

ASK ME ABOUT ARTT



What is NBTS ARTT?

ARTT is defined as the Anti Racism Team at New Brunswick Theological Seminary which comprises students, alumni/ae, faculty and staff.

How did it come into being?

Its conceptualization came through the insights and passion of students in Spring 2005. Greg Dunlap articulated a clear sense that the seminary had not fully struggled with the issue of racism. He challenged the board to consider this and respond. The board took the concern of the students seriously and in the fall of 2005 the Board of Trustees (BOT) suggested that we look at a full process to evaluate the seminary and to plan for a fully inclusive community. We contracted with Crossroads who has worked 25 years in the field. Two members of their staff visited us in Fall 2006 and in January 2007, the BOT approved a three-year program and committed \$90,000 to the creation of a team which in turn will create a plan to confront racism.

What's the purpose of ARTT?

We are in a three-year process to produce a 20-year plan for NBTS to move to a more just and inclusive society to confront the issue of racism that continues to be the fabric of this community.

How will ARTT empower NBTS?

The vision that we create which is embraced by the community empowers us. The vision empowers. The power is found in the fact that we receive and use the gifts of many people toward our mission.

How can the institution ensure the longevity of NBTS ARTT?

Crossroads which has committed to a 20-year plan says that the issue of racism is so entrenched in our institution that it can't be confronted or changed unless there is a long term process. The team needs to create a plan in which the BOT, Faculty, Administration and the Student body commit themselves to certain objectives. It needs to be built into the plan of mutual support and accountability. We have to design a way to hold each other accountable. The roots of racism are deep in all of our institutions and in the seminary. There are power centers outside of us that have influence on us so that the plan we create needs to address those institutions that impinge on us.

Re-Printed from *NBTS Highlighter*, October 2007

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ARTT

After the Board of Trustees approved a three three-year program and committed 90,000 to the creation of an action team to confront and dismantle systemic racism at NBTS, ARTT– the Anti-Racism Transformation Team came into being. The team has been actively working since then to shed light on and root out the virus of racism that is embedded in the policies, practices, and procedures at NBTS.

Some of ARTT's accomplishments over the past years are as follows:

- *The Board of Trustees placed its commitment to confront racism in the Seminary, church and society into the seminary's strategic directions
- *Principles of anti-racism have been inserted into the Land Use negotiating process.
- * A Staff Diversity & Multicultural Competency Policy has been instituted.
- *The Library's acquisition of works related to multiculturalism and anti-racism have been increased.
- *ARTT members collaborated with RCA on three-part Panel Discussion on the Belhar Confession and its relation to anti-racism.
- *NBTS was invited to participate in the ATS Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CORE).
- *The Curriculum Committee has added a course on anti-racism. -Sandra Austin, ARTT LEADERSHIP

This newsletter is the work of The Student Stakeholders, a subcommittee of ARTT: Chris Brennan, Glorya Johnson, Vernon Williams, Joanne Noel, Raynard Smith, & Marie Mainard O'Connell

MAY 2011

THE ANTI-RACISM TRANSFORMATION TEAM NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 3



The Leaven of Anti-Racism

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"We are grateful for all who have taken the risk to look closely at where privilege continues to hide itself in power, to confront it and to offer new ways for us to act in love."

-Gregg Mast

I am fond of quoting the words of Jesus that the kingdom is like leaven that a woman hid in flour and all was leavened. The words tell us that the courageous, faithful actions and words of just one person (or a few) can change the whole world. This is true with the life of Jesus, and we see glimpses of this same truth when we follow the remarkable lives of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., the lives of Mother Theresa and Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, also called Myanmar. The truth was glimpsed in the actions of school children in South Africa 35 years ago and with those who gathered in the streets of Cairo in these past months.

I often forget that Jesus also referred to those who lived lives of selfishness, greed and pride as leaven as well. As one would assume, such

leaven poisons a culture and its institutions with evil instead of good. We have witnessed this truth in the terrible movements of Nazism and Apartheid, where we see that just a few can skew the world – especially when the faithful remain silent and passive.

As the New Brunswick Theological Seminary community declared itself an anti-racist institution some five years ago, we knew that it would take time to move us toward becoming a beloved community. Leaven takes a while to work! It is hard work to confront privilege and power and to create a family that is more just and caring.

We are grateful for all who are a part of this movement toward God's vision for us.



WE are grateful for all who have taken the risk continue to look at where privilege continues to hide itself in power, to confront it and to offer new ways for us to act in love. We are leaven in the loaf for good; may God bless our efforts and grant us a more just and gracious way to live together.

- President Gregg A. Mast

ARTT PICNIC

JUNE 29, 2011

4:30 PM

Congratulations to the CLASS of 2011

Dr. Joanne Noel, Editor

The Belhar and Anti-Racism

During the months of January through March, 2011, three public forums were held on the Belhar Confession, the fourth standard of faith adopted by the Reformed Church in America (RCA) in 2010. The RCA's Office of Multiracial Initiatives and Social Justice (MRISJ) and the Anti-Racism Transformation Team of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary co-sponsored the forums. Each forum focused on how the Belhar Confession's three principles of

unity, reconciliation, and justice can bring fresh thinking and revitalized missional acting to three crucial areas of life. The January forum explored the Belhar's principles and anti-racism; the February forum delved into the Belhar and everyday life for everyday people; the March forum opened wide how the Belhar can help bring fresh engagements with the legacies of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Each session was co-moderated by someone from the New Brunswick Seminary community and a

representative of MRISJ. Each forum had a five or six-member panel of people from both communities. Each panel discussed issues related to that forum's theme, followed by a question and answer session with people from the audience.

