

**Doing Our Own Work: A Seminar for Anti-Racist White People**  
**A Program of Allies for Change**  
**© 2008 Melanie Morrison**  
**[www.alliesforchange.org](http://www.alliesforchange.org)**

*Doing Our Own Work* is an intensive seminar for white people who seek to deepen their commitment to confronting and challenging white racism where they live and work. It is our experience and conviction that those of us who are white need to "do our own work" -- educating ourselves, confronting white supremacy, holding each other accountable, and demonstrating good faith as we seek to build genuine and lasting coalitions with people of color. *Doing Our Own Work* seminar is designed as a supplement to, not a substitute for, contexts where people of diverse races and ethnicities discuss and strategize together how racism can be challenged.

The objective of the seminar is to provide participants with the knowledge, analysis, skills, and tools needed to become more effective anti-racist allies with people of color and to help bring about systemic change in the institutions with which they are affiliated.

Most often, we utilize a three-weekend format that extends over the course of five or six months. Participation in all three weekends is required. Occasionally, we offer *Doing Our Own Work* in other formats including two extended weekends and a six-day seminar that takes place in the summer. Whichever format we employ, we limit enrollment to 16 participants so that in-depth conversation, community, and consultation can occur.

The first weekend is devoted to analyzing white racism and white privilege. The second weekend explores what it means to be an anti-racist ally with people of color and other white people. The third weekend focuses on organizational change – how organizations can take specific steps toward becoming anti-racist and multicultural. Between weekends, participants are assigned articles and book chapters and encouraged to keep a daily journal of reflections about what they are learning and doing with regard to racism and anti-racism.

Utilizing input from the leaders, reading assignments, videos, group discussion, and structured exercises, we will explore the following topics and issues:

- Individual racism, institutional racism, and cultural racism
- Historical roots of racism in the U.S.
- Histories of movements for racial justice in the U.S.
- White privilege and unearned advantage
- Claiming and shaping an anti-racist identity
- How to be an effective anti-racist ally
- Cultural appreciation versus cultural appropriation
- Discerning our spiritual resources for change
- Practicing the skills of interrupting racism
- Strategies for institutional change

Providing more than 40 hours of "class time," the seminar utilizes an action/reflection method of learning: our study and reflection will be grounded in anti-racist action and our action will be strengthened and refined by reflection, study, and conversation. The action/reflection

components of this seminar will include:

- identification by each participant of a "sphere of influence" or constituency that will serve as her/his focus during the seminar;
- assessment of where and how racism is present in this constituency;
- development of an action plan and time table that identifies ways that the participant can work, in collaboration with others, to challenge white racism and strengthen anti-racist commitment in her/his constituency;
- checking in with the group to receive feedback and encouragement and to amend the action plan where appropriate;
- keeping a journal of daily experiences, insights, concerns, and questions regarding racism and anti-racism.

The facilitators are committed to working with the participants to create a respectful, loving, and truth-telling environment where we may bring our whole selves to this vitally important work.