



## Principles and Assumptions Underlying a Conversation on Race

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1. Humans exist in and for relationship. Our “calling” as humans is to be in proper relationship with each other and with all of creation. This involves mutual responsibility and accountability toward each other’s well-being.
2. A Sacred Conversation on Race must be explicit about the vocation of each person in the Circle to realize his and her call to relationship. The work of the Circle is to discern what it means to be in relationship and what it is about racism that destroys our will and capacity for relationship.
3. Our consumption-driven society seeks to create false, artificial desire directing us toward individualism and materialism as though it were there that humans meet their desire for joy and fulfillment. Our assumption is that human fulfillment and joy are found in relationship and community, found in completing our well-being in seeking the well-being of others. We believe that relationship and community are basic requirements for human well-being.
4. Racism is a denial of relationship. Racism was designed and is perpetuated to separate us from each other by denying, in the most profound ways possible, that we are related to each other.
5. Racism is not the only form that denial of relationship takes. We see it connected to other forms of social oppression and, with Martin Luther King, Jr., we see “the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war [as] all tied together.” They are “triple evils that are interrelated” (MLK 1967, “Where Do We Go From Here?”). Thus, to seriously address racism means to seriously address other forms of social injustice in society.
6. People who understand that racism is rooted in a 400 year old system of economic exploitation, and that it was constructed, rationalized, and legitimized for economic gain, are less likely to see it as innate to humans and, therefore, inevitable. Racism was socially constructed, therefore, not given in “nature”.
7. A Sacred Conversation on Race represents an effort to articulate our human “vocation to relationship” in the context of U.S. racism, to bring people into dialogue about personal and institutional racism, and to help them create and sustain a community committed to personal and social transformation.
8. A serious and sustained conversation on race through such as through a structured Study Circle (e.g., ASDIC Antiracism Study-Dialogue Circle®) can lead the Circle participants to desire to reach into the chasm created by racism, to examine its nature and mold of construction, and to find a way to connect across the chasm to create community. In the process of study-dialogue they also come to ask in what ways they are implicated in racism through the norms, social patterns, and cultural values that structure their understandings and everyday lives, and they come to ask what specifically they can do to address manifestations of racism in their lives, relationships, and the institutions they uphold or benefit from.

9. Knowledge alone does not create change. Enduring change occurs through relationships with others.

10. Through a sustained Study-Dialogue on race, Circle conversational partners, having created relationships and community amidst the racism that divides us, begin building these same types of relationships and community in the other parts of their lives.

11. To create such relationships and community, people continue to dismantle the interpersonal dynamics of racism and challenge the structures of domination in which racism is anchored. As each person changes, that person also begins to change the patterns of all the relationships of which they are part, making each of those relationships more antiracist. This includes the institutions of which they are a part. Beyond this, structures of domination must be directly addressed through social and political action.

12. People who are living out such relationships and community stand together firmly against

institutional and systemic racism, because systemic racism (defined below) denies the relationships and destroys the community in which they live. Effective resistance to the social forces that deny and destroy relationship requires the formation of coalitions across racial groups.

13. The struggle to eliminate racism is a long term struggle requiring community to sustain it.

14. Joy and fulfillment are found and sustained in the midst of struggle and in the context of a here-and-now *beloved community*.

15. Experience from participating in a sustained conversation on race creates the conditions for trust and truth telling, the courage to challenge, a sense of solidarity grounded in a common vision, and a context for a *beloved community*.

16. In this way, a Study-Dialogue Circle may be a catalyst for people to move into the transformative work of social change.