So, You Want to Talk About Race

Discussion Prompts for Preface – Chapter 3

**Writing (optional)**: As I read the introduction to “So You Want to Talk about Race” I noticed that Ijeoma started this journey of activism by writing about her frustrations, heartbreaks and fears she has for her community and family as it pertains to race.

I would love for us to do the same thing. We will NOT be sharing with the group; this is just a personal journey you can choose to take. If you wish to discuss it with someone, I am all ears and would love to make time for a private zoom call. I think identifying problems and fears will make it easier to gauge growth. For those who choose to participate, we will write something in the beginning of this journey, and I will give a prompt to write something at the end. In your own time you can compare the two to see if you can identify action items to combat your fears and frustrations.

**Discussion Questions**:

1. On page 21, Ijeoma talks about how when it comes to social issues, we tend to advocate/ discuss only one faucet of the social issue. How can we work to make sure race is properly woven into a conversation (and other social issues don’t dominate the conversation)?
2. On page 22, Ijeoma discusses how we like to filter new information through our own experiences to see if it computes. If it matches up to what we have experienced, its valid. If it does not match up, it is not valid. What are tactics we can use to ensure that people of color or other races are heard? When they say, “It’s different for me because….” How can we make sure we do not dismiss others claims just because we don’t have a shared experience?
3. On pages 23-24, Ijeoma shares a story about a conversation she had on social media with a coworker. Her coworker had posted that all homeless people should need to take a drug test to receive welfare. As someone who grew up on welfare, Ijeoma felt offended. She stated that poor people should not have to prove how much they deserve to have a roof over their head or feed their children. As the discussion became heated, the coworker used language like, “people like you”, suggesting she would be judged on the conversation due to her race.

Social media can be a powerful tool. As we have seen recently, it can also be a platform for arguments on social and political issues. How can we use Ijeoma’s story to change the way we use our social platforms or the language we use on the platforms?

1. On pages 33-35, Ijeoma suggest dialogue to discuss with others if you hear them making racist comments. One example being on page 35, the paragraph about hearing someone say, “black people are always late”. Racist comments can come in a lot of shapes and sizes. Using the dialogue suggested in this section, what are other possible ways we can respectfully discuss what seem like microaggressions to others, but are truly aggressive comments?
2. In chapter 3, Ijeoma discusses 9 basic tips to increase your chances at a successful conversation when discussing race. Let us discuss those 9 tips and where we, personally, may need some work.

Discussion Questions Chapters 4-7

**Writing Prompt**: In the chapter “Why Am I Always Being Told to ‘Check My Privilege’,” Ijeoma lists off the ways that she has been privileged in her life. Each of us have been given a lot of advantages in our lives. It is important to determine where we are privileged to know where we can help others. For this prompt, please list the ways you have been privileged in your life. For examples on where to start, refer to page 65.

1. The chapter about privilege is placed right before the chapter about intersectionality. In interviews, Ijeoma has stated that she placed those chapters in that order because it is impossible to fully understand intersectionality without first comprehending privilege. How do the concepts discussed in the chapter “Why Am I Always Being Told to ‘Check my Privilege’?” help deepen your understanding of intersectionality and help implement intersectionality into your life?

2. In the chapter “Is Police Brutality Really About Race?”, Ijeoma connects several social issues with police brutality. By looking at the “big picture” as we discussed last week, how have history, poverty, job availability and community infrastructure all contributed to police brutality and the cities it occurs most in? Would you consider this continued systematic racism, community/state issues or a lack of education on all fronts?

3. In the chapter about affirmative action, Ijeoma explains how affirmative action can and has helped minorities be better represented in the education system and the workforce. Today, it is not enforced and schools of higher education that still use it, use it voluntary. How could reintroducing affirmative action affect minorities today? Is this something you think many businesses voluntarily do today?

Discussion Questions Chapters 8-11

**Writing Prompt:**

We have all heard derogatory terms and slurs throughout our lives. For this writing prompt, I would like you to write down every racial term, name or saying you've heard in your lifetime. Then, reflect. Ask yourself if you have ever used these terms. Have you ever unknowingly or knowingly suggested them? How can you work toward removing these slurs that subtly signify race? Examples that Ijeoma uses in the book are nappy, ghetto, uppity and thug.

**Discussion Questions**

1.In the chapter "What is the School-to-Prison Pipeline?" Ijeoma discusses how the education system is failing children of color. She also gives ideas and examples of how we can use our privilege to get involved and help stop this system. How do other concepts and systems we've learned and discussed in this book play into the school-to-prison pipeline?

2. How do racial slurs and words that subtly signify race keep building and empowering ghettoization, poverty, police brutality and everyday discrimination? What can we do to combat normalized slurs in our conversations with others?

3. How can we ensure we are appreciating other cultures and not appropriating? What things can we change? What things can we do to show support and appreciation?

Discussion Questions Chapters 12-14

**Writing Prompt:**

After reading the chapter about microaggressions, think back to a time when you have heard someone or you yourself have said something that could be classified as a microaggression. Write down the situation, note the body language and reaction of the person receiving the aggression. After recreating a time when you heard/participated in a microaggression, write down a scenario in which you used what you have learned in this book to handle that situation differently.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. In the chapter "What are microaggressions?", Ijeoma indicates that microaggressions play into larger issues. What larger issues can come from normalizing microaggressions? How do microaggressions play a role in systemic and systematic racism?
2. In the chapter about "Why are out students so angry?", Ijeoma shares an experience she had with her 8-year-old son and how she supported her son and his decision to opt out of the pledge of allegiance. She also states later in the book that she knows that she won't always agree with her children's choices in how they approach activism. How can we as adults/parents show our children it's important to stand up for what they believe in even if we don't agree with them? How can we guide them toward information without swaying their views?
3. In the chapter "What is the model minority myth?", Ijeoma shares how Asian Americans are held to a higher standard academically and in certain industries due to the model minority myth. How can a seemingly positive bias be so harmful when logically it should be helpful?

Discussion Questions Chapters 15-17

**Writing Prompt:** Think back to how you felt prior to reading this book. What were your fears, frustrations, and concerns regarding racial injustice? What are your fears, frustrations, and concerns regarding race now that you’ve read this book? Have you been given the tools to combat those?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. In the chapter, “What if I hate Al Sharpton?”, Ijeoma discusses tone policing. What is tone policing and why is it so important that we stop ourselves from doing it? What burdens of “respectability” and “tone” do you see placed on different populations of color in our society?
2. In the chapter, “I just got called racist, what do I do now?” Ijeoma discusses the difference in handling being called a racist if you want to look like you’re a good person or if you want to be a better person. What are some things Ijeoma tells us we can do if we want to be better instead of just looking like we want to be better? (Page 220)
3. In the final chapter, “Talking is Great, but What Else Can I Do?” Ijeoma discusses some actions you can take to battle systematic racism using the knowledge you’ve gained from this book and from your conversations on race. What are some actions you can take in your community, your schools, your workplace, and your local government? What are some local anti-racism efforts in your community that you can join or support?