The Racism is Real series is a tool for communities, groups and educators to start a critical conversation about race and racism. This series is intended to be a tool for white people since non-white people, sometimes referred to as People of Color (POC), do not need to be told that racism is real.

This discussion guide was updated in 2019 to meet the ever-changing needs of our society as newer resources and tools emerge as a support for accountability and solidarity. Given that the 2016 election was also decided by the white majority in the US, followed by the rise of white supremacist groups, confronting racism is especially important to this demographic.

The three-part film series of films explores the way many Black Americans face racial bias. The first short, Racism is Real uses recent academic studies to juxtapose the life of an average Black person with an average white person. The second, White Riots takes a look at how the media distorts our perceptions of race in their coverage and analysis of protests and riots. The last film, Prison System by the Numbers exposes the racial disparities in America's prison system in a compelling dissection of drug-related incarceration rates.

Conversations about race are hard for everyone given consistent headlines of hate crimes and policies that deliberately target POC. It is beneficial and important for white people to sit with this discomfort and listen to feelings, stories, and perspectives of people of color. It is critical to note that POC have been trying to have these conversations and this is not a new effort. Having these conversations is necessary and will continue to be as times goes on.

ON COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY

At Brave New Films, we recommend following the lead of POC organizations that are doing groundbreaking work to make this world more just and free. Conversations about race are both interpersonal and structural which means they are complex and tough, although some groups have given guidance about to how to have such conversations using the concept of community accountability.

The organization, INCITE! Women of Color and Trans People of Color Against Violence have shared this clear definition of Community Accountability:

A process in which a community – a group of friends, a family, a church, a workplace, an apartment complex, a neighborhood, etc – works together to do the following things:

- Commit to ongoing development of all members of the community, and the community itself, to transform the political conditions that reinforce oppression and violence
- Provide safety & support to community members who are violently targeted that respects their self-determination
- Create and affirm values & practices that resist abuse and oppression and encourage safety, support, and accountability
- Develop sustainable strategies to address community members’ abusive behavior, creating a process for them to account for their actions and transform their behavior

“If I cannot tell you what it means to be white, I cannot understand what it means not to be white. I will be unable to bear witness to, much less affirm, an alternate racial experience. I will lack the critical thinking and skills to navigate racial tensions in constructive ways. This creates a culture in which white people assume that niceness is the answer to racial inequality and people of color are required to maintain white comfort in order to survive.”

– DR. ROBIN DIANGELO, AUTHOR OF WHITE FRAGILITY: WHY IT’S SO HARD FOR WHITE PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT RACISM
DISCUSSING THE FILMS

The films are short and we suggest they only be used as a conversation starter for dialogues that are needed about race. Preparing before the screening or discussion is key in order to outline key goals and approaches to reach those goals.

It is critical to know your audience and where you assume conflict to start. Are they open to conversations about race? Are there people of color in the room, if so how can they not be the only ones speaking?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After watching the films, check-in with yourself. How are you feeling? Discuss with your peers how the film affected you.
2. How has your life been shaped by your race? Do you think about your race when watching the news?
3. Why do you think there continue to be these disparities in employment and hiring when it comes to race?
4. Referring to Dr. diAngelo 's quote on critical discourse, what is she referring to when people of color are required to “maintain white comfort”?
5. What are some ways we can improve conversations about protests and riots?
6. Why do you think there are such striking numbers about race when it comes to the criminal justice system?

GO BEYOND CONVERSATIONS

ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO SCREEN THE FILM

CONTACT 3-5 friends, family, or colleagues to share your screening experience and EXPRESS why this issue is important to you. ASK them to screen the films in their communities.

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

FIND your Congress members, state legislators and city council member, they all have a say and leverage resources to support racial justice and equity.

ALL YOU HAVE TO ASK IS, "how are you combating racial injustice in your elected office?"

WRITE your legislator a letter or postcard, CALL to ask them to advocate for racial equity, set up an IN-PERSON MEETING to speak with them directly.

GET INVOLVED

FOLLOW, DONATE or VOLUNTEER to support the work of groups working toward equity and racial justice:

Black Lives Matter blacklivesmatter.com
BYP (Black Youth Project) blackyouthproject.com
Catalyst Project collectiveliberation.org
Color of Change colorofchange.org
Equal Justice Initiative eji.org
MPower Change mpowerchange.org
Race Forward raceforward.org
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) showingupforracialjustice.org
White Noise Collective conspireforchange.org

VISIT BRAVENEWFILMS.ORG/RR_RESOURCES FOR FURTHER MATERIALS & ACTIVITIES

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