

# Courageous Conversations Quick Overview

From the work of Singleton and Linton

**Note:** *This is in no way intended as a complete guide for Courageous Conversations, but rather a quick overview of a few key details with the purpose of prompting deeper examination of the full context and protocol presented in the book.*

Source: Singleton, Glenn E., Linton, Curtis. (2006) *Courageous conversations about race: a field guide for achieving equity in schools* Thousand Oaks, Calif. : Corwin Press,

## Some Common Language Used to Frame Conversation:

**Passion:** *"The level of connectedness educators bring to racial equity work and to the district, school, or classroom equity transformation (p.14)."*

**Practice:** *"The essential individual and institutional actions taken to effectively educate every student to his, her, [their] full potential (p.14)"*

**Persistence:** *Patience + Urgency, "Willingness of a school system to stick with it despite how slow results, political pressure, new ideas, and systemic inertia or resistance to change."*

**Race:** *"The socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes, including but not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structure (p.50)."*

**Racism:** *"Conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional enactment of racial power, grounded in racial prejudice, by an individual or group against another individual or group perceived to have lower racial status (p.*

**Institutionalized Racism:** *"Prejudice connected with the power to protect the interests of the discriminating racial group," Allowing "negative assumptions to persist unchallenged by those having positional power (p52)."*

**White Privilege:** *"Refers to the advantages that White people receive simply by virtue of their appearance." "The more melanin a person has, the less privilege or racial advantage he or she [or they] receive. (p.188)."*

**Whiteism:** *"Not recognizing White as a dominating color, nor recognizing the unearned power and privileges associated with having white skin and having a sense of (White) entitlement but lacking awareness of the experiences and perspectives of non-White-skinned people (p 197)."*

**Degree of Racial Consciousness:** *"The percentage at which we believe that race impacts our lives. (p.92)."*

## Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations

Parkrose Equity Team Agreements	Courageous Conversation Agreements	Reflection Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Stay engaged</li> <li>★ Experience discomfort</li> <li>★ Speak your truth</li> <li>★ Expect and accept non-closure</li> <li>★ Embrace the 'why'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <b>Stay engaged</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Remain “morally, emotionally, intellectually, and relationally involved in the dialogue. Don’t let your heart “heart and mind ‘check out’ of the conversation while leaving your body seated at the table (p.71).”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>Think of a time when race became a topic and you actively disengaged or avoided? What do you believe caused you to react in this way?</i></p> <p><i>How did it impact the conversation?</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <b>Speak your truth</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Be absolutely honest about your thoughts, feelings, and opinions and not just saying what you perceive others want to hear (p.72.).”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>Think of a time when race was a topic and you became silent or shared something that was less than your truest feelings in fear of how others might think or respond to you?</i></p> <p><i>What emotions prevent you from speaking your truth?</i></p> <p><i>What conditions help you speak your truth?</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <b>Experience discomfort</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Agree to experience discomfort so that they can deal with the reality of race and racism in an honest and forthright way (p. 74).”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>Think of a time where race was a topic and you experienced discomfort. What did you notice (what is racially happening)? How does what I am noticing cause me to feel? What personal meaning does that which I am feeling offer?</i></p> <p><i>Did you work through this</i></p>

		<i>discomfort? Or was it left unresolved?</i>
	<p>★ <b>Expect and accept non-closure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recognize that you may not reach closure in your understanding or interactions. We cannot simply search for solutions, but rather need an ongoing dialogue. There is no quick fix. "We cannot discover a solution to a challenge if we have not been able to talk, specifically and intentionally about that challenge (p. 75)."</li> </ul>	<i>Why is it necessary to expect and accept non-closure when dealing with race?</i>

## Six Conditions of a Courageous Conversation

### Condition 1-Focus on the Personal, Local, and Immediate

Looking at our personal, local, and immediate circumstances related to race.

- *How consciously aware of race are you? When did you become aware of race?*
- *What is your own racial autobiography?*
- *What events, conversations, experiences related to race have shaped your lens and perspectives?*
- *To what degree does race impact your life? Emotionally, relationally, intellectually, morally? Personally, locally, immediately?*

### Condition 2- Keep the Spotlight on Race

Critical need to focus and address race explicitly and intentionally (not shifting focus to internal or external factors such as families, poverty, community values, language, mobility, etc.)

