

# Defining | US

## PODCAST LEARNING COMPANION

Our podcast companions expand learning beyond the walls of schools and organizations by bringing crucial conversations to the leaders, educators and organizations that matter. Use this guide to promote critical reflection, deeper discussion and meaningful connections among adults and youth around the topics that are Defining US.

### VOICES OF CHANGE

*A Podcast with Stacey DeWitt*

#### INSIDE EPISODE 12:

#### "Talking About Race"

Join the conversation as Marybeth Gasman and Stacey DeWitt engage in a critical conversation about the importance of talking about race, even when it feels uncomfortable. Learn why White people need to be included in conversations about race and take the lead to find solutions to help heal the racial divide that separates us.

[DOWNLOAD THE TRANSCRIPT](#)



# MEET MARYBETH GASMAN

Marybeth Gasman is the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Endowed Chair in Education, a Distinguished Professor and the Associate Dean for Research in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. She also serves as the Executive Director of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Leadership, Equity and Justice and as the Executive Director of the Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions. Marybeth's areas of expertise include the history of American higher education, minority serving institutions (with an emphasis on Historically Black Colleges and Universities), racism and diversity, fundraising and philanthropy and higher education leadership. She is the author or editor of 30 books, including *Educating a Diverse Nation* (Harvard University Press, 2015 with Clif Conrad), *Envisioning Black Colleges* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), *Making Black Scientists* (Harvard University Press, 2019 with Thai-Huy Nguyen) and her newest book *Doing the Right Thing: How to End Systemic Racism in Faculty Hiring* (Princeton University, 2022). Marybeth has written over 250 peer-reviewed articles, scholarly essays and book chapters. She has penned over 450 opinion articles for the nation's newspapers and magazines and is ranked by Education Week as one of the most influential education scholars in the nation. Join Stacey DeWitt as she explores with Marybeth their respective roles in the work of disrupting inequities, challenges faced when doing so and why conscious conversations on race are critical to building a better future for everyone.



## LISTENING AND REFLECTING

Use this learning companion to dive deeper into the episode topic, with suggestions for asynchronous listening, engagement and experiences that offer opportunities for reflection, connection and commitment.

### WAYS TO LISTEN

Use the podcast transcript to increase engagement by following along and highlighting words, phrases, or concepts that stand out in the conversation. Take notes in the margin of reflections, connections and questions and consider these three methods for listening:

1. Open Listening - Listen to the podcast to simply notice and note the words, phrases and moments in the conversation that spark emotion and connections
2. Focused Listening - Listen to the podcast with a focus on the Moments that Matter using the time stamp and topics from the "Podcast Notes"
3. Reflective Listening - Listen to the podcast with a focus on critical self-reflection, using any or all the reflection questions below

# CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

## BEFORE YOU LISTEN:

1. What experiences have you had that connect to this topic?
2. What do you hope to learn from this episode?

## AS YOU LISTEN:

1. What were your experiences around race in school? Was your school racially diverse?
2. How were racially marginalized people discussed in your family and with close friends? How did that impact the way that you view racially marginalized people?
3. Is your current neighborhood or workplace racially diverse? How might this impact the way you view the world and interact with people from diverse racial backgrounds?
4. How are racially marginalized students centered or not centered in your school curricula? What opportunities currently exist for you to center racially marginalized identities in your curricula?

## AFTERWARDS:

1. What about this discussion resonated with you?
2. What questions or ideas would you like to explore further?
3. What conversations will you have, or immediate actions will you take, to create change in your own sphere of influence?

## EXPERIENCES THAT ELEVATE THE LEARNING

The following experiences are intended for use with leaders, educators, parents and those working in educational organizations. The purpose is to promote critical reflection, connection and commitment toward action. They should be used and adapted based on the individuals, group dynamics and organizational context of the learning.

## EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING

### Reflect on Important Moments in the Conversation

Use the timestamps within our [podcast notes](#) to find and re-listen to the most powerful moments in this episode, then write about your own perspective, experience and insights.

- How do your identity, experiences and knowledge influence your understanding of this topic?
- How does this topic connect with your current context?
- What are the implications to your practice?
- How will you continue the conversation in your school/community/organizations?

