

1.0 Reading Group Curriculum

Seven Month Study Group
Suggested Readings, Video, and Discussion Topics
January 2017

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Month #1: Develop group norms; share personal stories

- Focus of first meeting: In this first meeting, there is some housekeeping to attend to (group norms, logistics, and any particular needs members have for comfort or accessibility);
- Discussion Prompt: What brought you to this study group? (to SURJ-DC; to the desire to act for racial justice?)
- Introduction to Serial Sharing (or testimony)
- Reading and prompts for personal reflection (ahead of meeting): “Qallunology 101: A Lesson Plan for the Non-Indigenous” by Derek Rasmussen
 - <http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/qallunology-101-a-lesson-plan-for-the-non-indigenous/>
 - Have we seen the desire to “help” actually turn out to be harmful? Can we think of examples?
 - When faced with an urgency to act, what, if any, is the benefit of slowing down?
 - How does this perspective of indigenous worldview and European history affect your perception of racism the world?
 - What would it look like if we, as white people/members of the dominating group, ask ourselves this question before diving in to “rescue”: “Did we cause this problem in the first place?”
 - Can you think of a “current event” where applying this question would change the commonly heard narrative?
- Additional, Optional Reading: “Racial Identity Caucusing: A Strategy for Building Anti-Racist Collective” by Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing & Training
 - <http://tinyurl.com/crossroads-racial-caucusing>
 - We will focus on the reading starting at the bottom of Page 4 (The Reality of IRS in Our Lives and Institutions)
 - Optional Discussion Prompt: When did you first become aware of race? What is your first memory of being “white”?

Month #2: Structural racism/white supremacy and individual bias

Reading: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack by Peggy McIntosh

- <http://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>

Reading: “What is White Supremacy?” by Elizabeth Martinez

- http://soaw.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=482

Video: “Reverse Racism” - Aamer Rahman You might decide to watch this together as a group if you can manage the logistics. We used an iPad and got cozy around it.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dw_mRaIHb-M

Discussion Prompts:

- Summarize the readings and videos? Was any of this new?
- What about white supremacy? After doing the reading, what does this phrase mean to you?
- What is the difference between white supremacy and individual bias?
- Why is “reverse racism” impossible?

Month #3: Race as a “social construct” and a “divide and conquer” strategy

Video: “The myth of race, debunked in 3 minutes”- Vox video

- <http://www.vox.com/2015/1/13/7536655/race-myth-debunked>

Video: Race Baiting ~11 minutes

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WHPGL_wBaM

Video: MTV Decoded: Are Cracker, White Trash, and Redneck Racist? 5 minutes

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wllt-gTHWOY>

Discussion Prompts:

- According to the videos, what is the idea of “race as a social construct?”
- How does Bacon’s Rebellion lead to the practice of the “divide and rule” strategy by the “elite” (slave owners)?
- Does learning about the history of race in the United States shift your understanding of current issues? In what ways?
- At this point, are you looking at anything in your life differently?

Supplementary Video: Race the Power of an Illusion: Episode 2, (approx. 1 hr.)

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGLsn8O_Lvk&t=301s

Month #4: How, when, and why did our families become White?

Assignment: Everyone seek out info about your family's "coming-to-America" story (including adoption, if applicable), and be prepared to share about it in the meeting.

Reading: "How Did Jews Become White Folks", by Karen Brodtkin

- <http://nelsonssociology101.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/1/6/26165328/jews.pdf>

Reading: How the Irish Became White, by Noel Ignatiev

- <http://racetraitor.org/zmagazineinterview.pdf> (interview the author)

Discussion Prompts:

- How does your story relate to the reading material?
- How do you feel about what you have shared? If you don't know this story, how does that feel?
- How do the different stories people in the group have shared relate to one another? What is the same, or different, about your experiences?
- How does your knowledge of the arbitrary nature of who is or is not white (and when) affect how you view race in America?

