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New Perspectives Can Lead to Changed Hearts

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For the past couple of months, I've been doing some real soul-searching about what it means to have privilege and how I have failed to examine that privilege in my day-to-day interactions with my neighbors who are people of color.

Like many others who identify as white, the catalyst for this examination was the tragic death of George Floyd, as well as Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and a heartbreaking and embarrassing number of others in 2020 alone.

I tend to think that I pay close attention to injustices in the world and try to speak out against these injustices when I can, but something about these most recent deaths really took the conversation to a new level, not just in the United States but around the world.

Suddenly, you had all of these people on social media speaking out when they had never spoken out before.

That's a good thing. I'm not here to make anyone feel guilty for failing to speak out before. I know that it sometimes takes a long time for hearts and minds to change. There should be nothing embarrassing about receiving new information and changing your opinion based on that. It's called growth and it should be celebrated in our society, not shamed.

With this new examination of privilege and the brutality directed toward black and brown people in America came an explosion of book recommendations and authors who I had never heard of before. Names like Robin DiAngelo and her book "White Fragility," Michelle Alexander's "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness," and Ibram X. Kendi's bestselling book "How to Be an Antiracist." All of these books are featured on the ARUMC landing page for our Dismantling Racism initiative, which you can find [here](#).

I've recently purchased many of these books, and I know some of you have as well. I know a lot of you have read Kendi's book and it's really challenged the way you view the world.

To that, I say: good. It should challenge you. It should convict you, and it should encourage you to think differently and think of ways that you can lift up black voices and tear down the sin of racism in your own community.

I have not yet read "Antiracist" but it is sitting on my bookshelf right now. The reason I haven't read it yet is that I decided to start with Kendi's first published book, "Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America."

Although I wasn't a history major in school, I've always loved history as a subject. I'm always in pursuit of knowledge, which is no surprise if you know the traits of enneagram fives, which is what I happen to be.

"Stamped" is a powerful book, but it's also challenging. Kendi presents a history of racism in America, starting from the early 17th century — when colonists from England first came to the Americas — all the way to the modern era.

I felt strongly that I needed to read "Stamped" first in order to understand the basis for racism and white supremacy in America, which has been here from the very beginning.

I can tell you for a fact that much of the history told in this book was never taught to me in public school. Sure, we talked about slavery, Jim Crow, and the civil rights movement, but in a very basic sense, leaving out some of the most horrible parts of that history. My classes never explored deeper than a surface level understanding of these events.

But reading this book, and seeing all of the other amazing books about racial justice that people are now paying attention to, has been eye-opening and, at the same time, convicting to me.

It has challenged my understanding of the history I was taught and caused me to re-examine the "facts" about our nation's founding.

My encouragement to anyone reading this is to go make a point to go outside your comfort zone and read, watch and listen to media created by, and about, people of color.

I believe strongly that new perspectives often lead to changed hearts. And so often, voices of color are ignored or forgotten when we talk about history.

Pick up a new book, subscribe to a new podcast, or watch a movie or television series that's outside of your comfort zone! I'm certain you'll be surprised by what you learn.

And check back often on the [Dismantling Racism](#) page where we will be sharing important resources to create a Church that more accurately reflects the diverse and beautiful Kingdom of God.

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