



ANTIRACISM LITERACY PARTNERS

A NEXT RIGHT ACTION

How to Be an Antiracist 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” on p. 4 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 on p. 5.
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

***How to Be an Antiracist* Discussion Guide**

How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi (New York: One World, 2019).

About

How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi offers big ideas about racism and antiracism. The biggest of the big ideas is this: There is no such thing as a “not racist.” Instead, there are racists and anti-racists. People who claim they are “not racist” are only saying that they don’t burn churches or participate in lynch mobs. They are still racists because they support “racist policies through their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea.”

The opposite of a racist is an antiracist, one who supports “an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea.” Kendi frequently warns that becoming an antiracist is difficult. To support this point, he begins each chapter with a story from his own life that describes the racist ideas he only gradually discarded.

Most chapters focus on issues central to racist ideas and policies. Each chapter includes the historical and legal context of the issue in question. Kendi’s personal stories, definitions, historical context, excellent footnotes, and lively writing make the book accessible. It is a must-read for anyone seeking to understand how racism became embedded in US law and culture and what could be done about it.

Discussion Questions

1. In *How to Be an Antiracist*, Kendi shares his own experience with racist thinking. How does his honesty help give us space to acknowledge and name our own racist behaviors and attitudes?
2. Kendi writes, “The only way to undo racism is to constantly identify it and describe it—and then dismantle it.” Why does he believe we need to call out racism when we see it, even if it can be uncomfortable to identify?
3. The book’s central message is that the opposite of “racist” isn’t “not racist.” The true opposite of “racist” is antiracist. “The good news,” Kendi writes, “is that racist and antiracist are not fixed identities. We can be racist one minute and an antiracist the next.” What does it mean to have to constantly reaffirm your identity as an antiracist? Is there any benefit to the fact that you can’t just decide you are “not racist” or an antiracist and be done with it?
4. What is the first step you, personally, will take in striving to be an antiracist? How will you check yourself and hold yourself accountable if you notice you, or someone else, is being racist?
5. Kendi thinks that we should assess candidates as being racist or antiracist based on what ideas they are expressing and what policies they are supporting—and not what they say is in their bones or their heart. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
6. Anyone who values immigrants from European countries and devalues immigrants from Latin America is guilty of racism. Have you ever been guilty of this type of racism? Discuss the unique resilience and resourcefulness people possess if they leave everything in their native country behind and immigrate to another, as Kendi examines in the chapter on Ethnicity.

7. There's a stronger and clearer correlation between levels of violent crime and unemployment levels than between violent crime and race, but that's not the story policymakers have chosen to tell. Discuss why you think this is. How might our society and culture change if policymakers characterized dangerous Black neighborhoods as dangerous unemployed neighborhoods?
8. Why do you think it is so hard for people to not assess other cultures from their own cultural standards? How does doing this trap people in racist ideas?
9. Inequities between Light and Dark African Americans can be as wide as inequities between Black and White Americans. How have you seen colorism play out in real life and/or in the media?
10. Kendi writes, "White supremacist is code for anti-human, a nuclear ideology that poses an existential threat to human existence." How are white supremacists and their ideology actually harmful to all of humanity—including white people?
11. Kendi makes the case that to be antiracist, one must stand against all forms of bigotry. Why is standing against other bigotries so essential to standing against racism?
12. Kendi closes the book comparing racism and cancer. What do you think of this comparison?
13. Kendi believes we can defy the odds, heal society of racism, and create an antiracist society. Do you? Why is hope so central to the antiracist movement?

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

The discussion questions above are from "How to Be an Antiracist Book Club Kit." To view the kit, which includes Kendi's "Antiracism Reading List" and "Antiracist Syllabus," search for the title in a search engine or go here:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5913d00603596e07853ef761/t/5dc37dafd013963f1c034404/1573092786304/bookclubkit.ANTIRACIST.pdf>

Also by Ibram X. Kendi: *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. 2016. "In this deeply researched and fast-moving narrative, Kendi chronicles the entire story of anti-Black racist ideas and their staggering power over the course of American history." —Zinn Education Project

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>