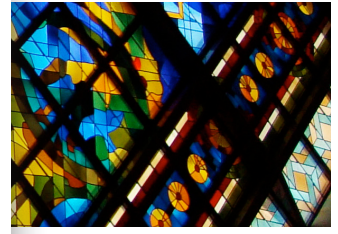


40 DAYS OF ENGAGEMENT on *Anti-Racism*



DAY 30

Simulate to Stimulate



Learning

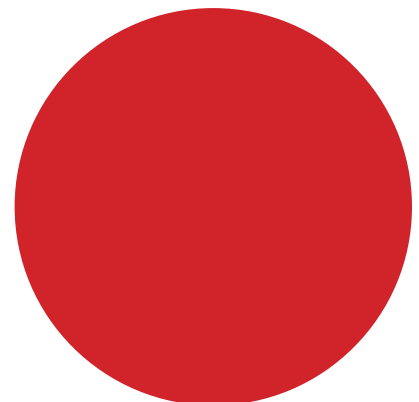
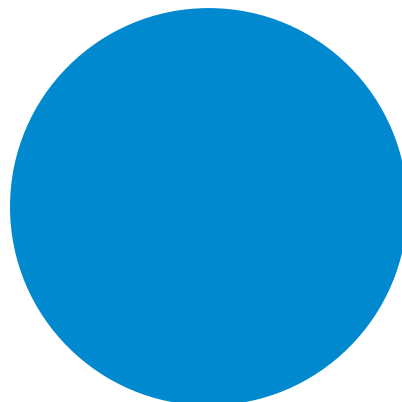
Dianne Hope

In April 1968, one day after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's assassination, Jane Elliot, a White American school teacher, carried out the well known "Blue-Eyed, Brown-Eyed" exercise with her Grade 3 students. She wanted her students, who were growing up in an all-White town, to better understand the discrimination faced by African-Americans. The students were divided into two groups based on the colour of their eyes, a physical trait over which they had no control. On the first day, the blue-eyed students were told they were better, smarter, and kinder than the brown-eyed children. The blue-eyed students had privileges, such as extra time at recess. The two groups of students were not allowed to play with each other, and the brown-eyed students had to wear paper collars so they could be easily identified. The next day, the roles were reversed; all of the students experienced discrimination. At the end of each rotation, the children reflected on their feelings, and by extension,

reflected on how racial discrimination might affect Black people. Once reports of the exercise were made public, Elliot was shunned by her colleagues and others in her community. Many objected to the exercise on the grounds that it was psychologically damaging to the White students. Imagine the psychological burden borne by those who are discriminated against because of their skin colour!

Years later, while I was an elementary school teacher, I learned of an adaptation of Elliot's exercise called the "Red-Dot, Blue-Dot" game. In it, students are random-

ly assigned a red or blue dot to wear on their foreheads, and took turns facing differential treatment because of the dot they wore. I used the same principle with the middle-school students in my after-school Heritage Club, while we were discussing South Africa's apartheid system. One group had privileges; the other did not. In one iteration, one group had to serve better snacks to the other. All were asked to create a mural to represent their lives. The Red-Dots had a wide variety of art supplies and a large piece of unblemished paper; the Blue-Dots were given



torn and crumpled mural paper and few supplies, in limited colours. We called the exercise “The Apartheid Game,” and as a follow-up activity, we created a movie in which the students used images and text to reflect on the exercise. I was blown away by some of the insights the students formed, particularly those of one student who was in the privileged group.

While focusing on the life of Nelson Mandela during a Black History Month service at my church, I again designed a simulation to help congregants reflect on how discrimination might affect various groups of people. This

With imagination and sensitivity, the “Red Dot, Blue Dot” simulation exercise can be adapted for use when exploring the lived experiences of different groups of Canadians.

time, worshippers were randomly given one of a long, silky ribbon, or a short, rough piece of twine. With eyes closed if they so desired, congregants were led through a spoken meditation in which they used their sense of touch to explore the texture and length of the material in their hands, imagining

that the piece of ribbon or twine represented their life. Did they live long lives, rich with pleasure and unfolding rather smoothly, or were their lives rough, hard, and short?

Just as we use simulations during the Christian Communion service and other religious rituals, faith communities can use this type of tool to gain a more visceral understanding of the impacts of racism. When led by skilled facilitators, simulation exercises provide the opportunity for deep reflection and even some degree of transformative change, *if* participants are able to approach them with open and vulnerable hearts and minds.



Faith Reflection

Kathy Yango

Read the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10.

When in his vision Peter is instructed to eat of the various animals that appeared, Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean” (Acts 10: 14).

- Consider where Peter’s prejudice might have come from.
- Whose rules might he have been following? Did his obedience to these rules make him more or less able to follow Jesus’ commandment, “Love your neighbour as yourself?”
- How might Peter’s actions have affected his sense of righteousness—for himself? For God?

Now, consider what Cornelius’ life experiences might have included, as the object of such prejudice, despite his upright life and faith in God.

How did Peter’s attitude change so that he came to realize that “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10: 34b-35).

How might you be complicit through passive participation in conversations where bias and prejudice are expressed?

How might you be courageous in examining subtle thoughts or attitudes that surface when your life intersects with those of other ethnicities?



Children's Activity

Kathy Yango

Explore variety and beauty of skin colours.

Sing "[The Color of Me](#)" by Sesame Street

Read:

- [The Colors of Us](#), by Karen Katz. This is the story of a girl who, while painting pictures of her friends, uses words like "cinnamon", "peanut butter", "chocolate icing", and "honey" to describe the colours.

- [All the Colors We Are](#), by Katie Kissinger. This non-fiction book explains how we get our skin colour.

Create:

Provide yellow, red, blue, and white paint. Children can mix these colours until they come up with their own skin tone. See the instructional videos below.

Try coming up with words to describe the different shades (for example: tan, toast, sand, sienna, cinnamon, etc.).

[Instructional video for leaders/teachers](#)

[Instructional video for children](#)



Group Commitment

Dianne Hope

Explorations of disparities between racial/cultural groups can be modelled on the "Red-Dot, Blue-Dot" exercise described above. Be sure to create safety for

participants during the exercise and allow time for de-briefing and coming back together as one community.



Advocacy

Kathy Yango

Create a coffee/tea group by inviting a group of friends who would be interested in exploring how to respond when they witness racial discrimination in your community or neighbourhood. Meet every other week for 3 months. Be concrete about what actions you would like to take individually or collectively.



Dianne Hope is a retired elementary school educator. She has been a member of The United Church of Canada for 40 years, and has provided lay leadership on a variety of committees and initiatives. Dianne is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (a reference body of the Canadian Council of Churches), and Peel Region's Black Youth Student Success Initiative.



Kathy Yango is currently a teacher with the Toronto District School Board. Previously, she worked in international development in the Philippines, focusing on team-building curriculum and education programs in marginalized communities.

