

Guidelines for SURJ-DC Reading Groups

Welcome! The SURJ-DC Education Team is so glad that you're willing to engage with other White people to discuss racism. We've created this 8-month curriculum, with articles, videos, podcasts, and discussion questions, as a way to help your group get started. We've picked out resources and themes that we consider to be foundational. Our goal is to help your reading group build a shared framework for what racism is and how it dehumanizes all of us.

In order to build this framework, we suggest that each person commit to attending their group as regularly as possible for at least eight months. Of course, life happens and we can't always make the meeting, but we've found that study groups benefit from having a consistent group that keeps coming back together over time.

If after eight months you realize that the group isn't for you, we understand. However, our hope is that many of these reading groups will "gel" and lead folks into ongoing study and relationship. To facilitate this, we plan to release new options of curricula (this coming fall/winter) that your reading group can choose from after completing this initial series.

The curriculum looks at how racism affects both People of Color and White folks. However, it is designed to be used by a White affinity group - meaning, everyone in the study group is White or "White-identified". For some explanation of the benefits of racial caucusing, go here: <http://tinyurl.com/crossroads-racial-caucusing>. If you choose not to work in caucus, you will want to look over the suggested curriculum and make adaptations to ensure that what you engage in best fits your group's' needs.

Reading groups are an opportunity to learn, and they are an organizing model: these groups have the potential to establish a collective analysis among hundreds of White people across the DC metro area! We hope they will move you to action, and add context to the work you're already doing.

We have a few suggestions that may help you in establishing a sustainable reading group:

1. **Find a regular monthly time** that works for all the members of your group, if possible. You will want to **allow adequate time** for members of the group to grow in relationship with one another, and explore the materials and monthly topic each time you get together. We suggest your group meet for 2 hours, in order to work with the entire curriculum in depth and have the opportunity to develop relationships with one another.
2. One of your group members has offered to serve as the host. This person will do their best to **find a quiet, confidential space** that works for everyone. The host can check in with members about accessibility, allergies, and other concerns of physical comfort. Your group might decide to **bring snacks** to each meeting.

3. At your first meeting, **share any requests you have of one another**. Find out what helps each member maximize their learning. Discuss how to balance meeting your own needs with meeting the needs of your group-mates. Record the requests and post them at each monthly session. Some suggestions:
 - It is very helpful to establish a nonjudgmental space and (overall) to speak from personal experience; if folks are open to offering or receiving feedback, talk about how this can be done in a way that is nurturing and supportive;
 - You may want to find a way to denote who is speaking and when they're done.
 - The readings and videos we've selected for each month's study vary in length; it might be helpful to set expectations around completing reading/viewing assigned material in time for the corresponding meeting.
 - An exale of group norms you might want to consider can be found here: <http://whiteawake.org/self-education/shared-agreements/>
4. **Establish the roles of facilitator, organizer and host**. These roles will make it more likely that your reading group will stick together throughout the year. Offer each role-player the chance to introduce their role, explain how they are planning to play it, and gather ideas from participants about how they can play it most effectively for this group. Your group can choose to rotate roles if you like. What is important is that they all get played throughout the year.
5. We suggest that the **organizer be in charge of sending out an email** with the readings 3 weeks before the session, and another email 1 week before the session to confirm the date, time, and location. Because the amount of material to read/view varies month to month, the **organizer can also preview assigned readings/video and give folks a heads up as to how much time they might want to allow to prepare** for the upcoming meeting.
6. Finally, **think about how you will open and close each meeting**. You might like to **start each meeting with check-ins**. This is an opportunity for each member to share with the group how they are doing, in life in general. This practice is a nice way to get to know each other, and makes space for members to bring their full selves. A complimentary closing exercise is to invite anyone who wants to **voice an appreciation** of something that stuck out to them in the reading or and something someone else said that touched them. Some groups may also want to begin and end their time together with a **meditation or moment of silence**.
7. Last but not least, remember to laugh! Don't be afraid to challenge one another, but always **take care of each other**.

