

# Confronting Racism



We are navigating turbulent times. Issues that have long been with us are coming to the surface in a way that is requiring all of us, as a human family, to look more carefully at ourselves, our society, our institutions and organizations, and how we see each other.

We have forgotten that we are a family.

As a family we have allowed the evils of racism and bigotry in our house. We have allowed members of this family to be marginalized and abused and oppressed. Racism and bigotry of any kind are problems that must be addressed now. And addressing them requires an understanding that all these evils are symptoms of a much deeper problem—a global plague that like the physical virus that has been infecting this human family, threatens all of us. This is the plague of dehumanization.

Dehumanization is a fundamental blindness to the humanity of others—to not see another as a person. It is to believe that others don't matter like we matter, that others don't count like we count. It is to deprive other humans of the basic qualities that make us human; in essence, to strip them of their humanity. It is the objectification of others. And it spreads contagiously. Dehumanization justifies and therefore enables mistreatment and racism. It fuels and excuses violence

toward those deemed unworthy or unequal.

We recognize this plague in blatant generalizations and explicit biases. The more subtle clues involve indirect and even unconscious views of one group as lesser.

When we see people as less valuable than ourselves, we encourage the mistreatment of others even if we are not aware of it. Our culture, our language, and our institutions can hide and perpetuate racism and other pernicious and persistent instances of dehumanization. This animosity is a manifestation of an underlying, deeply ingrained culture of separateness and othering—both overt and subtle.

Even though we easily recognize brazen dehumanization, we can too easily miss the seemingly subtle forms that exist within ourselves. We must all be vigilant in recognizing practices and behaviors that allow us to justify treating others disrespectfully and without dignity, or as objects to simply ignore and neglect. There will be no progress without identifying and eradicating those justifications *first*.

In 2017, we wrote, “...if we look in the mirror carefully, we can see all of humanity staring back at us. And the thing that should be most obvious about that reflection is that we are looking at a person. Whatever dignity and respect the person in the mirror feels they deserve is the same dignity and respect that we owe to all.”

As an organization we are working side by side with you, examining ourselves and looking for ways we can improve. We know there are ways we *must* improve and that there are biases and blind spots we must uncover and proactively address. The conviction to see others—to recognize our shared humanity and to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion in our institutions and organizations—is a conviction that must translate into collective and sustained commitment. We are unequivocally opposed to racial injustice and inequality. We

are actively listening and learning to discover where we have fallen short. We are committed to making organizational changes as we discover our own biases and work with intention to dismantle them. You can [read our commitments here](#).

With the current focus on the United States, it is easy to see this as a uniquely American issue. While much of the current focus on racial inequality may unfortunately prove itself to be short-lived—such as the public statements that many organizations have made to demonstrate that they care about fighting racism—this is neither local nor short-term. All over the world and throughout history we have witnessed—and continue to witness—the animosity that results from the dehumanization and objectification of those we deem as “other”. This is a universal, ongoing issue. We at Arbinger believe that identifying and rectifying racism and dehumanization of every kind is our obligation at all times. Not only right now, but especially right now.

Throughout our history as an organization we have sought to provide solutions that can help people everywhere overcome the plague of dehumanization. In that spirit, we have compiled a selection of resources to support you and your teams on this journey.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Can't See? Listen.**

Is there a more important time for real listening than now, especially to those who are different than us in some way? How interested are we in really understanding others? How eager are we to learn from others the kinds of things that might dispel any discriminatory distortions from those parts of us that are invested in maintaining the justifications we prop up through prejudice, misconceptions, and fear? How eager are we to listen?

This article addresses the humanizing power of listening.

[Read This Article](#)

## **A Blueprint for Outward Change**

Is there discrimination in your organization? To what degree might bias—implicit or explicit—influence decision-making both at the level of policy and in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment interactions between people? As a leader in your organization, how can you inclusively create a plan that will invite real and sustainable change?

This article lays out the application of the Arbinger Influence Pyramid for leaders seeking to create lasting change around equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

[Read This Article](#)

## **Listening to Each Other**

In the Article “A Blueprint for Outward Change,” we discuss one way to apply the Arbinger Influence Pyramid to anti-discrimination efforts in our organizations. That application also includes a special emphasis on the “Listen and Learn” and “Build Relationships” levels of that pyramid. In “Can’t See? Listen,” we explore the “Listen and Learn” level even more deeply and consider why listening charitably is key to real dialogue. We have created this video to highlight the power of listening and learning through the lens of multiple individuals and their experiences both at work and at home. In the current environment, with all the potential to talk at each other or past each other—for offense-taking and misunderstanding on the one hand, and the powerful possibilities to spark deep and lasting change in our communities, our organizations, and in ourselves on the other—what would listening and learning in the way this video highlights make possible right now?

[Watch This Video](#)

## **Turning the World Outward**

As a youth, Daryl Davis could not understand how people could hate him simply because of the color of his skin. Driven to understand the racism that targeted him, he reached out to white supremacists who practiced racism most blatantly. Daryl's story points the way to a different future. For 30 years he has befriended members of the KKK, with at least 200 of them renouncing their robes and former beliefs. While, Daryl's approach is unique to him and his circumstances, it is a powerful example of courage and humanity we can all emulate. In 2019 Daryl was the recipient of Arbinger's Turn the World Outward Award.

The film that Arbinger created in conjunction with that award, as well as other films highlighting those who have seen and championed the basic humanity of others, can be found at [turntheworldoutward.org](http://turntheworldoutward.org).

[Watch This Video](#)