

## Praise for *Our Problem, Our Path*

“*Our Problem, Our Path* lays the groundwork for engaging in compelling and critically important conversations, and for reimagining what is possible when discussing how we think and feel about race. This book will challenge and energize anyone who reads it and takes the journey to widen their path; it is visionary, practical, courageous, and invitational.”

**Peggy Brookins**, president and CEO  
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

“With compassion and humility, Michael and Bartoli offer a practical handbook for White antiracist awareness and practice. Filled with relatable examples and nuanced explanations, this is a step-by-step guide for responding to the obstacles—both internal and external—of unlearning our White socialization and challenging systemic racism. *Our Problem, Our Path* is a must-read for starting and maintaining the life-long process of White antiracist practice.”

**Robin DiAngelo**, author  
*White Fragility* and *Nice Racism*

“It is rare to find a book that places White people at the center of understanding their Whiteness. *Our Problem, Our Path* is exactly what it says: a path for White social justice activists to take if they honestly want to understand the impact of their Whiteness on themselves, on society, and on systems. This will not be an easy read, but it is a must-read. Take the path and start creating #GoodTrouble.”

**Eddie Moore Jr.**, founder  
The White Privilege Conference

“This is the book. This is it. A lot of antiracism work needs to happen within, before it can be effective. That within-work is not only your “inner” work, but also the within-race work that White people need to have with their family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. As a Black woman and racial-equity scholar, I make this suggestion often, but it is usually met with a combination of resistance and terror. For most White people, racial conversations are unfamiliar terrain and risk exposing loved ones and respected colleagues as racially inept or downright racist. *Our Problem, Our Path* takes on the essential tasks of White people understanding their own racial stress response *and* engaging other White people in frank, kind, and practical terms. It is both a starting point and an endgame.

“You can have honest race conversations without being mean or snarky. Discomfort and guilt are not the endgame of *Our Problem, Our Path*. To the contrary, racialized stress is part of the path to racial competency. The true goals of *Our Problem, Our Path* are to grow racial competency, build an antiracist society, eliminate racial hierarchies, and remedy the harms that occur as a result. This book provides clear examples and solution-focused strategies to move beyond anti-racist performance to effective action. *Our Problem, Our Path* is not just another book club selection for nice White people. This book is made for learning, growth, and doing the right thing (consistently). *Our Problem, Our Path* has the “get right and gather your people” work that Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color have been yearning to see from our allies.

“*Our Problem, Our Path* meets White people where they are on their racial journey, without making Black, Indigenous and other People of Color’s humanity fodder for debate. As such, *Our Problem, Our Path* recognizes how White people have been socialized to

understand race and racism while demonstrating how they can do better in socializing their own children, and make a difference in their own communities.”

**Keisha Bentley-Edwards**

Associate professor of general internal medicine and  
Associate director of research/director of the Health Equity Working Group  
Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity at Duke University

“If you’re a White person looking for a guide to transition you away from racial complacency and towards an antiracist practice, this is it. *Our Problem, Our Path* starts with something rarely articulated: What does the path look like and where might it lead us? This story-rich jewel promises to gather up White people and equip us with strategies that build the awareness, knowledge, and skill we need to find and support one another on the path to liberation for all.”

**Debby Irving**, author

*Waking Up White* and *Finding Myself in the Story of Race*

“This book serves as a master class and recipe for what is practically needed to talk about and address racism in the world along with the mental and emotional steps needed to accomplish genuine change, one person, one family, one neighborhood, and one community at a time. As a member of the global majority, as an African American, cisgender Blackman with a clinical psychology doctorate degree, reading this book provided me with much-needed and timely hope that someone understands us and that we have at least two allies on the inside. We have at least two superheroes mightily using their superpowers of empathy to educate, challenge, and awaken those willing to listen to take the well-outlined steps to break down hate and fight for a just and equitable world for us and for all of the children’s children’s children’s children.”

**Tim Barksdale, Sr.**, executive director  
Clinical Services for Merakey IDD Services

“*Our Problem, Our Path: Collective Antiracism for White People* is a roadmap to intercept Whiteness and define key practices necessary to embody antiracist leadership. As a Black woman leading efforts toward systematizing equity, I sought out the expertise of “Ms. Ali.” She humbly supports and unpacks various complexities and intersections one encounters when walking the path toward transformation. Although her work is framed for a White audience, through her discourse and facilitation I have witnessed People of Color and Indigenous folk grapple with the manifestations of their own internalized oppression. Dr. Michael’s work exemplifies that the study of self is one of the greatest tools in addressing racism.”

