

Temple Micah Racial Justice Initiative
Community Conversation #1: Systemic Racism
Tuesday, February 9, 2021
Chat Transcript

Participant: RACISM MSUT BE FOUGHT EVERY HOUR OF EVERY DAY

Participant: Some African Americans defer getting the vaccine due to mistrust. Wow - isn't that symbolic of where we are today!

Participant: racial equity and justice within the early childhood field

Participant: Continued confluence of racism and antisemitism

Participant: white nationalists took over the Capitol a few weeks ago!

Participant: So much to learn

Participant: address unconscious bias

Participant: Environmental degradation impacting black and brown people

Participant: RIP Breonna Taylor...George Floyd...Ahmed Arbaury

Participant: #SayHerName - so much violence that never makes the news

Participant: police brutality

Participant: police brutality against African Americans

Participant: Environmental justice

Participant: Covid disparities in communities, not just vaccines

Participant: disparate death rates from Covid

Participant: Lacking common language and trust, as well as willingness to bridge

Participant: The digital divide, which is so much worse for African Americans.

Participant: Even when it's not making headlines and prompting protests, there are still black and brown people who are being killed by police officers.

Participant: The pepper spraying of a 9-year old girl by police in a car

Participant: Racial wealth gap

Participant: I work every day to be antiracist as an educator. I am teaching my students the people who have been left out intentionally from history

Participant: all the jobs lost by women of color due to the pandemic

Participant: focus on racism in our society and how I have benefitted from my white privilege

Participant: racial wealth gap

Participant: education for K-12 and higher ed

Participant: Pervasive violence

Participant: black and brown children falling farther behind during Covid

Participant: Increasing tribalism and mistrust.

Participant: COVID disparities in education -- fewer Black students returning to DCPS

Participant: Everything that has happened over the last 400 years is why I am here today. Every single day we have reminders about why we need to have this conversation and do this work. You talked about vaccines, also reopening schools, education, on and on

Participant: reform for the justice system broadly

Participant: food insecurity

Participant: Wanting to move from talking about it to doing something about it.

Participant: working with students and making sure the voices of students of color are heard

Participant: disparity in evictions

Participant: housing and wealth inequities based upon historic red lining

Participant: Front line workers primarily people of color

Participant: attempts to continue to whitewash our history in school curricula and popular culture

Participant: Stunned by idea that those at the Capitol are like those in charge during two centuries of Black living

Participant: learning ways to express my outrage about racism in a constructive way with others and doing something about it

Participant: increasing equity in gifted programs for underrepresented minority students

Participant: We are not as far along as we think we are

Participant: Given Jewish history, I believe Jews are obligated to fight all forms of racism.

Participant: health disparity

Participant: Too many books read and too little action done by whites

Participant: persistent education disparity and learning gaps heightened by COVID

Participant: disparity in access to technology...alluded to already

Participant: prisoners and covid

Participant: My daughter, Dove Kent, says hello and thinks you're great!

Participant: people most impacted are not at the table or part of devising the solutions — no power

Participant: Debates around school reopening, virtual learning,

Participant: Differential response to white protests and BLM protests

Participant: Voter suppression

Participant: The need to address longstanding discrimination on so many levels: education, housing, income, violence and the intersection with sexism.

Participant: Lack of empathy for others

Participant: kids having the chance to read books about kids who look like them

Participant: Eviction crisis looming, much worse for black and brown people

Participant: Lack of diversity in neighborhoods, school

Participant: 400 years of racism in America

Participant: Incarceration rates in the US and inherent racism

Participant: racism in Israel vs. Palestinians

Participant: Lack of black coaches/managers in sports

Participant: I learned today that the percentage of Black doctors has not changed in 40 yrs

Participant: profound sadness over prominent Jews supporting racist p]leaders

Participant: So very concerned about complacency with Biden's ascension

Participant: I have been recently shocked to learn that I am a racist!!

Participant: Restrictive covenants (for Jews and blacks) applied until overturned in late
Participant: Rachel, Would you define racism and white privilege, please? Thanks.

Participant: Jews continued to face quotas in certain professions and universities (law, Ivy League et al)

Participant: as a white family we benefited from the GI bill

Participant: my grandfather dropped out of school and moved from NY to Atlanta as a teen to open a grocery store w his brother

Participant: I went to college on the daughter of someone killed as a result of the war

Participant: as a white family we benefitted from GI bill and that federal government were open to hiring a more diverse civil service.

