

**THE 21-DAY
RACIAL EQUITY
HABIT-BUILDING
CHALLENGE**

**DISCUSSION
GUIDE
FOR GROUPS**

by the Food Solutions
New England Network

The 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge Discussion Guide is created and published by the **Food Solutions New England (FSNE)** network, hosted at the **University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute** in Durham, NH, USA.

Lead authors are Curtis Ogden and Karen Spiller, Thomas W. Haas Professors of Sustainability at the University of New Hampshire.

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*21-Day Racial Equity Challenge Habit-Building Challenge
Discussion Guide, 1st Edition, 2019, Rev 1*

Please contact fsne.info@unh.edu with corrections or suggestions.

*Food Solutions New England
UNH Sustainability Institute
131 Main Street
Durham, New Hampshire USA
foodsolutionsne.org*

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“Racism—the systemic mistreatment of people based on their ethnicity or skin color—affects all aspects of our society, including our food system. While racism has no biological foundation, the socio-economic and political structures that dispossess and exploit people of color, coupled with widespread misinformation about race, cultures and ethnic groups, make racism one of the more intractable injustices causing poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Racism is not simply attitudinal prejudice or individual acts, but an historical legacy that privileges one group of people over others. Racism—individual, institutional and structural—also impedes good faith efforts to build a fair, sustainable food system.” - foodfirst.org

“The food industry is the nexus of almost all of the major forces in our politics today... It’s super closely linked with climate change and ethics. It’s the nexus of minimum wage fights, of immigration law, of criminal justice reform, of health care debates, of education. You’d be hard-pressed to find a political issue that doesn’t have food implications.” - Alexandria Ocasio Cortez

“We need to say no to the neoliberal fatalism that we are witnessing at the end of this century, informed by the ethics of the market, an ethics in which a minority makes most profits against the lives of the majority. In other words, those who cannot compete, die. This is a perverse ethics that, in fact, lacks ethics. I insist on saying that I continue to be human.... I would then remain the last educator in the world to say no: I do not accept ... history as determinism.” - Paulo Freire

Welcome Note

Welcome to the first version of the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge Discussion Guide. This Guide has been created to extend the skills you will build during the FSNE 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge out to 365 days of action!

We knew when we first launched the Challenge in 2015 that we wanted to increase our capacity, our strength of power and privilege as well as our collective action to create conditions for a more just and equitable food system. We wanted to make visible the often-invisible link between race/racism and our food systems.

We knew that starting with individual awareness-raising and evolutions - as the Challenge has always done - prepares a foundation for collective commitment, thus multiplying the numbers of advocates, allies and accomplices. This Guide is offered in the spirit of helping groups of individuals take the Challenge further.

It is our hope that you will experiment with the Challenge and this Guide to find new and bold ways to connect, collaborate and create food systems that work for everyone.

Sincerely,

Karen Spiller, Curtis Ogden and the
Food Solutions New England Network
Spring 2019

Introduction & Background

Why the Racial Equity Challenge?

The 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge (aka “the Challenge”) is not only a foundation for going from individual to collective change, it is also a springboard for ongoing, year-round 365-day action. The response to the Challenge over the years has been greater than we had ever imagined, with participants expressing a desire to learn more and take action.

“...Lately I am feeling compelled to talk about race more than ever before – but not knowing how to begin, and who else is interested in this discussion. My friends and colleagues are mostly white and privileged – as am I – and typically working on and worrying about things OTHER than race, unless there is a headline or crisis that captures our collective attention. The YouTube video was very helpful to me – let go of binaries, practice having the conversations, don’t be surprised when discomfort arises!”

In our Bonus Materials at the end of this Guide, you can read more about how the Food Solutions New England network came to center racial equity in its work and start its version the Challenge back in 2015.

What’s in the Guide?

Like the Challenge itself, this Guide is made up of tools, resources and examples. On a practical level, it is organized into three parts:

1. Introductory material for you to consider and get you in the right frame of mind
2. Tools and resources for organizing and facilitating group discussions (“Working With Your Group” pages)
3. Bonus material for additional inspiration and to go further with this work (pages

Approaching this Guide

Using this Guide starts with you assuming an organizer or facilitator role (or whatever term works for you), someone who brings an intention to take the Challenge experience from the purely individual level to a shared group or team level. The group, ideally, already has some “common ground” in terms of work, studies or even a shared faith approach even if not everyone knows each other.

All humans are “sense-making” and we can learn quite a bit on our own during the Challenge. But a group or team approach allows for collective sense-making and will help you discover new ways of thinking, deepen understanding and increase shared learning. We all have different experiences and gifts as well as biases and blind spots; a team approach also invites us to expand beyond our usual comfort zone.

Assemble a group or team of people to take the Challenge with you. It could be classmates, coworkers, colleagues, organizational partners, friends and family members. If possible, try to make your group diverse in different ways – race, lived experience, age, physical ability, gender expression, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity. To the extent these differences can be present in your group, the richness of the discussion and learning will increase. We learn more from encountering worldviews and “frames of reference” different from our own; seeing other perspectives opens the way to new solutions and possibilities for collaborative steps towards more racial equity. Give yourself and each other permission to struggle for the “right words” and give each other grace for stumbles as we work toward deeper connection and understanding.

As you and your group members delve into the Challenge in the form of daily email prompts that each person will work through, expect that responses may lead to some “conclusions” and learning, yet will also lead to many more questions. That exploration creates the opportunity for more authentic conversations and affirmations. As you move through the Challenge, you will begin to recognize and acknowledge voices and lived experiences that may be missing in your current community or work.