Supplementary reading: The entire manuscript of How the Irish Became White can be found here: <http://jroan.com/HtIBWhite.pdf>

ADD This [2016 Video??](#)

Month #5: What historical policies created the racial wealth gap?

Reading: “The Case for Reparations”, by Ta-Nehisi Coates

- <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Reading: The Color of Wealth, The Roots of the Racial Wealth Divide (chapter), by Rose Brewer
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1rItqWkDPTtOW5MUk96TWRraWc>

Discussion Prompts:

- What wealth, opportunities, or access to resources have you inherited?
- Where can you see your life/your family in relationship to the material covered?
- Did you formerly believe in the American “meritocracy”?
- Recognize the disparities and diverse experiences among members of your group; if there are wide income/class disparities in your group, consider discussing some of the cultural differences among people of different income backgrounds, and other aspects of life experience.
- Regardless of our own and/or our family of origin’s access to wealth, are there ways in which we and/or our family, as white people, have “aligned ourselves with the interests of the ruling class”?
- How does class conflict relate to immigration, whiteness and blackness?

Supplementary Video: Race the Power of an Illusion: Episode 3 “The House We Live In” (approx. 1 hr.)

- <http://newsreel.org/video/race-the-power-of-an-illusion> (digital rental available through Vimeo)

Month #6: The Cost of Racism to White People

Reading:

- “White Supremacy Culture”, by Tema
 - http://www.csworkshop.org/PARC_site_B/dr-culture.html
- “Costs of Racism for White People”
 - <http://unfaircampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Uprooting-Racism1.pdf>
- Costs of Oppression to Members of the Dominant Group
 - https://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/diversity/docs/cost_oppression.pdf
- “Grieving the White Void”, by Abe Lateiner - first two sections only (ending with “I am all I need, and there is nowhere I need to go”; sections are divided by ellipses)
 - <https://medium.com/@abelateiner/grieving-the-white-void-48c410fdd7f3#.p6plq88ys>

Discussion Prompts:

- What in the readings stood out to you? What do you identify with (personally, or your family, or an extended community you have membership in)? What are the costs of racism for you?
- How does considering the costs of racism interact with your desire to act against racism? How might it impact how you go about “eliminating” racism?
- Again, your group may want to consider class differences as they come up (see classmatter.org for resources on class and culture)
- How do we build a white culture without appropriation or supremacy? What does this even look like? What would it look like to be proud of being white? (This might feel uncomfortable to ask, but that’s ok!)

Month #7: Collective Liberation and the Work Ahead

Reading: “Anti-Racist Organizing Strategy” - the Catalyst Project (modified version of chapter from Chris Crass’ book “Towards Collective Liberation”)

- <http://www.leftturn.org/Collective-Liberation-Catalyst>

Discussion Prompts:

- In “Anti-Racist Organizing Strategy” Chris Crass outlines a vision of collective liberation and several aspects of strategy around how we can engage with this vision.
 - What points of this vision and strategy stood out to you?
- Crass also outlines the significance of working with the white supremacist world view we have internalized, as white people, as a necessary component of activism.
 - Here towards the end of this round of study, how do his observations strike you?
 - Has this period of study helped you uncover some of the ways that white supremacy has limited you?
 - How can you see yourself building on this work?
 - What action steps might you take in your own life to dismantle white supremacy?
- Reflecting on the total concept outlined in Crass’ article (the vision of collective liberation; strategies for achieving it; and the necessity of transforming the ways we’ve internalized white supremacy as part of the strategy):
 - Where do you see yourself now after seven months of our reading group?
 - What unique passions, skills, spheres of influence do you bring to this “big picture”?
 - How can you plug in, in such a way that is joyful and sustainable for you, in a way that builds on your unique gifts and sensibilities, and play your part within a larger body of people (SURJ DC; wider network of solidarity organizations nationally and internationally) working towards collective liberation?