- *Why is it important to isolate race, rather than avoid it or talk about it in conjunction with other diversity issue?*
- *What messages does media send about Black and White? Who benefits/suffers from these representations?*
- *What racial beliefs are operational in our school or school system?*

### Condition 3- Engage Multiple Racial Perspectives

"Normalize social construction of knowledge (p. 115)." Racial meaning is passed from generation to generation. We must be willing to listen and engage with others who have different

or contrasting racial perspectives or experiences, thus validating ALL racial expressions and experiences.

- *Can you think of a time when someone you knew did something that you viewed to be racially unjust, but they viewed it differently? What personal or historical contexts might have influenced each point of view?*
- *Where do you see the White racial point of view dominating in our schools?*
- *How does the ability to truly listen with the intent to hear, not respond, impact this condition?*
- *What conditions make you feel like your perspective is valued?*
- *How can we fully honor multiple viewpoints?*

#### **Condition 4-Keep Us All at the Table**

Examine intentionally and consciously who is engaging and how they are engaging, and from where they are within the compass. Allow time for discussion, listening, and reflecting. Use the compass (see below) to check in throughout. Be aware of the space you take up in the conversation.

- *Describe your own communication style. How does your typical communication style change when race is the topic or when in an interracial professional setting?*
- *In your experience, what takes place when you engage in interracial discussions about race or racism. What has made the conversations successful or unsuccessful?*
- *What conditions help you be truly seen and heard?,*
- *What are the parameters of your conversations-who speaks, on what, for how long, who is not speaking or listening? Who are the people at the table? How time allocated equitably? How are non-traditional forms of communication encouraged and valued? What ways are offered for reflection?*
- *In your own conversations with colleagues and students who are racially different than you, to what extent have your discussions been limited because of your differing points of view? How could the compass help you clarify your position?*

#### **Condition Five-Establish a working definition of race**

Agree on a definition of race that is separate from ethnicity and nationality, developed with a clear understanding of both historical and contemporary racial contexts.

- *What personal, historical, or contemporary racial experiences influence your definition of race?*
- *What evidence is present in our schools that suggests that the history of race still impacts policies, programs, and practices?*
- *What stories are present in the contemporary media that challenge or reinforce your beliefs about race and racial identity?*
- *Consider the Three Cs of Identify-Corner (citizenship), Culture (ethnicity), and Color (race)-what are your own personal three C's? What national, ethnic, or racial diversity exists within your circle of friends, family, or colleagues?*

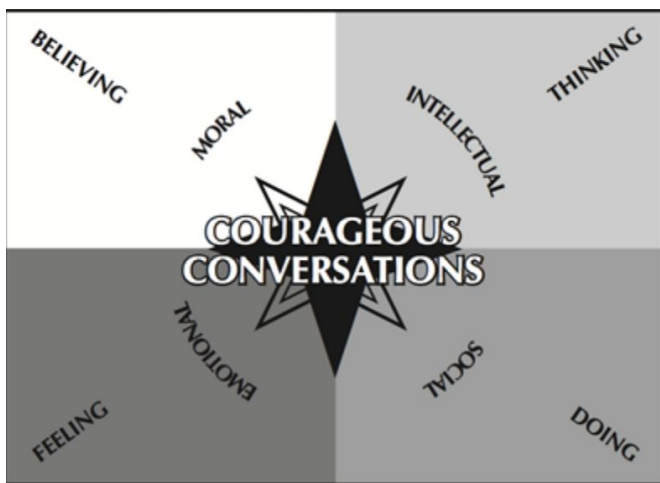
#### **Condition Six-Examine the presence and role of Whiteness**

Explore White as a color, culture, and consciousness and its impact

- *What does it mean to be White? What are the characteristics of Whiteness?*
- *How is your life impacted by Whiteness?*
- *How does White privilege impact you personally? How does it impact our students?*
- *Substitute White, Whiteness, and Whiteism for all references to race and re-examine the previous five conditions. How does doing this help you better understand the importance of conditions six?*

## Courageous Conversation Compass (p. 144)

Helps participants understand from where they personally and where others contributions to the conversations are coming from as well.



### **MORAL-Believing, Soul**

Deep seated belief related to information or an event, related to the “rightness”and “wrongness” of an issue. “Gut feeling.” Often not able to be verbally articulated.

### **INTELLECTUAL-Thinking, Head**

Personal disconnect from the subject or issue. Searching for additional information or data. Often verbally articulated.

### **EMOTIONAL-Feeling, Heart**

Responding to the issue or information through feelings. Causing an internal sensation-anger, sadness, joy, embarrassment-at a physical level.

### **SOCIAL or RELATIONAL-Acting, Hands and Feet**

Acting in response to the issue or information, specific behaviors and actions.