



Reconciling a Broken World

Rev. Mary Lu Johnston, Executive Director
Reach Beyond Mission
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“It wasn’t that we talked about things I hadn’t thought about. It was that we talked.”
--Madeline, Dallas Site Coordinator



Reach Beyond Mission is a summer alternative mission trip program for middle and high school youth focusing on service and justice education. Each summer we select college students to lead our mission weeks about food justice, affordable housing, and advocacy. Training for our college staff includes First Aid/CPR certification, leading youth with special needs, safe conduct guidelines, developmental characteristics of youth, and even food handling.

Because racism has so significantly impacted hunger, housing, and education in the United States, we decided we should provide anti-racism training. Little did we know how important the training would be to us when we began our second mission week in Dallas.

“When I arrived at the airport in Dallas days after the shootings, the city looked heavily armed. Without the racism training, my response to the tension I witnessed as I left the airport might have been different. The training helped me recognize all that has led up to what happened in Dallas—injustices that occurred long before the recent shootings of young African-American men. Although, as a history major, I have discussed in classes how the race-based slavery of America’s past, Jim Crow laws, and segregation led to what is happening in the United States today, the training gave me, as well as my fellow Reach Beyond Mission staff members, a place to discuss these issues openly and honestly without judgment. The training made me more aware that, as a white young woman, I can never feel what the African-American community feels—especially during times like this.”

–Caroline, Summer Volunteer Leadership Staff

Led by Rev. Yvonne Gilmore, a Reconciliation Ministry anti-racism trainer, the Reach Beyond Mission Summer Staff talked. We looked at scripture. We talked about privilege. We talked about the power of language. We talked about our identities.

“It was interesting to see how others perceive themselves, because what you see and even what you know is not the entire story.”

–Jordan, Dallas Home Repair Supervisor

“The anti-racism training helped us grow and bond as a team—even though we hadn’t known one another at all a week prior. As we discussed our identities, we moved past superficial “get to know you” games and began to understand one another on a deeper, more thoughtful level. The origin of our values suddenly became more apparent as we revealed how our histories have shaped us into who we are.”

–Madeline, Dallas Site Coordinator

Racism is a product of ignorance. Racism elevates the superficial differences and minimizes our common humanity. But when we talk—and listen— we see differently. Perhaps this is the real importance of the training. If we are willing to talk more deeply with one another and then listen—truly listen—we can begin to understand and take a stand to reconcile a broken world.

Reach Beyond Mission is deeply grateful to the NBA Incubate Initiative for financially supporting our Summer Staff anti-racism training day.

The NBA incubates new ministries, supporting social entrepreneurs of faith who are serving their communities in a variety of innovative ways and empowering these Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at nbacares.org/incubate or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at awatkins@nbacares.org.