

why is it so hard?

Each of us wants to be **heard and understood**. Talking about race can feel challenging because it's a complicated topic and we don't want to:

- Feel like our opinions have been **discounted or dismissed**
- Incur the costs of a conversation **if nothing will change**
- Engage in additional **emotional labor** when already exhausted
- Relive **trauma**
- **Say the 'wrong thing,'** hurt feelings, or be seen as clueless, a bad person, or racist
- Be **misunderstood**
- See ways in which **we might be contributing to or benefitting from** systemic racism

Talking about race often leads into other issues – **economics, power, safety, fairness**. Race is an important piece of understanding or addressing any of these issues.

why is it so important?

In order to address our challenges and find a way forward

- We have to see our problems accurately and fully

AND

- We can't change things unless we work together, on multiple fronts, to engage and address those problems

Lives are at stake, as is our collective future. The country's ability to move forward with integrity depends on an examination of systemic racism and barriers to substantive justice for all.

step in or step back?



It can also be okay NOT to have a conversation when it's too emotionally fraught, risky or undermines your sense of self.

where do our views come from?

Our picture of "reality" and the story we tell about how things are or should be, is deeply rooted –

- In our own lived experiences
- In the stories we heard as children
- In a particular generational moment in time, with its own "correct" terminology, which may or may not have been updated
- In the educational experiences we've had – or continue to have
- In the social circles and economic strata in which we live – and the culture of those we surround ourselves with
- In the media and books we consume

These are necessarily limited. But taking in additional information that conflicts with our sense of reality is confusing and troubling. How do we make sense of a picture that is more complex?

it can often feel easier to text, or post on social media, or put a sign in your yard, than to have a conversation....

what helps?

before the
conversation

choose your purpose

- **perilous purposes:** trying to change someone's belief system in one conversation
- **promising purposes:** listening to understand, and sharing what you see and what's important to you

anticipate conflicting feelings and complex people

- You can feel sad, angry, despairing, exhausted, defensive, accused, heartbroken **AND** hopeful, joyous, appreciative, and empathetic
- As human beings, we each have astonishing capacity for harm and bias **AND** an incredibly capacity for love, generosity and bravery

during the
conversation

don't talk past each other...adopt the **AND** stance

- You can be most concerned with X, I can be most concerned with Y, **AND** they both may be part of the picture we need to address

listen to understand

- In understanding how they understand the world, listen generously to **what concerns them most, and why it matters**
- When we hear things that don't align with our own experience, or what we **want** to be true, it's easy to defend or dismiss. Instead, listen generously to what concerns them most, and what new information you need to integrate into your world view

listen for intentions & share impact

- Good intentions are important, but also don't sanitize bad impacts. Well-intentioned people can be contributing to the problem.
- Work to understand how your words and actions, or the policies and practices we use to operate, impact others.

questions to ask

What worries you most about this?

What impact did that experience have on you?

What do you think I'm missing?

This is complicated. How are you feeling about this conversation?

Say more?

after the
conversation

reflect on your conversation

- Take time to reflect. Ask **"What did I learn?"** and **"What surprised me most?"**

take action

- To **make a difference:** do some research to learn more, talk with colleagues about what you've learned, experiment with a new way of doing things, or join a movement

step up to help drive change

Do people trust your capacity to understand the problem? Do they experience you as committed to change? Is there integrity between your words and espoused values....and your actions?

And if not, do they feel comfortable raising it with you? That's leadership.



how can I learn more?

How might I reflect on my own experiences, and talk with others about race?



The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture's Guide to Talking About Race, found here: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>

What exactly is meant by "structural racism"? What might be some examples?



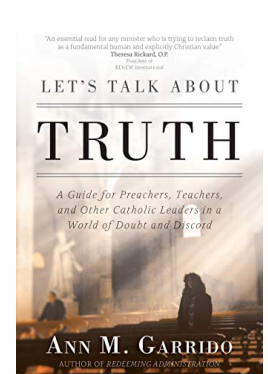
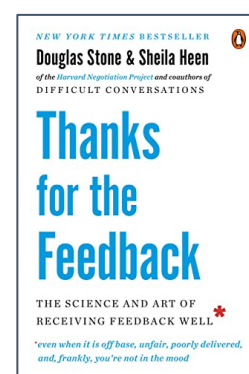
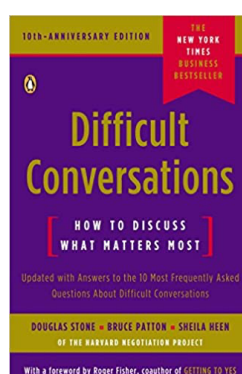
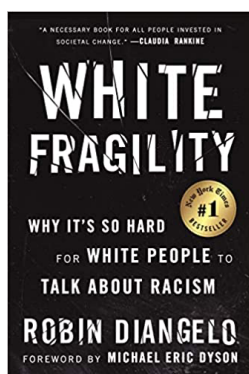
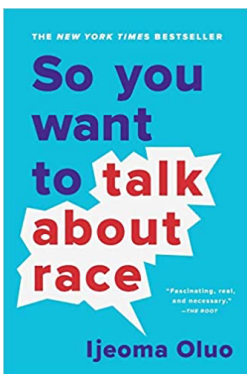
Watch a talk by Dr. Tricia Rose of Brown University: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC3TWx9IOUE>

What might I read to learn more about history and the perspective of people of color?



There are a number of terrific reading lists out there that help fill in history that many of us were not taught in school, and to understand the experiences of people of color. Here is one from the Harvard Kennedy School: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/library-knowledge-services/collections/diversity-inclusion-belonging/anti-racist>

And where can I get help to *talk about* race, inequality and other tough topics, processing the feedback I may get about my blind spots as a leader, and our responsibility to seek truth?



leaders have a responsibility to drive change

Equip yourself to drive change in your organization and community

Show your children what empathy, fairness and leadership look like