

Response to a Racial Incident: Action Plan

When there's a racial incident or tragedy on campus, it can be hard to know how to respond. Here is a short guide to help you craft a plan with your students. Remember it is important to respond quickly in the moment, but having a long-term action plan in helping your fellowship grow in seeking racial justice is just as important.

STEP 1: STOP

Before doing anything, stop and pray. Remember your dependence on Jesus.

- How are you feeling about what happened? How is it affecting you personally? What does Jesus want to say to you?
- Before you lead your whole fellowship, are there individual friends that may have been offended by the incident that need your care? How can you first respond with integrity in your personal life before modeling how to do that in your fellowship?
- Ask God what he wants you to do to respond. Ask others to pray and help as well. Don't do this alone.

STEP 2: Connect Personally to Your Students

Don't make a plan without your students, and especially without the offended people group. Lean on your student leaders. They will often have ideas about what to do. Here are a few ways you can engage with students:

- **Offended Party:**
 - Ask how they are feeling, thinking, and what they need. Buy them dinner to encourage them.
 - Listen, listen, listen.
 - Ask them what other student organizations are already doing on campus. How are they responding to the incident?
 - Empower: Create space for them to respond but also be sensitive to their fatigue. They will tell you what motivates them. Is there space you can create for them at a prayer or lamenting service? Your next large group? A retreat? Small groups? Leaders meetings? Are there rallies on campus, school paper articles, or Facebook posts that they'd want the rest of the fellowship to engage?

- **Offending Party:**
 - Ask how they are feeling and thinking. Look for where there may be guilt, confusion, or defensiveness.
 - Share with them some of what the offended party is feeling and what they need.
 - Ask them what they need from Jesus in this time.
 - Invite them to offer an intercessory apology to their friends in the offended party. For example, “On behalf of the _____ community, we are so sorry that _____ (be explicit and name the wrong) was done to you and/or your people. This is not what Jesus intended for your people and mine. Please forgive us.”
- **Unaffected Party:**
 - Ask what they are feeling and thinking.
 - Explain why what happened is not OK and how the community may be feeling.
 - Ask how they can love and mourn with the offended party.
 - Empower them to respond as well. Invite them to write articles in the school paper, participate in rallies, listen to their peers, use their artwork as a platform for social change, use their voice on social media to speak for justice, etc.
 - Share examples of how this has been done well and vary the examples in terms of the ethnicities involved.

STEP 3: Lament Publicly

See the lamenting guide or other resources. Help your fellowship ask the question: How is Jesus good news in the middle of this? Why does he care? How is he weeping?

STEP 4: Don't Stop

Once the incident is no longer trending on Facebook, your work isn't over. Revisit the incident throughout the year.

- Publicly acknowledge it again later.
- With the offended party: Debrief the responsiveness of the fellowship. How did they feel about how we responded? What would they hope for next? In what ways could our structures or leadership or influence on campus better care for [the offended party]? What changes would need to be made?
- Be ready to do more prayer ministry.