Consider using the group approach to this Challenge to create, strengthen and mobilize your tribe or movement. As Ken Robinson writes in his book, *Finding Your Element*, a tribe - or a pack, clan, elected family, posse, crew, network, or true friends – is a group of people who share common interests and values and show genuine appreciation and care for each other. We need more people who share this non-negotiable earnestness for racial equity and are willing to walk before us to boldly guide our steps, beside to steady us and behind to gently yet deliberately push us forward on the road to racial equity. This isn't to say that we should only connect with and work in our "in-group" or only with "like-minded" people. But finding alignment on dismantling racism and its impacts is the goal of banding together in order to accelerate change.

Get ready to have courageous conversations! Using the **Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations** as a starting frame, be prepared to:

1. Stay engaged
2. Experience discomfort
3. Speak Your truth
4. Expect and accept non closure

Remember to use the Challenge as a tool in your toolkit to advance your work toward racial equity, to activate and support you in taking bold action.

Resource: 10 Things Everyone Should Know about Race/Racism & the Food System

We offer these ten stories in the spirit of making the “invisible” visible. The dominant narratives of how our food systems work often leave some things out in favor of including stories that fit better with the bigger story of who and what “we are” (or would like to see ourselves to be) as nations or communities. We hope these ten stories inspire you to keep asking “What don’t we know?” and “Who are we not hearing from?”

1. The history of the food system in the United States is rooted in theft of land and the suppression of cultures. Military force opened the door for white settlers across the North American continent (and many other places). Before being dispossessed of their territories, Native Americans were disenfranchised of their human right to life. The disenfranchisement and loss of land for farmers of Mexican/indigenous origin following the Mexican-American wars, and the taking of Japanese-American land through mass internment during WWII are further examples of coerced land grabs. (see foodfirst.org)
2. Contrary to popular myth, it was not the small farmers of the New England countryside who built and bolstered the United States’ economic position. It was the backbreaking labor of unpaid American slaves in places like South Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama. After the Civil War, a new kind of capitalism arose in the United States and elsewhere. That new capitalism—characterized first and foremost by states with unprecedented bureaucratic, infrastructural, and military capacities, and by wage labor—had been enabled by the profits, institutions, networks, technologies, and innovations that emerged from slavery, colonialism, and land expropriation.
3. Slavery had a tremendous influence on food and labor systems around the world and was the central pillar of capitalism’s racial caste system until it was widely abolished in the late 19th century in many places (though it continues to exist in other forms). That said, the racial caste system has continued to shape the food system, especially during labor shortages. During WWII for example, when much of the US’s labor force was fighting in Europe and the Pacific, the Mexican Farm Labor Program

Agreement of 1942 imported Mexican peasants to keep the US food system running. Without them, the US could not have fought the war. After WWII the Bracero Program brought in over 4 million Mexican farmworkers. Mexican labor was cheap and legally exploitable. The “immigrant labor subsidy” transferred billions of dollars in value to the sector, turned WWII into a decades-long agricultural boon and transformed labor relations in agriculture.

4. African-Americans once owned 16 million acres of farmland in the US. But by 1997, after many decades of Jim Crow, several national farm busts and a generally inattentive (or obstructionist) Department of Agriculture (USDA), fewer than 20,000 Black farmers owned just 2 million acres of land. According to the USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture, of the country’s 2.1 million farmers, only 8% are farmers of color and only half of those are owners of land. Though their farm share is growing (particularly among Latinos, who now number over 67,000 farmers), people of color tend to earn less than \$10,000 in annual sales, produce only 3% of agricultural value, and farm just 2.8% of farm acreage.
5. While white farmers dominate as operator-owners, farmworkers and food workers—from field to fork—are overwhelmingly people of color. Most are paid poverty wages, have inordinately high levels of food insecurity and experience nearly twice the level of wage theft than white workers. While white food workers’ average incomes are \$25,024 a year, workers of color make only \$19,349 a year. White workers hold nearly 75% of the managerial positions in the food system. Latinos hold 13% and Black and Asian workers 6.5%.
6. Poverty results in high levels of food insecurity for people of color. Of the 50 million food insecure people in the US 10.6% are white, 26.1% are Black, 23.7% are Latino and 23% are Native American. Restaurant workers—an occupation dominated by people of color—are twice as food insecure as the national average.
7. Race, poverty and food insecurity correlate closely with obesity and diet-related disease; nearly half of African-Americans and over 42% of Latinos suffer from obesity. While less than 8% of non-Hispanic whites suffer from diabetes, 9% of Asian -Americans, 12.8% of Hispanics, 13.2 % of non-Hispanic African Americans and 15.9 % of Indigenous people have diabetes.
8. The Farm Bill—a long-standing pillar of agrarian capitalism—now functions as tool of “neoliberalism.” The long-term shift from domestic

