

# Taking Action

*"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in times of comfort or convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy."*

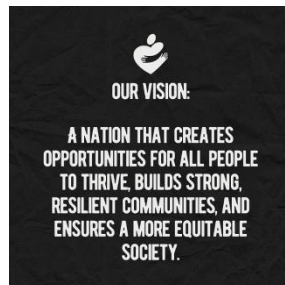
Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*"In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."*

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Perhaps you are wondering what you can do to learn and bring about real change. It all starts with us as individuals. The Partnership has compiled a short list of things we can all do today. It is not exhaustive and there are many good lists out there. Some of these are for you individually, and others are for your Community Action Agency. They take work, time, and practice. Some are hard...but things in life worth doing are hard. We won't be perfect, but we must try and work to better ourselves, our communities, and our country. Racism must end and it starts with us.

1. **Boldly denounce racism and white supremacy.** Not just quietly, but outwardly and publicly.
  - a. Issue a formal Statement approved by the CAA's Board of Directors.
  - b. Review agency mission, vision, and values and ensure that they recognize the role structural racism has on poverty.
  - c. State it publicly: ***Black Lives Matter***.
  - d. Use the meme below (or other relevant memes) on your social media pages to denounce racism and show public support that Black Lives Matter.



2. **Speak truth to power.** Easier said than done. In both our professional and personal lives, we must speak the truth. The narratives used in private are those that are carried to the public space and can be the hardest to counter.
  - a. Challenge and hold your colleagues and groups you interact with accountable for their language, their ideals, and their systems.
  - b. Check your friends and family members who continue to use racist and supremacist rhetoric. You can do it in a loving manner but let them know you are uncomfortable and will not tolerate it. The power of friends and family to silence us is real and we cannot allow our silence to make us complicit.
3. **Use direct terms in your speaking and writing.** Get comfortable and use words like *oppression*, *marginalization*, *institutional racism*, *equity*, *white supremacy*. Know what they mean, understand the distinction, and speak them out loud.

4. **Read books that address systemic racism and its effects on our current day lives.** Yes, read books - on your devices or “old school” paper copies. Our teachers had us read and write essays for a reason - that is how we learn, grown, and incorporate knowledge as human beings. Share what you learn with friends and family. Need suggestions on where to start? Here are some books to read in June:
  - a. *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein. (look for the Community Action Partnership’s book discussion group sign up for *Color of Law* later this month)
  - b. *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson. This movie is now available online for free. Learn more [here](#).
  - c. *Rising Out of Hatred*, Eli Saslo
  - d. *White Fragility*, Robin Diangelo
5. **Write an Op/ED to your local paper or blog post.** Again, this may seem cliché, but your name on an op/ed, letter to the editor, blog post, or other media location puts you out there, and forces you to *WRITE IT DOWN*. Even if you don’t send it anywhere, framing messages in our heads is one thing but writing them down is another. Put a marker down.
6. **Register to vote.** And then really vote. Once again, it sounds cliché, but way too many of us don’t exercise our right to vote and this must change. Community Action staff, board members, volunteers, customers all need to be part of the public discourse.
7. **Promote voter registration in a non-partisan manner.** Use non-CSBG-funded programs in your CAA to conduct voter registration activities, so long as it does not result in the identification of the activities with CSBG-funded programs.
8. **Call out Voter Disenfranchisement.** Voting is a right and disenfranchisement is real, and we must call it out. Does your jurisdiction make voting hard by closing poll locations, refusing to allow early/mail in voting, or put up other barricades? Speak out, even if it does not impact your specific voting ability.
9. **Join an organization or donate to an organization that is actively addressing systemic racial issues.** Many advocacy groups exist and seek active members. Donate your time and your treasure.
10. **Donate to an advocacy campaign** that aligns with viewpoints that address supremacy and racism.
11. **Hold local officials accountable for their current actions.** Too often we forget actions and move onto the most recent incident. We need to ensure we hold local officials accountable for their actions, including their votes and the ways in which they are contributing to the narrative on race in America.
  - a. Attend town halls.
  - b. Follow local officials on social media.
12. **Provide books to your children and talk with them about racism and supremacy.** Need some suggestions?
  - a. *Let’s Talk About Race*, Julius Lester
  - b. *We’re Different, We’re the Same*, Bobbi Kates and Joe Matthieu
13. **Review your community work as a CAA.** If your community does not have one, develop a police brutality and racial equity task force to ensure long-term attention, involvement, and intervention of your organization at the local level.
14. **Run for office.** Use your position to honestly address these situations.
15. **Join a citizen advisory council or other board.** Volunteers and community representatives are needed, and as a volunteer you can ensure local councils and boards are operating in ways that combat supremacy and racism.
16. **Develop real friendships with members of historically underrepresented groups.** Our friends most often look like us. Making friends as adults is hard and takes intentional investment of time and connection. Who are you investing in and spending time with to develop lifelong friendships?

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