

Kingston Reads: So You Want to Talk About Race
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Rough Draft Bar and Books, 82 John Street, Kingston, NY

Session #2 - Thursday, July 16, 2020 5 pm
Chapters 6 - 10

Reflection #1 (Chapter 6: Is police brutality really about race?)

The author writes that often, the conversation around police brutality against black and brown people is just a matter of “miscommunication.”

Oluo writes that it is discussed by the media and politicians as “If we could only come together, we’d see that we’re all good people.” But, after reading this chapter and learning more about implicit bias and the “power dynamic” that exists between police and people of color, do you think that the problem can be resolved through conversation?

What resonates with you after reading this chapter? How does it change or shift your view about police shootings when you read about the dynamic from the perspective of black and brown members of our community?

Reflection #2 (Chapter 7: How can I Talk About Affirmative Action?)

The author takes on 5 of the main arguments that have been made against affirmative action.

- 1) We don’t need affirmative action because society isn’t as racist or sexist as it used to be.
- 2) If an employer is racist or sexist, you can just sue them.
- 3) Affirmative action teaches people of color and women that they don’t have to work as hard as white men.
- 4) Affirmative action is unfair to white men because it causes them to lose opportunities to less qualified women and people of color.
- 5) Affirmative action doesn’t work.

Please reflect on your own beliefs about affirmative action. And then consider the author’s responses to each of these arguments. How does reading this chapter change/shift your view? And, if it doesn’t, why not? What data or logical argument could you bring to the table to support a view that opposes the author’s?

Reflection #3 (Chapter 8: What is the school-to-prison pipeline?)

The author suggests numerous ways to include addressing and confronting the school-to-prison pipeline in conversation.

Which of her suggestions (pp. 129-133) seem “doable” to you?

- 1) Talk to your schools and school boards (FYI, our Kingston chapter of Citizen Action has an education justice committee that meets regularly to talk about this very issue).
- 2) Recognize the achievements of black and brown children (everyday wins!!).
- 3) Normalize black and brown childhood.
- 4) Challenge language that stereotypes black and brown kids.
- 5) Discuss deeper causes of defiant and antisocial behavior in black and brown youth.
- 6) Don't erase disabled black and brown youth.
- 7) Challenge the legitimacy of white-centered education.

Reflection #4 (Chapter 9: Why can't I say the “N” word?)

What has your history been with the “N” word? When did you first hear it? From whom? Were you taught there were times you could use it? What do you think of the author's assertion that it's “completely fair” that people of color can use the “N” word and white people cannot?

Reflection #5 (Chapter 10: What is cultural appropriation?)

Oluo writes, “The problem of cultural appropriation is primarily linked to the power imbalance between the culture doing the appropriating and the culture being appropriated.”

Without that imbalance, she argues, “cultural appropriation becomes much less harmful.” If we are to be guided, as educators, by this concept, how might this change your perspective on projects that either you have assigned or that others have assigned?

This is complicated!! As Oluo writes: “And this is where the anxiety lies, because when you are trying not to appropriate a culture, but also trying to live in a diverse world, it can be hard to know what is or is not going to offend.”

What do you find difficult about the concept of cultural appropriation—if anything?