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"An unusually sensitive work about the racial barriers that still divide us in so many areas of life." —Jonathan Kozol

WHY ARE ALL THE BLACK KIDS SITTING TOGETHER IN THE CAFETERIA?

And Other Conversations About Race

Revised and Updated

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD

Book Group Discussion Guide

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20th Anniversary Edition (Basic Books, 2017)

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General Guidelines for Productive Discussions

This book is intended to encourage conversations about race and racism in the context of the United States. Readers outside of the United States may also find the ideas useful and relevant, but all should be aware that it has been written with specific reference to racial dynamics in the U.S. As is discussed at length in the book, many people find race-related conversations difficult to have, particularly in racially-mixed settings. Yet whether in same-race or mixed-race groups, gathering with other people to discuss the ideas in this book is a useful way to get started! This discussion guide provides reflection questions for each chapter, including the Prologue, Introduction and Epilogue. There are lots of topics contained in the book that readers may wish to talk about that are not highlighted in the reflection questions. Don't let that limit your dialogue. The reflection questions are only meant to be conversation starters!

Here are some discussion guidelines that book group members may find helpful:

SHARE THE AIR TIME. Everyone's participation should be encouraged. Monitor your own participation level. If you are someone who often speaks up, be sure you are also allowing opportunities for others to participate. If you are someone who is hesitant to speak in groups, use this opportunity to stretch yourself some.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT. Share the ideas from the conversations with your friends and acquaintances, but personal statements and experiences should remain confidential. Don't share someone else's story without their permission.

MUTUAL RESPECT IS IMPORTANT. Diverse perspectives are to be expected. When necessary, we can agree to disagree, and do so in a mutually respectful way. We are all "works in progress." No one knows everything. We all need to listen carefully to each other and recognize that each of us has something to learn from others.

SPEAK FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE. When talking about difficult topics, it's easy to slip into a pattern of talking about what "others" think. Try to avoid that. Use "I" statements.

IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION, ASK IT!

Prologue

1. In the prologue to the 2017 edition of *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and Other Conversations About Race,* the author identifies several changes/trends that have taken place over the 20-year period from 1997 (when the first edition of the book was published) to 2017. One of those changes is the population shift in the United States. The 2014 school year marked the first time in US history that the majority of school age children were children of color – Latinx, Black, Asian, American Indian or multiracial. Yet, despite the growing national diversity, old patterns of segregation persist in many neighborhoods and schools.

Reflection: What was the demographic makeup of the neighborhood where you grew up? Where you live now? What was the population of the schools you attended growing up? Is it the same or different from the schools in your community now? What role has the segregation of housing and/or schools played in your life?

2. A national poll conducted by PRRI in 2013 found that most White American adults (75%) have social networks (e.g., friends, neighbors, co-workers) that are entirely White, without the presence of any people of color. Robert P. Jones, the CEO of PRRI, concluded, "The chief obstacle to having an intelligent, or even intelligible, conversation across the racial divide is that on average white Americans…talk mostly to other white people." (p.45)

Reflection: Who is in your social network? At home? At school? At work? How has your social network shaped your world view? Do you agree that limited cross-racial contact is a barrier to understanding the experiences of people of color in the U.S.? Why or why not?

3. The political climate has also shifted from 1997-2017. In 1997 President Bill Clinton was in the White House, followed by George W. Bush in 2000, Barack Obama in 2008 and Donald Trump in 2016. During that time period the United States experienced the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the collapse of the stock market and the start of the Great Recession in 2008, the rise of the Tea Party conservative movement in 2010, the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in response to the murder of Travyon Martin in 2012 and numerous police shootings of unarmed Black people in the years following, as well as the increased visibility of White supremacist terror activities such as the 2015 church shooting in Charleston, SC and the deadly march in Charlottesville, VA in 2017.

Reflection: What changes in your community have been most important to you in the last 20 years? How has your life been impacted by the changes in our political climate? Based on your own experiences, what would you say is the current state of race relations in your community?

4. The author began the Prologue by posing the question, often asked of her, "Are things getting better?"

Reflection: Based on your reading of the Prologue section and your life experience, how would you answer that question?

Introduction: A Psychologist's Perspective

1. In the introduction, the author explains that she originally decided to write her book as a way to encourage conversations about the problem of racism in our society, after observing that many people have race-related questions, but sometimes don't know where to begin the necessary conversations. She quotes James Baldwin who wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced." The author adds, "Talking about racism is an essential part of facing racism and changing it." (p.78)

Reflection questions: If you are participating with others in a book discussion group, what race-related questions do you have that you hope your group will discuss now, or at a future session?

