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# SATYA - TRUTHFUL IN THOUGHT, SPEECH & ACTION

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First, they came for the socialists,  
and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade  
unionists,  
and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews,  
and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—  
and there was no one left to speak for  
me.

Martin Niemöller



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**Definitions and Race****by Paula Hulet**

With all of the protests that have occurred over the last few months, with all of the hate rhetoric on Facebook and other media sites, with all of the news coverage on protests in Portland and other cities, and as I prepare to co-facilitate zoom sessions on Robin DiAngelo's book *White Fragility*, I thought I would share some thoughts.

I found the first reading of *White Fragility* was difficult. I must admit the second reading isn't any easier. Difficult, not in the sense of boring or dense, but difficult as in hard to hear. The book challenges everything we know and take for granted in the world. How our way of life, the way white privilege undermines, limits the ability of people of color to live fully in this world.

So, while I said I wanted to share some thoughts, I am really out to share some definitions. For to engage in meaningful conversation we need to have a common understanding of the terms we use. I am relying on definitions from two sources, DiAngelo's book and an extract by Penguin Books of Ibram Kendi's book *How To Be An Antiracist*.

My readings have resulted in the gathering of a few new terms as well as new definitions for familiar terms we have used. A new term for me is white fragility. White fragility is what DiAngelo's book is all about. She says white fragility is triggered by discomfort and anxiety born out of a sense of superiority and entitlement. This is not a weakness it is a powerful means of control and protection of white advantage." We are myopic as to how we, whites, hold social and institutional power over people of color. Talking about race makes us uncomfortable, defensive, argumentative, or results in our walking away from the conversation. Which basically is the result of our never having had, or having had limited conversations with people of color which results in a refusal on our part to see the world from their eyes, to see what they hope for resulting in positive change in the world. So, in my mind, it is presumptuous to me to attempt to think like a person of color when we have had such different life experiences.

Our white fragility perpetuates racism. Racism is the result of actions taken because of our prejudices that lead to discrimination of a group of individuals. Historian Ibram Kendi, defines racism as "a marriage of racist

policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities.”  
Race is a social construct. Race is not biological.

But racism, fueled by our prejudices and a desire for control is often an individual act. But it is also corporate, systemic. In a desire for control, our systems and institutions result in a layering of society. Each layer of society is treated differently, on a spectrum ranging from some living with all the advantages and rights the world has to offer to some living with no advantages and no rights.

Think about women and the right to vote. A vote by the male hierarchy granted the vote to White Women in 1920, after much blood, sweat and tears on the part of suffragettes. It was not until the 1965 that right to vote was extended to Black Women. In another example consider the right of same sex partners to live together and to marry and be protected under the law to do so. In both examples society’s prejudices, as institutionalized, sought to maintain the status quo until a new level of consciousness was raised.

Now many of us would claim we are not racists, because we are not bad or mean people. DiAngelo argues we are racists as we refuse to acknowledge the power that we have due to white privilege. We refuse to see the layering that has gone on in society. Ibram Kendi is very concise in his definition of a racist: “One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or one who expresses a racist idea.” Catch that, a racist is defined by both what one does and what one fails to do. Action is the key. Not lip service.

Another new term for me is antiracist. Kendi defines antiracist as follow: “One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea.” He goes on to explain that “An antiracist idea is any idea that suggests racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences—that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group. Antiracist ideas argue that racist policies are the cause of racial inequities.” The causes of racial inequities have nothing to do with biology and everything to do with systems, structures, and norms. Being an antiracist begins with each one of us, naming and confronting our own prejudices, our privileges, our advantages in life. And then taking action, in large or small ways.

I don't know whether you agree with these definitions, find them offensive or have ones that inform your understanding of race and white privilege. A conversation on definitions might prove to be most enlightening and fruitful and a possible topic for a future Talk Around the Table.

With that in mind, to help further our discussion, challenge our thinking and in preparation for our next Talk Around the Table, a Zoom Session set for 2pm on August 5 (login information to be provided to those interested) I would encourage you to watch any of the following videos on You Tube.

“Race In America” by Phil Vischer – Veggie Tales Creator  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGUwcs9qJXY>

Jane Elliot – Blue Eyes -Brown Eyes on Oprah  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebPoSMULI5U>

Robin Di Angelo – an short version of her book White Fragility  
<https://www.umc.org/en/content/deconstructing-white-privilege-gcorr>

Staying positive does not mean you have to be happy all the time. It means that even on hard days you know there are better ones to come.  
(unknown)