Eight Month Study Group (to complete by Dec, 2017)
Suggested Readings, Video, and Discussion Topics

Unit 1, Months 1 and 2: What is our stake in anti-racism work?

Month #1: Introductions; Building community to get to work

- **Focus of first meeting:** In this first meeting, there is some housekeeping to attend to to build the foundation for deep discussion.
 - What norms will your group aim to uphold?
Possible group norms:
 - Speak *your* truth and share from personal experiences
 - Lean into discomfort and support others to participate
 - Commit to non-closure -- We may not go fast but we will go far
 - Embrace paradox and explore grey areas
 - Seek learning not perfection
 - What are people's needs around accessibility and participation?
- **Introductions:**
 - What brought you to this study group? (to SURJ-DC; to the desire to act for racial justice?)
 - When did you first become aware of race? What is your first memory of being "white".
- **Reading and prompts for personal reflection (read ahead of meeting):**
 - **"Can We Talk About Whiteness?" Code Switch Podcast**
Optional discussion prompts
 - Chenjerai Kumanyika, who teaches at Clemson University, says "...if you've been dealing with privilege, then equality feels like oppression." In what ways do you have privilege, and how do you feel about giving up your privilege? (See <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=479733094>, para. 96 of transcript.)
 - Catherine Orr, of Beloit College, teaches her students that whiteness is embedded in various institutions. In what institutions do you see whiteness embedded? (See <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=479733094>, para. 63 of transcript.)
 - **Debby Irving, "Waking Up White"**
Optional discussion prompt
 - The interviewer tells Debby Irving, "...you're a white anglo saxon protestant. You're not allowed to feel uncomfortable." In what situations have you felt uncomfortable about race? Do you think ethnic or religious factors made a difference? (Listen to 5:45 on podcast.)
 - **Susan Nalmark, "Tired of All the Talk About Ferguson?"**
Optional discussion prompt

- People often stay in their comfort zones. In what ways has staying in your comfort zone affected your relationships with people of color? Your relationship to liberation? (See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-naimark/tired-of-all-the-talk-about-fe rguson_b_5797018.html, para. 8.)
- The author writes, "...the real work of dismantling racism lies with white people...." What do you think about the term "real work?" How do we know when this "real work" is being done? (See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-naimark/tired-of-all-the-talk-about-fe rguson_b_5797018.html, para. 12.)

Month #2: What are the costs of racism to white people?

- Readings and other media:
 - Costs (spiritual, community, blindness)
 - [Hua Hsu, "White Plight?" New Yorker, July 25, 2016](#)
 - [Ruby Sales, "Where Does It Hurt?" On Being Podcast](#)
- Optional Discussion Prompts:
 - Role of white folks
 - What are your reactions to Ruby Sales' concepts of love? What are your reactions to her comments about ways white people of different regional/social economic status relate? (See <https://soundcloud.com/onbeing/ruby-sales-where-does-it-hurt?in=onbeing/sets/public-theology-reimagined>, 9:18-9:51)
 - Where does it hurt for you? Do you feel the "crisis of meaning" Ruby Sales speaks about? (See <https://soundcloud.com/onbeing/ruby-sales-where-does-it-hurt?in=onbeing/sets/public-theology-reimagined>, 13:30-14:45.)
 - What would it look like to fill the white spiritual void Ruby Sales speaks about? How do we build a movement that incorporates spiritual nourishment? (See <https://soundcloud.com/onbeing/ruby-sales-where-does-it-hurt?in=onbeing/sets/public-theology-reimagined>.)
 - Parallels between then and now
 - In On Being, they speak about how essential it is to have an intergenerational movement; building relationships and theology that foster "hindsight, insight, and foresight". How do you imagine that manifesting in your life? (See <https://soundcloud.com/onbeing/ruby-sales-where-does-it-hurt?in=onbeing/sets/public-theology-reimagined>.)
 - How can urban and rural/northern and southern/coastal and midwest/college- and non-college educated whites communicate about racial justice? (See

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByPMKTENsZHoRDJzTDZfN2N4OEK/view>

