



ANTIRACISM LITERACY PARTNERS

A NEXT RIGHT ACTION

So You Want to Talk About Race Discussion Guide

General Discussion Guidelines

1. What is racism and antiracism? To begin your discussion, start with the same understanding of these terms. See “Being Antiracist” at the end of this reading guide.
2. Keep in mind that racism exists whether people are aware of it or not. A racial identification as white and privileged or as a person of color will affect our ability to see racism.
3. Speak to your own thoughts, behaviors, feelings, experience, and beliefs. Refrain from hopelessness and absolutes such as “Racism is never going to end,” or “I can’t do anything.”
4. Expect discomfort but avoid defensiveness. There is a difference between agreement and understanding; consider whether “I don’t agree” may actually mean “I don’t understand.”
5. Consider how your antiracism work furthers the values, mission, and ends of Unity Church-Unitarian, see at end of guide.
6. This guide is meant only to serve as a conversation starter. Feel free to create a format that works best for you, and create and discuss topics and questions as you think best.

Covenants

We will listen from the heart.

We will speak honestly from the heart about our own experience, not that of others.

We will respect the confidentiality of what is shared here.

We will not interrupt.

We will not give unasked-for advice.

We will not judge others by what they say.

We will honor the diversity of thoughts and feelings.

We will honor and respect our time together and our commitment to our learning partner.

Suggested 1-hour Discussion Format

5 min	Opening: Review of covenants
10 min	<i>Check-in.</i> What, briefly, is going on in your life today?
30 min	Discussion
10 min	<i>Check-out.</i> How are you feeling now?
5 min	Next discussion: where, when, scheduled on Zoom?

Unity Library

A limited number of copies are available through Unity Library. Contact Shelley for more information:

library@unityunitarian.org

***So You Want to Talk About Race* Discussion Guide**

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo (New York: Seal Press, 2019).

About

In this *New York Times* bestseller, Ijeoma Oluo offers a hard-hitting but user-friendly examination of race in America

Widespread reporting on aspects of white supremacy — from police brutality to the mass incarceration of Black Americans — has put a media spotlight on racism in our society. Still, it is a difficult subject to talk about. How do you tell your roommate her jokes are racist? Why did your sister-in-law take umbrage when you asked to touch her hair — and how do you make it right? How do you explain white privilege to your white, privileged friend?

In *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Ijeoma Oluo guides readers of all races through subjects ranging from intersectionality and affirmative action to “model minorities” in an attempt to make the seemingly impossible possible: honest conversations about race and racism, and how they infect almost every aspect of American life. [Publisher Description]

Discussion Questions

1. In Chapter 1, "Is it really about race?," the author states: "It is about race if a person of color thinks it is about race. It is about race if it disproportionately or differently affects people of color. It is about race if it fits into a broader pattern of events that disproportionately or differently affect people of color." After reading the author's explanation of these points, can you think of social or political issues that many people currently believe are not about race, but actually may be? Which of the above guidelines for understanding when it is about race fit those issues?
2. The chapter about privilege is placed right before the chapter on intersectionality. The author has stated in interviews that she placed those chapters in that order because it is impossible to fully understand intersectionality without first comprehending privilege. How do the concepts discussed in the chapter "Why am I always being told to check my privilege?" help deepen your understanding of intersectionality and help implement intersectionality into your life?
3. The author states that she grew up in a majority white, liberal area and was raised by a white mother. How might that upbringing have influenced the way that she wrote this book? How might it have influenced the personal events she describes in the book? How might this book have been different if written by a black person with a different upbringing, or if written by a person of color of a different race?
4. Throughout the book, the author makes it clear that this book is written for both white people and people of color. But does the author expect white people and people of color to read and experience this book in the same way? What are some of the ways in which the author indicates how she expects white people and people of color to react and interact with portions of the book? What are some of the ways in which the author discusses the different roles that white people

and people of color will play in fighting systemic racism in our society?

5. In Chapter 12, "What are microaggressions?," the author lists some of the racial microaggressions that her friends of color said that they often hear. What are some of the racial microaggressions that you have encountered or witnessed? What are some that you may have perpetrated on others?
6. Chapter 15, "But what if I hate Al Sharpton?," discusses the issue of respectability politics and tone policing. What burdens of "respectability" and "tone" do you see placed on different populations of color in our society?
7. The final chapter, "Talking is great, but what else can I do?," discusses some actions you can take to battle systemic racism using the knowledge you've gained from the book and from your conversations on race. What are some actions you can take in your community, your schools, your workplace, and your local government? What are some local antiracism efforts in your community that you can join or support?

