

DIALOGUE — ON RACE — LOUISIANA

DOR Presentation and Dialogue Session

Participant Materials

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Orientation

Participant Information Needed Before the Session

The orientation is to prepare you for the dialogue and PowerPoint Presentation, US History of Race: a throughline of race from the country's founding until the present. This orientation describes what you can expect from the session. It describes the format, the facilitators' roles, your roles, and offers ground rules.

Please be prepared by reading the orientation and be ready to begin your session. We are looking forward to having your voice in the conversation.

The presentation is designed to clarify the entrenched idea in this country that the racial arrangement in our society is normal. It will help you unpack the narrative that began at the country's founding, where the decision was made to arrange its citizens in separate racial groups and backed by laws, policies, and practices to keep it in place. The racialized arrangement is still being practiced. The focus of the dialogue is to find out whether "we the people" want this system to continue.

- **Definitions and Distinctions & A Brief History of Race** – We begin giving clarity to the terms we will use throughout the series as well as a brief history of race and its link to building the country.

LOGISTICS AND ORIENTATION DETAILS

The orientation sets the tone for the dialogue, and this information will help you get the most from the session.

HOW THE DIALOGUE PROCESS WORKS

The session is timed. We start and end at the appointed time. This is to honor your time and to let you know what you can count on from us.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE DIALOGUE SESSION

To get the most out of the session:

- Review the assigned materials beforehand.
- Make notes so that when you get to the session, you will already be prepared to make comments on what stood out to you and what got your attention.

ROLES OF PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATORS

We would like to describe what is expected of you, as participants, and what you can expect from us, your facilitators.

What is Facilitation?

Facilitation is the verbal exploration of an issue in a shared space, marked by **openness**, **respect**, and **movement**. Talk is action, and in Dialogue on Race, participants are guided to discuss specific topics that pinpoint the impact of racism.

Participant's Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Actively and honestly participate in the discussions.
2. Demonstrate respect by listening attentively to others.
3. Remain open-minded and allow open discussion of experiences.

Facilitator's Responsibilities

The facilitator is a neutral, non-evaluative, non-judgmental process (not person) manager. The facilitator is neither the traditional chairperson nor the traditional decision-maker.

1. The facilitator never competes with the group members.
2. The facilitator helps the group break fixation by offering problem-solving strategies and making process comments.

3. The facilitator respects and defends the group members and their ideas from attack.
4. The facilitator does not permit anyone to be put on the spot.
5. The facilitator keeps the group focused on the task.

Now that we have defined our role as facilitators, when necessary, remind us of our responsibilities.

The ground rules are:

- Be honest.

Are there any ground rules you would like to add? If not now, you can always add them anytime during the series. Does everyone agree to these ground rules?

FORMAT OF THE SESSION

A key part of the format is the three topic areas. The topic areas are put in question form. We call them Topic Questions. They help guide the discussion in a way that leads to a more complete conversation than what is typical when talking about race. Too many conversations about race are reduced to debates, bull sessions, conversations that go in all directions, or conversations that do not go anywhere.

A description of the format and how it works:

Topic Question 1 looks at the information in each article/video and asks what stood out to you the most? In other words, what got your attention?

Topic Question 2 asks you where you recognize, have experienced, and/or observed instances of racism related to the specific session's topic that we are on that day.

Topic Question 3 focuses on what you would like to see done or changed, and what you can see yourself doing.

BENEFITS OF ORIENTATION

As facilitators, we work to help keep the conversation focused and move toward a more full and meaningful conversation. For that, we use a few tools that you may not see us using, but we want you to know what is going on. We use a timing sheet and give each other timing cues. This helps us distribute the time between the three topic areas in the format so that we can get to all three topic questions. We tell you this so that you can relax and focus on having a great conversation while we will do the rest.

These details are an important part of creating a space for open, honest, and brave conversation. We will do everything we can to make sure that is what you will experience.

Definitions and Distinctions

“In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak for me.”

