

America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 01

Context Matters:
The Permanence Of Racism

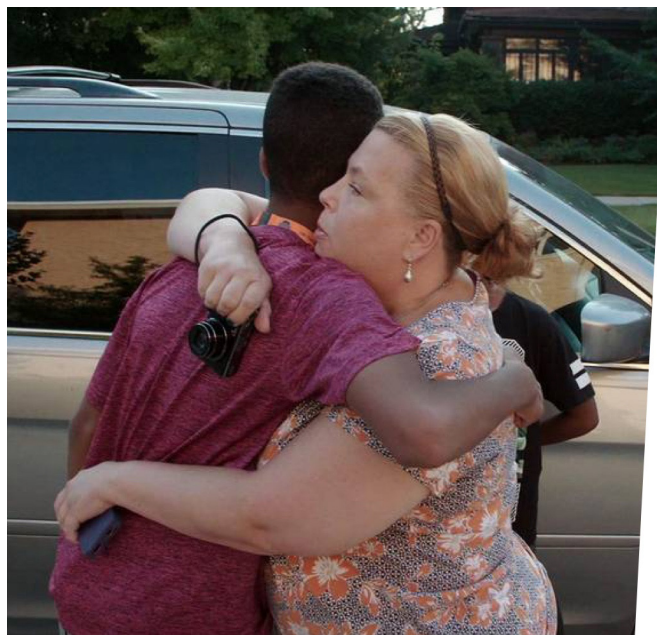
Episode Guide 01

TOPIC

Context Matters: The Permanence Of Racism

America to Me focuses on a year at Chicago's Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS), widely considered to be a safe, well-integrated, academically strong school. In Episode 1, we meet some of its students of color and their families, who have sacrificed to live in this popular district. Their stories begin to reveal the racial cracks and realities of the permanence of racism.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE



How is OPRFHS successful at valuing all of its students' racial and cultural identities, and where does it fall short?



What's the difference between desegregation and integration? Which has OPRFHS done well and what's the impact?



How is the racial divide reflected in students' lives at school and at home?

DESEGREGATION VS. INTEGRATION

“Desegregation” is the ending of racial segregation in America’s schools and military, following *Brown vs. Board of Education*. “Integration” involves more than just mixing together people of different races - it involves leveling barriers, creating equal opportunities regardless of race, and developing a culture that values diverse individuals and traditions.

REFLECT

- Think about the social life in your school or community: do people of similar races stick together or do they mix? If they stick together, why?
- Is it important for people who share the same racial identity to spend time together, apart from the larger collective? Why or why not?
- What's your racial context and how does it inform how you navigate the spaces you occupy and the work you do?

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☒ **Desegregation At Home** [1 hour]
If you're not familiar with it, review *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and research how your state / city / local community responded to it.

Places to look: Google your city's name + *Brown vs. Board of Education*, or city name + school desegregation.

- ☒ **Historical Timeline of Integration** [1 day]
Create a historical timeline of racial integration of your school, institution or community. Is there more work that needs to be done? What can you do with this data?

Places to look: Your school's admissions office, public records, libraries, Teaching Tolerance.

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe the racial demographics of a school (K-12) that you attended, and how you made decisions about which groups of students you befriended or spent time with. What did race have to do with your experience?



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EPISODE GUIDE 02

Living or Surviving:
Whose Humanity is Valued?

Episode Guide 02

TOPIC

Living or Surviving: Whose Humanity is Valued?

As we meet more students at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS), we start to see where the students of color are able to live as their authentic selves, and where they're just surviving. Extracurricular activities like Spoken Word Club offer safe, validating spaces for students like Charles and Chanti to explore their racial identities. Yet students like Ke'Shawn and Terrence are left searching.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- Where at OPRFHS do we see students of color just surviving and where do we see them living? Why are extracurricular activities like chorus, cheerleading, and spoken word so appealing to the school's students of color?
- Consider how Deanna (the cheerleading coach) and Jessica (the literature teacher) interact with their students of color. What's similar and different about their approaches?

- Teacher Jessica Stovall talks about her work being "life or death." Administrator Chala Holland talks about "surviving" versus "living." What distinctions are being made and why do you think Jessica and Chala use this language?

WHAT IS RACIAL IDENTITY?

Racial identity is a person's identification with a particular race that shares common characteristics with that person. Multiracial individuals identify as being a part of multiple racial groups.

