

Pacifica Synod Coaches - Anti-Racism & Coaching Darin Johnson darin@agapesandiego.org

Coaching is a practice of supporting people to function at their fullest potential within groups, communities and systems. The relevance of coaching is in part, to call people to apply the highest and best use of their abilities for the good of all—not just for the client, although they are the center of the coaching process. Within the church, coaching is for the good of the church and the world that God calls it to love. That means that coaching can be an integral part of God’s mission to liberate, heal and empower people to love and serve one another in mutuality, justice and equity.

Coaches can bring forth accountability for the shared values and practices as we accompany leaders who shape the vision, life and patterns of faith community. These shared worldviews and practices are where more or less equitable patterns are codified, sometimes consciously and largely unconsciously, such that it is a long process of white people waking up to their privilege and people of color recognizing their internalized oppression. In that process, wipopo have over-relied on BIPOC to educate, train, coach and transform them, when BIPOC are already working hard 24/7 to survive and thrive in the midst of white supremacy. It is time for white people and white institutions to take full responsibility for their own liberation and to become accomplices to dismantle the systems built for them by centering other stories and leaders.

Pacifica Synod Continuing Resolution to Confront Racism and White Privilege (May 2016): Recognized that anti-racism is integral to the Good News of Jesus Christ, and a particular problem in the ELCA. “The Pacifica Synod of the ELCA commits itself to constitute a synodical anti-racism task force to identify and share high quality educational tools and events to raise awareness of racism, white privilege, and Christ-centered paths to liberation of oneself, church and society; ... offer support for multicultural and multilingual ministry to engage and integrate congregations and leaders with nearby populations, will commit itself to provide accessible and affordable synod assembly and education events to less affluent leaders and congregations, and ... bear persistent public witness in solidarity with oppressed people in this and other countries for the transformation of society toward the domination-free reign of God in Christ.

Developmental Steps:

- 1) Recognize the systemic nature of oppression - Racism exists so that white people don’t have to be aware of it, because the guilt of oppression, suffering and death is too much to bear; it is comprehensive, overlapping, complex, institutional and largely unconscious.
- 2) Do your own homework - Learn the histories of oppression and of liberation. Don’t ask BIPOC to coach/mentor/guide you w/o compensation for expertise and emotional labor.
- 3) Own and unpack your own privilege and unconscious bias - Become curious about your own awareness, ignorance, bias, fears, and complicity, and adopt a posture of humility, learning, repentance and accompaniment, not performative guilt or self-righteousness
- 4) Build relationships that support the life-long exodus out of ignorance, fear, oppression
- 5) Collectively assess your organization’s sociocultural development - get trained as a group
- 6) Train/collaborate to transform congregations, neighborhoods, institutions, society, culture

Domination-Free Organization Culture Strategies

| What <u>not</u> to do: | Alternatives: |
|---|---|
| White Supremacy Culture of Domination | Domination-Free Organization Culture |
| Straight, white, male, affluent normativity | Non-binary, trans-racial identity |
| Idealism, Perfectionism | Diverse approaches as strength |
| Urgency | Relationships prioritized over products |
| Defensiveness | Humility, repentance and forgiveness |
| Objectivism, Scientism | Subjectivity balances objectivity |
| Preference for Special Knowledge, Expertise | Everyone has dignity and a contribution |
| Paternalism, Authoritarianism | Creativity & initiative encouraged |
| Dualism, Either-Or Thinking | Reconciling creative tensions/polarities |
| Power Hoarding | Egalitarian, sharing power/leadership |
| Conflict Avoidance | Conflict as creative learning opportunity |
| Individualism | Prioritize shared, relational values |
| Acquisitiveness | Material wealth shared by community |

Questions for Conversation:

What patterns of white privilege do you recognize in the coaching network or your own practice?

What norms of coaching derive from assumptions centered in white supremacy?

How do you understand your own coaching practice as balancing acceptance with guidance?

How has or might “the conversation” about privilege, unconscious bias, and/or sociocultural dominance come up in your coaching?

Resources:

Peggy McIntosh, White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack (1989 essay)

Joseph Barndt, Becoming an Anti-Racist Church: Journeying toward Wholeness

Lipmanowicz & McCandless, The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures

GroupWorks.com - patterns and practices for working in groups

Robert Livingston, The Conversation: How Seeking and Speaking the Truth About Racism Can Radically Transform Individuals and Organizations

Ted J. Rau, Who Decides Who Decides?: How to Start a Group So Everyone Can Have a Voice

Rau & Koch-Gonzalez, Many Voices One Song: Shared Power with Sociocracy

Ludwig & Gimnig, The Cooperative Culture Handbook: A Social Change Manual to Dismantle Toxic Culture & Build Connection