

So You Want to Talk About Race

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CHAPTER 3—What if I talk about race wrong?

"As uncomfortable as the conversation was, it needed to happen. The initial discussion led to a very long talk about race and identity and the difference between being a white mother who has loved and lived with black people, and being an actual black person who experienced the full force of a white supremacist society firsthand."

What did you think of the conversation the author had with her mother? What's the big insight that came from it?

"It's our desire to ignore race that increases the necessity of its discussion. Because our desire to not talk about race also causes us to ignore race in areas where lack of racial consideration can have real detrimental effects on the lives of others."

The author lists several examples of what happens when race is not discussed such as employer hairstyles in their dress codes that ignore the very specific needs of black women. Can you think of other examples where unintentional racism can be found?

"If you are white, and you don't want to feel any of that pain by having these conversations, then you are asking people of color to continue to bear the entire burden of racism alone."

What do you think about this quote?

"You should be having these conversation with people of your own race as well. White people—talk about race with other white people. Stop pretending that you are exempt from the day-to-day realities of race. Take some of the burden off of people of color. Bring it into your life so that you can dismantle racism in the white spaces of your life that people of color can't even reach."

What did you think of the author's list of how to have a better conversation regarding race?

CHAPTER 4—Check My Privilege

"The definition of privilege is in reality much simpler than a lot of social justice discussions would have you to believe. Privilege, in the social justice context, is an advantage or a set of advantages that you have that others do not."

Based on the author's definition, can you think of examples of privilege you have personally because of race, gender, etc.?

"The concept of privilege violates everything we've been told about fairness and hard work paying off and good things happen to good people...We want to protect our vision of a world that is fair and kind and predictable. That reaction is natural, but doesn't make the harmful effects of unexamined privilege less real."

What do you think about this quote?

"I recommend practicing looking for your privilege first when you are in a neutral situation. Sit down and think about the advantages you've had in life...Take some time to really dig deep through all of the advantages that you have that others may not. Write them down."

Take time to do this activity.

CHAPTER 5—What is Intersectionality?

"Intersectionality, the belief that our social justice movements must consider all of the intersections of identity, privilege and oppression that people face in order to be just and effective, is the number one requirement for all of the work that I do."

"Each of us has a myriad of identities—our gender, class, race, sexuality, and so much more—that inform our experiences in life and our interactions with the world. As we saw when we were checking our privilege, the different hierarchies, privileges, and oppressions assigned to these identities affect our lives in many ways. These privileges and oppressions do not exist in a vacuum, however, and can combine with each other, compound each other, mitigate each other, and contradict each other."

Do you understand what the term "intersectionality" means? How have you seen this dynamic at work in your life? In the life of others?