

GUIDELINES TO HOLDING DIALOGUE ON RACISM¹

- Be clear and open about the purpose of the conversation before inviting people and during the conversation
- Set ground rules for respectful conversation
- Active listening is a must
- Remain open, with curiosity modeled by responding with questions before responding with your own interpretation or explanation of impact in regards to someone else's comments
- Recognize and acknowledge people's experiences. The person/people you are in conversation with are bringing their own perspective, shaped by their own experiences (culture, history, practices, upbringing)
- Be mindful to take breaks to recenter when conversations feel uncomfortable or too wrought with conflict to be productive. Build in moments for prayer and pauses to reflect and recenter
- DON'T assume intent. DO center impact over intent
- Dismantling racism is not a checklist, a meeting, or a one-time commitment. Make small, realistic, challenging commitments to grow, learn and evolve.

MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Make no assumptions. People are bringing in different perspectives and experiences. Some things people may be sitting with could include:

- People won't understand me;
- I don't agree with everything and I don't want to be judged;
- I have stupid questions;
- I've never had to think about this;
- I don't want to offend anyone;
- This just doesn't impact me like that;
- I don't see race or color;
- I am not a racist and therefore play no part in racism.

¹ Adapted from Racial Autobiography by Whites for Racial Equity, a SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice) affiliate, and Conversation Guide: Talking about Race, Racism, Care, and Caregiving by Caring Across Generations.

QUESTIONS TO SPARK REFLECTION AND HELP US SHARE OUR STORIES

1. Family:

Are your parents the same race? Same ethnic group? Are your brothers and sisters? What about your extended family — uncles, aunts, etc.?

Where did your parents grow up? What exposure did they have to racial groups other than their own? Have you ever talked with them about this?

What ideas did they grow up with, regarding race relations? Again, do you know? Have you ever talked with them about this? Why or why not?

Do you think of yourself as white? If you're not white, do you think of yourself as black, or Asian-American, etc.? Or just as "human"? Do you think of yourself as a member of an ethnic group? What is its importance to you?

2. Neighborhood:

What is the racial makeup of the neighborhood you grew up in?

What was your first awareness of race? — that there are different "races" and that you are one.

What was your first encounter with another race? Describe the situation.

What messages do you recall getting from your parents about race? From others when you were little?

3. Elementary and Middle School:

What was the racial makeup of your elementary school? Of its teachers?

Think about the curriculum: what black Americans did you hear about? How did you celebrate Martin Luther King Day?

Cultural influences: TV, advertising, novels, music, movies, etc. What color God was presented to you? Angels? Santa Claus? The tooth fairy? Dolls?

What was the racial makeup of organizations you were in? Girl Scouts, soccer team, church, etc.?

4. High School and community:

What was the racial makeup of your high school? Of its teachers?

Was there interracial dating? Any racial slurs? Any conflict with members of another race?

Have you ever felt or been stigmatized because of your race or ethnic group membership?

What is the racial makeup of your home town? Of your metropolitan area? What of your experiences there, in summer camp, summer jobs, etc.?

5. Present and Future:

What is the racial makeup of this institution? of your circle(s) of friends here? Does it meet your needs?

6. General:

What's the most important image, encounter, whatever, you've had regarding race? Have you felt threatened? In the minority? Have you felt privileged?

7. Learning To Be White:

- When was the first time you realized you were white?
- When was the first time you realized you might be treated differently because you have white skin?
- When was the first time you realized people of other racial identity groups are treated differently?
- What were the messages you heard growing up about white people? African Americans? Latinos/as? Native Americans? Asian Americans? Pacific Islanders?
- Look at your friends, family, colleagues, key professionals or service people (doctor, dentist, lawyer, counselor, handyperson, etc.)—what are their racial identities? How and why did you choose to know or work with these people? To which racial groups do the people you socialize with regularly belong?