

# CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

## FROM 2020 WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT

It can feel uncomfortable acknowledging the centuries of advantage awarded to white people and the extreme disadvantage put on people of color. These conversations take courage and vulnerability. If someone in your life displays prejudice, engaging them in a conversation could have a huge impact on their willingness to listen and critically think about a different perspective, especially if they already know and love you. Even if you don't have a personal relationship with the person, calling out racism when you see it sets the standard that white supremacy won't be tolerated.

When white people are raised in a system rooted in white supremacy, the work to reject privilege and practice anti-racist allyship is never finished. As you engage in conversations with others about anti-racism, it is important to continue your own evolution and work every day to check your own bias, stereotyping, and ways in which you enable those systems to persist.

Resource: <https://www.dosomething.org/us/articles/how-white-people-can-talk-to-each-other-about-disrupting-racism>

### PREPARE FOR THE CONVERSATION

- 1. Understand why white people should have conversations with one another.** A common misconception white people have when starting to learn about racism is that we should ask for help from non-white people of color and Black people, and look to them to explain racism to us. While it is very important to center the voices of BIPOC (which stands for “Black, Indigenous, and people of color) in our research and education processes (following BIPOC on social media, reading books, listening to podcasts, and watching videos created by BIPOC), it is equally as important to remove the educational burden and emotional labor from them. There are so many resources about anti-racism that exist, and having to explain what racism is and why it's important can often take an emotional toll on non-white people.
- 2. Think about why you want to have this conversation,** and how you might explain to the person you're talking to why it's important to you that they sit with you through this.
- 3. Choose who you want to talk to and how.** Consider starting with a family member, close friend, teacher or team member, and try to have your conversation face to face if you can (whether that's on Facetime, Zoom, or in person).
- 4. Establish goals for the conversation.** Think about what you want to leave the conversation with. You might have a tangible goal, like asking your conversation partner to make a donation, call elected officials, or sign a petition. Another goal could be getting a better understanding for how your conversation partner is responding to this moment. Either way, it is helpful to be clear about what you want to get out of this conversation.
- 5. Set expectations for yourself and your conversation partner.** Talking about racism is hard, and the first time you try it will likely be bumpy, but having this conversation is necessary, and starting the conversation is always better than not saying anything at all. Set the expectation that this is a first conversation, and that you will try again if it doesn't go the way you've planned. You might also set guidelines for the conversation to encourage respect. Some guidelines to consider are: one person talks at a time, ask questions if you don't understand something, assume good intentions and intent (meaning that you only say things in the conversation with an intent to build community and learn from one another).
- 6. Do your research** about what's happening in current events to prepare for common questions people have about police brutality, protests, and looting.

## HAVE THE CONVERSATION

**DO...** Start the conversation from a place of curiosity and care. Try framing your questions with sentences like “How might we...” or “I’d be curious to know...”

**DO...** Lead with “I” statements. Sharing your experience can help others understand their own experiences. Try something like “I have been feeling really overwhelmed by everything going on and at a loss for what to do. What is the news cycle bringing up for you?” Avoid telling your conversation partner how they should feel about what’s going on. If they say something that surprises you or makes you uncomfortable, try to work with them on understanding why they’re thinking that way, and provide context for a different point of view.

**DO...** Ask open ended questions. Try something like: “How have you been feeling about what is going on in the news right now?” or “What are some reactions you’ve had to the protests happening across the country?” or “How is the current news cycle making you think differently about your identity?”

**DON’T...** End the conversation at the first sign of discomfort. Expect for the conversation to be uncomfortable, and prepare for disagreement. Think about the difference between going outside of your comfort zone to the point where it is towards learning and growth and going into a place of fear where you are no longer growing.

**DO...** Talk about [common misconceptions about police brutality, protests](#), and [looting](#).

**DO...** Stay on topic. Your conversation partner may try to deflect your questions by turning the conversation to different topics like “Black-on-Black” crime or violence and looting. Those types of deflections take focus away from the root issues and what the recent protests are actually about: police brutality, systemic racism, and the fight for justice and equality for Black Americans. Try and steer the conversation back to these crucial issues. If you want to prepare for some common responses from white people when confronted with the topic of racism, check out “[What to Say When People Deny the Reality of What’s Happening Right Now: Part 1](#)” and [Part 2](#) from Anna Edwards on Instagram. You can also check out this article for a great overview of how to respond to questions about “[Black-on-Black](#)” crime.

**DON’T...** Think you have to do this alone. Bring resources and research, and feel free to start by reading an article together or watching a video to reflect on.

**DO...** Consider taking a pause and returning to the conversation at a different time if you feel like the conversation is moving more towards conflict and away from conversation. There’s a difference between a conversation that involves disagreement and discomfort, and one that makes you feel unsafe, unheard, or does not feel like it’s moving towards learning. Not everyone is ready to have this conversation, but planting the ideas is a great first start.

## TAKE ACTION

Having a conversation is an important start, but it is not the only thing you can or should do. Right now is a critical period in American history – we are living through the largest civil rights movement of our time. We all have a responsibility to commit to anti-racist direct action and build a sustained momentum to fight against systemic racism. Now, that you've started to have conversations with those around you, take the next steps toward change:

**1. Take a stand against racism and do the work to practice anti-racist allyship.**

When you see something, say something. Come out publicly as a practicing anti-racist accomplice, commit to action, share the actions you are taking publicly, and invite others to join you. Have uncomfortable conversations with friends, family and neighbors.

**2. [Register to vote](#), encourage your network to register, and vote in every election.**

Your vote and voice count. It is crucial that we mobilize our community to elect officials throughout all levels of government who are responsive to our demands for institutional change. So it's incredibly important to champion others to check their voter registration, vote early, and participate in mail-in voting to combat voter suppression and establish a truly representative democracy.

**3. Contact your [legislators](#)!**

Urge the Governor, Speaker of the House, and the Ohio Senate President to declare racism as a public health crisis and enact equity-centered policies throughout Ohio. Let your local elected officials know that you support criminal justice and institutional police reform and demand that CPD take the steps recommended by City Council and our other Coalition leaders.

**4. Educate yourself and others about our nation's racist history and advocate for inclusive educational reform.**

Seek out anti-racist resources about, for example, slave patrols, Jim Crow laws, redlining, medical apartheid, disenfranchisement, the prison industrial complex and school-to-prison pipeline – this list is just the tip of the racist iceberg! And don't put the educational burden and emotional labor on other people of color in your life – do the work yourself. YWCA Columbus will be recommending materials for increasing racial literacy on social media and [on our website](#) – so check it out!

**5. [Regularly support black-owned businesses in Central Ohio now and in the future](#) – and commit to practicing conscious consumerism, like boycotting companies that have investments in the prison industrial complex.**

**6. Advocate that your employers take a stand against racism and implement policies internally to combat bias.**

If your company put out a statement, find out what they are doing, not just saying. Are they backing it up with action? Hold them accountable!

**7. Help to raise funds for organizations**, like YWCA Columbus, doing racial justice work in our community or leverage your network to support financially if you cannot. Your network can take action by making a donation today or by attending our virtual Activists and Agitators event in the fall. Check out [ywcacolumbus.org](http://ywcacolumbus.org) to learn more.