

# Talking About Race Toolkit

Center for Social Inclusion

<http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org>

AFFIRM

COUNTER

TRANSFORM



**Affirm**– Start off the dialogue by mentioning phrases and images that speaks to audience’s values. The key is to hook and engage your audience.

## 1. Start with the heart

- Start your message with an emotional connector to engage your audience in the message (*e.g., We work hard to support our families and all our contributions help make America great*)

## 2. Explain why we are all in this together

- Explain “shared fate” in racially-explicit terms (*e.g., It hurts the same to lose a home or job, whether we are White or Black, male or female, a single parent or a two-parent family...*)



**Counter**– Lead the audience into the discussion of race with a brief snapshot of the historical context. The key is to open audience’s minds to deeper explanations about racial inequities.

## 1. Explain why we have the problem

- Give a very brief explanation of what has happened in the past and explain why we have a problem today. (*e.g., Public dollars for schools, bus service, health care and a hundred more things we need, helped create jobs in the past. Cutting them now is not the answer to our problems, it will be the cause of more pain and misery.*)

## 2. Take on race directly

- Take on the race wedge by declaring it and dismissing it by naming institutional opportunities and actions (*e.g., This is not about immigrants or welfare. This is about whether Americans will see their children off to college...*)



**Transform**– Leave the audience with an engaging solution. The key is to present a solution so that the audience feels committed and feel as though they are progressing forward.

## 1. Reframe “makers” and “takers”

- Change and define who the real good guys and bad guys are in this fight (*e.g., And while oil company and bank CEOs are getting richer, some are laying off workers and fighting for tax loop holes to avoid paying taxes, instead of investing in our nation’s future...*)

## 2. End with heart and solution

- Present solution in emotional terms (*e.g., They [corporations] can and should do their fair share so we the people can invest in schools, health care, transit and services that help us all make a bright future for our country.*)

## **SCENARIOS:**

1. In discussing current public health issues with a family member, she mentions that outbreaks of diseases like measles are the result of “illegal immigrants” bringing disease across the border.
2. You live in a racially diverse neighborhood, but those who attend neighborhood association meetings are all white. Neighborhood leaders say it’s too bad, but the meetings are open to everyone and they can’t make people of color attend if they don’t want to.
3. You are working with colleagues to develop a client satisfaction survey. One of the questions asks whether the client would consider utilizing the program again. A colleague says “we want to be careful how the question is worded, because we don’t want to encourage these people to have more children.”
4. In a discussion related to police shootings, someone says that black-on-black crime is a far greater problem for African Americans than people being shot by the police.
5. Your friend is stressing about getting into graduate school. She says that because of affirmative action, it would be so much easier if she was a person of color.
6. Someone says “Blacks don’t care about the environment. It’s not their issue.”
7. You are serving on the majority white planning committee for an upcoming conference. You think your black co-worker would be an asset to the committee, but one of the organizers says “We already have two African-Americans on this committee. I think our next member should be Asian or Latino.”
8. In a discussion on the educational achievement gap, someone cites research on early brain development and the word deficit among children growing up in poverty. She then says that poverty and under-involved parents are the real reasons why children of color fail in school.