

EYES TO SEE

AN ANTI-RACISM EXAMEN FOR
JESUIT COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

LEADER'S GUIDE

ajcunet.edu/eyes-to-see



Dear Colleagues in Mission,

Thank you for helping your Jesuit institution take part in *Eyes to See: An Anti-Racism Examen* from the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU). The resources offered here were created collaboratively with the assistance of many generous colleagues who believe strongly in Jesuit higher education's mission to educate contemplatives-in-action.

Our colleges and universities are facing significant issues, particularly with respect to the debilitating sin of racism. In Ignatian tradition, the experience of reflection is foundational to discerning a path forward that draws us closer to God and the human family. At this challenging time in our nation's history, reflecting together could not be more important, if we are to make good on our mission commitments.

This *Leader's Guide to Eyes to See* contains:

- a script for *Examen* leaders
- practical guidance for conducting the *Examen*
- ideas for tailoring the *Examen* to the needs of specific groups at your institution

Links to music, readings and videos are available at ajcunet.edu/supplemental-materials. Resources for ongoing discussion and planning are available at ajcunet.edu/racial-justice and in the document, *Ideas for an Anti-Racist Future*.

The *Anti-Racism Examen* has been developed as a resource for boards, senior leadership teams, faculty, staff, and mixed groups of college/university colleagues. It may also be modified at the local level for student use (in the future, we hope to create one exclusively for them). At the end of today's *Examen*, your group's written and verbal comments will be a rich resource for further reflection, assessment and planning.

Many thoughtful conversations and creative initiatives on race are underway within and among Jesuit colleges and universities. We look forward to hearing about your experiences of using and adapting the *Anti-Racism Examen*, and hope to collect your ideas, resources and wisdom to share on the [Eyes to See webpage](http://ajcunet.edu/Eyes-to-See). Our hope is that this AJCU network-wide experience will be an additional contribution toward a racially just society and a world recognizable as God's own.

With appreciation,

The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
mission@ajcunet.edu

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Pre-Notes

Taking part in the *Anti-Racism Examen* should come from a sincere desire within a board, department, or leadership team to grow as an equitable and racially just community. The *Examen* may be done in one, two or three sessions. Though advance reading is not necessary, some institutions may choose to distribute an article before the meeting, to generate a more fruitful discussion among participants. It is important, however, that the *Examen* focuses on the experiences and reflections of group members, rather than a discussion of texts.

LEADERS

The *Examen* is best led by a colleague on campus who elicits trust and respect, and has the necessary skills in Ignatian leadership and spirituality to guide the group. It may also be co-led by two colleagues (e.g., the mission and diversity officers), provided they have prepared sufficiently for a shared leadership experience that flows smoothly for participants.

LANGUAGE

The *Anti-Racism Examen* is called “Anti-Racist” to imply both intentionality and a clear commitment to combating racial bias in all its forms. Members of your community may come to the *Examen* with a variety of assumptions about terminology and what is, or is not, an acceptable way to discuss racism and racial justice. It is best to acknowledge these differences up-front and to remind participants that focusing on terms can distract us from addressing core issues. Encourage participants to undertake the *Examen* with an open spirit and the desire to deepen their understanding through dialogue, reflection and prayer.

FOCUS

The *Anti-Racism Examen* emphasizes the need to address anti-Black racism in ourselves, our schools, and our world, though it has relevance to all forms of bias and discrimination. By beginning with a clear focus, we will also build the capacity of our communities to actively address exclusion in every form.

ROOM OR ZOOM ARRANGEMENTS

The *Anti-Racism Examen* may be conducted in-person or virtually, in a physical environment or on a platform that accommodates both plenary and breakout groups. It helps if the ambience of the space reflects some care and preparation (e.g., plants, candles, art pieces, or artifacts of the institution’s diverse history) in the room or on the screen. Background music will contribute to the tone, as well. Encourage participants to bring small journals or notepads for writing reflections—this helps underscore that the *Examen* is not simply another campus meeting. For a virtual *Examen*, Leaders may wish to use the chat box as one means of sharing within the large group.

In advance of the *Examen* (at least one week out), ask members of the group to serve as readers or speakers. Give each one the text of the reading or a description of what you are asking them to do, so that they will feel comfortable with their part. Generally, it is helpful for those speaking or reading to reflect a range of backgrounds (i.e., race, gender, religious, non-religious, etc.).