REFLECT

- What's the racial makeup of your school, institution, and/or community? How does that shape your experience in that space?
- Where at your school, institution, or community do you see your racial identity represented and valued? Where do you not feel valued?
- At OPRFHS, it seems the teachers seeking change are women of color. How does your school, institution, or community value the voices of women of color?

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☒ **The ME in Media** [10 min.]
Reflect on your first memories in which you saw your racial identity and culture represented in books, television and film. How often do you see your racial and cultural identity represented in those forms of media? Take some time to share your experiences with a partner.
- ☒ **Spaces of Value** [1 day]
Investigate who at your school is responsible for ensuring that students of all races and cultures are affirmed and valued. If no one is currently responsible, who should be responsible, and who should be held accountable? Come up with examples of what this looks like when it's done well and when it's not done well.

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe a time in your educational experience when you felt racially valued or affirmed because of, or in relation to, your race.

- **What do you remember about the experience and what was the racial impact of the experience on your life?**



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EPISODE GUIDE 03

Racialized Relationships in Families
and Communities

Episode Guide 03

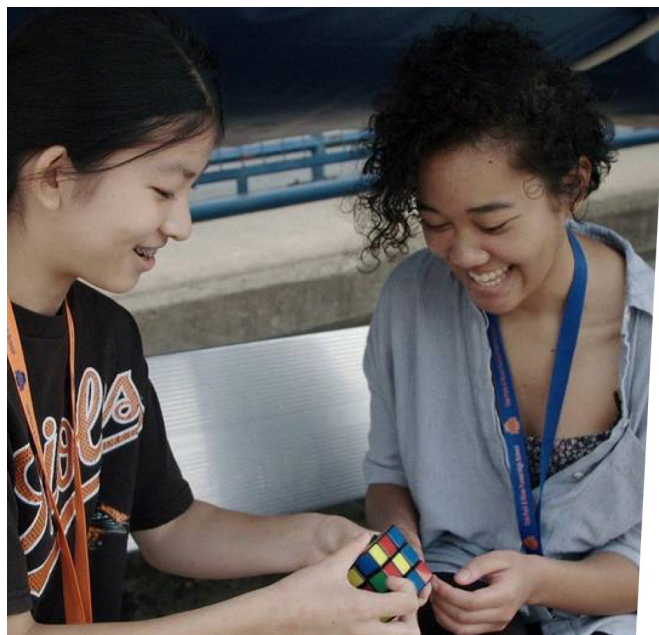
TOPIC

Racialized Relationships in Families and Communities

By Episode 3, the racial cracks at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS) are becoming more apparent, as are the complexities of Oak Park's racialized relationships. Terrence's relationship with his mother, Jada's and Charles's interactions with their physics teacher, and teacher Jessica Stovall's experiences with her family and work all illustrate the diversity of racial relationships and their power to impact identity, self-image, and success.

Organizing a Group Discussion?

Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- Where or how do we see the OPRFHS administration taking responsibility for building relationships with students, families, and faculty of color?
- How would you describe the racialized relationship between Jada and her physics teacher? Think of some specific examples from the episode.
- How do some of the other characters experience their family history in school?

WHAT IS INSTITUTIONALIZED OPPRESSION?

Institutionalized Oppression is a systemic mistreatment that occurs when established laws, customs and practices create inequities solely due to an individual's race.

REFLECT

- How does your family experience shape how you show up in conversations about race?
- Who are you comfortable having a discussion about race with and why? Who are you not comfortable speaking with about race and why?
- What messages did you receive about race from your family, and how do those messages conflict or align with the messages you receive(d) in school?

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☑ **Racial Identity Gallery Walk** [1 day]
Create a visual collage, drawing, or group of images of your family. Include things that reflect and are important to your racial identity. Do a gallery walk with your group to appreciate the diverse racial identities among you and within your families.
- ☑ **Fierce Conversations** [Workshop]
Prepare a dialogue with someone who has challenged you regarding race, using Fierce Conversations as your guide.

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Discuss one or more experiences with your family that shaped your racial identity and your understanding of who you are racially.

- Consider your family history and what you know about the racialized history of your family.
- Feel free to use this as an opportunity to engage with family members who can provide insight into the racial dynamics of your family.