- safety net programs for farmers that protected producers during lean years, to the subsidization of agribusiness itself through commodity support and crop insurance, has structurally positioned low-income farmers and communities of color on the losing side because they have been given few options for resources. (See foodfirst.org)
9. We must not forget that fishing is, and always has been, a central component of human food systems, and that fisheries have also been marred by racism. For example, the southeastern Atlantic coast of Georgia was once abundant with fish and shellfish. When Europeans arrived in the area in the mid-18th century, they did seem to take interest in these resources. However, Africans, who were forcibly enslaved and brought to Georgia beginning in the 1750s, were very reliant upon fish for both subsistence and then small scale commerce as were their descendants. Those practices continued for two hundred years, until large scale commercialization, led by white fishers who migrated from other states, forcibly pushed African-Americans to the margins. This happened in the oyster, shrimp and blue crab fisheries. In 1999 African-Americans held only 12 of 159 licenses in the blue crab fishery. In the shrimp fishery, only 5 of 400 boats were owned and operated by African-Americans. A way of life and livelihood has slowly been taken away and in some places is on the brink of collapse.” Who has access to fishing and fisheries - for both subsistence and for economic livelihood - is still very much tied to issues of power, wealth and race. (See *“Life on the Water: A Historical-Cultural Model of African American Fishermen on the Georgia Coast,”* National Association for the Practice of Anthropology Bulletin, January 2007)
 10. The history of the US food system has many examples of fights for resistance and liberation: from the early struggles of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union to the Black Panther’s food programs and the boycotts and strikes by the United Farm Workers. More recently, the Food Chain Workers Alliance have fought for better wages and decent working conditions. Oppressed communities have developed ways of healing historical trauma and there are peer counseling groups with skills for working through the immobilizing feelings of internalized oppression, fear, hopelessness and guilt. All of these resources and historical lessons can be brought into the food movement.

Working With Your Group

Getting Started

Thank you for working with a group during this year's 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge! This Guide assumes you are able to take - or already have taken - some of these preliminary steps:

- **Identify a group of people** that are signing up for the Challenge and interested in getting together to talk about their experiences or their learnings during the Challenge. An optimal size is generally somewhere between 6 and 10 people. If you have more than 10 people, consider breaking into two smaller groups, even in corners of the same room, with at least “light” facilitation for each.
- **Decide a format for the group.** There is no “right” way to do this. Some groups schedule once-a-week lunch or coffee conversations during the three weeks of the Challenge. Some organize one-on-one conversation buddies. Some people organize an in-office email list or physical “bulletin board” to share reflections, ideas and resources. Experiment with what works for you and the group. And keep notes, as an organizer/facilitator, to hand off for next year or to jog your memory.
- **Find convenient times and spaces** to meet and reserve those time slots. We suggest something between 60 - 90 minutes. Consider access to that space for people with different abilities. Consider times of the day that will work for your attendees. Can you or someone in the group organize some help with childcare or transportation if needed? Will anyone in your group need or want an interpreter?
- **Invite** people! Use some version of the sample invitations below and check the FSNE online Challenge Outreach Kit for flyers and postcards that you can use. FSNE can also connect you with others at your school or organization who may have already registered for the Challenge.

Sample Invitations

Sample #1

You're invited!

Conversation about the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge

Across our region—in communities, businesses, nonprofits and in government — there is significant discussion about race and racial inequity. We have found a tool to strengthen our will and skill to address racism in our food systems.

The good news is that all of us recognize the importance of addressing racial inequity in our institutions and see opportunities for greater impact by working together.

The goals of this conversation focusing on the 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge are to:

- Increase understanding of and commitment to racial equity and to make a real difference in the community.
- Share local and national racial equity best practices.
- Further cross-jurisdictional, cross-community, and cross-sector strategies for racial equity.
- Foster post-convening collaboration.

Tuesday, August 5 at 6:00 pm. - 8:45 pm
University of Minnesota
McNamara Alumni Center on the East Bank

For more information on the convenings, locations, and registration, contact Liz Smith at 555-867-5309.

Sample #2

Are You Taking the Challenge??

Many around our network have signed up for the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge hosted by Food Solutions New England that begins April 1. This year we want to create space and opportunity for those who would like to engage in dialogue and group reflection during the 21 days!

Please join us for a coffee chat on Saturday, April 13 at 10 am-12:00 pm. Continental breakfast will be served. Only requirement is that we ask that you have read at least 7 of the 21

daily Challenge prompts and are eager to talk about what you have learned, what moved you and what actually challenged you to action.

Please RSVP to Jamal at 555-867-5309 by April 8!

Looking forward to sharing a brave and bold conversation with you!

Sample #3

Convening Post 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge
You've taken the Challenge - what's next?

- Join us on Friday, May 3 at 6-8 pm to share reflections and begin to brainstorm.
- What did we learned about ourselves, about our organizations and its policies and practices?
- What are ways that we can leverage our network?
- What actions can we take individually and together?

Come with ideas and let's keep this moving!

Sample Agenda for a Racial Equity Challenge Conversation

Use this for a 60 to 90 minute meeting/conversation. Modify to suit your needs.

<i>What (Topic)</i>	<i>How (Process) and Who (Facilitator/Presenter)</i>	<i>When (Timing)</i>
<i>Start-Ups</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome (Facilitator 1*) • Clarify roles** • Check-In Question: <i>How are you? OR One word to describe how you are feeling today? OR What's something you are bringing to today's discussion?</i> (<u>brief</u> response from each participant) • Review the meeting agenda • Review working agreements to guide discussion 	15 min
<i>Discussion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present prompt from the 21 Day Challenge (Facilitator 2) • Invite people to reflect silently, perhaps revisit something they have written/drawn in advance • Open up the discussion (facilitator ensures that everyone gets a chance to speak, reminding people that pauses and silence are okay and can be powerful) 	30-60 min
<i>Closing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-Out: <i>What is one thing you are taking from today's discussion? What is something you are committing to further your learning or take action around?</i> (Facilitator 1) • Evaluation ("Pluses": <i>What worked about our discussion today?</i> "Deltas" (Changes): <i>What could we do to make our next discussion even better?</i>) • Next meeting date and time + roles (facilitator(s) and recorder) + prep work for that meeting 	15 min

**You might consider having more than one facilitator to share this role. Or, if you have one facilitator for the entire meeting, consider having someone else facilitate the next meeting.*

***Different roles might include facilitator(s), recorder/scribe/visual recorder, photographer (with attendee consent!), timekeeper*

Planning Ahead for Follow-up

Think about ways to keep the conversation and relationship-building moving toward action, to move beyond our “comfort” zones into our “stretch” (sometimes less comfortable) zones. Consider how the group can support one another to push ourselves, our partners, our tribes, further than we have before. How can we create the individual, community and workplace supports in order to center **racial equity** in decisions-making and activities, including policies, practices, programs and budgets and day-to-day happenings?