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

You can adapt the *Anti-Racism Examen* to your institution’s circumstances by inserting music, readings, and other resources as you see fit. A starter list of resources is available at ajcunet.edu/supplemental-materials. If you would like to receive this *Leader’s Guide* in the form of an editable Word document, please e-mail your request to mission@ajcunet.edu.

Eyes to See Script

The text and timing listed below is for conducting a half-day *Examen*, using:

Part I – The Composition of Place Video and

Part II – The Anti-Racism Examen

This content may be shortened, lengthened and/or distributed over two sessions, as the institution sees fit. It does not include the timing for Part III (Discussion and Planning), which necessarily follows the *Examen*. Please consider when and how this will take place and whether the group will engage in Part III separately or in conjunction with Parts I and II.

(Notes for Leaders are in blue)

INTRODUCTION: 10 MINUTES

Thank participants for being present. If they are not well acquainted with each other, begin with introductions, followed by a reminder of how the group has come together to undertake the *Examen*. Recall any prior work that has been done by the group around the issue of anti-racism and offer a brief description of what the *Examen* will entail.

[LEADER: 3 MINUTES]

Jesuit colleges and universities do not exist in a vacuum. Though we live and work in specific neighborhoods and cities, we are also bound up in the racial history, reckoning and upheaval of the nation as a whole. George Floyd died in Minneapolis and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, but both affect us personally. In them – and in the violent deaths of so many other Black citizens – we see the contours of bigger questions about race in America. They ignite the dry timber of our centuries-old racial divide and of so many issues unaddressed.

The question for Jesuit colleges and universities is not *if* we need to strengthen our solidarity with Black students, colleagues, and alumni – it is *how*. And yet, we cannot overlook the fact that our institutions are not machines through which the mission is fed and delivered. They are collections of individuals whose gifts, biases, and courage of conviction influence whether we can do anything at all. The *Anti-Racism Examen* that we are undertaking sheds light on the link between our personal experiences around race and our institution's ability to step into the breach with integrity and hope.

Our time together will consist of two parts.

First, we will listen to the voices of colleagues and students – some in this room and some from the wider community of Jesuit higher education – whose words remind us of how the *Examen* can help us move beyond fear, toward the deepest part of our mission. The critical work of becoming an anti-racist institution requires us, before all else, to listen in an entirely new way. The lament and hope in their voices is our guiding star.

Second, we will take part in an *Examen* together, in the pattern of St. Ignatius of Loyola. For nearly 500 years, people of many faiths, and no faith at all, have found that the *Examen* helps them to become more human, more aligned with the common good, and more imaginative about the future. In the coming years, the *Examen* may serve as a touchstone for our [board/department/team] and a way to remain accountable to the requirements of racial justice.

The *Examen* always opens with an expression of gratitude, so let's begin in that spirit. We will start with a prayer, followed by a series of reflections.

A Prayer for Our Community

PRAYER MAY BE LED (SLOWLY) BY LEADER OR PARTICIPANT [2 MINUTES]

Source of All Being, Creator of All Life, may Your goodness find its way into the hearts of all Your children.

May those who wield power do so with a balance of wisdom, justice and compassion. May those who feel powerless remember their intrinsic worth, and also act with a balance of wisdom, integrity and compassion.

May we all feel called to action based on the injustices of racism, and see ourselves not as enemies of one another, not in struggle with one another, but as human beings, created in the image of God, connected to one another's well-being.

May all of us come to acknowledge the racism that is pervasive in our region and our nation.

May we commit to sitting down with one another in honest dialogue, opening our hearts in compassion to one another, bearing witness to the pain and fear of one another, even if ... and especially if ... "the other" looks and seems so different from ourselves.

May we commit to joining together in acts of justice that will bring about equality in education, economic opportunities, law enforcement and judicial proceedings.

May each of us come to understand that, ultimately, "my" experience of freedom, justice and peace is inextricably linked to the freedom, justice and peace of every other person in our county and city, our country and our world. May we open our eyes to the invisible lines of connection that unite us, and with clarity of vision, continue to work for a world where every person's life is valued, cherished and loved.

Amen.

(Rabbi Andrea Goldstein, Congregation Shaare Emeth, St. Louis, Missouri)

Readings and Transition to Video

10 MINUTES [FOLLOWING PAUSE AFTER PRAYER]

Ask readers to share their passages slowly, allowing at least 20 seconds of time in-between each. Readings are also available for readers in a separate PDF on the [Eyes to See Supplemental Materials page](#).