## CREATING AFFINITY GROUPS

Conversations about race can feel challenging for several reasons. Each person has different racial experiences and conversations about race that can bring up feelings of discomfort. Regardless, avoidance of the topic is not constructive. It is essential for us to find ways to acknowledge our feelings, move through the discomfort and lean into conversations that can lead to personal growth and transformation. It can be helpful to engage in conversations about race with people from your own racial background before you engage in conversations about race with people from different racial backgrounds. If you do not have affinity group spaces in your organization or setting now is a good time to create them. [Affinity Group](#) spaces can be built around shared identities, including race. Additional resources on forming Affinity Groups can be found [here](#). How often will you host your affinity group meetings? Will a monthly meeting feel adequate

or would it better to start by meeting more frequently, i.e., twice a month? It's important to have an affinity group facilitator who has received training to engage in conversations about race, racism and other forms of oppression. Community norms will be critical as you engage in this process. As you begin planning for your affinity group meetings consider the following:

- What do you believe about your own race and where did your beliefs derive?
- How have your beliefs about your own race been challenged?
- What do you believe about people from different racial groups and why?
- How have your beliefs about people from different racial groups been challenged?

## EXAMINING YOUR EXPERIENCES AROUND RACE

In this episode, Gasman reflects on the tension that she experienced due to her father's beliefs about race. Take a moment to reflect on your interactions with the people you are closest with and how their beliefs about race may have shaped your worldview. Spend 15-20 minutes thinking about one of your relationships. You might consider your relationship with a spouse or partner, a family member, close friend, or colleague. Now think about a specific instance where the topic of race or racism came up. Journal your memories about that moment. As a leader/educator/parent/stakeholder complete the following steps.

1. When did the instance occur and what was the outcome?
2. Who was present at the time and what role did they play in the conversation? Were they an active participant or were they a listener?
3. How did you participate in the conversation? As an active participant or as a listener?
4. Were comments made about race or racism that you did not agree with? If yes, what was your response to the comment? If you had that moment to do over, what would you change and why? What might you keep the same and why?
5. Re-read what you wrote and think about how you can be an advocate for change. What would you change about yourself to become an interrupter when it comes to comments that point to racial bias and/or stereotypes?

## MORE ON WINDOWS AND MIRRORS

In this conversation, there may have been ideas that resonate with you. These are called mirrors because they mirror our own experiential lens. Windows, on the other hand, provide learning opportunities and insights into the experiences and identities of others. After listening to the perspectives of the host and guest in this podcast, free write any mirrors or windows that came up for you.

# EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE BUILDING DEEPER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND THE LEARNING

## GO DEEPER WITH THE PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Select moments in the podcast to discuss in a group. Use a protocol such as the [Four A's](#) (School Reform Initiative, 2017) to independently highlight and consider what assumptions informed the conversation, what you agreed with, what you would argue with, what you aspire to act on. Then in partners or small groups discuss responses to the Four A's. In the whole group, select a few partners/groups to share insights from the conversation.

## GALLERY WALK POWERFUL MOMENTS IN THE CONVERSATION

A gallery walk is a great way to delve deeper into topics with large groups. Begin by writing the 4 categories/topics listed below on chart paper. Divide participants into 4 equal groups. Have each group relisten to their portion of the conversation, then chart important concepts, ideas, or questions for that portion of the podcast. After groups are finished, their charts should be displayed around the room. Participants should add, emphasize, or make connections with other groups' posters by adding phrases, words or symbols to the charts. As a whole group, reflect on the connections made around these powerful moments in the podcast:

- 1:40 An Entry Point into the Work
- 10:05 Why White People Need to be a Part of the Conversation on Race
- 16:25 The Power of Building Diverse Relationships
- 25:14 Looking to the Institutions that are Getting It Right

## EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE TAKING ACTION

### SUPPORTING YOUR COMMUNITY

Affinity groups can be a powerful tool to combat racial bias and stereotypes, but you will not be able to support the people in your community until you have done the deep work of excavation yourself (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). Continue to provide affinity group spaces in your community for your organization and for the larger community. Create affinity group spaces for the families and children in your community (affinity groups for children are suggested for 1st graders and up). Older children (upper middle school and high school aged children) should be able to take on more responsibility in facilitating affinity group conversations after having the opportunity to see a trusted and skilled adult model this for them over time. It is important to recognize that you cannot support your community in building affinity group spaces if you have not begun or continued the work of engaging in your own racial literacy development first. This is a mandatory step in the process and cannot be overlooked. You may want to have a discussion around a common book, film, TV show, TikTok video, Instagram or Twitter post, or article to get started. You can share the [Affinity Group](#) document with your community as you begin building your space.