At the end of your first discussion, take the pulse of the group for next steps. Invite an opportunity for ongoing dialogue, meetings with guest speakers; issue-focused meet-ups to extend the learning and action community

Email lists, monthly or quarterly check-ins also support information sharing and connection. Consider bringing in guest speakers, coordinating field trips to related events or sites, hosting a film screening. Create opportunities to celebrate successes. Invite articles and blogs from the team into each other’s networks. This multiplies and diversifies voices with shared values and messages. Always ask “What’s next?” and “What’s possible now?”

Preparing Yourself for the Discussion

1. Center yourself. Connect to your values and what gives you strength and support (other people, places, activities). Forgive yourself and others in advance for your own and their imperfections. Also remember that racism is, as Jay Smooth says, “a concept that is designed to trip us up.”
2. Keep doing your own personal work on understanding your own racial identity, your worldview regarding race, racism and other forms of oppression, and your understanding of how your identity impacts your conversations about and work for racial equity. As humans, we all carry biases that we may not even realize we have.
3. Be willing to meet people where they are; try to understand people who are in different stages of their own journey on these issues. But also be thinking about how we can support each other to get beyond “where we already are.”
4. Challenge yourself to listen to others non-judgmentally.
5. Be willing to learn, acknowledging that any one person has only a partial grasp on the truth.
6. Be willing to be challenged, to change your mind and to deal with uncertainty.
7. Envision yourself handling challenging situations with grace and effectiveness, building trust by being, at times, transparent and vulnerable when you are able.

Preparing the Group for Discussion

1. Acknowledge the purpose of the group at the outset.
2. Acknowledge that power dynamics are always in the room. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Power can be used for good and for ill. And it is important to acknowledge that different power dynamics may be at play and affecting the conversation.
3. Remind people that everyone is unique and that no one speaks for all other people of their race or ethnic group. Invite a spirit of curiosity and for learning from each other as individuals with different experiences.
4. Invite people to share their aspirations for participating in the discussion, including any concerns that they may have.
5. Remind people that the point of these discussions is to help one another grow, to learn and commit to taking action to undo racism. This is difficult to do when we are completely comfortable and things are familiar and easy. It is also difficult to do when we are feeling panicky and worried, whether true or not, about our safety. The work of these discussions is to get us into the “stretch zone,” where we experience some discomfort. It is important to make this experience - of stretching into some discomfort in order to learn, okay for people.
6. Agree on a set of working agreements for the discussion time (examples below), either by writing those up on a blank page or working from a list you prepare in advance.

Working Agreements or Guidelines for the Group

Working agreements, community agreements or even rules of engagement are names for conversation/meeting guidelines that help create an environment that values diversity of thought and experience. They help create a space within which you have a higher chance of a respectful and productive experiences for the participants.

Talking about your agreements - or even better, creating them together - and getting consent to use them is a helpful way to build trust when you start the conversation. People are much more likely to respect and use an agreement that they have helped create. It will make your job as the host much easier. When problems or conflicts arise, you all will be able to refer back to your set of agreements (e.g. *We all agreed at the beginning that it's best if only one person speaks at a time...*).

Example List #1

- Listen deeply
- Make “I”- statements rather than generalized “We” statements
- Keep it here
- We don’t have to agree
- Notice intent vs. impact (Use “oops” and “ouch” as in “I made a mistake” and “I am hurt”)
- Be willing to be uncomfortable
- Expect and accept a lack of closure (i.e. we won’t figure this all out today)
- All voices are heard
- Moving in and moving back
- 3 Before Me - let three other people talk before you talk again
- Appreciate each others’ differences and values
- Deconstruct language, request clarification when needed
- Take/Share what you’ve learned (without attribution or with permission)
- Both/And- not binary choices
- Open to curiosity
- Ask “*what else would we like to add?*”

Example List #2

(Crafted by a team for use at Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group 2018 Conference)

- **Be Curious, Open, and Respectful** - call in not out/throw sunshine not shade
- **No one knows everything** - together we know a lot
- We can't be articulate all the time - give the benefit of the doubt and ask questions
- **We take care of ourselves** - stretch, eat, drink, use restroom, rest, etc.
- **Confidentiality** - don't speak for others without explicit permission, don't share something communicated in a private or safe space.
- **One mic** - one voice at a time
- **Take Space/Make Space** - if you are usually quiet challenge yourself to take more space, and if you usually talk a lot be mindful to leave room for quieter voices
- **Avoid Jargon, Acronyms, and Industry language** - use inclusive language that is accessible for people with varying inside knowledge
- **Be aware of time** - enough let's move on (ELMO) means if what you wanted to say has already been said, don't say it
- **Speak from your own experience** - Use I statements rather than generalization
- **Challenge assumptions**
- **Be conscious of intent vs. impact** - no matter intention you're responsible for your impact
- **Avoid using isms** without explaining what you mean by them

For steps to building group/ community agreements, check out *Seeds of Change* at seedsofchange.org.uk

Navigating Challenging Conversations

Spend time thinking about how you might respond to these challenges that may be raised during your discussion:

- **“What about reverse discrimination?”** (“What about white people who work real hard...now they can’t get jobs. That’s not fair. Why should whites be punished?”) Consider: Reverse racism and discrimination are not possible given the history of oppression and power structures that has been core to the making of this country. All people can be unfair and treat others badly, but that is not the same thing as being racist. Racism is by definition a form of oppression based on the socially constructed concept of race used by the dominant racial group (whites) over non-dominant racial groups.
- **“We need to lower our standards so that people of color can get in/advance/make it.”** Consider: Lowering standards is not what it means to work for equity, and is essentially giving into myths of racial inferiority. Standards may be culturally/racially biased and changed to be more inclusive, but not “lowered.”
- **“Can people of color be racist?”** Consider: No. Racism is used to justify the position of the dominant group, white people in this case, and to uphold white supremacy and superiority. Everyone can be biased, and engage in bigoted and belittling behavior that is intolerant of other perspectives. But racism is by definition a form of oppression exercised by the dominant racial group (whites).
- **“Why aren’t we talking about the oppression of women/LGBTQ?”** Consider: We can be explicit about racism and at the same time not exclusive of other forms of oppression, which do exist and can compound (through what is known as “intersectionality”). It can be important to lead with racism and the oppression of people of color because race continues to be most predictive of opportunity and outcomes in this country and one of the hardest things to talk about in productive ways. And

when we dive wholeheartedly into conversations about racism, they naturally lead to other forms of oppression.

- ***“I’m tired of talking about white power/privilege/supremacy.”*** What really needs to happen is we need to learn to have constructive relationships, learn to communicate, try to help them...!” Consider: It is true that we have to learn to have more constructive relationships and communication. AND we have to recognize that racism is a system of oppression that is used to uphold the power of the dominant racial group, in this case white people. It is used to preserve unearned privilege and the myth of white superiority. This is the water in which we swim in this country, so failing to see it, talk about it, and working actively to shift it essentially helps to keep racism in place.
- ***“People of color have to take some responsibility too.”*** I haven’t had it easy and I am white. I overcame many obstacles in my life through hard work and a positive attitude.” Consider: Many people struggle and suffer, because of poverty, gender and other forms of oppression. We don’t want to deny that. And we don’t want to suggest that individual effort and hard work is important. And we also do not want to diminish the real structural barriers that exist for people of color in this country that often means they have to work many times harder to “succeed” or survive. Think about how white dominant cultural norms can make it easier for white people to progress, like being on an escalator going up, white presenting a counter-force for people of color, like trying to run up an escalator going down. Individual effort matters, and so does addressing societal structures and norms.
- ***“I just see people as people.”*** I don’t see Black, or White or green or purple.” Consider: Science suggests otherwise. Implicit bias has been proven to play out in everyone’s minds to some degree and at a level of consciousness that can be very subtle but still impact our actions in the world. Microaggressions, a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority. are a phenomenon we should discuss and be aware of. And you can take

an implicit association test to see about your own biases. It is best that we be humble about this fact and actively work to counter these unconscious biases and stereotypes.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

- **“Why use the word “racism”?** *Couldn’t we find a gentler, less negative word?”* Consider: Who are we trying to protect by being “gentler” and less negative? Often we privilege the comfort of the privileged (white people), at the ongoing expense of people of color. We have to be bold, courageous and truthful, and recognize that there is a difference between discomfort and outright panic. Unless we name racism, how will we be able to work to undo or dismantle it?
- **“It seems that you are saying all white folks are racist? I am not a racist.”** Consider: There is a difference between saying that an individual is “a racist” (by malicious intent) and that someone lives in and is influenced by a racist system. It is very difficult for white people in this country not to have some internalized sense of superiority and bias vis-a-vis people of color because of how systems have been rigged in their favor. This does not mean that white people can’t work hard to overcome these internalized sensibilities, and it requires ongoing commitment, awareness building and action. And even better if we do this in community together, like this group.
- **“This doesn’t impact me. Racism does not impact me.”** (person of color saying this) Consider: Racism can be more and less obvious. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Everything we see is a shadow cast by that which we do not see.” Racism can be interpersonal and institutional (more obvious) and internalized and structural (perhaps less obvious). Research is showing how much of a psychological burden racism is for people of color, even being passed down through genes, and how things as subtle as narrative and primes create barriers for people of color. We do not mean to make this overwhelming, but if we do not name these dynamics, we cannot address them. And the good news is that there are more and more tools for addressing how racism operates at different levels, and this Challenge will point us in the direction of many of these!

Facilitation Tips

There are many important behaviors and skills that facilitators can employ to help guide a group towards a goal or learning point in a respectful and inclusive discussion. Some of these skills are outlined below, along with several examples. These phrases and techniques are not intended to be exact “scripts” and should be adapted to your own voice and situation.

1. Addressing behavior – acknowledging behaviors in the room. Examples: There seems to be a lot of side conversation. Is that okay with everyone? There is low energy in the room. Should we take a stretch break? There’s a lot of emotion building right now that is interfering with productive discussion. Let’s take a few deep breaths and a moment to remember the ground rules.
2. Bridging – making connections, tying one learning point to another. Examples: We started to talk about ally-building earlier, and now we’re getting into some more concrete ideas of how to be an effective ally.
3. Checking for understanding – making sure directions and questions are clear. Examples: Does everyone understand? Is that question clear? Clarifying – interpreting, clarifying misunderstandings, defining terms. Examples: There seems to be some miscommunication happening here; maybe we should take a step back. Who needs more clarification before we move on?
4. Encouraging – prompting, nonjudgmental responses, open-ended questions, respectful probing. Examples: “We’re all learners in this process. This can be a hard topic to discuss. Thank you for sharing that story.”
5. Evaluating – asking questions that encourage group members to examine an issue from a different perspective. Examples: “What’s another way to look at this issue? A different take might be; “I appreciate Joseph sharing his perspective on the matter; do others have a similar or different perspective?”
6. Gatekeeping – managing time and group participation. Examples: “Let’s hear from some of the people who we haven’t heard from.... Let’s take two more responses, and then we’ll move on.”