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EPISODE GUIDE 04

Agency Among Different Racial Groups

Episode Guide 04

TOPIC

Agency Among Different Racial Groups

Episode 4 offers a vivid example of the impact of agency. When an individual feels a sense of agency - like Ke'Shawn in his theater class - they feel like they have control over their choices and actions, and the ability to advocate for themselves. Agency impacts our self-image, our sense of belonging and contribution, and our ability to succeed. So when Ke'Shawn's agency is taken away by school's security, it impacts much more than just his ability to participate.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE



Where is agency present in the student experience at OPRFHS and where is it absent? Where is it present and absent in the experiences of teachers and administrators of color?



How does race play out in the choices that students make and how they are defined (e.g. Kendale's trip to Disney vs. wrestling responsibilities, and his choice in the lunchroom about where he sits)?



What is it about Jessica Stovall's and Aaron Podolner's racial identity that prevents them from having an authentic conversation about race?

WHAT IS AGENCY?

Agency is the ability to feel empowered to take control of your own choices and actions, and advocate for yourself. Race can have a strong impact on a person's agency.

REFLECT

- How does race inform your sense of agency around your racial identity?
- How does your sense of agency shift depending on who you are or who you are with?
- Where in your school, institution, or community do you see agency around racial identity? Is it specific to only certain racial identities?

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Share an experience when someone else's perception of who you are racially differed from how you define or view yourself. How did that affect your sense of agency?

- If this has never happened to you, share an experience of when you had a perception of someone's racial identity that turned out to be different from how they themselves identified. How might that have affected their sense of agency?

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☑ **Finding Agency** [15 min.]
Make a list of the places where you find agency around your racial identity. Are there places where it's lacking? In the places where you find the most agency, are you creating agency for other racial groups?

- ☑ **The Mask You Wear** [1 hour]
Using a blank face mask or a piece of paper with holes for eyes, create a visual representation / mask of your identity. On the inside of the mask, represent who you are and how you self-define, including words, images, and phrases that describe your racial identity. On the front of the mask, create a representation of how the world perceives you, including words, images and phrases that describe how others perceive your racial identity. Consider how the two sides differ or look similar.



America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 05

Academic Expectations Based on Race

Episode Guide 05

TOPIC

Academic Expectations Based on Race

In Episode 5, we meet a new group of white students at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS), whose experiences contrast with those of the school's students of color. One key area of difference involves academic expectations - what is expected of the white students academically as opposed to the students of color, and the influence that those high or low expectations have on the students' placement (Honors Track, College Prep, etc.), teacher attention, student motivation, and academic success.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- Describe the racial demographics between the honors class and the reading class. What does that say about academic expectations, particularly based on race?
- How are academic expectations demonstrated differently between the reading teachers Emily and Paul, and physics teacher Aaron Podolner?
- What role do Caroline's & Terrance's families play in their academic expectations for them?

WHAT IS A BIAS?

A bias is a belief that some people, races, ideas, etc., are valued more than others; a prejudice for or against something.

REFLECT

- What experiences have you had with academic integration/segregation? What are the arguments for and against academic tracking?
- What happens when the topic of race and academic performance comes up in your school or community? If it doesn't, why not?
- Who has the power in your school or institution to decide an individual's level of access and success? What measurements are used?

ENGAGE

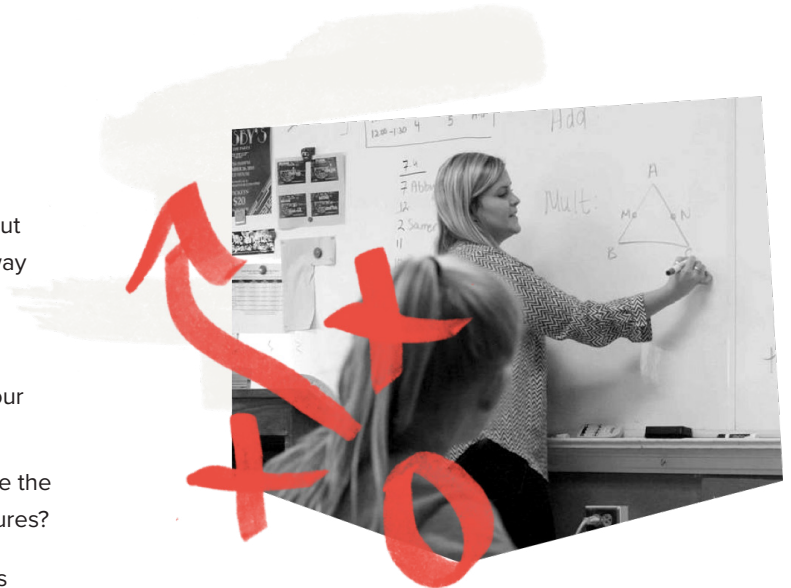
These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☑ **Implicit Bias Tests** [20 min.+]
Have your group or class take one or more of Harvard's Implicit Bias tests. Once everyone has finished, ask them to write what they learned about themselves and why they think they scored the way they did.
- ☑ **School Research** [1 hour]
Take a walk through your school or a school in your community and:
 - Note whose pictures are on the walls. What are the demographics most represented in those pictures?
 - Ask about the school's discipline policy. What's the racial breakdown of the students who find themselves in detention most often?
 - Interview at least two students of color and two white students about the school's academic expectations of them. Which tracks are they in and how do they feel about their placement?