[READER 1]

For some Americans, the revelation that racism is alive and well has upended assumptions that the United States has been marching slowly and steadily toward equity and racial justice. Some who considered themselves more enlightened on matters of race are now brought up short – discovering dimensions and depths of racism around and within themselves that are even more pervasive than they had imagined. Like the aperture on a camera, the racial reckoning of our nation is bringing the reality of racism into sharp and painful focus. This is a familiar picture for Black Americans. But, whether these realities are new to us or not, none of us can un-see them now.

[Pause]

[READER 2]

“Racism is a philosophy based on a contempt for life. It is the arrogant assertion that one race is the center of value and the object of devotion, before which other races must kneel in submission. It is the absurd dogma that one race is responsible for all the progress of history and alone can assure the progress of the future. Racism is total estrangement. It separates not only bodies, but minds and spirits. Inevitably it descends to inflicting spiritual or physical homicide upon the out-group.” ~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

[Pause]

[READER 3]

We human beings are amazingly capable of self-deception. Our ability to look honestly at ourselves and at the effects of our actions (or inaction) is inhibited by a whole host of factors. The fear that our faults will make us less lovable to others; ignorance of our family and national histories; apprehensions over upsetting the boundaries between “us” and “them”; and the dread of being overwhelmed by problems beyond our control are but a few. Until we are inescapably confronted with a problem, the temptation is to rush through our days with little time for reflection. We can unwittingly skate on the surface of our own lives.

[Pause]

[READER 4]

“Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is not cause for stumbling. But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.” ~ First Letter of John

Readings (cont.)

[READER 5]

Ignatius was not a person of the 21st century, but he had insights into the hearts and minds of people that endure to this day. Among the anchors of his spirituality was the conviction that we must stop, on a regular basis, to notice the activity and leadings of God in our lives, in order to stay tethered to ourselves and to the holy purpose for which we are made. As part of the *Spiritual Exercises*, he required that Jesuits do this twice a day: that they see clearly whatever reality was in front of them, and open themselves to it, thereby becoming more authentically human. He called this practice the Examen.

[Pause]

[READER 6]

“... They should practice the seeking of God's presence in all things, in their conversations, their walks, in all that they see, taste, hear, understand, and in all their actions.... This kind of meditation, which finds God our Lord in all things, is easier than raising oneself to the consideration of divine truths, which are more abstract and which demand something of an effort, if we are to keep our attention on them.” ~ St. Ignatius of Loyola.

[Pause]

[READER 7]

Most of us, when we're in a crisis, fall back on what we know. We talk with trusted friends and family, return to books and music that have sustained us, pray or reflect, and rely on whatever has brought us insight in the past. It is comforting that we don't need to invent these practices. They are there for us whenever we reach for them. The Examen comes to us as this kind of gift. It is familiar and enables us to see what had been obscured or invisible before – hiding in plain sight. So it is no surprise that we turn to the Examen now, as a community of colleagues – each with our own histories and experiences of race and racism – to see what had been hidden to us, which is now in plain sight.

[Pause]

[READER 8]

“Have you ever tried to enter the long black branches of other lives –
tried to imagine what the crisp fringes, full of honey, hanging
from the branches of the young locust trees, in early morning, feel like?
Do you think this world was only an entertainment for you?” ~ Mary Oliver

[Pause]

Readings (cont.)

[READER 9]

Jesuit schools are lauded for their culture-embracing orientation. Called by some, the “thinkers of the Church,” Jesuits shaped their institutions with the same élan of social commitment and clear-eyed inquiry that drove Ignatius and his friends to serve at the margins of society. Whatever our role in the college or university might be, we share in that spirit and in all aspects of our institution’s history and identity. We share in its mission at the most basic and profound level.

[Pause]

[READER 10]

But institutions are capable of the same spiritual blindness as individuals, both historically and in the present. To be credible, college and university communities, like persons, need to stop and notice the unvarnished reality of our common life, to observe where we have met the moment and where we have failed – to consider who is truly included when we refer to “Us.” Racism, the original sin of our country, mocks our mission and casts doubt on our commitment to human dignity. It dehumanizes us all. In this light, the Examen is not merely a practice for personal reflection. It also is our rough-hewn doorway to institutional transformation.

[Pause]

[READER 11]

“For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn— and I would heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.” ~ Gospel of Matthew

[Pause]

[LEADER]

We now listen to the voices of colleagues and students who help to clarify this moment in which we, as Jesuit colleges and universities, come together to talk about race.

Members of our university/college community experience the wrenching realities of racism in varying ways, and this video, designed as a *Composition of Place*, may evoke strong feelings. Please feel free to watch all, or just part of, it as you feel comfortable.

