. How might you create a more racially just meeting space, and work towards making decisions with an anti-racist lens?
- Connect with other community organizations and learn what they are doing. Be willing to go to tables outside of your comfort zone.
- Actively listen as a practice. Move around your community prayerfully and report back what you noticed—and what you didn't notice.



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