7. Giving – judiciously offering facts or personal experiences to clarify a point. Examples: “Thank you for that observation. I had a similar experience at a meeting. “
8. Naming feelings – interpreting and acknowledging feelings. Examples: “It sounds like you might be frustrated with this conversation. Is that correct?”
9. Re-framing - helping to find opportunities out of challenges. Example: “That sounds challenging/difficult. What could it look like if it were different in the future, so that it would work better/help us meet the goals better?” “So what needs to happen to turn that around? What resources do we need to move that in a different direction?”
10. Orienting – bringing the group back to task, reiterating the question or topic. Examples: “This is a really interesting discussion, hopefully that will continue during breaks or at lunch. The piece we need to focus our attention on now is.... Let’s go back to the original question.”
11. Paraphrasing – seeking clarity, promoting group understanding. Examples: “A number of different ideas are emerging; let me try to synthesize them into three major points. They are.... “
12. Resolving – conciliating differences, cooperative problem solving. Examples: “Even though you feel that way, Donna, can you understand what Naomi is saying? This is a complex issue with a lot of different perspectives.”
13. Remaining – honoring silence, allowing participants enough time to reflect and formulate thoughts. Examples: “Let’s take a few more minutes before we begin so that everyone can gather their thoughts.” Allow the silence to exist. Count to 10 silently before asking another question.
14. Returning – keeping all participants engaged in the dialogue, putting the conversation back to the whole group. Examples: “Does anyone have a different perspective? What feelings did this activity bring up for others? What do others think about this issue?”
15. Seeking – asking for clarification, suggestions, more information. Examples: “What has your experience been? Can you say more about that? What does that term mean to you?”

Bonus Materials

Inspiration from Other Organizations Doing the Challenge

Southside Community Land Trust (Rhode Island)

In the Spring of 2018 a group of staff members of **Southside Community Land Trust** led the entire staff through the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge put out by Food Solutions New England (Curtis' question for follow-up: What did that look like?). Staff have continued this work beyond the challenge by holding a monthly racial equity and justice meeting from August 2018 to present. These monthly gatherings culminated in a 3-hour staff retreat in October to gather and share ideas and brainstorm possible next steps. At the same time, the Board of Directors recommended that the organization begin work to restate its vision, values and practices on race equity, social justice and gentrification.

Old West Church (Boston)

Old West Church (OWC) adapted the 1st 21-day Challenge for Lenten Vespers (March 2016). Taking three prompts (one per week), OWC created a full color printed booklet with a reading, a list of events or exhibits to experience spoken word, art and music as well as a space to write one's thoughts and reflections. Parishioners were invited to "read, reflect, engage". This booklet was distributed and was accompanied by an OWC hosted event *Community Conversation with Debby Irving, author of "Waking up White"*. The 21-day Challenge led to a speaker series on food and food justice and the transformation of this historic Boston church land to an urban food forest.

Health Care Without Harm

The **Health Care Without Harm** food team did the racial equity challenge together in 2017. Individuals signed up to receive the challenge prompts and participated in weekly group discussions (held by video conference). There were two discussion calls each week to accommodate schedules (individuals could take part in the one that worked for them), and each call had a facilitator. For the

group calls, individuals were asked to share a reflection based on the prompts from the previous week and then there was deeper discussion on particular prompts/resources.

Health Care Without Harm (continued)

“While the team did do the challenge together as a group in 2017, we did not do it again as a group in 2018. The idea was that people could continue to do it independently if they felt there was merit in repeating the exercise. Participation as a team in 2017 was really part of trying to bring the team to a baseline understanding and level of comfort in terms of race in the food system. Over 2018 we continued with more tailored learning for the team, meaning that we identified individuals that we consider to be experts in the field to do a professional development session with our team. The first session was on Native Americans and the food system and the second on the history and current policy related to immigration/ immigrants and the food system. The other thing that happened in 2018 is that we have become active in the HEAL Alliance and two of our team members are facilitating a group within HEAL for white allies. They bring learning from that group back to our team. In terms of the influence of all of this on programming at HCWH I would say the biggest shift is that we are now looking at how to recognize labor as part of sustainability. Specifically in 2019 there will be folks exploring the different certifications related to labor standards and we aim (I believe) to do some education related to this with our network once we come to some decisions on which standards are meaningful to use.”

Testimonials From 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge Participants

“Centering racial equity is a life-long journey and a daily practice. We can’t wait for the right time to start and need to commit now, personally and professionally. The racial equity challenge is one opportunity to make that commitment, for 21 days but really for every day of the year. The 21-day challenge is a starting point: a place to get resources, hear experiences, call-in partners, colleagues and friends and most of all to connect for the long-term to a community of practice that imagines us all doing better.”

New England Grassroots Environmental Fund, New Market, NH, Bart Westdijk

“The scriptures give clear instruction and guidance with how we are to live, to live in relationship with our own selves, with one another, and with all creation. While the instruction is clear, we so often fail these simple rules of life; we fail to love each other, love ourselves, forgive each other, forgive ourselves. This can be daunting, to step against what we see in ourselves, in others, in our institutions. But what we are called to do is take the next faithful step. And to quote one of my own personal prophets, Dave Matthews, “To change the world It starts with one step. However small, the first step is hardest of all.” The 21-day racial equity offers a step. Each day. One step. A step towards justice. A move toward equity. It is a journey. And we are called to be faithful. And to take the next faithful step.”