Participant: my parents had an FHA Federal mortgage and rules disallowed integrated neighborhoods

Participant: As a child, on a car trip South - I saw and was horrified by whites only rest rooms (on interstate highways. Also water fountains.

Participant: We know only what W don't know. I don't know if Larry's or m

Participant: My father used the GI Bill to go to graduate school and the VA loan program to buy a house. We moved to the suburbs so that I would have good schools - better than those if we had lived in the big

city where we were. Of course, the suburb was very white, and there were very few black students in the school.

Participant: his customers were predominantly African Americans, and the success of his store enable him to save and invest

Participant: my brothers and I were able to attend our closest public schools that were closed to blacks, even after the Brown decision.

Participant: My parents earned enough money to send me to private school in NYC and to sleepaway camp in Mass.

Participant: My family moved out of the "Jewish" part of St. Louis to the suburbs, in a new neighborhood that was certainly not selling to Black families

Participant: I went to public schools. I went to a magnet high school with amazing black and brown classmates.

Participant: when I became a single parent I benefitted from my whiteness because my parents could help me financially and I had an education that allowed me to take advantage of opportunities in the federal government

Participant: Sorry— Larry and I only know what we DON't know: whether black men could have gone to Northwestern or Cornell, for instance, when our Dads did. Both of them worked for the room and board and had support of ROTC in my Dad's case, or family, in Larry's. What is clear is that there were very few people of color in pictures of their classes.

Participant: my father and his brother both faced quotas for college and graduate school, and were "advised" against submitting many applications

Participant: One of my grandfather's owned a hotel in Hammond, Louisiana and one was a manager (overseer?) on a plantation in Louisiana!

Participant: Jared's father came from Poland to join his father in '20s. S

Participant: I GREW UP IN SHAKER HEIGHTS Ohio WHICH WAS PRIVLEDGED AND INTEGRATED. HOUSEING AND SCHOOL

Participant: My father went to college and dental school before WWII. In a reversal - Jews allowed into professional schools - this was a (new) privilege. Counter example - when he went looking to buy a house (after WWII), he was told "You'll be glad to know that neither Jews nor dogs are allowed here" - suburb of Detroit.

Participant: my grandfather never graduated high school and owned a junkyard (wrecked auto parts) that become very successful

Participant: In the Soviet Union, there were still very much quotas and places of education and employment closed to Jews. Practice of religion was a criminal offense, and yet discrimination based on religion was still rampant.

Participant: One side of my family benefitted from the GI Bill. On the other, my grandparents inherited farm land (40 acres) that had been purchased 140 years earlier from a member of the Saginaw nation in MI.

Participant: My grandfather, a recent at the time immigrant from Hungary, was able to access the government opportunities in the Participant: When my father and his parents arrived in NYC from Nazi Vienna, they received critical support from HIAS. They were sponsored to come to the US by a Jewish family they never met from Long Island. My grandmother got a union job sewing dolls clothes in the garment district. My grandfather was able to get a job in a chemical plant as a janitor and then worked his way up to being a manager. My father received a great education at the exceptional NYC public schools including Bronx Science and City College. My mother's immigrant parents had arrived earlier and received support from family members but always worked very hard and ended up in the Jewish chicken farming community in NJ --ultimately having to give up the farm in exchange for the unpaid feed bill.

Participant: My high school (early 70s) had 1 black student. One!

Participant: Legacy advantage at university

Participant: I do know that among the "aristocratic" German Jews (My Mom was one), there was a lot of very overt Racist language and ideas.

Participant: when my grandfather went to UMd in the 30s, as a Jew he was not allowed to live in the regular dorms. But African Americans completely barred from attending UMd.

Participant: Ran furs for a furrier. Eventually bought his own furniture store with the money he had earned. Wouldn't have happened if he had gotten off the boat from Nairobi.

Participant: I can't disagree with what you are saying in general, but I think it fails to account for class which affecting at least some Jews differently. I grew up thinking we were middle class because my parents never let us think differently. I now know we were poor, went without much in terms of resources, and without access to much of the white privilege you are talking about. I am not suggesting my story warrants a lot of discussion at this point, just that it did exist.

