

RECONCILIATION DINNER

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Reconciliation Dinner Shreveport

Inaugural Reconciliation Dinner of Shreveport
AUGUST 27, 2016

DEPICTION OF CHEF NAT FULLER AT THE FIRST RECONCILIATION DINNER



CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE

“Why talk about racism and race relations?”

Racism and relations among racial and ethnic groups present critical problems in our society. We believe that Americans care deeply about these issues and have a lot to say about them. As we share our experiences and ideas with others, new ideas for solving our problems will emerge. But dialogue not only helps us find a solution— it is, itself, part of the solution. This is true of all public issues, but especially of race relations.

The only way we will get along better is for people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds to talk openly and respectfully with each other. This kind of communication can be difficult, but only by taking part in such conversations will we realize that our differences are not so great. Often participants find that they come out of these discussions fundamentally changed.

Transforming race relations in our city will require many of us here this evening to participate in these kinds of discussions. As we come together to discuss our experiences and concerns, we are working toward understanding and trust among people of different racial and ethnic groups.

We hope this brief guide will help you be part of this important dialogue. Please join us.



CIRCLES OF TRUTH

Ground Rules For Useful Discussions

- Listen carefully to others. Try to really understand what they are saying and respond to it, especially when their ideas differ from your own. Try to avoid building your own arguments in your head while others are talking.
- Think together about what you want to get out of your conversation.
- Be open to changing your mind; this will help you really listen to another's view.
- When disagreements occur, keep talking. Explore this disagreement. Search for the common concerns beneath the surface. Above all, be civil.
- Value one another's experience and think about how they have contributed to your thinking.
- Help to develop one another's ideas. Listen carefully and ask clarifying questions.
- Don't waste time arguing about points of fact; for the time being, you may need to agree to disagree and then move on. You might want to check out the facts before your next conversation.

Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the conversation.

Speak kindly.

A SAMPLE SESSION

The purpose of this session is to allow discussion participants to listen to others' stories about race relations. It gives each person an opportunity to tell his or her story. The success of this discussion depends upon thoughtful listening to others to understand their points of view and a willingness to share and possibly re-examine one's own attitudes. Remember, you can disagree without being hostile, you can confront a misperception or mistaken idea without accusing someone of being racist.

General questions to consider

- What is your racial, ethnic, or cultural background? Talk for a few minutes about your background.
- How have your background or experiences contributed to your attitudes about race relations?
- Have you experienced racism personally? Have you seen it in practice? Has it affected you or people you know? How would your life be different if you didn't have to deal with it?
- In what ways do your attitudes toward persons of other races or ethnic groups differ from those of your parents?
- As you think about your own attitudes, do any of them run counter to the ideals that you hold? If so, how do you deal with that internal conflict?
- You probably have heard expressions of prejudice from family members, friends, co-workers, or neighbors. How do you think they learned their prejudice? How do you feel when you hear these expressions? How do you react?
- How often do you have contact with people of other races or ethnic groups? What is that like?
- Do you have friends of other races? If so, how did you get to know them? Is it hard to make friends with people of other races or ethnic groups? What is that like?
- Many white people have friends of other races, but they often see these friends as "exceptions to the rule." Why do you think this is so?
- How do you help your children deal with racism? How do you help them understand race relations?

Cases for discussion

- An African-American couple is turned down for a mortgage by a bank, despite the fact that white couples in similar financial situations have been approved for mortgages.
- A Hispanic woman does not get a job as a receptionist because she speaks English with an accent.
- A white man who wants to be on the police force is not hired, while several minority applicants with lower scores on the qualifying test are hired because of a court-ordered affirmative action program.

QUESTIONS ON THE CASES

What is your first response to each of these cases?

- Racism has sometimes been defined as "prejudice plus power." Do any of these cases fit that pattern?
- What if anything, do you think the people described in each of the cases should do?
- What if anything, do you think the government should do in these cases?

SPEAK YOUR PEACE

The Civility Project

It is not a campaign to end disagreements, rather it is a campaign to improve communication by reminding ourselves of the basic principles of respect.

NINE SIMPLE TOOLS FOR PRACTICING CIVILITY, TAKEN FROM P.M. FORNI'S BOOK CHOOSING CIVILITY.

- **PAY ATTENTION.** Be aware and attend to the world and the people around you.
- **LISTEN.** Focus on others in order to better understand their points of view.
- **BE INCLUSIVE.** Welcome all groups of citizens working for the greater good of the community.
- **DON'T GOSSIP.** And don't accept when others choose to do so.
- **SHOW RESPECT.** Honor other people and their opinions, especially in the midst of a disagreement.
- **BE AGREEABLE.** Look for opportunities to agree; don't contradict just to do so.
- **APOLOGIZE.** Be sincere and repair damaged relationships.
- **GIVE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM.** When disagreeing, stick to the issues and don't make a personal attack.
- **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.** Don't shift responsibility and blame onto others; share disagreements publicly.



NARRATIVE4

Fearless Hope through Radical Empathy

www.narrative4.com

Narrative4 is a global educational organization that promotes the exchange of stories as a way to engage more profoundly with the world. Although storytelling is an ancient and universal human activity, Narrative 4 helps people to tell their stories in a new and powerful way. If you step into my shoes, I will step into yours. Our goal is to achieve a sense of fearless hope through radical empathy.

Our core methodology centers around a story exchange, which works on a simple idea: If I can hear your story deeply enough to retell it in my own words, as if it happened to me – and you can do the same for my story – then we will have seen the world through each other's eyes.

Narrative 4 asks people to tell a significant story from their lives. At the same time, in a safe space, they are then given the chance to own and articulate someone else's story—to craft it and shape it and take responsibility for it. This process is designed to build a mutual trust that strips away the typical narratives of cynicism and despair, allowing new ones to take shape:

A narrative for fearless hope. A narrative for radical empathy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT INFO@NARRATIVE4.COM.

SAWA BONA MOMENT

Sawa Bona is a South African (zulu, khosa) greeting which translates to “I see you.” The respondent says Sikhona which means “I am here” – or until you acknowledge my humanity I do not exist. This greeting is based on the South African humanist philosophy Ubuntu – I am who I am because of who we all are, which stresses the interdependence of human beings. Ubuntu inspired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that aided South Africans in coming to terms with the atrocities perpetrated under the white supremacist system of apartheid. The Sawa Bona Moment is a short presentation series that gives participants the opportunity to develop trust, dignity, and respect within their environments; and to increase cultural awareness through short biographical presentations from volunteers who share their culture and life experiences.

The presenters describe how their background has shaped their development and self-awareness. Each presentation is between 10-15 minutes on average with time allotted for questions between each presentation. Some general topics that presenters are encouraged to focus on include: cultural values that influence their work ethic and how they relate to others, and basic information about their cultural history.

The program opens and concludes with a short dialogue from the facilitator about an issue or topic related to racism, injustice, and inequalities (i.e. educational disparities, food access disparities, disparities in criminal justice system).