**Myla Pope**, director  
Office of Equity, Saint Paul Public Schools, St. Paul, Minnesota

“The hard work to ensure a more racially just American society cannot live solely in the work of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people alone. Whether in neighborhoods, classrooms, school systems, or in car rides home, White America is either undermining racial justice, or undermining racism. To be able to understand where one is on the continuum of cultural proficiency takes honesty, humility, and courage. Racial justice can never be fully realized without self-reflection, intellectual rigor, and truth. But, unfortunately, too often, too many White people are more than comfortable ignoring how race, class, power, and privilege intersect to create unbalanced systems, experiences, and outcomes along racial lines.

“*Our Problem, Our Path*, by Dr. Ali Michael and Dr. Eleonora Bartoli, raises a clarion call and charts a path for White people to not only reflect on their mindsets, but to probe their own experiences to better understand their own potential for harboring and nurturing racial biases and, just as importantly, how they arrived, consciously or unconsciously, at the

conclusions they have about race and People and Communities of Color. Was racism taught at school, learned from social media, derived from an experience, or reinforced at mealtime with family and friends?

“Many claim to be antiracist, but too often gleefully swim in the most shallow of waters ignoring the depth of work it takes to actually be antiracist. Teachers must understand that one can slide from cultural proficiency and antiracism to being culturally destructive and racist from child to child, or minute by minute. Deconstructing one’s mindsets and assumptions based on race takes sincerity and vigilance. It demands an understanding of history and how one’s personal journey is influenced by it. This book challenges us to move well beyond woke language to authentic action.

“As Malcolm X said, I tell sincere white people, ‘Work in conjunction with us....Let sincere white individuals find all other white people they can who feel as they do....to work to convert other white people who are thinking and acting so racist....In our mutual sincerity we might be able to show a road to the salvation of America’s very soul.’

“*Our Problem, Our Path: Collective Antiracism for White People* is a powerful road map that helps to light a path of action to create a society that is more consistently educationally and racially just. We all deserve nothing less.”

**Sharif El-Mekki**, CEO  
Center for Black Educator Development

“Michael and Bartoli have written the book I’ve been waiting for, one for all the White people who know racism is wrong, who want to do the right thing, and who want their children to live in a better world. Writing with clarity and from deep experience, the authors explain what antiracism means and how to do it without adopting the hectoring tone that can turn people away from this essential work. While James Baldwin correctly identified racism as a White people’s problem, Michael and Bartoli manage to frame it as a positive life mission that will benefit us all in the end.

“Above all, *Our Problem, Our Path* offers the wise guidance, with generous helpings of empathy and compassion, that White people need if we are to talk with one another about (and eventually eradicate) the invisible caste system in which we all live.”

**Maureen Costello**, executive director  
Center for Antiracist Education, STAND for Children

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# Our Problem, Our Path

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*To all the children's children's children's children's children's  
children's children*

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# Our Problem, Our Path

## Collective Antiracism for White People

Ali Michael  
Eleonora Bartoli

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# About the Authors

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**Ali Michael, Ph.D.**, is the co-director and co-founder of the Race Institute for K–12 Educators; she works with schools and organizations across the United States to help make research on race, Whiteness, and education more accessible and relevant to educators. Ali is the author of *Raising Race Questions: Whiteness and Inquiry in Education*, winner of the 2017 Society of Professors of Education Outstanding Book Award. As a member of a multiracial editorial team, she has co-edited *The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys*, *Teaching Beautiful Brilliant Black Girls*, and *Everyday White People Confront Racial and Social Injustice: 15 Stories*. With her colleague Toni Graves Williamson, Ali adapted Robin DiAngelo’s *White Fragility* for a young adult audience. Ali sits on the editorial

board of the journal *Whiteness and Education*. Her article “What White Children Need to Know About Race,” co-authored with Dr. Eleonora Bartoli in *Independent Schools Magazine*, won the Association and Media Publishing Gold Award for Best Feature Article in 2014. When she is not writing, speaking, or training, Ali is striving to be an antiracist co-parent to two amazing kids. Her writing and speeches are available at [alimichael.org](http://alimichael.org).



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Photo by Anthony Rugnetta,  
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Throughout her career, Eleonora has held leadership positions in professional organizations at the state and national levels. She has also presented at numerous conferences and is the author of a number of publications focused on multicultural counseling competence, White racial socialization, and the integration of social justice principles in evidence-based counseling practices (see her website, [dreleonorabartoli.com](http://dreleonorabartoli.com), for details). Eleonora has received academic awards, including the Lindback Foundation Award for Distinguished Teaching and the Provost Award for Outstanding Advising and Mentoring. The Gillem-Bartoli Alumni Award for Contributions to Social Justice was established to honor the contributions of Eleonora and her colleague, Dr. Angela Gillem, in their roles as activist-scholars within academia.