Participant: My husband went to school on GI bill. My father was smart and hard working, but did have access to financing to begin career as a builder. My mother never worked. I went to UCLA because I had the grades. I went through LA City schools, which were excellent at that time, so good public schools.

Participant: My father used the GI bill to go to grad school where he met my mother, a Jewish refugee from Czechoslovakia. they were able to buy a house in a predominantly white suburb in Maryland in Participant: Each of my parents was the first in their families to go to college. That was clearly a privilege of their whiteness. In both cases, the education led to good employment, and they had the freedom to travel to obtain those jobs. Freedom of travel was also a privilege.

Participant: Our public schools assumed that we would achieve certain status

Participant: That said, I think I was lucky— I lived in a household that early on adopted Civil Rights as an obligation, and it was part of our daily dinner table conversation.

Participant: Grandparents were able to move across the country, one side from Philly to LA other from Chicago to LA and buy houses, start businesses, work for gov

Participant: Union jobs, exceptional free schools, and support from established family members were not as readily available to Blacks who arrived in NYC as part of the great migration.

Participant: What I have heard from my mom was that the 40's were not really a time of plenty. But I do know that my grandfather was able to buy a house by saving all of his money (no loan) not sure the date.

I know that my mother was able to attend college (they moved to Ohio so they could pay in-state tuition). She was not allowed to join regular Greek houses, so she joined the Jewish Greek house.

Participant: we were able to live in safe neighborhoods and attend excellent schools that were inaccessible to Blacks. .

Participant: My immigrant grandparents created family businesses, helping to sponsor family members from Europe. They worked hard, faced anti-Semitism, which they spoke about. They seemed to be oblivious to Black people's plight.

Participant: There is plenty of privilege, the solution is not less privilege, but equal opportunity

Participant: Early on in the 60's, my brother and I learned about inequities. We were fortunate to attend a neighborhood school in Plainfield, NJ. Many of our classmates of color were bussed from across town and they could not go home for lunch. Lessons learned early on in life about white privilege.

Participant: Access to excellent NYC public schools, safe neighborhoods, home ownership

Participant: Many Jewish families like mine set up informal loan systems to help younger siblings or newer immigrants get started in business or school. Women however were typically excluded from these family banks. new

Participant: I understand caste, not privilege

Participant: My immigrant great grandparents always worked for themselves. I expect the skills and ability to work for themselves, as hard as it likely was, was a path not open to people of color who were more likely to work for others.

Participant: How does that 46% compare to other whites?

Participant: And to Jews nationally?

Participant: What percentage of other whites in NYT poll wanted to slow down?

Participant: Hey folks, we will grab questions at the end if there is additional time, if not please bring them to your small group and we will be sure to dive in!

Participant: Who gets to define or decide whether we are allies or not?

Participant: Much of the idea that there was a black-Jewish alliance on civil rights in the Participant: I saw this far, far, far more in the sixties than now.

Participant: Did Jewish day schools proliferate — like private schools in the South — so that the children didn't have to go to integrated schools?

Participant: Good question Marla

Participant: Applying early decision to college because we don't need to rely on financial aid is a huge privilege. We also had the choice all along between public and private schools — one child went public all the way, the other opted into private for HS. The right decision for both — but we had choices that many people don't.

Participant: Both of our sons have learning disabilities. We were able to pay for private testing, private services, and ultimately private school.

Participant: We moved to Bethesda for the good public schools and they are more segregated than where we were in California

Participant: 1. Rep'd an inheritance from our parents. 2. We contributed capital to enable our son to buy a house

Participant: Sent children to private school because the local choices for school were not good

Participant: choosing to enroll our kids in private school

Participant: we worked within our elementary school PTO to help improve our DCPS middle school so that it would attract more in district families. the impact was to reduce the percentage of kids from out of district homes

Participant: It's so tempting to deny and struggle to come up with examples.... this exercise itself is a great way to ramp up the heat on our own fires...

Participant: no question that sending my son to private school was an exercise in white privilege. He definitely needed smaller classes and teacher attention as a learner - but it was our white privilege that won him a place in his private school class. It turned out that he was also the only Jewish child in his entire class of 77 young men. The admissions Officer was a closeted Jew. And intervened to admit my son. The only black students were "imported" from NYC to play sports and they were treated abysmally.

