

Culture: My Racial Autobiography

Modified from Source: Original source *Courageous Conversations* (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

Essential Question: When did we first start to view ourselves as a racialized being? How has my history of understanding race impacted my growth and development?

Goal: To help participants develop a fuller understanding of personal racial identity development and experiences linked to race.

Materials Needed: Paper and pencil/pen for each participant, Racial Autobiography Questions.

Overview

- Step 1: Discuss Ground Rules (10 minutes)
- Step 2: Independent Reflection on racial autobiography questions (10-20 minutes)
- Step 3: Discussion with a trusted peer (10 minutes)
- Step 4: Whole Group Discussion/Compass Check-in (10-20 minutes)
- Step 5 (Extension): Racial Autobiography: Chapter 1 (10-20 minutes)

Introduction

Introduction of Ground Rules:

- Introduction of the Compass
 - This should be a review activity that simply reminds or reinforces the notion that everyone enters into conversation, particularly conversations related to race, differently.
 - There are typically four quadrants or four entry points into race related conversations. [Introduction of the Compass](#).
 - Moral Quadrant (Believing):
 - Intellectual Quadrant (Thinking):
 - Rational Quadrant (Feeling):
 - Emotional Quadrant (Acting):
- The Four Agreements
 - Goal is not to teach the agreements but rather to provide a general overview of what they are and how they impact discussions about race.
 - Stay Engaged: Conversations related to race are often difficult. It is important that individuals understand that these conversations can be difficult and remain involved in the conversation rather than opting out of said conversations.
 - Experience Discomfort: Discomfort in conversations related to race is inevitable, this condition asks participants make a commitment to bring issues into the open. It is not talking about these issues that create divisiveness. The divisiveness already exists in the society and in our schools. It is through dialogue, even when uncomfortable, the understanding, healing, and change begin.
 - Speak Your Truth: Use I statements Only. Oftentimes in conversations related to race, people have a tendency of speaking to more than just their personal experience, but rather tend to speak for other individuals within their racialized group.

Culture: My Racial Autobiography

Modified from Source: Original source *Courageous Conversations* (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

- Expect/Accept Non-Closure: We are not going to solve all issues related to race today. The purpose is to engage in the conversation honestly and earnestly, and when it is done, learn to reflect on what you have learned so that it can inform the next conversation.

Independent Reflection Free Write

- Students will work independently on answering the questions from the [Racial Autobiography questionnaire](#). Questions are designed to guide student thinking. Students do not have to answer each component of each question.
- Process: Teachers have some flexibility in this process. There are some suggestions listed below.
 - Circle Process: Teachers present each question to students while sitting in a circle with the idea that students merely write out the responses.
 - Handout: Teachers can print out the racial autobiography questionnaire and distribute to students.
 - Read-aloud: Teachers can read each question of independently providing students with time to process each series of questions
 - Jot down notes to answer these questions. Let them guide but not limit your thinking. Jot down any other memories or ideas that seem relevant to you. (You won't hand in these notes, but they'll help you participate in the discussion.)

Discussion with Trusted Peer

- Students will work in pairs with a peer that they feel comfortable with to share out some of the larger concepts from their independent writing. Students should answer the following questions.
- For this paired activity teachers should pair students with individuals that they have a quality rapport with. Teachers can allow student to select their own partners but must be mindful about students getting left out of this process.
- For those teachers that feel that students may not be able to handle the discussion either due to difficulty of subject or struggles related to sharing these types of ideas (no judgement) students can write out responses to these prompts.
 - **Family: What messages did you learn from your family about race?**
 - **Neighborhood: What messages did you learn from your neighborhood about race growing up?**
 - **Elementary and Middle School: What messages have you learned about race as a result of your schooling?**

Whole Group Discussion/Compass Check-in

- Students will answer the following prompt using circle procedures, teachers should begin each round to serve as a model for students.
 - Where did this activity place you on the compass? And why?

Culture: My Racial Autobiography

Modified from Source: Original source *Courageous Conversations* (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

- How much of what you have learned about race has come from home?
- How much of what you have learned about race has come as a result of where you live?
- How much of what you have learned about race has come as a result of schooling?
- Optional: How much of what you have learned about race has come from movies, television, radio.

Racial Autobiography: Chapter 1

- Students will have the opportunity to write their racial autobiography using the notes that they took from the earlier portion of the activity. Teachers that elect this activity have a high degree of flexibility.