

Suggested Topics for Conversations About Race or for Listening Exchanges

(Many of these topics can be revisited repeatedly. Some will elicit many stories to tell. It is likely that feelings will accompany many of these stories and memories. Using Listening Exchanges to feel, express, and unload those feelings can accelerate our healing from the effects of racism.)

What are your social identities (“race”, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.)? What was good about growing up with these identities? What was difficult?

How has racism affected your life?

What’s good about talking about “race”; what’s difficult or scary about it?

What are your earliest memories of being aware that there are people whose skin is a different color from yours?

What are your earliest memories of being aware that people are mistreated based on the color of their skin?

How have you been oppressed, or the target of systematic mistreatment for any reason? What have you experienced?

Where have you experienced being in the “dominant” role with regard to other people? How did that affect you?

What are your earliest memories of contact with someone of a different “race” than your own? What happened? What, if anything, do you wish had happened differently?

Where does your mind go and what feelings come up when you think about race or racism?

Tell the story of your life from the perspective of “race”. Where in your life were you with people of the same “race”; with people of different races? How has your “race” affected your life, your relationships, your opportunities, etc.?

What are your memories of friendships with a person of another “race”? When you were young? More recently?

What attitudes and behaviors around racial differences and/or racism were expressed in your family when you were growing up?

What experiences have you had in trying to make friends with people of other races?

Where do you feel you belong, and where do you feel unwelcome, with various racial groups?

How does your class, religion, gender, or sexual orientation affect how comfortable you feel with people of other “races”; with people of your own “race”?

Describe times you have interrupted racism or taken some action against it (even if what you did feels insignificant, or inadequate).

What mistakes have you made with regard to “race” or racism?

What could you do now where you work, or go to school, or live to take initiative against racism?

What other topic would be useful for you to address with regard to healing from the effects of racism in your life and taking action to eliminate racism?