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe your racial experience in classes during any part of your K-12 schooling.

- What was the racial makeup of your classes or the levels/tracks you were in?
- While you were in school, what was your racial understanding of the classes or tracks within your school? How has that understanding changed over time?
- What were the embedded (overt or covert) expectations of the spaces you described?



America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 06

Racial Identity Development

Episode Guide 06

TOPIC

Racial Identity Development

By spring semester in Episode 6, the students of color at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS) encounter a fresh set of opportunities and obstacles along their paths to developing their racial identities. Kendale achieves a big goal, while Tiara's dreams are dashed. Charles's voice is validated with a team victory, but Jada's attempt to express her voice through film is challenged for being too provocative.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- How is Jada's identity development impacted by the feedback on her film and the conversation she has with her teacher? Why does Jada feel she needs Veronica in her film?
- What did Grant learn about himself from his father's story?
- What do you learn from Charles's poem about his racial identity development?

WHAT IS RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT?

It's the process through which people explore and express their racial identities, and look for validation of their identities from society, family, and peers.

REFLECT

- Why are stories important and what can we learn from them about racial identity? What can we learn from a personal narrative?
- What have you learned about yourself while watching the stories of the students and teachers at OPRFHS? Has your perception of yourself or those around you changed?
- Why is racial identity development work in the classroom important?

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe a time when the personal racialized narrative or story of someone else challenged your racial understanding of yourself.

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☑ **Invisible Knapsack** [30 min.]
Ask your group to unpack their invisible knapsacks by comparing themselves and their lives against the 26 statements of Peggy McIntosh's "Invisible Knapsack."
- ☑ **Identities** [30 min.]
In small groups, name 3-5 pieces of your racial identity that you carry with you every day or brought with you today (e.g. physical features, material possessions, etc.). What do these things look like, feel like? Are they the same as yesterday? Will they be the same tomorrow?



America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 07

Whiteness

Episode Guide 07

TOPIC

Whiteness

In Episode 7, the students at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS) experience a series of thrilling victories (Kendale's overtime win and Charles's rise in spoken word) and crushing blows (Terrence's graduation news and Ke'Shawn's home situation). As they fight to achieve the "American dream," we begin to see the white cultural origins of that dream and how it impacts everyone's lives at OPRFHS.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- Where and how do you see whiteness showing up in OPRFHS, and how is it valued by the administration?
- What does it mean that Brendan's dad does not want to be referred to as white?
- Consider the ways that Caroline's mother and Thelma Dye's daughter experience Thelma's relationship to her own family and the family she worked for. What seems to be visible and invisible to Caroline's mother? What's the impact of the relationship on Thelma Dye's family?

WHAT IS WHITENESS?

Whiteness is a social construct based on White cultural norms (habits, practices and ways of being). These norms are valued and privileged as the standard that all individuals and institutions are expected to embody and aspire to.

REFLECT

- How did this episode broaden your perspective of the social construction of race in America?
- Ke'Shawn says that “people are confusing peace with quiet...” Who benefits from the quiet? Is your community quiet or vocal when it comes to issues of race? What does this show about your community? How can you create peace?
- How is race predictable in your school, community, neighborhood, and housing practices? Are there interventions? How are people interrupting those predictabilities?

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☒ **The Privilege Walk from Paul Kivel** [30 min.]
Read and guide your group through Paul Kivel's exercise on class and race.
- ☒ **BaFa' BaFa'** [2-4 hrs]
Read and guide your group through this face-to-face learning simulation designed to help people understand the impact of culture on our behaviors and the behaviors of organizations.

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe a time when you were quiet or vocal about a situation related to race. Explain why you chose to engage in the manner that you did and what race had to do with your decision.