Our Next Right Action: Unity Church began exploring Our Next Right Action shortly after the killing of George Floyd. "Antiracism Literacy Partners" is one of several "next right actions." Further education, advocacy, and lifestyle changes that shift our awareness and privilege are part of how we can sustain antiracism as a lifelong commitment. What next right actions might you take next?

For More Information

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo (Boston: Beacon Press, Reprint Edition, 2018).

Notes:

Discussion questions are from Hachette Book Group Reader's Guide.

https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/so-you-want-to-talk-about-race_readers-guide.pdf

From “Talking About Race,” National Museum of African American History & Culture: Being Antiracist

To create an equal society, we must commit to making unbiased choices and being antiracist in all aspects of our lives.

Race does not biologically exist, yet how we identify with race is so powerful, it influences our experiences and shapes our lives. In a society that privileges white people and whiteness, racist ideas are considered normal throughout our media, culture, social systems, and institutions. Historically, racist views justified the unfair treatment and oppression of people of color (including enslavement, segregation, internment, etc.). We can be led to believe that racism is only about individual mindsets and actions, yet racist policies also contribute to our polarization. While individual choices are damaging, racist ideas in policy have a wide-spread impact by threatening the equity of our systems and the fairness of our institutions. To create an equal society, we must commit to making unbiased choices and being antiracist in all aspects of our lives.

Being antiracist is fighting against racism. Racism takes several forms and works most often in tandem with at least one other form to reinforce racist ideas, behavior, and policy. Types of racism are:

- **Individual racism** refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. The U.S. cultural narrative about racism typically focuses on individual racism and fails to recognize systemic racism. *Examples include believing in the superiority of white people, not hiring a person of color because “something doesn’t feel right,” or telling a racist joke.*
- **Interpersonal racism** occurs between individuals. These are public expressions of racism, often involving slurs, biases, or hateful words or actions.
- **Institutional racism** occurs in an organization. These are discriminatory treatments, unfair policies, or biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for whites over people of color and extend considerably beyond prejudice. These institutional policies often never mention any racial group, but the intent is to create advantages. *Example: A school system where students of color are more frequently distributed into the most crowded classrooms and underfunded schools and out of the higher-resourced schools.*
- **Structural racism** is the overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society. These systems give privileges to white people resulting in disadvantages to people of color. *Example: Stereotypes of people of color as criminals in mainstream movies and media.*

No one is born racist or antiracist; these result from the choices we make. Being antiracist results from a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life. In the absence of making antiracist choices, we (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions and society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you *are*; it is about what you *do*.

Being Antiracist at the Individual and Interpersonal Level

When we choose to be antiracist, we become actively conscious about race and racism *and* take actions to end racial inequities in our daily lives. Being antiracist is believing that racism is everyone’s problem, and we all have a role to play in stopping it. In “The Racial Healing Handbook,” Dr. Anneliese

A. Singh reminds us of the importance of being purposeful: “You need the intentional mindset of *Yep, this racism thing is everyone’s problem-including mine, and I’m going to do something about it.*”

Being antiracist is different for white people than it is for people of color. For white people, being antiracist evolves with their racial identity development. They must acknowledge and understand their privilege, work to change their internalized racism, and interrupt racism when they see it. For people of color, it means recognizing how race and racism have been internalized, and whether it has been applied to other people of color.

All racial groups struggle under white supremacy. People of color groups are not always united in solidarity. People of color can act by challenging internalized white supremacy and interrupting patterns of prejudice against other racial groups. For everyone, it is an ongoing practice and process.

Accessed Sept 1, 2020: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

Unity Church-Unitarian Values, Mission, and Ends

Values

Unity Church-Unitarian honors the ambiguity and uncertainty in the search for greater truth, meaning, and equity. In all we do, we strive to embody:

- Wonder
- Open-hearted engagement
- Courageous action

Mission

Unity Church-Unitarian fosters transformation through a free and inclusive religious community that encourages lives of integrity, service, and joy.

Ends Statements 2018-2023

Working within ourselves, among our church community, and beyond in the larger world, we the people of Unity Church-Unitarian:

- Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.
- Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.
- Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world.
- Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people.
- Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.
- Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it.
- Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.
- Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.

Accessed 8.29.20: <https://www.unityunitarian.org/values-mission-ends.html>

Covenants adapted from UU Small Group Ministry Network, accessed 8.29.20:

<http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/covenants.html>