



## **The First Step**

June 3, 2020

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I ache for the families of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery and all who were killed before them. I grieve my part in the sin of racism, but I have no words for you to make things better.

Words don't cut it anymore. We used words last year in our Presbytery gatherings as we focused on reconciliation. Robin DiAngelo and Bettina Love drew large crowds and challenged our thinking about racism. We left those gatherings more informed and perhaps personally motivated. It was a step in the right direction, but we didn't fix anything, and more people of color have been murdered.

Instead of more words, what if now we acted? In this time, your actions or inaction will speak louder than words, and they always have.

Maybe you've already found ways to take action in this time: donating to organizations that are run by people of color to support people of color; following racial justice advocates and speaking into issues identified by people of color; using your influence and voice to demand changes in our criminal and justice systems.

I'm not ready. I want things to change, of course. But, I recognize that my uninformed actions – however well-intended – can be reckless. So, as a white woman, my first step must be to listen to our sisters and brothers of color. What change do they want, and how do they want me involved, if at all? What actions would *not* be helpful? Right now, the voices of people of color might be angry and sharp; they might reveal trauma; they might express exhaustion; or they might inspire and challenge. I need – we all need – to listen to these voices. Not to debate or offer counterpoints. Listen.

People of color don't have an obligation to teach white people about racism or recount their experiences; there are ample resources for white people like myself who are looking for education. Consider yourself extremely blessed if you have black and brown people in your lives who are willing to explain – again – what should be obvious to us.

I yearn to act and to offer a tidy list to you of how we can “fix” the problem. But I'm not ready. For the next while, I'll be listening.