Chapter 1: Defining Racism

1. The author writes, "Prejudice is one of the inescapable consequences of living in a racist society…the cultural images and messages that affirm the assumed superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of people of color is like smog in the air. Sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always day in and day out, we are breathing it in. None of us would introduce ourselves as "smog breathers" (and most of us don't want to be described as prejudiced) but if we live in a smoggy place, how can we avoid breathing the air? If we live in an environment in which we are bombarded with stereotypical images in the media, are frequently exposed to the ethnic jokes of friends and family members, and are rarely informed of the accomplishments of oppressed groups, we will develop the negative characterizations of those groups that form the basis of prejudice."(p.86)

Reflection: Do you agree that it is hard to avoid developing prejudices? Think about the stereotypes you were exposed to when you were growing up. What did you learn about other people (or even about your own group) that you now know were based on stereotypes or the result of distorted or omitted information?

2. Many people use the terms "prejudice" and "racism" interchangeably, but the author says it is important to understand that they are not the same. Prejudice refers to individual attitudes, but racism is better understood as "a system of advantage based on race," a *system* involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices that operate to the advantage of White people and to the disadvantage of people of color (p. 87). Because these policies and practices are so

well-established and engrained in American society, the system of advantage can continue to operate even in the absence of overtly prejudicial thinking.

Reflection: Does the definition of racism as "a system of advantage" make sense to you? Why or why not? If people of color are *disadvantaged* by racism, how are White people *advantaged* by it, knowingly or unknowingly?

3. The author uses the analogy of a moving walkway to illustrate the ongoing cycle of racism and to distinguish between *active* racist behavior, *passive* racist behavior, and *actively anti-racist* behavior (p.91).

Reflection: What examples of *active* and *passive* racism have you observed or experienced? What examples of *active anti-racism* have you witnessed or participated in?

4. The author asks, "Why should Whites who are advantaged by racism *want* to end that system of advantage? What are the *costs* of that system to them?" (p.93)

Reflection: How would you answer those questions?

Chapter 2: The Complexity of Identity

1. The author explains that our sense of identity is largely shaped by our social interactions with others. Some dimensions of our identity are likely to be more salient to us because of the history of interactions we have had.

Reflection: Which parts of your identity are most important to you? If asked to complete the sentence, "I am _____" using as many descriptors as you can think of in sixty seconds, what would you write?

2. The author writes, "there are at least seven categories of 'otherness' commonly experienced in US society. People are commonly defined as other on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender (including gender expression), religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age and physical or mental ability. Each of these categories has a form of oppression associated with it: racism, sexism, religious oppression/anti-Semitism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, and ableism, respectively. In each case, there is a group considered dominant (systematically advantaged by the society because of group membership) and a group considered subordinate or targeted (systematically disadvantaged). When we think about our multiple identities, most of us will find that we are both dominant and targeted at the same time. But it is the targeted identities that hold our attention and the dominant identities that often go unexamined." (p. 103)

Reflection: Does this statement ring true for you? Which aspects of your identity have you been actively exploring? Which parts of your identity are relatively unexamined? If you have a

"dominant" aspect of your identity, how much do you know about the "subordinates" and how did you learn it? If you have a "subordinate" or targeted aspect of your identity, how much do you know about the "dominants" and how did you learn it?

Part II: Understanding Blackness in a White Context

Chapter 3: The Early Years

1. The author argues that many adults learned in childhood that they should not speak about race-related observations. Even when they had race-related experiences that were confusing or upsetting, many people learned early in life that they should keep their questions to themselves. The silencing in childhood leads to silence in adulthood, and the pattern repeats itself with their own children.

Reflection: Think of your earliest race-related memory. How old were you? What emotion, if any, is attached to the incident you recalled? Did you talk to anyone – a parent, teacher or other caring adult - about what happened? If not, why not?

2. The author writes, "Though adults often talk about the 'color blindness' of children, the fact that children as young as three do notice physical differences such as skin color, hair texture, and the shape of facial features. Certainly preschoolers talk about what they see, and often they do it in ways that make parents uncomfortable. How should we respond when they do?" (p. 112). She also provides several examples of conversations she had with her own children when they were young, including discussing the painful history of slavery in America.

Reflection: What experiences, if any, have you had talking to young children about race and/or racism? Do you agree that it is important to help young children understand their race-related observations? How do you approach conversations with children about painful racial incidents, not only in US history, but in contemporary life?

3. The author discusses the importance of "raising resisters," children who can recognize and think critically about the stereotypes to which they are exposed and the inequities they see around them. (p. 126-127)

Reflection: What do you think about the idea of "raising resisters"? How can you educate yourself, if necessary, so you are able to respond to children's questions about racism and other isms in an empowering way?

