



## Deconstructing White Privilege: A Discussion Guide



DISCUSSION GUIDE, WHITE PRIVILEGE

The General Commission on Religion and Race invites United Methodist Christians of goodwill to engage in conversations about race, racial identity and the challenges that come when racial prejudices and bias are combined with institutional power and privilege, typically defined as racism.

These discussions are not easy to undertake. Our shame, fear, race, anger, frustrations, confusion, personal biases, separation and segregation—including that which is institutional, personal and familial—often render it nearly impossible for even well-meaning people to “get at” how we feel about and how we can move through racialized differences toward becoming God’s beloved community.

Still, God in Christ Jesus is calling us to be courageous, steadfast and true to our calling to transform the world from one divided and warring to one where God’s peaceable kingdom will come. The Scriptures beckon us:

- “Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all time.” (Psalm 106:3)
- “Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord.” (Isaiah 1:18)
- “You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.” (Isaiah 58:12)
- “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24)
- “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

We, the laity and clergy who are members of the staff and board of directors of the Commission, believe that now is the time to start conversations about the realities of race and racism and how they affect our communities, our congregations, our families, our nations and ourselves—even the ways we live out our faith.

As we read and watch news reports, observe and participate in the happenings in our cities and towns, and assess the racial dynamics in our communities and in our churches, we believe that Christians can and must bring our understanding of the power of God’s reconciliation and God’s justice to bear on the conversations and the situations in which we find ourselves.

So, for the next year, the General Commission on Religion and Race will release one or two video discussion-starters each month for your use. We invite you to begin this conversation in your Sunday school class, as a weekly class meeting, among United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men’s groups, young adult fellowships, ministry leadership teams, annual conference Cabinet, or as a study with team with people from other congregations or denominations.

Some suggestions:

- Invite people to participate in a weekly/biweekly/monthly discussion group about race and racism. Explain the time commitment, the fact that each person will take turns facilitating and that you will use discussion-starters from the General Commission on Religion and Race. Set a firm meeting time and stick with it.

- Plan for two sessions for each video, with each session lasting at least 60 minutes.
- Keep your group small, say no more than 8-10 people, so that everyone has the opportunity to reflect and speak.
- Rotate the roles of facilitator and recorder each time, so that everyone may participate fully. (Note-taking should be limited to any ideas the group wants to carry forward, including possible ministry/action items for the future).
- Set ground rules for the discussion—but not too many. Remind participants to speak from their own experiences and not on else's and avoid saying things like, "My Asian friend told me" or "My co-worker says Blacks don't." Also, affirm that frustration, confusion and fear are all part of the discussion—do not attempt to tamp down those feelings. And suggest that what is said in the group stays in the group.

### Questions/Discussion Starters—Robin DiAngelo ([watch video here](#))

(It might be helpful for people who identify as White to meet as a group first and have a discussion on [Dr. DiAngelo's video](#), then meet in an interracial group. Please allow time and space for individuals to tell their stories)

1. When were you first aware of your racial identity? What were the circumstances and how did you feel? What, if anything, were you told, taught or shown about "your" race?
2. What is your racial-ethnic identity? Do you celebrate it in any way? (Family traditions? Stories? Photos?)
3. Tell a story about the earliest time in your life that you became aware other races. What were the circumstances? What, if anything, were you told, taught or shown about that other racial group?
4. Name a time recently when, in worship, Sunday school, Bible study or another discipleship setting, the pastor or leader expressed any value in being in any kind of positive relationship with people of other races?
5. Tell a story about a time when a discussion or encounter involving race made you reflect or think about your life as a Christian? About your role as a mentor or parent or grandparent? About your own friendships or relationships?
6. Dr. DiAngelo emphasizes that racism is not an individual "bad" act done by "bad" people. Rather, she talked about institutional or systemic impacts of racism. What is the difference between individual prejudice and institutional power?
7. What are some evidences of institutional racism in your community? Church? Families?

*GCORR is building the capacity of The United Methodist Church to be contextually relevant and to reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*