

The Pocket Guide to Black History in the U.S.

Discussion Card - Set I

Facilitator's Guide

Culture Coach International
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Facilitating Conversations

The African American History Discussion Cards are designed for use in a variety of settings: businesses, schools, religious groups, and community organizations.

There are 20 cards with a significant fact(s) or people on one side about African American experiences dating from the first recorded slave revolt in 1526 to the election of President Barack Obama in 2008. On the reverse, there are a number of questions, related to the fact(s) presented, that can be used to begin discussions about social justice and equality issues affecting the United States today.

Gathering a Group

Talk with others to find out if there is enough interest to form a group of 3-12 people. With groups larger than 12, consider having smaller groups with a designated facilitator for each group. Find a place that all attending can sit comfortably and will not be disturbed.

Facilitator Pre-work

- Decide if this is a one-time discussion or an on-going series.
- Determine the length of time for each meeting: recommended one to 1.5 hours for each session.
- Select the card(s) to discuss and the order in which they are used.
- Think about outcomes: Is this for personal awareness or are there actions that you want to be taken afterwards?
- Depending upon how well the group of people convening know each other, consider starting off with introductions and why people were interested in coming together for this discussion. You may also want to use a short ice breaker activity that helps people to get to know each other a bit before they start the discussion. A sample ice breaker is provided at the end of this guide.
- Review instructions and facilitation tips.

Instructions & Facilitating Tips Provided with the Cards

Instructions

- These cards have been designed to spark conversations & some of these discussions may be emotional
- While using Black history as the foundation, the topics raised here can be applied to many different groups
- Set ground rules for your discussion before starting & hold people to these
- Make sure that you allow adequate time for the discussions so that people have a chance to feel heard
- Depending on the time allowed & the questions asked, you may only have time for one card - don't rush the discussion
- There is no one right way to use the cards, follow the flow of the conversation

Facilitating Tips

- Keep discussions focused on the topics, not on personal attacks
- Personal experiences are just that - personal experiences, so don't deny someone their experience or tell them they are wrong in how they understand their personal experiences
- There are no right or wrong answers - instead practice the idea of "both/and" instead of "either/or"
- Be willing to be uncomfortable in hearing other people's experiences - this doesn't mean the discussion has to stop
- Give yourself time to process what is shared
- If possible, provide a time to regroup at a later time to share insights & impact

Leading the Discussion

Opening

Thank everyone for coming and being willing to participant in an important conversation. Set the context for the discussion and why it is important to you/your organization.

Start with Ground Rules

Since the resulting conversations may become emotional, it is important for facilitators to set some ground rules prior to starting the discussion. A good technique, which helps to get the buy-in of the group, is to have the group develop these ground rules.

Suggested Script

As we are going to be sharing our experiences and ideas today, it is important to create some ground rules for our discussions. Does anyone have any suggestions for what ground rule we should use?

Some examples include: Listen, be respectful, keep an open mind, only one person speaks at a time, what is said in the room stays in the room, respect the opinions others keeping in mind that opinions are different from facts.

Make a list of the ground rules (on flipchart paper or a whiteboard) for everyone to see.

As we have our discussions, let's keep these ground rules in mind today.

If necessary, refer back to list if participants during the conversation.

Leading the Discussion

- The discussion can have many formats depending upon the number of people involved, how many cards you are using, if everyone is discussing the same card or different cards.
- One thing to keep in mind is allowing a conversation to flow naturally, but to move on to a new questions when the conversation starts to slow down.
- Be careful that people are not criticizing people for their ideas and that respect is being shown while you are having the discussions.
- If the conversations go off topic, bring them back again saying something like *I think we are getting a little bit off topic. Let's come back to the current topic of_____.* Does anyone else have anything to add to this part of the discussion? If not, than we will move on to the next question.

Closing

Thank participants for sharing and being a part of the conversation.

Sample Script

I want to thank you all for coming and for participating today. This has been an important conversation to have and I want to thank you for being open and honest about your thoughts and experiences. As we move back out into our lives, let's be mindful of the confidentiality of what people have shared and also to apply the insights that we learned today.

If its been decided that some form of action is needed, determine what, when, where, who and how.

We would love to hear about how your discussion(s) went.

Were there topics that sparked a richer conversation than other topics?

Are there topics missing that you think should be added in future editions?

Are there any other facilitator tips we should know?

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