- Martin Niemoeller

Materials:

1. [Participant Questions](#)
2. [Terms Necessary to Better Understand Institutional Racism](#)
3. [Race and the Power of Historical Honesty](#)

Participant Questions

Definitions and Distinctions

Topic Question 1:

Introduce yourself briefly and talk about your previous understanding of racism. How do you usually hear racism defined?

Topic Question 2:

What are some specific examples of racism you are aware of, based on the definition we have just provided?

Topic Question 3:

As you think about the need to eliminate racism, what are your thoughts about what you would like to see happen to end the caste system that ranks groups by color? What can you see yourself doing as part of the solution?

Terms Necessary to Better Understand Institutional Racism

Racial Prejudice

Racial prejudice is a preconceived judgment or opinion against an individual based on superficial appearances and assumptions. Anyone can be racially prejudiced. They can carry positive or negative stereotypes of others based on racial characteristics.

Words such as racism, prejudice, and stereotype are often used interchangeably. While definitions of these terms overlap, they actually mean different things. Racial prejudice typically arises from race-based stereotypes and have their dangers, but it is racism that has the power to determine the degree of institutional access a person has.

White Privilege

White privilege refers to historical and contemporary advantages that this group of citizens can count on daily: advantages in such thing as homeownership, retirement benefits, wealth, and so on. The biggest problem with white privilege is the invisibility it provides to those who benefit from it most. It is the invisibility that helps maintain the racial hierarchy in this country.

The definition is significant in that often those who are white see that people of color face disadvantage but seldom see that those disadvantages are what gives them exclusive privileges.

“If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one’s life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtue of their own.” Peggy McIntosh

Institutions

Institutions are organizations and establishments that run our society. They interconnected through their common task of helping our society to function.

Therefore, every government agency (local, state, or federal); every business or industry (large or small) is an institution; whether factory, office, or retail store. Within the communications industry, each newspaper, radio, TV station, magazine, or computer network is an institution. Every school and university, sports team and franchise, art gallery, dance studio, and thousands more groups are institutions. These institutions are necessary, and in a society that professes freedom and justice for all, it is reasonable to expect that these institutions will operate in a fair and equitable way.

Systemic/Institutional Racism

Even with the principle of freedom and justice, the United States appointed race categories for people based on their color. To ensure this system worked, a broad range of laws and policies were set in place for unequal distribution of resources. The power to carry out this set up was given to the institutions to keep the practice in place. It is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead, it has been a feature of the social, economic, and political systems in which we all exist. It is a system that reinforces and perpetuates racial group inequity.

It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. The setup of the race hierarchy began at the founding of the country and has become entrenched and still is a feature of the social, economic, and political systems today.

Poignant examples of institutional racism today can be found in school disciplinary policies in which students of color are punished at much higher rates than their white counterparts; in the criminal justice system; and within many employment sectors in which day-to-day operations, as well as hiring and firing practices can significantly disadvantage workers of color.

It is no longer legal to have barriers to keep those who are not white from accessing institutions, but racism still operates, and equity is not yet the established ground in the United States.

Racial Prejudice + Institutional Power = Institutional Racism

Individual Racism

People often say individuals are the problem and describe what individuals do to carry out racism. Someone can carry out their individual racial prejudice by face-to-face or covert actions toward an individual while in the position of representing a company or organization. When they take it upon themselves to use the power of an institution to carry out their racial prejudice, that is individual racism, and the institution is accountable. Many institutions include diversity programs to their workplaces as a preventive measure for such actions.

Diversity

Diversity has come to refer to the various backgrounds and races that comprise a community, nation, or other grouping. In many cases, the term diversity goes beyond acknowledging background and race and includes, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and so on. Diversity programs also work to include an appreciation of these differences. Diversity programs have their merits, but diversity programs alone cannot end racism.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to the social characteristics that people may have in common, such as language, religion, regional background, culture, foods, etc. Ethnicity is the traditions one follows, a person’s native language, and so on. Ethnicity is real, and everyone has a place and culture of origin, from the forced enslaved group to those who came to the U.S. during the immigration surge. Despite the variety of ethnicities and locations from which they came, groups that the U.S. did not consider to be white were assigned to specific racial groups based mostly on observable physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture and eye shape.

