

## Let's Talk About Racism

It all starts with a conversation.

### **First, check your privilege.**

“Privilege, in the social justice context, is an advantage or a set of advantages that you have that others do not.”

-Ijeoma Oluo, So You Want to Talk About Race

This is an exercise to prompt deep reflection. Here are the steps we took:

- 1. Designate a member of your team to facilitate.**
- 2. Pick a date and time; put it in the calendar, and invite everyone. Plan for one hour, and make sure everyone comes prepared to write down their thoughts.**
- 3. Set some ground rules. Here are some we used (adapted from Oluo's book):**

- + Be present. This can be a particular challenge in remote calls, but it is important.
- + Step up / Step back: If you tend to dominate discussions, take a step back, and help the group invite others to speak. If you tend to stay quiet, challenge yourself to share ideas so others can learn from you.
- + Keep power dynamics and your perspective in mind.
- + Speak from your own experiences. Avoid generalizations.
- + Ask compassionate questions.
- + Listen actively.
- + Confidentiality is non-negotiable.

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**4. As the facilitator, put together a list of questions ahead of time. Even if you aren't meeting virtually, we recommend assembling a presentation to give participants time to read and reflect on each prompt. While the cues are mostly closed (yes or no) questions, encourage everyone to write down any relevant feelings or stories.**

### Prompts

- + Have you always had good mental health?
- + Did you grow up middle class?
- + Are you white?
- + Are you male?
- + Are you non-disabled?
- + Are you neurotypical?
- + Are you a documented citizen of the country you live in?
- + Did you grow up in a stable home environment?
- + Do you have stable housing?
- + Do you have reliable transportation?
- + Are you cisgender?
- + Are you straight?
- + Are you thin, tall, or conventionally attractive?
- + What other privileges can you think of?

### Bigger questions

- + How has your privilege influenced not only your status in society but your experience with and understanding of the world at large?
- + How might your privilege have impacted your ideas on racism, on education, on the environment?
- + What privileges do we have as a team?

**5. Break out into smaller groups (previously assigned by the facilitator) or remain in one group to openly discuss the exercise: what was difficult?, What was surprising? What was something new you learned?**

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## How to Discuss the Book

Follow this initial conversation up with several group discussions on your chosen resource. Depending on the length or format, you can break it up into sections and spread it out over a month. It can be a lot to digest, so taking your time is a good idea. But keep the pace rhythmical so as not to lose momentum.

### **The facilitator should:**

- + Schedule discussion dates in the calendar and invite everyone.
- + Communicate the assignment breakdown (i.e., read chapters 1 - 6 for the first discussion).
- + Consider splitting larger groups into smaller breakout groups (six people or fewer).

### **This is what our hour-long discussions looked like:**

1. Go over the ground rules again with the larger group.
2. Maybe pause as a group and take three breaths together. Remember, this is a conversation — not a lecture or a presentation.
3. Break out into assigned small groups (this works virtually too). Make sure you have a co-facilitator in each small group to share the prompts.
4. In small groups, spend about 45 minutes discussing questions and sharing thoughts. Come back together as a whole team for the remaining 5 -10 minutes. Use this time for further reflections (what was difficult? what feels hopeful?), or give the details on the next reading assignment and discussion date.

## Now what?

Keep these conversations going. Read something else together. Keep learning.

Take action. Partner with a Black-owned business, donate to an anti-racism movement or organization, review and revise your HR policies and recruitment processes, and host diversity and inclusion trainings.

Don't expect to become experts. Always remain open to learn, speak up, be wrong, and work harder. As your team invites more (and different) perspectives, it will only become stronger and more successful as an anti-racist organization. Let us know how it goes.