



# ANTIRACISM LITERACY PARTNERS

## A NEXT RIGHT ACTION

### Discussion Guide: TED Talks on Race (series of four)

#### 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. 6 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. 7.
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?

## TED Talks on Race Discussion Guide (series of four)

1. **What it Takes to be Racially Literate,” Priya Vulchi and Winona Guo. 2017. Time: 12:14**  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/priya\\_vulchi\\_and\\_winona\\_guo\\_what\\_it\\_takes\\_to\\_be\\_racially\\_literate#t-710865](https://www.ted.com/talks/priya_vulchi_and_winona_guo_what_it_takes_to_be_racially_literate#t-710865)

### About

Priya Vulchi and Winona Guo felt they were left uneducated on racial issues in high school. They created a non-profit called Choose ([www.chooseorg.org](http://www.chooseorg.org)), which I encourage you to check out, and took a year before entering college to travel the country interviewing folks about racial injustice. They then published a book as a resource: [Tell me who you are: sharing our stories of race, culture, and identity.](#)

In this TedWomen video, their intention is to promote increased racial literacy. The message is that there are two big gaps in our racial literacy:

**Heart Gap:** an inability to understand others’ experiences with heartfelt compassion. There is a need to link the impact of long-ago slavery & discriminatory institutions (which we tend to think of as long ago, so who cares?) to what happens now (hey, this is relevant to me so I do care). To do this, we need to listen to many personal stories & histories to understand the impact of racism—and link statistics about racial injustice to individual stories of people we can relate to.

**Mind Gap:** inability to understand systemic racism. Need to not only listen to individual stories of injustice but see how systems of cultural & legal barriers have created and sustained the injustice.

The video is a bit of a pep rally for increased racial literacy. The final message is that we need to proactively create a shared American culture that embraces and celebrates different cultural norms and experiences as part of this inclusive American culture.

### Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of an example of “Heart Gap”? What personal story helps you understand the impact of racism?
2. How do you think that we can increase our racial literacy in the area of “Mind Gap”?
3. What is the biggest take-away from this podcast, for you?

2. **“The Urgency of Intersectionality,” Kimberlé Crenshaw. 2016. Time: 18:41.**  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle\\_crenshaw\\_the\\_urgency\\_of\\_intersectionality](https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality)

### **About “The Urgency of Intersectionality”**

In this TedWomen video, Kimberlé Crenshaw draws attention to how well known are the deaths of Black men at the hands of the police, and how little known are the Black women who are killed.

She details the case of Emma DeGraffenreid who was denied a discrimination claim against General Motors because her situation was in the intersectionality of discrimination against Blacks and discrimination against women. Because GM could point to Black men working for them, and white women working for them, they were within the letter of the law of that moment.

Crenshaw sees the same type of intersectionality explaining why Black women have remained invisible to mainstream media covering violence against Blacks by police. As she puts it, “You can’t solve a problem you can’t see.”

She suggests that it doesn’t have to be this way. Need to “say their name,” “hold them up,” bear witness to the injustices experienced.

### **Discussion Questions**

- What about the distinction between Black men vs. Black women as to their risk of harm or death from interactions with the police? What are the reasons that the deaths of Black women are less known, less in the awareness and concern of policymakers?
- What are the “frames” we need to create so that we can really understand these women’s’ stories, take them in and create action steps to address them?
- Are there gender-specific (stereotyped) responses of Black men & women to interactions with police—that the police could be trained to understand and respond to more effectively with less threat of escalation or violence?

3. **“How Racism Makes Us Sick,” David R. Williams. 2016. Time: 17:20**  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_r\\_williams\\_how\\_racism\\_makes\\_us\\_sick](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_r_williams_how_racism_makes_us_sick)

**About “How Racism Makes Us Sick”**

David R. Williams is a Professor of Public Health at the Harvard School of Public Health, as well as a Professor of African and African American Studies and of Sociology at Harvard University.

In this Ted Talk, he addresses the impact of racism on the health of Black Americans. He notes that economic success, educational attainment, and access to healthcare do not protect Blacks from early onset of health issues and death.

Major experiences of discrimination and micro aggressions correlate with impacts on health such as blood pressure, obesity, and heart disease.

Discrimination also occurs in the delivery of healthcare, in part due to implicit bias.

After describing the impacts of racism and causes such as implicit bias, he concludes with some hopeful solutions and responses that can be made.

**Discussion Questions**

- “Why does race matter so profoundly for health?”
- How is healthcare delivery discriminating against POC and what can white people do to challenge the systems providing this discriminatory care?
- What are examples of institutional racism that are having a negative impact on Black health? (Hint: Residential segregation impacts access to health care delivery.)

4. **"The Path to Ending Systemic Racism in the U.S.," Dr. Phillip Atiba Goff, Rashad Robinson, Dr. Bernice King, Anthony D. Romero. June 2020. Time: 1:06:23.**  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/dr\\_phillip\\_atiba\\_goff\\_rashad\\_robinson\\_dr\\_bernice\\_king\\_anthony\\_d\\_romero\\_the\\_path\\_to\\_ending\\_systemic\\_racism\\_in\\_the\\_us](https://www.ted.com/talks/dr_phillip_atiba_goff_rashad_robinson_dr_bernice_king_anthony_d_romero_the_path_to_ending_systemic_racism_in_the_us)

### **About**

This TED talk taped on June 3, 2020, a week after the George Floyd murder featured Dr. Phillip Atiba Goff, Rashad Robinson, Dr. Bernice King and Anthony D. Romero discussing racial injustice in America and ways to move forward. Each speaker used the intensity of the moment to highlight past efforts and how they have not been enough. The necessity for bolder and more direct actions were discussed. Some of those included were defund police, re-emphasis on non-violence, anti-racism training for everyone, building support systems beyond the police, fill the leadership void, recognize the threat of white supremacy, hold police unions accountable, dismantle systemic racism, don't support systems that support white supremacy, find groups to partner with and join forces (e.g. Color of Change Rashad Robinson's organization), put trust in new generation of leadership, recognize the enormity of the situation, and promote local and national legislation to codify and standardize the reforms (some were detailed).

### **Discussion Questions**

- Which suggestions for action do you think will be effective and why?
- What work has Unity Church done around these actions? Should a new or additional direction be adopted? If so, what should it be?

**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?

## 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>