

Introduction

The purpose of this curriculum is to help young people sort out the many messages they get about race, racism, and white privilege and then to support them in becoming more effective forces for racial justice and racial healing in their lives. This is neither easy nor trivial work. If you are reading this and are teaching a First Day School class for teens, thank you for your work, time, and care of our young people.

I have written this curriculum so that it can be taught in 10 45-minute classes or as 5 1½-hour sessions, knowing that different Meetings use different formats with their youth. At the end of each pair of sessions, there is an overview of which activities from each to use if you are meeting in 5 sessions. In a few places, the group will make some choices about an area to focus on or which activity to use. I strongly encourage you to let the youth make the choices – young people almost always know what they need, and when asked sincerely and respectfully, can let us older folks know.

Many diversity programs focus on getting those with privilege to understand their privilege and those who have experienced discrimination to share the pain of those experiences and end their program's work there. While both these aspects are important, moving beyond those two places – recognition of privilege and sharing of pain and hurt – to places of invested reflection, analysis, and action is where I hope this curriculum will lead folks. Dynamics that encourage guilt on the part of white people and single out folks of color do little to positively motivate people to act differently or fully reflect on their part in the larger systems at play. While feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, anger, and more may come up, it is our responsibility as youth leaders to help young people acknowledge those feelings, feel them, and then look to what is underneath or behind those feelings. That information is the information each of us needs to move forward and make changes in our lives and communities. I feel guilt because at a deep level, I know that something is wrong and I have participated in and/or benefited from the wrong. Once I understand this, I can work for the right-ordering of the situation; I can bring about the realm of God and the power of love to that wrong.

This is not easy work. All of us carry our own baggage, misconceptions, and wounds about race, racism, and white privilege. You don't have to be perfect or an expert to do this work; you do have to listen, pay attention, and seek support. Please, if you are teaching this curriculum alone, find a trusted f/Friend to be your elder – someone with whom you can process your own feelings, emotions, and reactions. Working with teens, especially around charged subjects, often brings up our own baggage – that is fine and natural. It is not OK, however, to work out our baggage on or with the young people in our care; that is where supportive elders come in. The more we are willing to broach difficult topics with our young people and do our own work with other adults, the healthier and more human our lives, Meetings, and communities will become. Again, thank you for doing this work.

Racial Composition of the Group:

Having led many workshops by myself on race and co-led workshops with people of color, I know that my race and racial identity shape and influence how the participants interact with the material and me. As I am white, I have written this curriculum from the perspective of a white adult leading it. Given the racial composition of most meetings within New England, the dynamics would be different if this were led by a person of color. I have some ideas about where and how some different dynamics might arise, but have not included those here, as I don't have the personal experience to talk about them with authority. If you are a person of color and considering using this curriculum, I would love to talk with you, share my ideas, and possibly get your input on what I need to change or add to make this curriculum more useful to teachers of color.

This curriculum has been designed to work in both all white groups and groups that may have one or two youth of color – as that is the racial composition of most of our First Day Schools. The two different groups have very different dynamics, and it is important that you, the teacher, are thoughtful about how to nurture the group you have so that everyone feels included, engaged, and safe. Here are some things to consider about each kind of group:

All white group:

- it is vital that the voices and experiences of folks of color come into your conversation via readings, videos, and in person visits.

- one of the pitfalls of all white groups is that there is ample opportunity for folks to make assumptions about people of color and their experiences. Develop a practice of identifying assumptions when they are spoken and seeking the source of them, and helping folks separate what they are seeing from assuming the reasons behind it [i.e. “the Somali kids sit together at lunch” (fact) vs. “the Somali kids don’t like us and only sit with each other” (assumption plus a fact) – and, push them to rephrase the situation to be about them – “I only sit with other white students”].
- there is tremendous opportunity with an all white group to name many of the white dynamics of racism and white privilege that white folks can be too afraid or ashamed of to talk about in front of people of color. Taking advantage of the space to lovingly allow youth to name and explore some of these dynamics is a rare and precious gift.