Participant: I moved to an apartment building in NW DC that had good schools for my daughter to go to; I kept my daughter in public schools and in DC public schools on the secondary level white students were automatically put in AP classes and Black and brown students were not put in AP classes. Asian children were put in with the white students

Participant: The ability to get a 5% down loan in Participant: In our family, it was all about education. My grandpa's junkyard allowed me to graduate from a top notch college with no debt. I was able to take a lower paying job and live in NYC, and if I didn't have enough money to pay all of the rent, my parents helped out.

Participant: and in this pandemic, because we work in "white collar jobs" I am aware of how we have become richer since our jobs were less threatened

Participant: I used the financial investments that my parents and grandparents had put in my name in order to put a down payment on a house, when the prices were low (2010) without having to build up the savings myself.

Participant: We bought a house in a very particular neighborhood specifically for the public schools. In the "neighborhood" schools (all the way through high school), the "black" students were more typically African (children of diplomats) and not African American. We have set up a "wealth transfer" plan for our children and grandchildren that is based on what our privilege allowed us to accumulate. On the other side, we have been very active politically and in organizations that sought to change - maybe contented ourselves a bit too much with the idea that this allowed us to make our other individual choices.

Participant: Can the chat comments be preserved and shared...so much info is flowing so fast, we can't keep up, but would like to do so afterward.

Participant: Paid off our son's debts and paid for their college.

Participant: During the pandemic, being in jobs that have allowed us to work from home and maintain our incomes...

Participant: Ability to get jobs, housing, mostly avoid crime, and more... 2. Decided to remain closely affiliated with only Jewish institutions outside of employment.

Participant: to save the chat go to the three dots at the bottom of the page. That saves the chat for you.

Participant: the ability to work from home right now is a huge privilege

Participant: was able to "work the system" to get access to vaccine

Participant: Ditto points above: Could make decisions about college without concern for scholarships. Paid tuition so kids could go to college. When kids weren't doing well in schools, able to pay for testing, tutors.

Participant: When will the video recording be accessible?

Participant: My husband and I thought it was important to raise our kids in a mixed neighborhood in DC and that they go to public schools.

Participant: Ditto Ruth

Participant: My father came from a very poor family where they always fought about money. He did ROTC and worked his way through college. He went into the Navy to pay for it. Then managed to get through Columbia Law (because he was white). He became a lawyer and spent many years of our lives working, but was able to amass wealth which is still benefitting us today. Investing a gift from my father continues that privilege. Including for my young son's college tuition.

Participant: My mother taught me financial literacy from a young age and set up a credit card for me in my late teens to begin building my credit score. This set me on a financial trajectory that later allowed me to take out college loans and quickly pay them off, buy my own home, and more. These are skills I will teach to my son which will also further his privilege.

Participant: We live in the suburbs. We sent our children to private school through 8th grade. After that, they went to BCC, a suburban public high school with a diverse student body. Both of our children attended expensive private universities. Basically, we took advantage of the income from my career as a lawyer and the money we inherited from our families to provide our children the best education possible.

Participant: had family help every step of the way due to privilege. we had the ability to go to school, send our kids to private school etc.

Participant: We recently purchased a home out of state that our family loves. Clearly a result of our privilege.

Participant: We send our 2nd grader to a public charter school, which in many ways benefits privileged families (with "motivated" parents) from day 1.

Participant: Sending our kids to a bilingual public school that we lotteried into...that transportation to get them to a school in a different ward from where we live is not an obstacle for us is a privilege. also, my wife being able to work from home and supervise virtual learning is a privilege too

Participant: My husband and I lived in a “frontier” (so called”) neighborhood in DC. One of the worst of the districts in terms of schools and violence. When we had children, we made a painful, still painful, decision to move to the suburbs, comforting ourselves that our kids would go to public schools. In retrospect (and even at the time) we knew we were opting for “private school privilege” in a wealthy largely white county.

Participant: we lived for 5 years in Detroit children with our in after the riots and ran a transportation system for the elderly and the ill, we were integrated and we paid everyone including ourselves minimum wages1970-Participant: with our children

Participant: This recording will be available on YouTube tomorrow and remain public for about 1 week.

Participant: Thanks Amy!