

White Like Me: Alton YWCA hosting discussion of racism and white privilege this weekend

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON – The YWCA of Alton has two main purposes – to eliminate racism and to empower women.

That first goal especially is being addressed through the organization's Racial Justice Committee, which is hosting a discussion over the course of the next three months involving the hot-button and often controversial phrase: "white privilege." Many people hear those words and assume it is a direct condemnation of their skin color, mistakenly thinking those who use it in earnest assume because a person is white, they have everything handed to them. Instead, white privilege simply means, while any person on this Earth face genuine struggles, having white skin in America means racial discrimination is not one of those struggles.

To discuss white privilege and what it means to people and the community at large, the Alton YWCA is hosting a screening of a film called "White Like Me," which is based on a book of the same title by Tim Wise. The film is a look at racism and white

privilege in America. It will be screened this Saturday, Jan. 26, from 2-4 p.m. in the lobby of the YWCA. The film is roughly an hour and 10 minutes and will be followed by a discussion in the lobby about its immediate impact as well.

Racial Justice Committee Program Chairperson Sonya Porter was able to attain several copies of the book, which are being offered for sale through the YWCA at \$15 per copy during the film screening. Two further discussions on white privilege as well as the continued impact of the film and book will also be hosted in the lobby of the YWCA on Feb. 8 from 2-4 p.m. and March 2 from 2-4 p.m.

While the books do cost money, the events are open to everyone and free to attend. Sarah Neal, who sits on the Racial Justice Committee said she hopes white folks who already realize white privilege come to discuss it with each other so they can better bring its message to their communities through word of mouth. She hopes word of mouth makes the discussions grow, and people who would otherwise find themselves “on the fence” regarding the issue may even join the conversations at the February and March dates.

Neal said the target audience for the film and book is white people who already realize or want to learn more about the concept of white privilege, but emphasized people of all races and backgrounds are welcomed and encouraged to attend to enhance the much-needed discussion about race in the community as well as the nation at large.

“Racism and racial privilege are complicated issues, and one film or book won’t fix it, but it could help lead to discussions that could,” she said.

More information on the film screening as well as other upcoming events hosted by the YWCA and its Racial Justice Committee can be found on the YWCA’s Facebook page.