



This week's article is by Kori Carew

"Ready for a Movement? Pull up." by Kori Carew



Susan Freeman, M.A. Comms [she/her] Follow
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If the fear, uncertainty, anxiety and economic impact of COVID-19 were not enough, in May we watched the video of Ahmaud Arbery being chased and killed and learned prosecutors declined to prosecute his killers. Then we learned about Breonna Taylor, and Amy Cooper was captured on video weaponizing her White Privilege and the stereotypes of Black men. By the time May 25 came we saw a police officer kneeling on George Floyd's neck for over eight minutes as he cried for his mother and said he could not breathe and the level of racial trauma was overflowing. What has ensued since May 25, with protests all over the country, cries for defunding police departments and reallocating funds to services that would better communities and reduce crime in the long run, continue till today. Across the world we saw people joining in protests alongside millions of Americans desiring racial justice and equity. Our workplaces changed with many companies making internal and external statements on racism and declaring commitments to anti-racism. Some companies even used the words "Black lives matter" in their external statements. Inclusion, diversity, equity and belonging consultants and professionals are in demand right now as organizations try to ensure they are doing the right things to assess their internal culture and practices and make efforts towards anti-racism and racial equity. **Leaders across this country understand that engaging in anti-racism and racial justice and equity efforts in the workplace are not just consistent with their diversity and inclusion values but necessary.**

The question I have been asked by colleagues, attendees at conferences I speak at, and in one-on-one conversations is simple. They ask, "is this a moment or a movement?" I don't know if this

Every once in a while that Christian charismatic upbringing kicks in. This is one of those times. In order to solve a problem we must face that problem and we must tell the truth. **To solve a problem we must understand it, and to understand it we must resist denial and see the truth.** Acknowledge the reality and truth of racism in America. Acknowledge the truth of systemic racism, institutional racism and interpersonal racism. Acknowledge discrimination and bias in banking and lending, housing, education, access to health care, policing, the criminal justice system and other areas of our society. Acknowledge your organization's history, gaps and plans toward anti-racism and racial justice and equity.

2. Knowledge is Power.

Knowledge is power but only when we turn that knowledge into wisdom and apply it. Education and awareness programs have received a lot of criticism in recent years with some even arguing that implicit bias trainings do not work. **Education and learning is a necessary component of growth.** Understanding cultural differences, the history of race and racism, the ways in which racism shows up in systems and cultures are all necessary component of change. It is not the whole solution but is a component of the solution. The beautiful thing about learning is that we have tremendous access to reliable information and can learn at our own pace. Feel free to check out this [resource and toolkit](#) put together by me and my colleagues. Engage in meaningful conversations and [know the do's and don'ts](#).

3. Words matter and definitions are important.

We understand each other when words have the same meaning and we speak the same language. Yet one of the words frequently mis-used and mis-applied is racism. We currently live in a time where a discussion of race or pointing out race as a factor in current events or personal experience opens you up to being accused of being racist. Responses to discussions of racism elicit defenses such as "he is not a bad person," "he is married to a Black woman," or some other defense that has nothing to do with what being racist is. **Fact: Good people can do racist things. Also, fact: Well-meaning people can and do engage in racist behavior.** Similarly, White privilege is received in some quarters as meaning White people do not work hard for what they have or have suffered no individual setbacks. This is far from what White privilege is about. If your organization is going to engage in anti-racism and racial equity a common understanding of terms and language must be used. Educate around what terms mean and why they are important.

4. Practice, Practice, Practice.

Like everything, practice makes perfect. Except with anti-racism and moving the needle on racial justice and equity we ought to strive for always practicing as we will always be learning. We will not always get it right. We will make mistakes, we will use the wrong word. Despite our well-meaning we will not always be well-doing, and we may be told something we said or did was offensive and it will sting. Being anti-racist and part of a movement requires a commitment to keep going. **Learn from your mistakes, get comfortable being uncomfortable, and keep moving forward.**

your habits to create new routines. Understanding your cues and responses will help you succeed. Why then do we so often think we can improve diversity in the workplace by having education sessions and sending people on their way? Systems and processes are to organizations as habits are to people. Good intentions and plans can be sabotaged by bad habits and learned behaviors. Systems and processes that hide blindspots and inequity sabotage well-intentioned diversity and anti-racism commitments.

Racism in America is more than just implicit bias, learned habits and people in white hoods.

Understanding systemic racism helps us understand how racial inequity results in our organizations and institutions based on how they were created, the normative lenses used to filter value add, talent, behavior and all aspects of human engagement. A movement will require us to understand the systems in our organizations, how they hide bias, how they ignore cultural differences, where racism is built in to the system and then make changes. Our systems were built to work for some of us. Now let's make them work equitably for all.

6. **Execute**

Understanding racism, anti-racism, and cultivating diversity and inclusion in our organizations requires expertise. Bring in experts, spend the money to hire people who know that they are doing, and then execute. **Executing on organizational change requires leadership from the top and ownership for execution across the organization.** Numerous articles have been written recently on why Chief Diversity Officers are often **set up to fail**. Avoid these pitfalls by ensuring those leading your anti-racism efforts have the resources -- human and financial, authority and support needed to succeed. Good DEIB professionals **offer exceptional value which is only useful if executed upon.**

7. **Choose Courage**

Over the years I have come to see courage as doing the thing you know needs to be done but you don't want to do. The process of being part of change around diversity and choosing anti-racism in this moment requires courage. Many are being attacked right now as fomenting division. Some of our colleagues are vehemently opposed to the commitment of anti-racism and the education, town halls, listening tours and other efforts organizations are engaging in. As of Friday President Donald Trump declared cultural sensitivity training and addressing topics such as white privilege as un-American and divisive and banned **such training for federal employees**. He is wrong. Courage is needed now more than ever as those who stand for anti-racism are likely to face more opposition. This **TEDx talk** walks you through five necessary steps for choosing courage to disrupt -isms and bias.



Just belonging: finding the courage to interrupt bias

ted.com

A moment of racial tension presents a choice. Will we be silent about implicit and unconscious bias, or will we interrupt bias for ourselves and others? Justice, belonging, and community are at stake. Kori Carew is a community builder who generates...

We can choose to maintain a movement for change, for anti-racism, for racial equity and justice in our organizations and in our communities. **As Brene Brown reminds us, "when we deny the story, it owns us. When we own the story, we can write a new ending."** May we choose to face our story of racism and its roots and write a new story together.



About Kori Carew

Kori S. Carew, Esq., an attorney, TedX speaker, and community builder who generates awareness and understanding of critical human issues by creating the space and climate for open dialogue that is meaningful, enables people to expand their perspective and drive positive change.




Kori is the Chief Inclusion & Diversity Officer at Seyfarth Shaw, LLP, an international AmLaw 100 firm. Using advocacy and organizational strategy to address structural barriers to diversity in the workplace, she brings an incisive voice, unapologetic questioning of the status quo, and a lifelong fascination of human potential to empowering women and marginalized people. She is a nationally sought-after speaker on topics of diversity, inclusion and belonging, inclusive leadership, talent engagement and development, authenticity and leveraging power.

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