

# DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: HOW TO TALK TO ABOUT RACE



FACILITATED BY EDWINA SESSONS AND JACKIE MCGUINNESS

AAUW NJ

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# WELCOME

## **Edwina Sessions:**

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AAUW NJ Diversity and Inclusion Chair

Former President of the Willingboro Branch

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Program Chair AAUW NJ

Teacher at Burlington County Institute of Technology in Burl Co

Medford Branch



# CONVERSATION ETIQUETTE + ZOOM ETIQUETTE

## **Our Intention:**

To recognize how the system of racism shapes our lives, how we uphold that system, and how we might interrupt it.

## **Agreements:**

- Show up and choose to be present
- One of us talks at a time
- Tell your truth (without blame, shame, or judgment), and own that it is your truth only (by using “I” statements)
- We agree that we can disagree (agreeably)
- Keep confidentiality

## **An Invitation:**

- For those who typically speak a lot in groups, this is an invitation to step back
- For those who typically do not speak as much, this is an invitation to step forward

## **Zoom Etiquette:**

- Please “raise your hand” when you would like to speak, and wait to be called on
- Feel free to type a point you want to raise or question you would like to ask in the Chat so you won’t forget while you wait your turn
- When you are done speaking, please say ‘I am complete / done / finished’ or put yourself on mute
- If there is background noise on your end, please put yourself on mute

# AGENDA

Welcome

Icebreaker Activity

Introduction

Zoom Poll

AAUW Tool Kit w/ key terms/principles of diversity

Scenario: Case Study (Zoom Poll)

How to talk about Race

Questions?

Break Session: Scenario, What would you do?

AAUW Branches in study groups

Reflection and wrap up

# ICE BREAKER BREAK OUT SESSION

Brainstorm about 4-5 “I am..” statements. These are statements describing who you are... For example

I am Black

I am a woman

I am a mother

I am a teacher



In your breakout sessions introduce yourself, your branch membership, and 2-3 of your “I am” statements.

# INTRODUCTION

When you meet someone new or see someone for the first time, what do you notice? How does that shape your interactions? What happens when you take away the ability to see when you meet someone..

[Has Your Judgement Ever Been THIS Wrong? | Tell My Story](#)



[AAUW: Implicit bias test](#)



ZOOM POLL: What shapes do you experience in the figure?  
What shapes are there in the figure?



Kanizsa Triangle

[illusions\\_index](#)

# AAUW TOOL KIT

One of the goals of AAUW : “Embody the goals and spirit of inclusion, diversity and intersectionality across all AAUW activities and participants.” Kim Churches





# NINE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS PEOPLE IN OUR SOCIETY TEND TO NOTICE IN OTHERS, IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

(Jane Elsea, *The 4 Minute Sell*)

1. Skin Color
2. Gender
3. Age
4. Appearance
5. Facial expressions
6. Eye contact
7. Movement
8. Personal space
9. Touch



# KEY TERMS



**Diversity:** the condition of having or being composed of differing elements : variety especially : the inclusion of different types of people (such as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization programs intended to promote diversity in schools



**Inclusion:** the act or practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded



**Intersectionality:** the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups

## OTHER NOTABLE DEFINITIONS



**Equity:** justice according to natural law or right specifically : freedom from bias or favoritism



**Unconscious/implicit bias:** not marked by conscious thought, sensation, or feeling : freedom from bias or favoritism: a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment : prejudice



**Privilege:** a right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage, or favor



**Social justice:** justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.



**Race:** any one of the groups that humans are often divided into based on physical traits regarded as common among people of shared ancestry

## Seven Underlying Principles of Diversity: (PATREESE INGRAM, ED.D.)



1. **Diversity is an inside job**, meaning that diversity is not about “them.” it is about each person coming to terms with his or her attitudes, beliefs and experiences about others and gaining comfort with difference.
2. **Diversity goes beyond race and gender.**
3. **No one is the target of blame for current or past inequities.** All human beings have been socialized to behave in certain ways, and all of us are at times both perpetrators and victims of discrimination and stereotypes. The idea is to move forward in creating more opportunities.
4. **Human beings are ethnocentric**, seeing the world through their own narrow view and judging the world by their familiar yardstick. This is not bad in itself, but it can be a source of conflict if we do not accommodate and value other ways of being.
5. **The human species resists change.** This makes the constant adaptation required by diversity difficult for people already overwhelmed by staggering transitions in today's communities and organizations.
6. **Human beings find comfort in likeness.** We have a tendency to seek the company of those most similar to us in a variety of ways... age, gender and ethnicity being just several of many.
7. **It is difficult for people to share power.** History shows that we rarely do it voluntarily. Understanding this past can help clarify why there is sometimes a backlash associated with diversity efforts from people who believe they will lose in this experience.

# A CASE STUDY...

Zoom Poll: I have 3 girls, which ones are mine?



Common Questions:

How I responded  
depended on the  
day.

Many times I  
didn't or I was  
sarcastic.

Comments came from  
everyone.

What are you mixed with?

