Conversation Guide: Interracial Race & Ethnicity Conversation

Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-6 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 topics. Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share, learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate.

Introductions: Why We’re Here (~10 minutes)
Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

Conversation Agreements: How We’ll Engage (~5 minutes)
These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- Be curious and listen to understand. Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others’ experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.

- Show respect and suspend judgment. People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.

- Note any common ground as well as any differences. Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.

- Be authentic and welcome that from others. Share what’s important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.

- Be purposeful and to the point. Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.

- Own and guide the conversation. Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the “time out” sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

Question Rounds: What We’ll Talk About
Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)
Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

- What is one thing you are carrying with you from your affinity group conversation?
Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Interracial Race & Ethnicity Conversation (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

The ability to have meaningful conversations on Race and Ethnicity is instrumental in developing a society that reflects the multi-faceted population of this country. However, this skill is not taught in schools, nor is it easily acquired. Unless one is part of a diverse community comprised of members willing to intentionally share their experiences with one another for mutual growth, most people will not have deep exposure to these conversations. The purpose of this conversation is for participants to build on their previous conversation in affinity groups and increase their capacity to engage in discussions that many typically experience as challenging.

Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- What thoughts and emotions have the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd brought up in you? What has this been like for you?
- What does Whiteness mean to you? How has that changed or stayed the same over time?
- What advantages, disadvantages, or responsibilities do White people have in fighting against racism? Black people? Other people of color?
- What would a society that values racial and ethnic differences look like? What hopes and fears come up for you when thinking about that society?
- What thoughts or emotions come up for you as you think of having future conversations on this subject with others who do not share your point of view?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing (~5 min)

- Give us feedback! Use livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/ or QR code
- Donate! Make more of these possible; give at livingroomconversations.org/donate/
- Join or host more conversations! With a) this group by exchanging your emails; b) others in person and/or by video call online. Get more involved or learn how to host at livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/

Thank you!

This is an open source project. Please use, share and modify with attribution to LivingRoomConversations.org