Racial Equity

Racial Equity refers to what a genuinely non-racist society would look like. This is when every United States citizen is assured full access to all rights and privileges, and barriers against color are removed.

Race and the Power of Historical Honesty

By Rick Swanson



Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3OAUe62fb8>

Honesty is important to any relationship, a friendship, a business partnership, a marriage, and even a community. Dr. Rick Swanson discusses the importance of historical honesty.

Rick Swanson earned a J.D. from Southern Illinois University School of Law in 1994 and then went on to earn a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Kentucky. In 2001, he joined the Department of Political Science at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette as their pre-law teacher and advisor. He is currently the department chair. Dr. Swanson has written a book, book chapters, journal articles, and encyclopedia entries involving law and politics, including civil rights history. His courses also include coverage of civil rights history, and his current research is on local civil rights history. This talk was given at a TEDx event using the TED conference format but independently organized by a local community.

Transcript:

I want you to think of your favorite photo of you with the people closest to you in your lives, this could be a picture of you and your family for you and your friends. Now, imagine one day all of

them tear you out of that photo. And for the rest of your life, they gather without you, share stories, reminisce, celebrate their achievements without you. They erase you from their memory. How would you feel hurt, confused, angry? Well, this is largely how the telling of history in cities all across the southern United States, including here, has treated African-Americans. At the start of this year, a friend of mine, a black woman, asked me to tell her local history to a leadership group, I was happy to help as a trained and experienced scholar. I thought it would be easy. Check out some books in the library and put together a presentation. How wrong I was.

I found a few key bits of information in books, but I discovered that most of our region's black history was hidden, scattered in countless pieces in library storage, government vaults, state archives, courthouses, and numerous digital databases. I felt like an archaeologist that was searching for long lost bits of treasure that had been buried in a key.

When I began presenting our region's black history publicly, I was surprised at how moved people were both black and white. I expected anger about the past, but I didn't expect shock and gratitude and tears from the audiences. White audience members said things like, I never learned this in school. I never saw this in any museum. I had no idea this happened. And from black audience members, I heard things like, thank you for telling my story. Thank you for helping my voice be heard. Once an older black woman stood up in the audience and told us how she was the first black student at her high school and then holding back tears, she also told us how she had not been invited to her school reunions for 50 years. Another time, an elderly black gentleman shook my hand and told me, thank you, you're the first honest white person I've ever met. This is how I learned firsthand the power of historical honesty. So what caused this history to be so hidden? Human nature to demonstrate. I want you to clap if you've ever told a morally embarrassing story about yourself, where you made your actions sound better than they actually were.

Yeah, me, too, you see, we often rewrite our past to make ourselves look better. And we do this collectively as well. It's called historical denial; a people invent a false history to hide an embarrassing fact about themselves. This happens all around the globe. And in the United States, we have a lost cause of the Confederacy.

Let me explain. At the start of the Civil War, Southern whites explained that the reason they were leaving the Union, forming the Confederacy, and fighting was to keep four million people enslaved based on their skin color. Out of thousands of quotes from Confederate leaders saying this, I'll read just one. Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens publicly declared the Negro is not equal to the white man, slavery, subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first in the history of the world based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth. And for more of Confederate's own words at the time, just read any Southern newspaper from eighteen sixty early, eighteen sixty-one. Yet even before the Civil War ended, Southern whites began erasing and rewriting their history to glorify their actions. They now begin to claim that they weren't fighting for slavery, but for liberty.

They themselves called this story the lost cause and narrative, and in the decades after the Civil War, the lost cause narrative expanded to include fictional accounts of the Reconstruction era and Jim Crow segregation.

By nineteen hundred, Southern governments had widely banned accurate history textbooks and required that schools teach only the fictional lost cause.