One or two youth of color:

- most people of color in the US are very adept at navigating predominantly white spaces, this is probably true of your youth of color.
- one of the greatest pitfalls for this particular dynamic is to constantly put the youth of color on the spot to speak for all people of their ethnicity or race or for all people of color. This is not their job and it is your responsibility to make sure this does not happen.
- bringing in the voices of people of color in the form of videos, readings, and in person speakers is really important so that your youth is not the lone voice of people of color and so s/he can see and hear others who may share some of her/his experience
- see the notes in different sessions that have suggestions for altering specific activities if you have one or two youth of color in your group.

All of us go through different stages of understanding our own and others’ racial identity. This is influenced by society, peers, family composition, politics, the media, and much more. Our understanding of racial identity is not static; we often cycle around different stages at different times in our life. Appendix I has two charts about racial identity development, compiled by Lisa Sung, and a “Bill of Rights for Multiracial People,” written by Maria P. P. Root. I have found these useful in understanding different stages that folks might be in and offer them here as

an additional resource. Both can be found on multiple websites and have been used by many folks in the field.

It is not necessary that you know and can identify all the stages. What is helpful is to be able to recognize when the youth in your group may be in different places and that they may need different kinds of support. Depending on where we, as adults, are, we may also have stronger reactions to folks at different stages. Please allow yourself the space to note these reactions and talk about them with your elder. As with all youth work, loving the young person for who and where they are in their journey is the most important thing. Gently pushing them to consider new ideas and perspectives and to hold up what they believe against those new ideas and perspectives is another important aspect of youth work. What is supportively challenging for each youth looks a little different. Get to know your youth and listen to the explicit and implicit information they give you about what they need.

Getting Intergenerational:

Some meetings may want to use some of this with a more intergenerational group. That is great. Almost any workshop that works for teens will work for adults too. Here are some suggested guidelines for making it work well:

- Try to balance the number of people under the age of 25 with those over the age of 25; this may mean limiting the number of older adults attending.
- Set some really clear ground rules about everyone speaking from their own experience and not pulling the age card (i.e. no “what you young people don’t know/understand/remember . . . “ but yes to “growing up in the 50’s, it was my experience that . . .”). And then be vigilant about holding the older folks to these ground rules – even if you have to interrupt people midsentence to ask them to rephrase something or check what they are saying. Do it.
- Ban ageist compliments (i.e. “you are so articulate/wise/wonderful for a teen!”). Encourage complete compliments instead (i.e. “I really learned a lot from what you said.” or “Thank you for sharing your story about X with us.”). Again, you might need to teach some older people how to do this.
- Engage some of the youth and some the adults ahead of time in planning for and co-leading some of the activities. This will model intergenerational cooperation and reinforce that everyone in the room has something valuable to offer.

Some Notes about Making Things Work with Teens:

- Get everyone's e-mail address and create a group or closed Facebook page. This will give you the chance to e-mail folks reminders about the next session and easily follow-up with people between sessions. If you don't know how to do this, one of the teens will be happy to teach you.
- Anything you ask the youth to do you should do too. If they are sharing, you share.
- You don't have to be cool to be cool with teens. If you are honest, sincere, human, respectful and caring of the young people they will appreciate you at the least and most likely come to love you. Teens can sense insincerity and patronizing the way dogs sense fear. Just BE YOURSELF – that automatically makes it safer for teens to be themselves. Admit when you don't know something, ask when you don't understand, be willing to laugh at yourself, and stick to what you say. If you say everyone gets a chance to talk, make sure that is true. If you say you will do something, do it.
- You may notice that there is not a “ground rules” activity anywhere in this curriculum. Talk about expectations of being together, as you need to. If during a session, someone shares something deeply personal, take time in the closing to name an expectation of confidentiality. A huge first step in interrupting racism and working for racial justice is being able to say publicly when something is not OK with us and to ask for the boundary that we would like to have in place. Model that and encourage the youth to practice that skill: “I want us to be a real community and I realize that only 3 of the 5 of us have been talking in this discussion,” or “When you have a side conversation when I am talking, it makes me feel disrespected. How do other people feel? What should we do as a group?” or “There are clearly some really different ideas and feelings about what words are respectful. Let's talk about those words, what they mean to each of us and then agree on how we will talk with each other.”