)

- How do current tensions and spiritual voids reflect history? (See <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByPMKTENsZHoRDJzTDZfN2N4OEK/view>)

Unit 2, Months 3 through 6: Role white folks played in historical liberation movements

Throughout these sessions, talk about:

- Parallels between then and now
- Roles of white folks
- Learnings for solidarity
- Ego-driven actions
- Love-driven actions

Month #3: The abolition of enslavement

- Readings and other media:
 - ["I will be heard!" Abolitionism in America, Cornell Library](#)
Click on links in menu at the right of the page.
 - [Howard Zinn. *History is a Weapon: A People's History of the United States, Chapter 9: Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom*](#)
 - [James R. Bradley, June 3, 1834. Letter to Lydia Marie Child from Voices of a People's History](#)
 - [Two videos: Grimke Sisters 5:22; Eric Foner on Angela and Sara 2:26](#)
 - [Video: AMERICAN EXPERIENCE | The Abolitionists, Part 3, Chapter 1 | PBS: 12:38](#)
- Optional Discussion Prompts:
 - Roles of white folks:
 - William Lloyd Garrison advocated use of pacifism in anti-slavery work, while John Brown advocated violence. Did John Brown's violence make a difference in ending slavery? If so, how? Did William Lloyd Garrison's pacifism make a difference in ending slavery? If so, how? (See [Video: AMERICAN EXPERIENCE | The Abolitionists, Part 3, Chapter 1 | PBS: 12:38](#))
 - A jigsaw puzzle, from the 1860s, depicts American emancipation as a white female, implying the "responsibility of salvation...rests in white Americans' hands." What do you think about this depiction? What part do you think white American abolitionists played in emancipating black people from slavery? (See http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/spread_word.htm.)
 - Learnings for solidarity
 - Although different branches of the anti-slavery movement disagreed on how to realize their aims, abolitionists maintained solidarity because of

their common beliefs in individual liberty and Protestant evangelical faith. What beliefs do you think will help racial justice activists maintain solidarity today? (See

<http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/abolitionists.htm>

- Howard Zinn writes, “Blacks had to struggle constantly with the unconscious racism of white abolitionists. They also had to insist on their own independent voice.” How do you think this affected the ability of whites to show solidarity with blacks in the abolitionist movement? Where do we see echoes of this now? (See <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinnslaem10.html>.)
- Ego-driven/Love-driven actions
 - One reason that anti-slavery organizations proliferated was that the institution of slavery, in contrast with “the universal freedoms espoused in the Declaration of Independence” created a “moral schism in the national culture.” How do you think institutions and abstract concepts such as *freedom* influence people’s choices in choosing ego-driven versus love-driven actions? (See <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/abolitionists.htm>.)
- Parallels between then and now:
 - Activists spread the word about the abolitionist movement through posters, newspapers, pamphlets, poems, essays, sermons, and songs. What types of communication methods do we use today to spread the word about challenging racism? (See http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/spread_word.htm and <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/strategies.htm>.)
 - During the anti-slavery movement, white people such as Senator Charles Sumner took risks by speaking in favor of abolition. Do white people today who work for racial justice take risks? What types of risks, if any, have you taken in racial justice work? What risks do you see yourself taking in the future? (See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MILN_17KH6M.)

Month #4: Montgomery Bus Boycott

- Readings and other media:
 - [Video: Montgomery Bus Boycott 1955-1956](#) (video 26:08)
 - [Video: Rosa Parks Trained for Life Full of Activism](#) (video 8:16)
 - ["Before Rosa Parks, There Was Claudette Colvin" NPR](#)
 - [Dorothy M. Zellner "They Stood Up:Rosa Parks and Virginia Durr, Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement" Jewish Currents 2006](#)
- Optional Discussion Prompts:
 - Roles of white folks
 - White liberal Virginia Durr worked behind the scenes to secure the money for Rosa Parks to go to Tennessee for non-violent training. What were the

