


Belonging Community Conversation on Racism

Host Guide

Imagine Fox Cities Initiative



Dear Change Maker,

Thank you for considering hosting the second discussion in the series of the Belonging Community Conversations on Race. The topic of this second dialogue is racism. First things first, please read the short set of materials provided carefully before beginning your conversation. The goals of these conversations are to listen and share personal stories without judgement in order to create a foundation upon which to take action together to eliminate racism.

The expressed American ideal is the creation of a society that is fair and has opportunity for all, regardless of individual or group identity. We see examples everyday of how we fall short of this ideal. We hope these conversations will help us understand why we are unable to reach our admirable but elusive goal. By enhancing our understanding of the issues related to racial injustice, we can plan a better way forward together that will improve the wellbeing of all of us in the Fox Cities, and create a community in which we know that we belong.

Thank you for taking this important step toward changing our community for the better. We hope you will also consider hosting a third conversation on antiracism. In order to ensure that we keep improving this work and that your efforts have the biggest impact, please complete the short five-item survey after your conversation by following the link at the end of the facilitators/host guide.

With gratitude,

Imagine Fox Cities Belonging Group

Facilitator's Instructions

This Imagine Fox Cities Belonging Conversation offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet by video call or in person for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others. Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn. No preparation is required, though background links are available for participants to gain more information on the topic. Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate. Some hosts may offer a Q & A after Closing. This uses the Living Room Conversations format

Introductions:

Why We're Here (~10 min)

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

Conversation Agreements:

How We'll Engage (~5 min)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud. (A more detailed explanation of each is attached.)

Be curious and listen to understand.

Show respect and suspend judgment.

Note any common ground as well as any differences.

Be authentic and welcome that from others.

Be purposeful and to the point.

Own and guide the conversation.



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Question Rounds:

What We'll Talk About

Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round 1:

Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer the following question:

What sense of purpose/ mission/ duty guide your life?

Round 2:

Round Two: Race (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read the definition of racism.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines racism as a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. It results in racial prejudice, discriminatory behavior and implementation of laws, policies and practices that produce racial inequities.



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Take 1-2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- a. When you were growing up did your family or other close relations express beliefs that reflected racism?
- b. Have you ever witnessed or been the target of racism? If so, briefly describe how.
- c. Have you ever treated people differently (discriminated) based on racism? If so, briefly describe how.
- d. Do you see evidence of racism in the following:
 - i. your social circle, community
 - ii. your workplace
 - iii. in the United States
- e. What is the opposite of racism?

Round 3:

Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

*Take 2 minutes to answer **one** of the following questions:*

In one sentence, share what was most meaningful or valuable to you in the experience of this conversation?

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(continued from the previous page)

- a. What new understanding or common ground did you find within this topic?
- b. Has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- c. Name one important thing that was accomplished here.
- d. Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing (~5 min) Provide feedback!

<https://imaginefoxcities.com/conversations-on-race/>



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Conversation Agreements

Be curious and listen to understand.

Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.

Show respect and suspend judgment.

People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try truly listening, without interruption or crosstalk.

Note any common ground as well as any differences.

Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.

Be authentic and welcome that from others.

Share what is important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.

Be purposeful and to the point.

Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.

Own and guide the conversation.

Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.



Understanding Racism

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines racism as a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. It results in racial prejudice, discriminatory behavior and implementation of laws, policies and practices to produce racial inequities.

“For most of its history, the United States excluded people of color from its main pathways of opportunity and upward mobility, causing deep inequities across many aspects of life... Since our nation’s inception, racist policies and practices have been carried out by leaders who wrote and spoke about equality while engaging in the purchase, bondage, and sale of people of African descent.

Periods of progress have often been followed by periods of backlash. Abolition and the Civil War were followed by Jim Crow laws, white mob violence, and lynchings. The civil rights movement and key legislative accomplishments were followed by cuts in federal antipoverty programs and the acceleration of mass incarceration. The election of our first African American president has been followed by a curtailment in policies that enforce fair housing, reduce inequities in the criminal justice system, and protect consumers from predatory lenders.” (The Urban Institute)



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Additional resources:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vX_VzI-r8NY

<https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/racism-101.html>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/158-resources-understanding-systemic-racism-america-180975029/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/apr/09/colorism-racism-why-black-people-discriminate-among-ourselves>

<https://www.charisbooksandmore.com/understanding-and-dismantling-racism-booklist-white-readers>