America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 08

Code Switching: Managing Multiple
Racial Identities

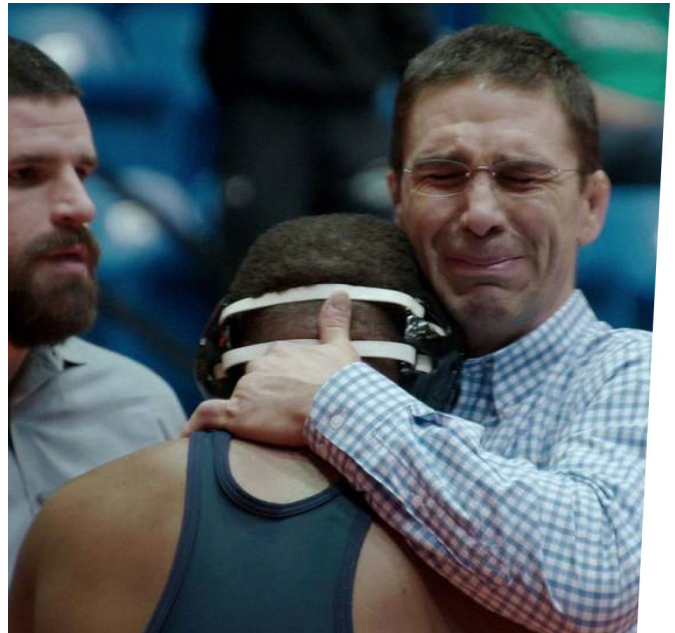
Episode Guide 08

TOPIC

Code Switching: Managing Multiple Racial Identities

Identities, both authentic and assumed, play a strong role in Episode 8, as we see the students, teachers, and families of Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS) navigating multiple identities and finding the need to code switch in order to fit in and achieve recognition at the school.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE



How are Chanti and Diane's experiences with race similar and different from each other? What makes Chanti and Diane's experiences unique?



How is the process of racial identity development complicated by mixed racial identities at OPRFHS? Where do we see the different students and faculty at OPRFHS trying to fit in or code switch?



Dave Bernthal references his "natural connection" with his AP students because they remind him of the type of student he was. How is his affinity for students like him impacting students of color?

WHAT IS RACIAL CODE SWITCHING?

Code switching is when a person of color consciously or unconsciously changes their speech, behaviors, or other traits in order to conform to / fit in with Eurocentric society.

REFLECT

- Where in your school, institution, or community do you see multiple racial identities being valued? What do those spaces look and feel like to you? Describe them.
- Who or what has had the most influence on your own racial identity development? How do you know?
- Who has agency and a voice in your community? How do you know this? How do you extend this access to all members of your community?

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe a time when you felt as though you had to show up, act, or engage a particular way that differed from who you are culturally and racially, in order to get access or be accepted within a space.

- **If this hasn't happened to you, describe why you think it hasn't.**

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☑ **A Day In The Life** [20 min.]
Create a hypothetical “day in the life” journal entry on what a day in your life would look like if you were to become society’s definition/expectation of your racial identity.
- ☑ **Engaging Multiple Perspectives** [1-3 hours]
Seek out and attend an event in your community that exposes you to voices and cultures that are different from your own. Be mindful of how it feels to be an “outsider” and whether or not you find yourself changing your own speech or behaviors.



America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 09

Racial Fatigue & Self-preservation

Episode Guide 09

TOPIC

Racial Fatigue & Self-preservation

By Episode 9, Chanti and Caroline experience fatigue as women of color, as does teacher Jessica Stovall as she continues to engage the administration in piloting an equity program that benefits all faculty and students. Both students of color like Tiara and white students like Brendan continue to spiral from emotional and physical fatigue as they navigate their experience at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS).

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- What are the barriers that the people of color at OPRFHS are facing? Who and what in the system are creating those barriers? Why are people of color most impacted?
- What is the impact of race on white students vs. students of color as they navigate OPRFHS?
- What moments of fatigue do you see play out with the adults and students?

WHAT IS RACIAL FATIGUE?

Studies have found that chronic exposure to racial discrimination can result in significantly higher rates of anxiety disorders, extreme physical fatigue, and other serious physical symptoms among people of color. Also known as “racial battle fatigue.”

REFLECT

- Do your school's administrators and teachers reflect the student demographics? Why is it important for schools to have administrators and teachers of color, and why isn't racial representation enough?
- Why do you think it's difficult to recruit and retain teachers of color?
- List some examples of racial fatigue that you've either experienced or witnessed. If you haven't experienced or witnessed any, why not?