Chapter 4: Identity Development in Adolescence

1. Psychologists have found that Black adolescents often begin to explore what it means to be a member of their racial or ethnic group as early as middle school or junior high school. The form that exploration takes may depend on the social context of the school they attend or the neighborhood they live in and the environmental cues they are receiving in those environments.

Reflection: Why do Black youths, in particular, think about themselves in terms of race? Have you ever asked (or been asked) why are all the Black kids sitting together? After reading the author's discussion of racial-ethnic-cultural identity in adolescence, how would you answer that question? What are the potential benefits of gathering together in "affinity groups?"

2. In a discussion of the connection between oppositional identity development and academic achievement, the author writes, "Particularly in the context of school where racial status has been linked to achievement, during the active exploration phase of REC identity development, when the search for identity leads toward cultural stereotypes and away from anything that might be associated with Whiteness, academic performance may decline." (p. 146)

Reflection: What is it about the curriculum and the culture of academic opportunity within the school that reinforces the notion that academic excellence is a largely White domain? What curricular interventions might we use to encourage the development of what the author calls an "empowered emissary identity"?

3. Stereotype threat is a kind of performance anxiety, often experienced by stigmatized groups, that can impact academic performance. Yet, as social psychologist Claude Steele states, "Although stereotypes held by the larger society may be hard to change, it is possible to create educational niches in which negative stereotypes are not felt to apply – and which permit a sense of trust that would otherwise be difficult to sustain." (p.161)

Reflection: Have you ever experienced stereotype threat in school or in the workplace? If so, what helped or would have helped relieve your anxiety? What are some of the research-tested strategies that educators can use to create the kind of "educational niches" that foster a student's trust and promote academic resilience? How might these strategies apply to the workplace as well?

Chapter 5: Racial Identity in Adulthood

1. The author writes, "The process of REC-identity development, often emerging in adolescence and continuing into adulthood, is not so much linear as circular. It's like moving up a spiral staircase: as you proceed up each level, you have a sense that you have passed this way before, but you are not in exactly the same spot. Moving through the immersion phase of intense and focused exploration to the internalization of an affirmed and secure sense of group identity does

not mean that there won't be new and unsettling encounters with racism or the recurring desire to retreat to the safety of one's same-race peer group, or that identity questions that were resolved won't need to be revisited as life circumstances change." (p. 174)

Reflection: Have you experienced (or observed someone else experiencing) what might be called "identity recycling," perhaps triggered by a situation at work or as the result of racial incidents involving your (or someone else's) children? Have you participated in affinity groups (sometimes called employee resource groups) at work? Do you find such groups useful? Why or why not?

Part III: Understanding Whiteness in a White Context

Chapter 6: The Development of White Identity

1. In her memoir, *Waking Up White,* Debby Irving recalls how she thought about her own racial identity until, at age 48, she "woke up White," an awakening that came in the context of an academic course she was taking. Irving explains, "The way I understood it, race was for other people, brown and black-skinned people. Don't get me wrong – if you put a census form in my hand, I would know to check 'white' or 'Caucasian.' It's more that I thought all those other categories, like Asian, African American, American Indian, and Latino, were the real races. I thought white was the raceless race – just plain, normal, the one against which all others were measured." (p.186)

Reflection: Have you ever felt, as Irving did, that being White was "the raceless race – just plain, normal, the one against which all others were measured"? Or experienced an "awakening" that led to an active exploration of what it means to be White in a race-conscious society? Or, have you observed/interacted with someone else who is "waking up White"?

2. The author writes, "While the task for people of color is to resist negative societal messages and develop an empowered sense of self in the face of a racist society, [counseling psychologist Janet] Helms says the task for Whites is to develop a positive White identity based in reality, not on assumed superiority. In order to do that, each person must become aware of his or her Whiteness, recognize that it is personally and socially significant, and learn to feel good about it, not in the sense of a Klan member's 'White pride' but in the context of a commitment to a just society." (p. 186)

Reflection: If you are White, to what degree have you experienced the identity developmental process that Janet Helms described, and that the author summarizes in Chapter 6? How can White people achieve a healthy sense of White identity?

3. "There is a history of White protest against racism, a history of Whites who have resisted the role of oppressor and who have been allies to people of color. Unfortunately these Whites are often invisible to us. While the names of active racists are easily recalled – past and present Klan leaders and Southern segregationists, for example – the names of White allies are often unknown."

Reflection: What do you know about the history of White allies in America? What might be the benefits to you and others of learning more about that history?

Chapter 7: White Identity, Affirmative Action, and Color-Blind Racial Ideology

1. Whether we consider measures of housing, education, the labor market, the criminal justice system, the media, politics or health care, Whites as a group fare better than just about every other racial/ethnic group in the United States on measures of access, participation, and success. Yet recent national surveys indicate that 50% of White Americans believe that discrimination against Whites has become a problem equivalent to that against people of color. (p. 211)

Reflection: Why do you think so many White people hold this belief despite the data on persistent racial gaps on measures of social or economic well-being?