Old West Church UMC, Boston MA, Pastor Sara Garrard

“I am so thrilled to know that Food Solutions New England continues to use the 21-Day Challenge that Dr. Moore and I created. Adapting the challenge to fit your organization’s mission, repeating it annually as a kind of racial equity “tune up,” and offering it online across your network were unique spins you put on the challenge that have now inspired other organizations. For a country that’s been schooled not to talk about race, this challenge is proving that not only do people want and need to talk about race, doing so is opening hearts and minds to how we can disrupt

the racial patterns designed to keep us from one another's hearts and minds.”

21-Day Challenge Co-creating Founder and author, Debby Irving

“As a white woman born and raised in the deep south, I have a lifetime of self-examination, un-learning, and new habit building to do to reconfigure my relationship with race, power, and privilege. When I stepped into a position of leadership of a national food systems initiative, this personal responsibility became a professional imperative. Thankfully I came across the 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge, which provided me with a roadmap and support system to strengthen my analysis of racism in the food system, uncover my biases and blind spots, and identify ways to actively dismantle racism through my work in the good food movement. Our entire team at the Wallace Center now participates in the challenge annually, and we utilize the resources to guide our monthly team “Racial Equity Coffee Chats” that help us keep the conversation going throughout the year. Our participation in the Challenge catalyzed an internal assessment and strategic planning process to center racial equity in the Wallace Center’s work. We cannot say enough good things about this initiative, and highly encourage other organizations to take the challenge as a team!”

Susan Lightfoot Schempf, Program Officer- Community Based Food Systems, Wallace Center

See Also:

Tufts University, Friedman Justice League, The Friedman Sprout, May 1, 2018 Edition
<https://friedmansprout.com/2018/05/01/reflections-on-equity-fjl-takes-on-the-racial-equity-habit-building-challenge/>

More inspiration from blog post highlighting take-aways from 2018 Challenge
<http://interactioninstitute.org/offerings-from-the-fourth-annual-21-day-racial-equity-challenge/>

Guidance For Decision-Making

Working with a group during the Racial Equity Challenge will most likely involve discussion for deeper understanding and raising awareness while also connecting with other people at your school, workplace or organization. This does not always require that everyone in the group agree.

However, if you get into a situation that requires the group to make decisions or find alignment or agreement, we offer these resources to consider some collaborative ways to do this.

The Decision-making Framework

(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a1dn9GrdMYvBli_oHi6cSoTy8o_khHPm/view) This framework guides the steps to consensus which we have found best serves collaborative work. Here is snapshot of models that work, often used together, and are successful in building power of decisions and collaboration:

- Use the Rational model as a foundational tool.
- Use the Consensus model when a decision needs to be made.
- Use the “Principled” Negotiation model when Consensus is not yet met.
- Defer to Steering/Advisory Committee to resolve in the event that consensus is not met, as an action of last resort.

The “Convener” would have a significant role as facilitator. The Convener leads the consensus building and negotiating/conflict resolution when consensus is not met.

Step 1. Use of the Rational model

Information is presented, advantages and disadvantages shared. Alternatives are suggested all in alignment with meeting the goals and objectives of the Initiative. This continues to place where the information is gathered and sorted. (See more detailed description)

Step 2. Use of the Consensus model

Consensus model is a desired process for group decision-making. It is a method by which an entire group of people can come to an agreement. The input and ideas of all participants are gathered and synthesized to arrive at a final decision

acceptable to all. Through consensus, we are not only working to achieve better solutions, but also to promote the growth of community and trust.

Consensus does not mean that everyone thinks that the decision made is necessarily the best one possible, or even that they are sure it will work. What it does mean is that in coming to that decision, no one felt that her/his position on the matter was misunderstood or that it wasn't given a proper hearing. Hopefully, everyone will think what emerges is the best decision; this often happens because, when it works, collective intelligence does come up with better solutions than could individuals.

Difficulties in reaching consensus are bound to occur and having a standard approach to addressing that would be helpful for all participating partners. There are several ways to express one's objections:

- **Non-support** ("I don't see the need for this, but I'll go along.")
- **Reservations** ("I think this may be a mistake, other options available, but I can live with it.")
- **Standing aside** ("I personally can't do this, but I won't stop others from doing it.")
- **Blocking** ("I cannot support this or allow the group to support this. It is immoral." If a final decision violates someone's fundamental moral values they are obligated to block consensus.)
- **Withdrawing from the group.** Obviously, if many people express non-support or reservations or stand aside or leave the group, it may not be a viable decision even if no one directly blocks it. This is what is known as a "lukewarm" consensus and it is just as desirable as a lukewarm beer or a lukewarm bath.

If consensus is blocked and no new consensus can be reached, the group stays with whatever the previous decision was on the subject or does nothing if that is applicable. Major philosophical or moral questions that will come up with each affinity group will have to be worked through as soon as the group forms.

Step 3. Use of Principled Negotiation, the approach to negotiation developed by Roger Fisher, Bill Ury, and others, first described in the book *Getting to YES*, is preferred. In concept, Principled Negotiation is a *win-win* approach where the goal is to reach a lasting agreement, rather than traditional positional (*win-lose*) bargaining.

Elements of Principled Negotiation:

- separate the people from the problem
- focus on interests rather than positions
- generate a variety of options before settling on an agreement
- insist that the agreement be based on objective criteria

Roles Needed

- **Vibes-watcher** is someone besides the facilitator who watches and comments on individual and group feelings and patterns of participation. Vibes-watchers need to be especially tuned in to the sexism of group dynamics.
- **Recorder** takes notes on the meeting, especially of decisions made and means of implementation and a time-keeper keeps things going on schedule so that each agenda item can be covered in the time allotted for it (if discussion runs over the time for an item, the group may or may not decide to contract for more time to finish up).
- **Facilitator, the Convener** aids the group in defining decisions that need to be made, helps them through the stages of reaching an agreement, keeps the meeting moving, focuses discussion to the point-at hand; makes sure everyone has the opportunity to participate and formulates and tests to see if consensus has been reached.