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe what you learned about race as a student at school, and how it impacted your understanding of yourself, others, and/or the world?

- **Were you explicitly taught about race in school? At home? Within your community?**
- **Did you learn through racialized messaging or implied socially constructed meanings within school?**
- **Who or what taught you about race and how did it impact you?**

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☒ **Faculty Protection Policy** [30 min.]
Write a fictional policy that would protect, support, and empower teachers like Tyrone and OPRFHS's special education teachers, Anthony and Michael. How could you help to create an actual policy like that for your school or institution?
- ☒ **Racial Equity Policy** [1 hour]
Research if your school, institution, or community has a racial equity policy. If it has one, what is it? If not, what steps could you take to get the conversation going?



America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 10

Collective Responsibility

Episode Guide 10

TOPIC

Collective Responsibility

In the final episode of *America to Me*, we witness the resilience of the students and teachers of Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS) in their quest to find agency, racial identity validation, and community. Their stories demonstrate that individual steps towards equity are important, but it takes everyone working together to create long-lasting, systemic change. Transformation is a collective action that requires intentional commitment and involvement to make the necessary systemic changes. No one can opt out.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- How much value does the school place on the achievement of students of color?
- What were the disparities between the two award assemblies and how did those disparities show and reinforce inequities for students of color?
- Where did you see the teachers taking co-ownership of their students of colors' success?

WHAT IS COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION?

When teachers, administrators, staff, and members of the community work together systemically to ensure higher quality instruction in all classrooms and better results for all students.

REFLECT

- How do you take ownership in the spaces you are in to interrupt racism and inequity?
- In what ways do you see your community members engaging and disengaging from race discussions?
- What does strong leadership in the classroom and at the administrative level look like for white students and students of color?

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

After watching *America to Me*, describe your feelings, thoughts, strategies, and intended actions for achieving racial equity and achievement in schools and your community.

- **How has *America to Me* moved you to be a catalyst for change?**
- **How will you strategically move your classroom, institution, and/or community forward to have a better understanding and sense of urgency for change when it comes to racial equity and achievement?**

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- ☒ **Who Makes the Decisions?** [1 hour+]
It's critical for all institutions and communities to have people of color in decision-making roles, where everyone can collectively work together to address racial awareness, equity, and inclusion. Does a group like that exist in your school, institution, and/or community? If so, is there a role you could play within that group? If there isn't such a group, are there people of color you can support to create that group?

- ☒ **Who Keeps the Data?** [1 hour+]
Data is a powerful tool, but sometimes data around racial inequities is not collected, available, or shared with the people who seek to create equity. What kinds of data would be useful in dismantling the systemic barriers that people of color face in your school, institution, and community? Who are the keepers of that data in your spaces? Is that data accessible to you? If not, who is it accessible to?



America to me *real talk*

ORGANIZER GUIDE

Talking About Race, Identity
& Education



Organizer Guide

INTRODUCTION

Talking About Race, Identity & Education

Reflecting on Langston Hughes’s prophetic poem, “Let America Be America Again,” *America to Me* looks at the complexities of race, identity, privilege, and education through the eyes of a diverse group of young people.

This guide is designed to help you use *America to Me* as a catalyst for group discussions about race, racism, and racial equity in America today.

If you’re here, it means you believe in the promise of America and know we can do better. Thank you for playing a role in expanding and deepening this crucial dialogue.

We welcome you.



ORGANIZING A GROUP DISCUSSION

- ☒ Start with either a trained facilitator or a group organizer (e.g. teacher, administrator, family member, student) who can moderate the discussion using this guide.
- ☒ Schedule at least one hour for a group discussion, two hours if you’re watching the episode as a group.
- ☒ Look for a safe, inclusive space that’s wheelchair accessible, near public transportation, and that has media capabilities if you want to watch the episode as a group.
- ☒ Participants should watch at least one episode of *America to Me* before the discussion and be willing to follow the discussion guidelines.
- ☒ Ideal group size: 10 people or fewer. If your class or group is larger, break into smaller groups for discussion.
- ☒ Helpful handouts: Print-outs of the Langston Hughes poem “Let America Be America Again” and the discussion guidelines, paper and pens for the exercises.

PREPARING FOR DISCUSSION

To keep your discussion respectful and productive, here is a suggested set of guidelines that all participants should follow:

ORGANIZER GUIDELINES

Your role is to organize the gathering, read through all of the materials, kick off the conversation with the guidelines, and ensure that everyone follows them.