2. Many people confuse affirmative action programs with quotas. Quotas, defined as fixed numerical allocations, are illegal in most instances; however, setting goals which can be measured is a fundamental component of effective affirmative action programs. It is difficult to separate any discussion of affirmative action from the contemporary research on the widespread nature of unconscious bias and "automatic White preference" which contributes to racial discrimination against Black Americans, in particular (p. 215-225).

Reflection: What are the salient arguments in support of affirmative action and in opposition to it? Given the context of historical and present-day racial bias, which arguments carry the greater force at this time?

3. The author cites the work of various social scientists, including Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, who describe color-blind racial ideology as "the dominant racial ideology of contemporary America, in which White people deny or minimize the degree of racial inequality as the result of factors unrelated to racial dynamics (such as Black cultural values or economic forces unrelated to race.)" (p.226).

Reflection: Do you agree that color-blind racial ideology is widespread? Why do the social scientists cited in the book agree that being "color-blind" is problematic?

Part IV: Beyond Black and White

Chapter 8: Critical Issues in Latinx, Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Middle Eastern/North African Identity Development

1. The author writes, "Although conversations about race, racism, and racial identity tend to focus on Black-White relations, to do so ignores the experiences of other targeted racial or ethnic groups. When we look at the experiences of Latinxs, Native Americans, Asian and Pacific Islanders (APIs), and, more recently, Middle Easterners and North Africans (MENAs) in the United States, we can easily see that racial and cultural oppression has been a part of their lived experiences and that it plays a role in the identity development process for individuals in these groups as well." (p. 236).

Reflection: What new information have you learned about the experiences of one or more of these communities of color that gives you greater insight into the identity development process for them? What are some of the critical issues that stood out for you in thinking about the experiences of youth from these various groups?

2. "Cultural identities are not solely determined in response to racial ideologies, but racism increases the need for a positive self-defined identity in order to survive psychologically. To find one's racial or ethnic identity, one must deal with negative stereotypes, resist internalizing negative self-perceptions, and affirm the meaning of ethnicity for oneself." (p.287)

Reflection: What can parents, educators, and other caring adults do to foster positive psychological outcomes for children who are at risk from racism?

Chapter 9: Identity Development in Multiracial Families

1. The author writes, "In order to understand the contemporary meaning of claiming a multiracial identity, it is useful to review briefly the history of racial categorization in the US." (p. 300)

Reflection: What insights do you gain from reviewing this history? Why has racial classification been so important in the United States? What are some of the factors that influence how today's children in multiracial families choose to identify themselves?

2. The author writes, "The successful adoption of children of color by White parents requires those parents to be willing to experience the close encounters with racism that their children – and they as parents – will have, and to be prepared to talk to their children about them. Ultimately they need to examine their own identities as White people, going beyond the idea of raising a child of color in a White family to a new understanding of themselves and their children as members of a multiracial family." (p. 327)

Reflection: Would you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What can friends, teachers and other caring adults do to support the identity development of multiracial children and their families?

Part V: Breaking the Silence

Chapter 10: Embracing a Cross-Racial Dialogue

1. The author refers to "the White culture of silence about racism," and encourages her readers to break the silence about racism whenever they can (p.333). She writes, "In order for there to be meaningful dialogue, fear, whether of anger or isolation, must eventually give way to risk and trust. A leap of faith must be made (p.337).

Reflection: Have you also observed this culture of silence? What are some of the personal and social costs of such silence? Have you felt the fear or anger that the author describes? Have you been able to make "the leap of faith" the author describes? If so, what helped you do so?

2.The author concludes Chapter 10 with these words: "We all have a sphere of influence. Each of us needs to find our own sources of courage so that we will begin to speak. There are many problems to address, and we cannot avoid them indefinitely. We cannot continue to be silent. We must begin to speak, knowing that words alone are insufficient. But I have seen that meaningful dialogue can lead us to effective action. Change is possible."

Reflection: Do you believe change is possible? If so, what is your sphere of influence and how can you use it to bring about positive social change? If you are hesitant, what is holding you back? What support do you need to become a more effective agent of change?

Epilogue: Signs of Hope, Sites of Progress

1. In the epilogue, the author writes, "I believe deeply that the winter of the social-political climate of 2017, the time at which I am writing this epilogue, can give way to spring, but it is the collective *actions* of people committed to social justice that will bring about the thaw." She then offers examples of people and places where she finds signs of hope.

Reflection: Where do you find signs of hope? What is happening in your community that is, or could be, a source of encouragement? How might those efforts be amplified?