

# **My Background**

## **Stephanie Gregory**

I grew up in a rural area of Lima, Ohio where most of my family also lives, but there wasn't much ethnic diversity. Then I attended college at Ohio Wesleyan University, a small private college with a significant minority student population. Throughout my college career I had several friends of different ethnicities, and plenty of opportunities to experience a different culture than the one I grew up in. However, it was my 4th year of college when I first developed a passion for racial reconciliation, after going to Jackson, Mississippi on a spring break mission trip.

We served at the John Perkins Foundation, and were taught by John Perkins himself about the biblical basis for racial reconciliation and our Christian responsibility to live it. The ministry being done by the Perkins Foundation was so inspiring that once we returned to Ohio I couldn't stop thinking about the things I had learned. It was explained to me that I still receive certain privileges simply because I am a white person—"white privilege" they call it. This injustice to minority groups concerned me and impelled me to gain a better understanding. Suddenly I felt a responsibility as a white woman to stand for racial equality, but I didn't quite know how. So, I embraced diversity, eager to learn from whoever would allow me. I began hanging out in the House of Black Culture, one of the small living units on campus which had an educational focus on black culture. And I continued developing close relationships with my friends of different ethnicities. Fortunately, they were patient with me as I learned about their ethnic histories and cultures.

Today I am much further from where I began, but I will always have more to learn. That's why I am so thankful for organizations like the ReNew Partnerships which create safe environments for people to wrestle with their perceptions of "race", engage different cultures, and understand the biblical importance for facing these challenges. Imagine, then, my excitement to be employed by such an organization!