By the 1920s, Southern governments had widely built lost cause monuments. Films like Birth of a Nation actually made the Ku Klux Klan into heroes and the nineteen thirty-nine film Gone with the Wind romanticize the Confederacy. These and other such films spread the lost cause narrative everywhere. The lost cause was really lost truth. The lost cause narrative affected local beliefs as well. I've heard many myths about our region's history. I'm going to share just four of them with you, along with the matching facts.

Myth slaves were well treated in this area. Fact enslaved people lived under the constant fear of brutality local law required that if you tried to escape, you received twenty-five lashes of the whip and if you tried to resist, you could be killed. Agatha Babineau from Lafayette Parish and Gordon from St. Landry Parish told how their owners beat and whipped them and sometimes even rubbed salt in the wound. All this explains why when Union General Banks came through this region during the Civil War, thousands of enslaved people fled to his forces to be liberated.

Myth, there wasn't much slavery in our region.

Effect, according to the 1860 census, half the population of Lafayette Parish was in slave. Half of white households had slaves and an average of over eight slaves for slave owning household. And a majority of our entire region of south-central Louisiana was enslaved, even most non slave owning whites were heavily dependent on the slave based economy.

Myth after the Civil War, reconstruction locally was a non-violent white struggle against corrupt black government.

That reconstruction was an attempt to create racial equality in the south, but Southern whites blocked that effort through systematic anti-black terrorism, including dozens of murders and assassinations by our local area, chapters of the Knights of the White Camellia and the Whiteley's. Jim Crow segregation wasn't so bad around here. State imposed segregation was intense, pervasive, and systematic, besides extensive physical separation, there were extremely few options for blacks when it came to careers or education. They had no political say in all. This was enforced against them by violence when needed. And most cities in our region went even beyond this. Lafayette Parish had several lynching's. The city of Lafayette actually made interracial friendship a crime. And in nineteen twenty-three, the city passed an ordinance dictating only two areas of the city where blacks could live or own a business.

In short, in our region, south central Louisiana. Whites of all backgrounds, French, Spanish, English, German and others, severely oppressed black people. Yet the lost cause hid most of this history.

For example, The leading academic book on Lafayette Parish history was published in nineteen fifty-nine out of nearly three hundred pages, it contains only a six-page chapter on Black History. Just last month, I visited a museum in our region that had exhibits to local cotton and sugarcane production in the early eighteen hundreds. These industries were based on slave labor. Yet there was not one reference in these exhibits to slavery or anyone of African descent. A Confederate monument in St. Landry Parish was built in the nineteen twenties as part of the Lost Cause movement. This monument also happens to stand at the same location as the Appaloosas massacre committed by whites against blacks during reconstruction. It was one of the worst acts of domestic terrorism in U.S. history. Yet there is no memorial to the victims.

Indeed, we've had no problem remembering Confederate soldiers from our region for the last one hundred fifty years, yet there were also many black soldiers from our region that fought for the union, such as August Bernard from Lafayette Parish and someone we just met.

Gordon from St. Landry Parish.

Indeed, a monument in Washington, D.C., even honors our region's black union veterans by name, yet locally.

We've forgotten they even existed.

A mural created in the year 2010 showcases the major white ethnic groups that founded the city of New Iberia, absent from this mural are enslaved blacks, even though they were a third of the founding population and over 60 percent of that population. By 1860, the only portrayal of black people is a musical band located in a tiny section of the new. And this absence is even more profound in our official regional flag, which represents only French and Spanish heritage. This means that in our most common visible representation of our region's heritage, African heritage, a major part of our heritage is invisible. And far beyond questions of accuracy, these symbols have enormous meaning. Just like family portraits, they reveal who we value or do not value as members of our community. Now, our local historical accuracy is improving, but much of our region's history telling, as you can see, still treats African-Americans almost as if they've never existed here.

And really in our region, there is no such thing as black history or white history. There's only our history, a history of deeply interwoven interaction. And so historical accuracy means historical inclusiveness by telling our shared history in schools, museums, books, films, murals, monuments, and cultural tours.