You have the same voice and authority as everyone else in the group. You are the group organizer, not the group leader.

Be prepared. These are sensitive topics, so it's crucial that you read this entire guide and the entire Episode Guide you'll be covering, including the resources under EXPAND.

Stay aware of who is speaking and who is not. Ensure that no one dominates the conversation, and welcome (but don't demand) input from quieter participants.

If someone violates a guideline, respectfully remind them of it.

If your conversation becomes a fight, quiet the group and ask everyone to spend two minutes silently writing down what they're feeling and thinking. Use your judgment to either move on to a different topic or share what everyone wrote.

GROUP GUIDELINES

Appreciate that everyone in the room has good intentions and also biases. Everyone is doing the best they can from their current state of awareness.

Speak for yourself ("I feel..." "I think..."), not on behalf of your identity ("we feel..." "we are...") or other identities ("they think..." "they act like...").

Listen to understand and not to respond. Take the time to process what you've heard.

Avoid negative judgments, language, and name calling.

Be open to feeling uncomfortable - all growth comes with some discomfort.

Understand that groups of a single race can have multiple perspectives and even the most diverse groups will have missing perspectives.

Stay engaged. Take a moment if you feel frustrated or misunderstood, but don't drop out.

Don't dominate the conversation. Everyone gets a chance to speak and be heard.

Don't expect resolution, complete agreement, or definite answers. This is a discussion, not a debate or a lesson.



Set the stage for a good discussion by welcoming everyone and arranging your group so everyone can see each other, ideally in a circle.

STARTING THE DISCUSSION

Introduce yourself and your role. Hand out print-outs of the discussion guidelines and (if using) the poem by Langston Hughes.

Read aloud the discussion guidelines and monitor the conversation to ensure everyone follows them.

Have each person introduce themselves by name and self identify their race, ethnicity, and gender pronouns.

Read aloud the definition of “Race” as it pertains to this discussion:

Race is a social construct based on perceptions of a person’s skin color, hair texture and other physical characteristics.

In the words of historian Nell Irvin Painter, “race is an idea, not a fact.” Race is different from a person’s nationality (e.g. Irish, Italian) and their ethnicity (e.g. Jewish, Latinx).

EXPANDING THE DISCUSSION

Read and familiarize yourself with the Langston Hughes poem, and ask everyone “What is America to you?”

Ask your group some of the Essential Questions About Race.

Pass out paper and pens. Ask everyone to put their anonymous questions about the series or other race-related topics in a box. Read them aloud for the group to discuss.

Introduce the Racial Autobiography (below) and encourage participants to think about their first entry.










Use the *America to Me* Episode Guides to frame your discussion.

WRAPPING UP THE DISCUSSION

When your time is up or you feel the discussion has reached a natural stopping point, thank everyone for their time and contributions.

Invite everyone to continue watching the series, thinking about what they heard, and engaging in conversations about race and racial equity.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT RACE

-  What is America to me?
-  Why do we need to talk about Race? Why does Race matter?
-  Which person from the episode / series strikes a chord with you and why?
-  Who benefits from an environment of equity and inclusion?
-  In what ways is Oak Park and River Forest High School a microcosm of communities around America?
-  Where have you found resources that are inclusive of many racial backgrounds?
-  How are experiences around race different for white people and people of color?
-  Why is it important to understand the cycle of oppression with regard to race?
-  Where and when in society do you see that the color of your skin is valued?
-  Who should be at the table to create communities of Equity and Inclusion? And who should be at the table to ensure systemic change? Are they the same people?

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY DEVELOPMENT AND JOURNALING

From Glenn E. Singleton's **COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION™**

Race is something that impacts all of our lives, whether we're conscious of it all of the time or not. Reflecting on your own racial journey is important for understanding your identity, your relationship with others, and your positioning in the world. An understanding of your personal journey with race can also lead to a heightening of your racial consciousness.

As you watch each episode of America to Me and engage with the Episode Guides, you'll see prompts to add entries into your own racial autobiography.

As you complete your journal, please describe your experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and, be mindful of what comes up for you as you engage.

Remember, race is personal and professional. It includes positive and negative experiences. Race is many things. Do not limit yourself in what you choose to share.

Before you watch the docu-series, start your journal with this entry:

STARTING YOUR RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

What was your earliest experience with race? What was your most recent experience with race? (These are called the “bookends” of your racial autobiography.)