- reasons for Durr to work in the background, rather than taking a more public role in civil rights? (See <http://www.jewishcurrents.org/2006-may-zellner.htm>, para. 32.)
- Learnings for solidarity
 - The activists for the bus boycott held nightly mass meetings in church. How do you think this influenced them in maintaining solidarity? In what ways can racial justice activists maintain solidarity today? (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRprVK7EY-c>; 11:43.)
 - Ego-driven/Love-driven actions
 - After King's home was bombed during the bus boycott, he said, "The consequences for my personal life are not particularly important. It is the triumph of the cause that I am concerned about." How does this quote relate to ego-driven or love-driven actions? (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRprVK7EY-c>; 10:55.)
 - When Virginia Durr saw Ed Nixon, head of the local NAACP, at the post office, she greeted him and offered her hand. He did not acknowledge her and later told her that calling her by her first name and taking her hand was dangerous. Do we see echoes of this today? Are there secrets we need to keep? (See <http://www.jewishcurrents.org/2006-may-zellner.htm>, para. 14-17.)
 - Parallels between then and now
 - Black folks in Montgomery, Alabama were able to organize the bus boycott so quickly because they had an established activist organization, the Women's Political Council. In a time where fast responses and organizing will likely be needed, how are we ensuring that we're ready? (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRprVK7EY-c>; 3:13.)
 - *Rosa Parks went to Highlander Folk School, where people learned how to be leaders in their movements. What types of trainings today are available for people to lead in movements? Where do the trainings take place? Where do white youth learn about social movements and organizing? (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpORxvkZ6qs>; 4:53.)

Month #5: Little Rock Nine

- *Readings and other media:*
 - [Casey Nichols, "Little Rock Crisis, 1957"](#)
 - [Vaughn Wallace, photos by Ben Cosgrove, "Brave Hearts: Remembering the Little Rock Nine"](#)
 - [David Margolick, "The Many Lives of Hazel Bryan" Slate](#)
 - [Christine Firer Hinze, "Reconsidering Little Rock: Hannah Arendt, Martin Luther King Jr., and Catholic Social Thought on Children and Families in the Struggle for Justice" Journal of the Society of Christian Ethi](#)

- Optional Discussion Prompts:
 - Roles of white folks
 - When the nine students tried to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, they faced “an angry mob of white students, parents, and citizens determined to stop integration.” Why do you think these white people were so determined to stop integration? (See <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/little-rock-crisis-1957>; para. 3.)
 - What do you think about President Eisenhower’s decision to involve federal troops in integrating Central High? (See <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/little-rock-crisis-1957>; para. 4.)
 - What do you think about how other whites who graduated high school with Hazel Bryan treated her 40 years after she was pictured harassing Elizabeth Eckford? (See http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history_lesson/2011/10/elizabeth_and_hazel_what_happened_to_the_two_girls_in_the_most_f.html; para 18.)
 - Learnings for solidarity
 - Hinze claims that Hannah Arendt, as a white intellectual, displayed a “superficial solidarity” towards the Little Rock Nine because she did not do enough to understand African American families and communities. How could Arendt have shown greater solidarity with the Little Rock Nine? (See http://www.luc.edu/media/lucedu/dccirp/pdfs/articlesforresourc/Article_-_Hinze,_Christine_3.pdf, pp. 36-37.)
 - Ego-driven/love-driven actions
 - When the Little Rock Nine sought to desegregate Central High School, Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus claimed that he called in the National Guard because he had the courage to act to protect the black students from harm. In what ways was his decision to bring in military presence ego-driven or love-driven? (See <http://time.com/3874341/little-rock-nine-1957-photos>, para. 3-9.)
 - Parallels between then and now
 - Forty years after the desegregation of Central High School, Hazel Bryan received resentment for her racist actions from other white contemporaries who thought that they had done nothing wrong by looking away from Hazel’s overt racism. What types of incidents today exist in which white people look away from the overt racist behavior of other white people? How might Hazel’s life have been different if there was social media then in the way we are connected to it now? (See http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history_lesson/2011/10/elizabeth_and_hazel_what_happened_to_the_two_girls_in_the_most_f.html, para. 18.)