## LOCATING THE HIDDEN FIGURES

In this podcast episode, Marybeth talked about her journey to wanting to know more about the dynamic between Black and White people. On her journey, Marybeth discovered a hidden figure, Charles Spurgeon Johnson, race relations expert and former president of Fisk University. There are numerous hidden figures located in our history, but they have not received the attention they deserve. Search for two to three hidden figures to learn more about Black history. Find out how each person shaped history and see if you can find additional hidden figures as you learn about each name listed below. Here are a few names that you can start with:

- [Ella Baker](#)
- [Septima Clark](#)
- [Charles Spurgeon Johnson](#)
- [A. Philip Randolph](#)
- [Fred Hampton](#)
- [Myles Horton](#)

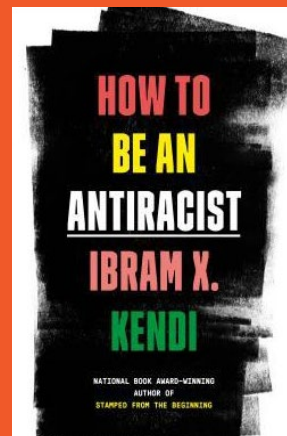
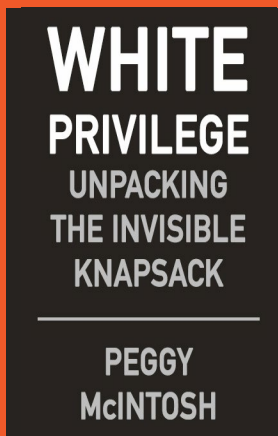
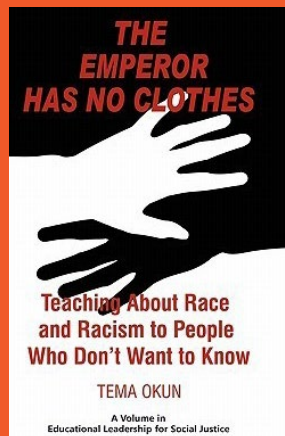
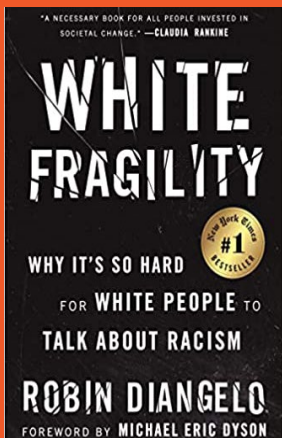
## FINDING YOUR LOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Tackling issues related to race, identity and education can feel overwhelming. Instead of focusing on the greater issues, narrow your focus to the things you can influence. In small groups, challenge participants to think of their own locus of control and generate ideas for things that they can change as individuals and as teams to support more equitable solutions for students. Perhaps it is having critical conversations about assumptions and biases with those who have opposing ideas, creating a common understanding around the importance of diversity, designing opportunities to honor the diversity present in your classroom/school, or challenging yourself to continue learning and reflecting on the topic. No action is too small if it is moving in the direction of growth. Encourage colleagues and others to choose one step they will take within their own locus of responsibility.

*Sources: School Reform Initiative, 2021; The resilience circle network (2012); Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2021). Racial Literacy. National Council of Teachers of English, p.1-8*



## INDEPENDENT READING AND BOOK CLUB RECOMMENDATIONS



## RELEVANT RESOURCES:

- [Ted Talk - Talking Justice- Using Words and Voice to Make Change](#)
- [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)
- [Ibram X. Kendi, Robin DiAngelo Discuss Racism in America](#)
- [Expanding Affinity Potential: Affinity Groups in Elementary, Middle, and Early Childhood Education](#)

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