Length of Time in Consensus Building

This depends upon the “time-sensitive” nature of the issue.

Communication Process for Decision-Making

To ensure that voices are heard, meeting agendas should be sent in advance (in emergency cases, no less than 72 hours and longer for regular cases) noting a “consensus” issue with brief description. This allows partners to plan their calendar accordingly. In the event that one is unable to attend, welcome their thinking and knowledge that may inform the group. Comments and information pertinent to the decision can be sent via email by a designated time (12 noon) of the meeting day. The Convener will have a structured process for presenting these comments. There is no “absentee voting”. One must be present to engage in the dialogue and information exchange to fully participate in decision making.

Step 4. Defer to the Executive/Steering/Advisory Committee

This 6-7 seat committee includes representatives from an Executive/Steering/Advisory Committee. [or we can take it to the Steering Committee which extends the voting to more individuals]. The process of consensus decision-making would have been exhausted when it is deferred to this Committee.

Use the following tools for support.

Decision-making Framework

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1a1dn9GrdMYvBli_oHi6cSoTy8o_khHPm

Sample One: The How Decision-making Matrix

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=15UYkSEFpwL1mCeMqTVmvkeWSBoqepVzR>

Sample Two: The Who Decision-making Matrix

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hNB2hAHCTrSrMeNbQIg8POt95Za-ycF>

Glossary of Terms

Before you work with a group during the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge, take some time to look over this online Glossary of key terms.

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Use this space to write down four of five key terms from the Glossary that you want to post on the wall of your discussion space or take turns sharing aloud around the discussion circle, for consideration of the group.

Key Terms for Our Meeting:

More of our Favorite Discussion Resources

Code Switch Listening Party Kit

http://interactioninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CodeSwitch_Listening_Party_Kit.pdf

On the Table Race Equity Host Toolkit

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jVGWWne-hJnDr1VpaDwql_4_zPhSHmbs

Race and Public Policy Discussion Guide

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jVGWWne-hJnDr1VpaDwql_4_zPhSHmbs

How to Build Your Tribe: Finding “Your People”

<http://www.marcandangel.com/2010/08/16/how-to-build-your-tribe-finding-your-people/>

Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist, Multicultural Institution

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1advu5N18kSKVIuzJqGJkT8YcKIziEc62>

Building Capacity and Cultivating Interdependence for Racial Justice

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1a9YlqSVorttJMYQyQ2o-p3uYmGZNqcyc>

Back Story: Food Solutions New England, Racial Equity & Why the Challenge

Food Solutions New England (FSNE) is a regional collaborative network organized to support the emergence and viability of a New England food system that is a driver of healthy food for all, racial equity, sustainable farming and fishing, and thriving communities. Food Solutions New England was launched in response to a shared sense that greater connection and trust was needed across food system efforts and innovations and began with our inaugural New England Food Summit in 2011. We have been working since then to develop deeper connectivity and alignment around a long-term food system vision built upon shared values of racial equity and food justice across the entire value chain and system, public health, and ecological integrity in New England. The FSNE network distinguishes itself from other regional food system efforts by actively cultivating thought leadership around vision and values in the regional food system and network leadership by connecting and aligning the region's nonprofit, philanthropic, private, and public sector actors focused on our food system. FSNE has been fortunate to have University of New Hampshire, Sustainability Institute as its steadfast champion and coordinating [backbone organization](#)

Why did FSNE commit to racial equity?

As a Network, we understood that to really achieve the transformation, the change in our food system that we were seeking - a food system that serves and feeds us all, we had to dig deep and examine, name and address the current reality of racial inequities in which our food system was conceived and still upon which it thrives.

Why the Challenge? Where did it come from?

Embodying one of our FSNE's core values, *Racial Equity and Dignity for All*-*"We believe that racism must be undone in order to achieve an equitable food system. Fairness, inclusiveness, and solidarity must guide our food future."* We wanted to build skill and will within our FSNE network.

We wanted to be better advocates, allies and accomplices and models of what it could look like to actively create an equitable food system that works for everyone. We wanted to work diligently and actively to create conditions where

we no longer are able or choose to predict or assign disparities of any kind--be it of health, wealth, education -- by one's race or ethnicity.

As recently as January 17, 2019, Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones, President of American Public Health Association and author of [A Gardener's Tale](#), spoke at an event at Washington University School of Medicine, echoing our thoughts by saying, "We need the tools to name racism, we need to continually ask how is racism operating here, and we need the tools to organize and strategize to act." [Dr. Jones told *The American*.]

Several years back, we sought a tool to support our journey and we found the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge co-created originally by Debby Irving (author of *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*), Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr. (founder of The Privilege Institute) and Dr. Marguerite Penick Parks (University of Wisconsin Oshkosh). We took the initial idea and, with the co-creators blessing, built an interactive program with daily email prompts, moderated online discussion, a launch webinar and, now, a group Discussion Guide.

We continue to add elements to engage and ignite participation, personal and organizational inquiry and to serve those who are seeking to do the hard work of shifting consciousness and behaviors, to build power to dismantle racism in all its forms.

Frederick Douglass wrote, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."



UNH Sustainability Institute



at the UNH Sustainability Institute
131 Main Street
Durham NH, USA 03824