

Smith Departmental Prompts to Discuss Race and Racism

Guiding Principles

“Defensiveness is a common reaction when waking up to the realities that racism is operating on your watch. You might feel personally responsible for the harms that are outlined. You might *be* personally responsible in some cases. But disrupting the harmful patterns will require deep listening and learning, not defensiveness.” (Banks & Harvey, 2020)

“Building the capacity to be anti-racist similarly **takes commitment over time**, involves hard work, and is not always pleasant.” (Banks & Harvey, 2020)

“Anti-racism is a behavior. Anti-racism is pursuing racial justice by:

- Naming,
- Understanding,
- Being accountable for,
- And providing remedies for

The system of racial stratification that structures opportunities and assigns value” (Green, 2020)

General Weekly Check-ins

- How does your body feel?
- How does this week feel for you?
- How did you engage in self-care this week? What did self-care look like for you this week?

Questions/Topics

(Consider offering the prompt in advance so folks can reflect and come prepared to SHARE):

1. Tell me your story. (Possible directions: Family history, educational background and passions within your work and outside)
2. Can you name a time in our office/department when you felt marginalized? Please share your personal racialized experiences. For white colleagues can you name a time when you micro aggressed someone?
3. How does our department contribute to systemic racism?
4. Where do you see a disconnect between our espoused commitments and our actions? How can we align these moving forward?
5. How will we track and quantify our progress in racial justice within our department/college?
6. What organizations or thought leaders can we bring into our department (and pay) to help move our organization forward? Crowdsource names/organizations, determine goals/objectives and then begin scheduling guest speakers/trainings.
7. Read XXX article/poem/statement. What strikes you about the piece? What is troubling or affirming? What did you learn or what did this piece bring up for you?
8. What specific elements of your identity do you leave at home when you come to work? How can we create space for you to bring your full identity to work?
9. What would it be like to name racism when it shows up? To understand how it functions between people, how it functions as policy, how it functions at the department and institutional level?
10. What would it look like to hold ourselves accountable for being able to do something when people are treated differently?
11. What barriers currently exist for our BIPOC faculty, staff and students and what can we do today to remove these barriers?
12. How does race and racism operate in 2020?