All you **All** Black?

You don't talk Black? You don't act Black.

Are these your natural children?

Do they all have the same babies' Daddy?

Did you dye her hair?

Are you together?

We figured you adopted...

What's it like to be married to a white man?

Kwanzaa book for Christmas

What do your children identify as?



# GUIDELINES TO HAVING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Approach The Conversation With Respect

Put Aside Any Preconceptions You May Have



Create A Safe Environment Where Everyone Can Be Real  
With Their Feelings





# Be An Active Listener: Listen and Learn From Each Other



# Recognize Individual Differences



# Connect To Individual Cultures



# Commit Yourself To Change

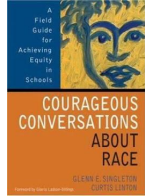




# How to be a part of the change



# Do You Want To Learn More About starting Conversations About Race? A Short List of Books To Help You Start Conversations On Race:

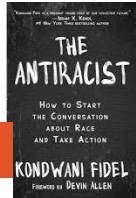


## Courageous Conversations About Race

Author: Curtis Linton

## So You Want to Talk About Race

Author: Ijeome Olvo



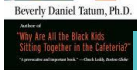
## The Antiracist

Author: Kondwani Fidel



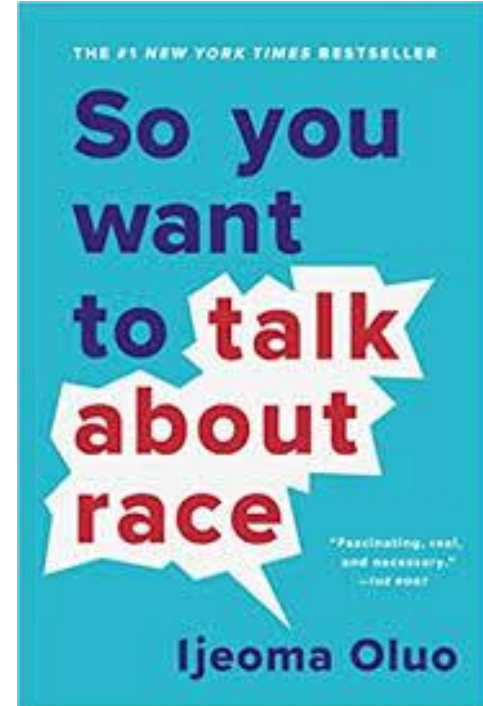
## Can We Talk About Race?

Author: Beverly Daniel Tatum



## Equality: Courageous Conversations

Author: Trudy Bourgeois



QUESTIONS ??



# BREAK OUT SESSION

Now that you have some idea of how to start or respond to a conversation or situation let's practice. You will watch one scenario and then discuss how you would respond to the situation.

Woman Shopping

Nail Salon





AAUW NJ BRANCHES THAT ARE HAVING THE DISCUSSION...

ATLANTIC COUNTY



# NORTHERN OCEAN- ALICE TARLACH



The agenda is developed with the objectives of the group's mission in mind:

1. recognize racial stereotypes;
2. model appropriate behavior;
3. foster change in the community.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Meeting of 1/23/21: Discuss pros and cons of last meeting with guest Dr. Keturah Harris.

Should we have a specific outline of questions for the next speaker?

2. Are names of companies and teams, such as Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, Indians, Redskins, etc. racist and, if so, should they be changed?

3. Recall situations where there were perceived racial remarks towards you and others.

What can be done or said when witnessing a racist laced conversation or situation?

# NORTHERN OCEAN

4. What are the group's feelings about examples of racial insensitivity in the plays and movies such as *South Pacific* and *Gone with the Wind*?
5. How might the Letter to the Editor written by Henry McNally and published in *The Ocean Star* on 1/12/21 be perceived by this community?

*The Racial Healing Handbook* by Anneliese A Singh—the book was recommended for use by our group by Dr. Harris.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/09/business/aunt-jemima-renamed-pearl-milling-company.html> (Brand Name Change)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwYzyqUdUfY> (Virtual Talk, Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents*)

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7942OGiMeHjuIqpcVpzuVV?si=XhuhVLRkT02Z7yYEUmWDsg> (Brené with Emmanuel Acho, *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man*)

# SOMERSET HILLS- BECKY HUGHES

- Group Size: 8 – 12 participants (including leader)
- Format: Book, Workbook, Topic of Interest
- Meeting Length: 60 – 90 – 120 minutes (dependent on group size)
- Meeting Frequency: Same day and time, every week or two
- Meeting Duration: Commit to 2 – 3 months at a time
- Group Agreements: Establish by consensus, revisit as need arises
- Initial Meeting = Grounding
  - What prompted you to join this group?
  - What expectations do you have about being in this group?
- Plan for Evolution of Group





## REFLECTIONS AND WRAP UP

Human Family

Challenge:

Choose one thing you will do in the next 30 days to increase your understanding of diversity. Share with your diversity buddy and share with AAUWNJ

THANK YOU



"In diversity, there is beauty and there is strength."

Maya Angelou