Composition of Place (Video)

VIDEO [13 MINUTES]

At the conclusion of the video, it may be appropriate to allow for a moment of silence. The Leader may then wish to ask one or two members of the group, who have been invited in advance, to share their own experiences of racism on campus, thus bringing the *Composition of Place* closer to home. *[In this case, it would be helpful to share the video with these colleagues before the Examen takes place.]* Alternatively, a written reflection by Black students and/or alumni could be read aloud (reflections may come from social media, blogs, alumni magazines, etc.).

[LEADER]

Ignatius reminds us that God works dually through our intellects and our emotions. Neither is expendable and neither can be ignored. Let's spend the next few minutes, in mind and heart, reflecting on our own *Composition of Place*. I/We invite you to use your journal/notepad and to think and write on these questions:

Display PowerPoint Slide on *Composition of Place* (option to include background music).

- What feelings do the voices and images in the *Composition of Place* video elicit in me?
- With what did I resonate? When did I experience resistance or discomfort?
- What experiences of racism have I had or seen on our campus? What do I know, at a personal level, about the experiences of Black members of my college/university community (students, alumni, staff, faculty or trustees) whose place in the institution is different from my own?
- What stories about race stick in my memory and influence how I think about racism?

After participants have reflected and written for 5-6 minutes, divide the group into clusters of three for discussion (if holding event virtually, assign groups randomly to Breakout Rooms; ensure that Breakout Rooms have been turned “on” in settings). Let the participants know, at the beginning, how much time they will have for this discussion. As a general rule, facilitators should be used for the small groups.

Ask participants to allow each person enough time to share their own experiences freely and without interruption, except for asking clarifying questions. Move through the questions one at a time, allowing time for discussion within each small group at the end.

[10-MINUTE BREAK]

Discussion of Ignatius' First Two Questions

DISCUSSION TIME [45-90 MINUTES]

After the break, reconfigure the groups, so that each now has 5-6 members.

[LEADER]

Ignatius was a mystic and yet a thoroughly practical person. He invites us to reflect on our lives not in broad or lofty terms, but in grounded and specific ways. Three simple questions guide him and us:

Download and show the [PowerPoint slide](#) titled, “Help from Ignatius of Loyola: Three Questions.” Display the first two questions only and read through them with the group.

Using Ignatius’ first two guiding questions, we can dig deeper into our experience.

Select, in advance, a few bullet points from each question below or create your own (e.g., questions that are specific to the work of trustees, staff, faculty, etc.). Add your questions to a PowerPoint slide for display at this time. Groups need not select a recorder, but all members of the group should be encouraged to take personal notes on the conversation.

Add your questions to a PowerPoint slide for display at this time. Go to Zoom or in-person groups to discuss the questions. Groups need not select a recorder, but all members of the group should be encouraged to take personal notes on the conversation.

What have we done to advance anti-racism?

- How have we told our college/university’s racial story? Whose voices were missing in the narrative and how does their absence affect us and the work we are doing?
- How did race play a part in our institution’s founding and early days, whether owning enslaved persons is a part of our history, or not?
- What has been our most significant institutional example of combatting racism? How long ago did it occur? How do we feel about the experience today? Is there something in it on which we can build? What would we change?
- What institutional conversations and decisions related to racial justice have we avoided because they were inconvenient, uncomfortable, or not a priority? What choices do we and others at the college/university need to make, to overcome these obstacles?
- How, specifically, has systemic racism been embedded in our everyday work and practice as a group of colleagues? As a college/university?
- How have we responded, as an institution, to anti-racism demands from students, faculty/staff, or the surrounding community?

Discussion of Questions 1 & 2 (cont.)

What are we doing to become more anti-racist?

- What is our college/university's institutional identification with the Black Lives Matter movement and other social movements calling for equity and inclusion? Are we actors or observers, and why?
- Whose voices on campus are strongest, with respect to the work of anti-racism? What is my/our connection with them?
- Do our campus conversations specifically address issues relating to white privilege, not simply diversity?
- Do we have the capability as a board/leadership team/department to undertake ongoing conversations about race, in order to lead and serve more authentically? How are we developing leaders for this purpose?
- How is our work toward anti-racism moving beyond representation (i.e., merely increasing the numbers of Black and other underrepresented groups) to explore issues of privilege, placement and power?
- How is the college/university seen by local communities of color and Black communities, in particular?
- What forums are available for Black faculty, staff, students and alumni/ae to tell our stories?
- Where is the commitment to anti-racism most and least evident in our approach to research? Our selection of service sites? Our pedagogy and curriculum? Our strategic planning? Our committees? Our institutional partnerships? Our community relationships? Our hiring? Our liturgies and retreats? Our lobbying and advocacy? Our campus art and culture? Our recruitment and admissions policies? Our articulation of the Jesuit, Catholic mission?

