

Self-Reflection Questions

From the Touro Race & Equity Collaborative (TREC)

“The Reform Movement is committed to advancing racial justice in the United States and stands firm in the belief that Americans of all races have the right to equal treatment under the law. We seek to heal wounds caused by centuries of prejudice, discrimination and mistrust by working across lines of race, faith and class to free our country from systemic racism.”

- Rabbi Pesner, Religious Action Center, in his 2017 Letter to Congress

With this Jewish commitment to social justice, to racial justice, and to building a more equitable community, we invite you to join us in self-reflection during these Ten Days of Repentance.

The following questions come from the Anti-Defamation League and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC) with quotes from a variety of sources and voices. They are designed to promote reflection on and increase awareness of how race impacts our lives and our community. If you are interested in becoming more involved with the Touro Race & Equity Collaborative, please see the Social Justice section of the Bulletin to learn more.

1: When and how did I become aware of my racial identit(ies)? If I haven't thought previously about my racial identity, what questions do I have? What steps might I take to learn more?

“What does it mean when I say that 'I don't see race?' It means that because I learned to see no difference between 'white' and 'color,' I have white-washed my own sense of self. It means that I know more about what it is to be a white person than what it is to be Asian, and I am a stranger among both.” - Michi Trota, *I Don't See Color*

2: Describe a moment when your racial identit(ies) were important to, or took on particular meaning for, you. If you haven't had an experience about your racial identity that you can think of, consider another identity: gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, etc.

“It has taken me many years of intensive study and practice to be able to recognize and articulate how I am shaped by being white, and this in itself is an example of whiteness. While there are exceptions, most people of color do not find it anywhere near as difficult to articulate how race shapes their lives.” - Robin DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White?*

3: Describe a moment when your racial identit(ies) were important to, or took on particular meaning for, others.

“After an away game with the 7th grade Talmud Torah soccer team, I experienced the sting of being “different” for the first time. The two teams had lined up to demonstrate good sportsmanship—each of our hands high-fiving those from the opposing team, followed by the standard, “Good game”—when one of other team’s players called out, “Good game, burnt toast.”

“At that moment, I realized that I was not the same as my teammates. I was outraged, ready to fight. But when I looked around, my teammates had already walked away. I felt truly alone, and defeated. Occasionally, kids from different synagogues and summer camps would ask me, “Are you an Ethiopian Jew?” I didn’t know how to respond. They made it seem as if that was the only way I could be both a person of color and a Jew.”

— Rafael Lev, *For the Sin of Prejudice: Growing up Jewish as a Person of Color*

4: How do the words below resonate in light of all of the stories of racial injustice (police-related violence, family separation, etc.) we see and experience today?

“At the first conference on religion and race, the main participants were Pharaoh and Moses. Moses’ words were: ‘Thus says the [Eternal One], the God of Israel, let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me.’ While Pharaoh retorted: “Who is the [Eternal One], that I should heed this voice and let Israel go? I do not know the [Eternal One], and moreover I will not let Israel go.’ The outcome of that summit meeting has not come to an end. Pharaoh is not ready to capitulate. The Exodus began, but is far from having been completed. In fact, it was easier for the children of Israel to cross the Red Sea than for a Negro to cross certain university campuses.” -- Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s 1963 speech, *Religion and Race*

5: Updating the story to today, who is Pharaoh, who is Moses, who are the Israelites?

Sources of questions:

1-3 “Reflection Activity: Identity” from the Anti-Defamation League www.tolerance.org/professional-development/reflection-activity-identity

4-5 “Hearts & Minds: A Model Discussion about Racial Justice for Reform Congregations and Communities” from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism www.rac.org/racialjustice