Month #6: Multi-racial organizing

- Readings and other media:
 - [Video: Dolores Huerta, Co-Founder of United Farm Workers](#) (2 consecutive videos 2:39 and :39)
 - [Katherine Anastas, "UFW Geographic History 1965-1977" Mapping American Social Movements](#)
 - [Maggie Potapchuk, "Multi-Racial Partnerships and Coalitions" Chapter 10, Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building](#)
 - [USIP Report "Truth Commission: South Africa"](#)
 - [Susie Linfield, "Trading Truth for Justice? Reflections on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission" Boston Review](#)
 - [Jane Duran "Black/White Radical Alliances in the 1960s" Monthly Review](#)
 - [Characteristics of Anti-Racist White Allies and Moving From Concern to Action](#), P. 54-55 of Western States Center's Dismantling Racism: A Resource Book
 - <https://lcrm.lib.unc.edu/blog/index.php/tag/association-of-southern-women-for-the-prevention-of-lynching/>, Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching
 - <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/via01>

- Optional Discussion Prompts:
 - Roles of white folks:
 - What were the role(s) of white folks in supporting the grape boycotts? (See http://depts.washington.edu/moves/UFW_geography.shtml.)
 - What was the role of white women in anti-lynching? How did ASWPL both perpetuate and subvert white supremacy? (See <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/via01>.)
 - In an interracial or multiracial effort, why is creating time for same race/ethnicity caucus meeting important for white people? (See <http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/potapchuk10.pdf>.)
 - Learnings for solidarity
 - In racial justice work between whites and people of color, in what ways can an accounting process build solidarity? (See [Characteristics of Anti-Racist White Allies and Moving From Concern to Action](#), p. 55.)
 - Ego-driven/love-driven actions
 - Dismantling Racism: A Resource Book says, "Discomfort offers an opportunity for reflection and deeper understanding, which leads to change...." How does discomfort leading to change influence ego-driven and love-driven actions? (See [Characteristics of Anti-Racist White Allies and Moving From Concern to Action](#), p. 54.)
 - Parallels between then and now
 - What are similarities and differences between ASWPL and white organizations supporting anti-black-violence today? (See <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/via01>.)

- Have you participated in/studied multi-racial organizing? What were successes? What were failures?

Unit 3, Months 7 and 8: How can we show up today?

Month #7: Showing up imbalanced and incomplete

- Readings and other media:
 - [Mia McKenzie, "How to Tell the Difference Between Real Solidarity and 'Ally' Theater" Black Girl Dangerous](#)
 - [Mia McKenzie, "'How Can White Women Include Women of Color In Feminism?' Is A Bad Question. Here's Why." Black Girl Dangerous](#)
 - [Robin DiAngelo "White Fragility"](#)
- Optional Discussion Prompts:
 - Language is powerful. How do you feel about the word "ally"? How is it perceived today? Mia McKenzie talks about the difference between "inclusion" and "centering" - how can we check that the experiences and abilities of People of Color are centered in all racial justice work we do? In what ways can we hold ourselves and our efforts accountable toward this end?
 - What experience do you have with feelings of white fragility? Were you aware of it at the time? How can we move past defensiveness or withdrawal to approach collective liberation with our whole selves?

Month #8: Showing up from a place of love and solidarity

- Readings and other media:
 - [Caitlin Breedlove, "Spiritual muscle, courage, and non-compliance"](#)
 - [Berkley Carnine and Liza Minno Bloom, "How To Support Standing Rock and confront what it means to live on stolen land"](#)
- Optional Discussion Prompts:
 - What are ways that you cultivate courage or see courage cultivated around you? Breedlove says, "All the courage that organizing has given me comes from seeing and learning courage in action, witnessing courage from others." What does courage look like in action and how does it differ from the idea of the 'white savior'?

Additional Readings:

This is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt is Shaping the Twenty-First Century by Mark Engler and Paul Engler

Strength to Love by Martin Luther King Jr.