REFLECTION: 5 MINUTES

Return to the plenary and ask participants to reflect on what they heard from each other (background music may be helpful), perhaps jotting a few notes or phrases for themselves in their journals or notepads.

DISCUSSION: 15-30 MINUTES [DEPENDING ON GROUP SIZE]

Invite participants to share the most significant things that they heard from each other. This is not a group report-out, but it is an opportunity for each person to speak. Participants may pass, if they wish, but ask them to let the group know that they are doing so. Ask one colleague, in advance, to take notes on the screen, which will be sent to all participants after the meeting.

[LEADER]

Having reflected on our experience, Ignatius encourages us to lift one key awareness to the light of God: A colleague's comment that particularly struck you; a new realization or question about the college/university; a reading; something in the video; or, perhaps, some new realization about yourself. If it is life-giving, give thanks for it. If it is not, ask for insight or grace. [Moment of silence]

BREAK: 10 MINUTES

Discussion of Ignatius' Third Question

Display the [third question](#) on the screen and read through it with the group.

DISCUSSION TIME: 30-60 MINUTES

[LEADER]

In the last part of the *Examen*, we are asked to consider: What ought we do to become a more anti-racist Jesuit college/university? Using all the capacity of our imaginations, as Ignatius encourages, let's consider how next month (and next year) might be different because of the shared experience that we have had today.

Going forward: How can we co-create a more anti-racist campus?

Select (in advance) questions from the bullet points below (or write your own), in addition to those on the [PowerPoint slides](#). Display your questions on the screen. [OR] Use this time as a completely open discussion, raising some of the questions below only if the group seems to need additional prompting. Ask a colleague to record responses on the screen.

What ought we to do, to become a more anti-racist Jesuit college or university?

- What kind of uncomfortable conversations will we now join or convene, in order to move forward?
- How will we connect our Catholic and Jesuit mission indivisibly to our commitment to anti-racism?
- Who will our institutional partners be in the work of anti-racism?
- How will Black community members find a greater voice and influence in the college/university community?
- How can the *Examen* grow as a “way of proceeding” at the college/university, particularly in the work of anti-racism? What would a reflection on anti-racism in every area of the college/university look like?
- What are the most urgent needs on our campus, with respect to racial justice? How will Black colleagues be essential to setting those priorities?
- In what ways do we want our institution to be seen as anti-racist in the coming years? What does achieving that goal imply for us?
- How will we hold ourselves accountable to the moral imperative of anti-racism?

[LEADER] CLOSING REMARKS AND PRAYER: 5 MINUTES

With gratitude for this time and for the Spirit of God among us, let us now take a moment to pray together on these possibilities for our future and the next steps toward achieving our goals. Please join in our closing prayer.

Thank participants for being part of the *Anti-Racism Examen* and remind them that it is one step in a larger process. Note any recurring themes in their discussion and review the next steps. If a discussion on planning is to take place at a later date, offer those details. Display prayer on the screen.

A Prayer for Racial Justice

PRAYER MAY BE LED (SLOWLY) BY LEADER OR PARTICIPANT (2 MINUTES)

When we do not see the gravity of racial injustice,
Shake us from our slumber and open our eyes.
When out of fear we are frozen into inaction,
Give us a spirit of bravery.
When we try our best but say the wrong things,
Give us a spirit of humility.
When the chaos of this dies down,
Give us a lasting spirit of solidarity.
When it becomes easier to point fingers outward,
Help us to examine our own hearts.

God of truth, in your wisdom, Enlighten Us.
God of love, in your mercy, Forgive Us.
God of hope in your kindness, Heal Us.
Creator of All People, in your generosity, Guide Us.
Racism breaks your heart,
break our hearts for what breaks yours.

~ Anonymous

If the meeting is to conclude, bring the discussion to a close. If, however, the meeting is to continue, it would be wise to give the group a lengthy break (perhaps lunch) after the closing prayer and return, later in the day, to brainstorm on concrete next steps.

In either case, the [Eyes to See webpage](#), the [AJCU Racial Justice Resource webpage](#) and [Ideas for an Anti-Racist Future](#) may help to spark future discussions.