

Struggling with our Stories of Race

Facilitator Guide for Guided Communal Presentation

Introduction

Thank you for taking the brave step and leading your community in this conversation. Conversations around our history, or racism, or systems of oppression can be extremely challenging. As a leader, making time to prepare well for these conversations is important. The phrase “brave space” or “inviting space” might be more helpful than “safe space”. Moving beyond where we feel safe and engaging in honest and vulnerable self-reflection and conversation about race and racism is one part of how we move closer to becoming the beloved community.

It’s not critical that participants fill out every journal reflection, or learn all of the dates and data points presented. The goal is to engage in self-reflection and conversation together, to build a space that can hold hard conversations. The hope is that this reflection guide offers a first (or second or third) step into this critical conversation and will be a stepping stone to further learning and action.

About the Timeline

The timeline was created to be a self-guided experience. After viewing the timeline together, folks are welcome to return to it to explore it more fully. Dots on the timeline are color-coded by theme, so one way of exploring the timeline is by color instead of date.

- Red: Events/policies connected to Christianity
- Orange: Housing
- Green: Immigration
- Grey: Acts of Violence
- Purple: Acts of Minority Empowerment/movement
- Blue: Education
- Brown: Other government action/policy

Preparation:

- Invite participants to download or print the journal. In addition to space to reflect on the timeline experience, there are three individual journal prompts each week. Encourage participants to engage in the journal as much as they are able. They don't need to do all of it do participate, though they are encouraged to come back to the content they skip at a later date.
- Set the time, date, and zoom link, and communicate with participants.
- It might be helpful to have a co-host to help with meeting logistics. It can be challenging to run the presentation while also monitoring the chat, etc.
- Decide ahead of time the format. Will there be time to debrief at the end or will you just invite folks to process in their journals? Will you debrief in breakout rooms or as a whole group?
- About debriefing: This topic can be challenging and may stir up unexpected emotions or reactions. It is recommended that conversation after viewing the timeline be limited to reflection of their own experience with the timeline and the information presented, and redirect conversations that veer into interpretation or opinion about the events presented. Encourage folks to use the journal to unpack areas that they disagree with, rather than opening up space for debate.
- Possible debrief questions:
 - What is one thing that surprised you?
 - Did something connect with your own story?
 - What is one thing you just can't leave without saying?
 - What is going to stick with you this week?
 - What do you want to look into further?
 - Use the framework "I notice" or "I wonder"

Showing the Timeline

- At the beginning of each gathering, review the community guidelines. An example can be found at the end of this document.
- If time allows, create space to share any learnings from that week's journal prompts.
- Encourage folks to not utilize the chat function while the timeline is playing as it can be distracting.
- Play that week's section of the timeline in full.
- **Timeline Sessions.** The timeline has been divided so that each session is roughly the same length of time (25-30 minutes), though you are welcome to adjust for what works in your setting.
 - **Session 1:** Opening-1843 (Sojourner Truth)
 - **Session 2:** 1845 (Manifest Destiny)-1910 (Angel Island)
 - **Session 3:** 1910 (Racial Zoning Codes)- 1944 (GI Bill)
 - **Session 4:** 1948 (Native American Voting Rights)- 1979 (BIPOC Women's Ordination)
 - **Session 5:** 1980s (War on Drugs)-End
- After viewing that week's session, move into debrief.
- Offer a closing prayer, or invite someone else to pray.
- Remind folks of the journal prompts and the details for the next gathering.

Community Covenant

This group covenant is a combination of two resources: "Conversation Toward a Social Statement: Faith, Women, & Sexism", and Dialogues on Race Facilitator Guide. It is not all-encompassing or the only way of being in community, but does give us a common framework for entering into courageous conversations and covenanting to be in this work together.

Listen respectfully and carefully to others. This is your best way to begin to understand them and to keep the "public space" of this conversation safe for candid conversation. Listening helps bring out differences and helps to probe for shared values and positions.

Speak honestly about your thoughts and feelings. Personal thoughts, feelings, values and experiences are as legitimate a part of the conversation as factual information.

Speak for yourself, only; use "I-statements" rather than "you-statements." Likewise, it is not fair to expect other conversation partners to represent a whole group. Remember that they are only speaking for themselves.

Stay open to new perspectives and trust that the Holy Spirit is present in the conversation.

Embrace the messiness. These are hard conversations. Expect to be wrong, expect that others will make mistakes, know that loose ends will be present, and the work will be unfinished at the end. You are encouraged to ask clarifying questions and disagree while offering abundant grace as we learn together.

Attend to your own health and self-care. Make a plan for self-care and time for prayer throughout the week as we enter into challenging conversation.

Help keep the discussion focused by sticking to the subject at hand.

Maintain confidentiality about matters people share with the group. This helps to build and maintain trust.

Commit giving and receiving feedback with openness and grace. Work to stay grounded and open when receiving feedback, using your journal and/or check-in group to process and unpack. Particularly for white folks: be willing to hold one another accountable in learning together. In these brave spaces, white folks must point out where privilege and biases show up for sake of learning and doing better.