GLOSSARY

For the purpose of this guide, we are using the following definitions for each term (in regards to race):

Agency

The ability to feel empowered to take control of your own choices and actions, and advocate for yourself. Race can have a strong impact on a person's agency.

Bias

The belief that some people, races, ideas, etc., are valued more than others; a prejudice for or against something.

Biracial

A person who self-identifies as having parents of two different races. Some individuals use the terms "biracial," and "multiracial" and "mixed race" interchangeably.

Code Switching (race)

When a person of color consciously or unconsciously changes their speech, behaviors, or other traits in order to conform to or fit in with Eurocentric society. Read NPR's "Five Reasons Why People Code-Switch."

Collective Responsibility (education)

Teachers, administrators, families, and members of the community work together systemically to ensure higher quality instruction in all classrooms and better results for all students.

Color blindness (race)

The idealistic notion that the solution to racial inequity is simply to treat people as equals, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. At best, this ideology naively ignores the complexities of systemic racism, whiteness, and the effects of centuries of racism and inequity. At worst, it is a form of racism and privilege. White people do not experience the disadvantage of racism and therefore can ignore racism, deny the negative experiences of people of color, and reject their cultural heritage and perspectives. Read "Colorblind Ideology is a Form of Racism"

Colorism

Prejudice and discrimination against individuals based on the darkness or lightness of their skin tone. This prejudice and discrimination can come from within or outside of the racial group. See "What's Colorism?" from Teaching Tolerance.

Competing Victimization

Tactics used to remove responsibility for behaviors that are centered around white privilege.

Desegregation

The ending of a federal policy of racial segregation in the school systems and military. The focus of the Civil Rights Movement before Brown vs. the Board of Education. See "BROWN V. BOARD: Timeline of School Integration in the U.S." from Teaching Tolerance.

Equity

Equity is learning and working to understand people's life experiences and how various structural and institutional practices have created barriers to all people living in a just, fair society. Equity prioritizes and focuses on the just and fair distribution of resources and access to eliminate barriers, so a person's full humanity can be realized and recognized. Equity is not the same as equality. Equality is treating everyone the same and attempts to promote fairness. Things can only be fair if everyone begins at the same starting point.

Eurocentric

Focusing on European culture and/or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world; implicitly regarding European culture as the gold or default standard which American society should adhere to. One example is American classrooms, which teach European history, but rarely African history outside of the slave trade.

Implicit Bias (aka social cognition)

Unconscious judgments or prejudices formed through our upbringings and exposure to certain societal values, the media, etc. See POV's "Implicit Bias: Peanut Butter, Jelly, and Racism."

Institutionalized/Systemic Racism

A systemic mistreatment that occurs when established laws, customs and practices create inequities solely due to an individual's race.

Integration

More than just the act of desegregation, integration involves leveling barriers, creating equal opportunities regardless of race, and developing a culture that values diverse people and traditions, rather than merely allowing a racially marginalized group into the mainstream white culture.

Internalized Oppression

A person who is victim to racism over a period of time who begins to believe that they are inferior and the problem. Eventually they will internalize these negative thoughts and exemplify the lies of inferiority and inadequacy. When they believe this they have internalized the oppression. Read "Yeah, But They're White" from Teaching Tolerance.

Multiracial

A person who self identifies as being a part of multiple racial groups. How a multiracial person self identifies may differ from how society or other racial groups perceive them. See "Multiracial in America" from the Pew Research Center.

Race

Race is a social construct based on perceptions of a person's skin color, hair texture and other physical characteristics. In the words of historian Nell Irvin Painter, "race is an idea, not a fact." Race is different from a person's nationality (e.g. German, Cuban) and their ethnicity (e.g. Jewish, Latinx).

Racial Identity

A person's identification with a particular race that shares common characteristics with that person. Multiracial individuals identify as being a part of multiple racial groups.

Racism

A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

White Privilege

Rights, immunities or social advantages afforded to those who are or are perceived to be racially white. White privilege is different than economic privilege. Read "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh.

White Supremacy (as it relates to race and power)

A belief that the white race is inherently superior to other races and that white people should have power over people of other races.

Whiteness (culture)

Whiteness is a social construct based on White cultural norms (habits, practices and ways of being). These norms are valued and privileged as the standard that all individuals and institutions are expected to embody. Whiteness as a "standard" is embedded in institutions and structures and is largely based on Eurocentric norms. Read "I Sometimes Don't Want to Be White Either" on Huffington Post / Read "Whiteness and White Identity Development" from Culture and Youth Studies.