



RACIAL FAIRNESS AMERICA

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Why White People Contribute

Of course, not all will, but...

It's hard to define in a measurable way what racism consists of, and perhaps even harder to determine who has how much of those ingredients. So let's keep it simple: you don't have to turn over a whole lot of white rocks to uncover a racist. Still, despite the loud minority, most white people don't think they're racist and would be ashamed if they were. They might be giving themselves too much credit, but white anti-racists, legitimate non-racists, and even subconscious semi-racists are our target audiences. And they appear to be in the majority.

Furthermore, with education, we can move people out of that middle ground of being neither clearly racist nor clearly anti-racist. Until recently (and in many states, still) children got the "whitewashed" version of American history. This schooling was based on assumed white superiority, explicit approval of white people's "manifest destiny" to control the whole continent, downplaying or usually completely ignoring the many atrocities committed – not just by individuals, but institutionally and deliberately and impressively consistently – against People of Color in our past and present. This lack of knowledge can be remedied in discussions with individuals and groups, which is what white volunteers in the Racial Fairness project will be doing.

The result among many white people finally learning the truth will be horror, guilt, and probably some denial. These feelings might motivate many of them to help out in some way, which is OK – but not really what we're after.

Such feelings create a heavy emotional burden to carry around. Yes, it may be motivating in the short run, but from a psychological standpoint and in the long run it's counter-productive. No one wants to lug such a burden, and the easiest way to get out from under it is to make some sort of amends, probably brief and symbolic, then put it out of one's mind.

Focus on Fairness

We're looking for something more sustained, and that's why we emphasize fairness instead of guilt. According to a [2019 Pew Research poll](#), 56% of white Americans already acknowledge that being white is an advantage in getting ahead in our country.¹ That's 56% *before* we educated any of them.

¹ *Race in America*, 2019

It's not just that white folks rarely know many (if any) details about the *history* of racial unfairness in the U.S. Few understand that *this past remains with us*. What we/they need to learn and embrace is that the present situation is unfair not only because of continued racism and discrimination, but because the injustices that each past generation suffered meant it was often impossible to accumulate wealth or establish a family culture of solid education. So each generation started almost from scratch. Meanwhile, white families typically did advance in wealth and education and opportunity from one generation to the next. And since ongoing race prejudice is built into almost all areas of our society, People of Color have to be twice as good to stay out of trouble, work twice as hard to get a good education or a great job, and overcome prejudicial and even vicious treatment just to stay in the game. White privilege? You bet!

The more white people learn about this, the more undeniable the unfairness of contemporary American society becomes. But we Americans, and white Americans no less than anyone else, pride ourselves on a sense of fairness. We don't condone cheating. We root for the underdog. We don't give the healthiest, best nourished, and best trained athlete a head start in the race.

This belief in fairness admittedly weakens when it costs something to uphold it, yet even then it normally remains present, able to be tapped and brought to the fore.

So yes, we could wheedle donations of time or money or material goods out of white people by appealing to their sense of guilt or shame, but we prefer to focus on fairness – partly because it's a much more positive and more sustainable motive, but also because the unfairness itself is not disappearing anytime soon, while a sense of personal guilt just might.

From Helpless to Hopeful

We believe that the majority of white Americans do not want to live in a racist society and would do something to help if they could. But they feel like they can't. The problem is too enormous and too stubbornly tenacious for any one or two people to make a difference. They feel helpless about it, and so do little or nothing, waiting for the arc of history to bend on its own.

The Racial Fairness Project recognizes this and relies on it. We will be addressing white people in groups, mostly, but whether it's small or large, or even if it's just one or two people at a time, our pitch includes the idea that of course, by yourself, you cannot do much, but as part of a group, as part of a movement, you can. Through us, your contribution unites with dozens and hundreds and thousands of other white people nearby, forming a river that can transform the landscape, producing a future that offers a fair shake to all. That's our message, and we think it's a winner.

We expect to receive contributions big and small even from people who never thought much about racism before, and believe that a lot of these will be recurring contributions, and that the generosity of some will inspire generosity in others.

This sort of giving could even become a social norm. Leveling the playing field takes a lot of people with a lot shovels. But nobody has to do it alone, and everyone can help somehow.