In some cases, panelists applied the Belhar's principles in big-picture ways while in other instances, focused on personal experiences that sometimes reflected pain or overcoming struggles. In other cases, the panelists found that theological approaches held sway while in other instances, practical approaches took center stage. In yet other cases, the panelists saw application of the principles as being most appropriate through group or community-wide actions while in yet other applications, things appeared to depend on the individual's own introspection and action. Regardless of the application, the panelists found and suggested that the Belhar's principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice are profoundly relevant to being and acting across a wide spectrum of life and ministry.

- Earl James
RCA Coordinator of Multiracial Initiatives & Social Justice

Multiculturalism refers to a community/society that recognizes, values, and promotes the contributions of the diverse cultural heritages and ancestries of all its people. Thus, **Multiculturalism** is the valuing, affirming, celebrating, and embracing of a person in the particularity of his/her culture.

SWOTing the Library

Among the issues the Anti-Racism Team was established to address is one that asks, "Despite our best intentions, how does the legacy of institutionalized racism continue to manifest itself in our common life?" In an effort to address such issues, the library as one element of that common life was subjected to a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis involves an examination of the Library's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (hence the acronym).

Among the identified weaknesses were several we cannot currently do much about (e.g., handicapped access and climate control). It is hoped these and other architectural issues can be addressed should the institution bring the land use conversations with Rutgers to a successful conclusion.

More directly connected with ARTT was a comment that the gallery in the Reading Room has a monocultural feel (both to race and to gender). The gallery is the legacy of John Van Dyke, librarian from 1878-1932 and Rutgers' Professor of Art History from 1891-1932. For some members of the community the portraits represent a testimony of our historic legacy of missions and social justice. Unfortunately that history is not well known. For others it represents evidence of the long monocultural tradition of white males training other white males for ministry.

The issue was raised in the library committee and in ARTT meetings as to the relevance of the portraits to our efforts to become an anti-racist institution. Some feel the only appropriate course is to remove the portraits completely. Some suggest that a more representative selection of portraits might be appropriate. Still others feel the portraits should be supplemented with other work that represents the history of people of color (either in this institution or nationally).

No immediate decision was made, but the discussion has encouraged Library Director Chris Brennan to investigate options to address the Library's imagery, to make it more representative of our community and more welcoming to all.

-Chris Brennan, DIRECTOR OF SAGE LIBRARY

Training to Become the Beloved Community

The ARTT training should be a necessary requirement for students and faculty. The training takes students and faculty on a journey through American history discussing ideologies not taught in secular schools. The facilitators used illustrations that demonstrated how policies, systems and economies strategically institutionalize racism. The course gives students the opportunity to discuss and examine their own preconceived notions and prejudicial attitudes against others. Some students shared heart-breaking stories that were difficult to hear. As tears rolled down the participants' cheeks it became increasingly clear that, a greater level of cultural sensitivity should be required on the part of the facilitators.

We live in a post-modern society, a "melting pot" of diversified cultures, languages and customs, but "white privilege" still reigns. I believe that with continuous education, willingness and the power of the Holy Spirit New Brunswick Seminary will rise as an entity truly striving to live by our Lord's commandment, to love one another as we love ourselves.

-Charlesetta Holmes

The success of a training event such as ARTT should not only be measured by the ability to accomplish the expected outcome, but should also be measured by the right questions raised that prompted new ideas and thinking outside the box and the tension created by engaged participants with intense convictions and concerns. The "norm" was disturbed and folks were made uncomfortable enough that gradualism" was no longer an option. If we measure ARTT's third training event by these standards, it was a huge success.

The forty-four participants committed themselves to engaging the difficult subject of dismantling racism. The training provided valuable and challenging information on understanding systemic racism and useful tools for dismantling racism. The freedom to share painful experiences opened the door for real and challenging conversation, but at times it interrupted the normal flow of training creating tension and anxiety in the room. Such training ignited difficult conversations and hard questions. If we are serious about our "work" of dismantling racism within our institution, several of the hard questions raised during the training are worth some thought: Where were the white students? Why isn't ARTT mandatory for all students? As a Seminary can we do this work apart from our belief in God, how do we include spirituality in the training? What's after the initial ARTT training? Where do we go from here?

- Cora Taitt

I recently attended my second ARTT training session. As a white male of Brazilian heritage, my cultural and racial composition can result in much discussion and debate. However, what is clear is that the March ARTT training session was once again beneficial since it brought diverse individuals in community to explore issues related to race prejudice and the misuse of institutional power. I suspect that in our radical individualized and entitlement based culture it is of utmost importance to consistently and continually examine our own complicity to systemic and institutional power differentials. By cultivating a more profound understanding of the need to nurture "a beloved community", we actively engage in Christianity as manifested through personal enrichment as well as communal empowerment.

-Fernando Linares

THE ANTI-RACISM TRANSFORMATION TEAM



JOANNE, JOAN, WILLIARD, GREGG, RICHARD, ROBIN, JOHN, GLORYA, LYNN, VERNON, JESSE, BETH, CORA, RAYNARD, LEE, CHRIS, RENEE, JOHN, SOAE, WARREN, SANDRA, MARIE

RACISM:
Race prejudice and the misuse of power by systems and institutions.