Disclaimers & Acknowledgements:

This is a first draft of this curriculum – it needs your input, ideas, suggestions, and revisions. I made it available on the web because I want folks to be able to add in “here's what I did instead of . . .” or “This activity flopped, but I found that doing x, y, and z, really worked well.” Please,

help make this curriculum better. I love open-source materials and created this curriculum in that spirit.

I sent out a few short, open-ended survey questions about what this curriculum should include to Young Friends and parents. I didn't get many responses, but the ones I did get indicated that most Friends think is an important topic and one that they are relatively unfamiliar with talking about in a personal way. There was some anxiety expressed about talking about white privilege and the feelings of guilt, shame, or disassociation it raises. In my experience working with both white youth and adults, creating a nurturing and supportive environment for white folks to explore their feelings and reactions has been the most effective way to keep white people engaged and interested in learning and doing more. Therefore, this curriculum is not as radical as I otherwise would have written it. My ultimate goal is to get more Friends, particularly white Friends, thinking about racial justice and *acting* in new ways to bring about more justice and equity to issues of race in our meetings and communities.

The basic flow and framework for the different sessions came primarily from two places: Facing History and Ourselves (see www.facing.org) and AWARE-LA (Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere – Los Angeles, see www.awarela.org). I have had the privilege of attending workshops by both groups and both groups do amazing and deeply powerful work. Check with your youth; many middle and high schools use FHAO curriculum and resources. Both organizations' web pages have some great related resources if you want to do more work on racial justice, diversity, or people standing up to injustices.

Much of my understanding of how positive diversity work can happen comes from Niyonu Spann, the Beyond Diversity 101 intensive (see www.beyonddiversity101.org) that she created, and the many folks who've participated in that workshop. Many of the ideas and activities in this curriculum come from BD101 or are variations on exercises from that workshop.

A lot of my understanding about how white folks can learn together and begin to take responsibility for and change racism and white privilege has come from the White People

Challenging Racism: Moving from Talk to Action group (see www.wpcr-boston.org) and the White Privilege Conference (see www.whiteprivilegeconference.org)

Finally, to all the students and Young Friends I have had the absolute delight to work with over the last 16 years - you have taught me so much and you are the reason I do this work. Thank you.

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Sessions 1 & 2: Self & Society

Goals:

- I can explain how I exist as both an individual and as the member of different groups within the context of US society.
- I can name and claim both my ethnic and racial identities.
- I can identify aspects of my ethnic and racial identity, group history, and culture that I am proud of.
- I can identify questions and feelings that I have about race, racism, and racial justice.

Sessions 3 & 4: Framing, Naming & Explaining

Goals:

- We can explore and agree upon language used to name and describe race, ethnicity, and racism.
- We can examine the origins and supporters of stereotypes about many different racial and ethnic groups.
- We can evaluate our “racial diet” and sources of information.
- We can develop questions about the racial composition, climate, and culture of our community.

Sessions 5 & 6: How We Got Here

Goals:

- We can identify some of the key points in the history of our community OR Quakerism that led to our current place and race relations.
- We can learn from our elders about their experiences.
- We can identify members of our community OR Friends who actively resisted racism and worked for racial justice.

Sessions 7 & 8: White Privilege & Racism Today

Goals:

- We can identify the ways in which white privilege and racism impact our daily lives.
- We can identify the manifestations of white privilege and racism in our meeting, schools, and community.
- We can connect to resources within our meeting, schools, and communities that are addressing white privilege and racism.

Sessions 9 & 10: Interrupting Racism & White Privilege

Goals:

- We can practice ways of interrupting racism and white privilege as we encounter them in our lives.
- I can develop an action plan for a change I will make in my life to become a more effective ally for racial justice.
- We can support each other in our personal plans.
- We can name the gifts that each person brings to racial justice work.