Historical honesty is so vital because historical denial is so dangerous. Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it.

And historical denial makes extreme beliefs like white supremacy seem not so bad, especially when it falsely proclaims to promote racial harmony.

Just last year at a Lafayette City Council meeting, an older white gentleman defending our local Confederate monument claimed we've never had a race problem around here.

Historical denial also perpetuates discrimination. The Lost Cause narrative taught that enslaved blacks were happy and loyal, but free blacks were dumb, lazy, and untrustworthy. So even though slavery had ended, these beliefs led Southern whites to impose yet another hundred years of severe racial oppression. And this happened as recently as your parents or grandparents lives or perhaps your own life. It's not surprising then that we still suffering the lingering effects of this discrimination. As just one of many possible examples, remember that ordinance I mentioned that the city of Lafayette passed in nineteen twenty-three, segregating blacks to only two neighborhoods. That ordinance was a century ago, and we still see the same residential patterns today in racial maps of the city.

Historical denial also marginalizes people, it says you and your experience don't matter. This isn't just wrong, it's foolish because it hurts everyone. We can't come together to solve our common problems if our shared stories leave out many of us. And how can we move forward together if we can't even admit the past? Honesty is a critical foundation for any relationship, a friendship, business, partnership, or marriage. Likewise, to have racial unity, we must have racial honesty. Of course, we're not responsible for what our ancestors did, but we are responsible for what we do now and this marginalization I'm talking about is happening now. So ask yourself, how complete and accurate is your local history? And how can you improve that? Luckily, the answer is really simple, honest conversation. You could perhaps share what you learned today with at least two people and hopefully many more. If you see a local school, a museum is leaving out important history, ask that it be taught you could write an article or book filling in missing local history, but that's OK. That's too much. Just update the Wikipedia entry.

If you see a monument to racial oppression, ask your local officials that it be moved to a museum with a history of that oppression can be told so that it never happens again.

And if you see a symbol of your community that leaves out a major portion of your community, ask that that group be included in a simple insist that the invisible be made visible.

As a positive example, in nineteen ninety-nine, the University of Louisiana improved the historical accuracy of its official seal so that it now reflects our region's French. Spanish. And West African heritage.

Now, visibility is only the first step, but it is essential being seen is critical to mutual respect and dialogue. Yet on one, you if you tell accurate history, you may have your character attacked by historical deniers.

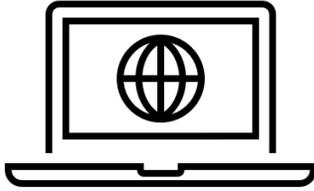
This has happened to me and others I know locally, and this intimidation often succeeds. I've spoken with local leaders, both white and black, who admit privately that the lost cause narrative is false, but they're afraid to say so publicly for fear of losing their jobs, their social status.

No one should be afraid to tell the truth, and it's important that the truth be told. So I'm giving this talk today. Let's end the dangerous lives of the lost cause of the Confederacy. Let's end the dangerous lies of any type of historical denial anywhere. We've adapted to lives, now let's adapt to truth. And we wouldn't be alone.

All around the world, numerous groups of people have admitted the truth about past wrongdoing committed by themselves or their ancestors in order to bring to bring reconciliation between themselves and the people that were hurt.

Let's join them in courageously embracing historical honesty. Along with what honesty brings empathy. Compassion, understanding, forgiveness and healing. If we all come together, we can restore everyone to our community portraits, what was torn apart can be made whole. And that's the power. That's the power of historical honesty.

What's Next?



Visit our [website](#) to [subscribe](#) to the newsletter and stay in the know!

Check out our [Eventbrite page](#) to register for future events.



The **DOR Original Series** is designed to offer a series of conversations that help participants unpack the confusion and misinformation around race.

We also host a **DOR Advanced Series, Advanced Beyond Series, Featured Topic Dialogues, Race in Conversations, Culture Club, Dialogue Happy Hours, and Facilitator Trainings**. These are all great opportunities to continue the conversation!



Remember to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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