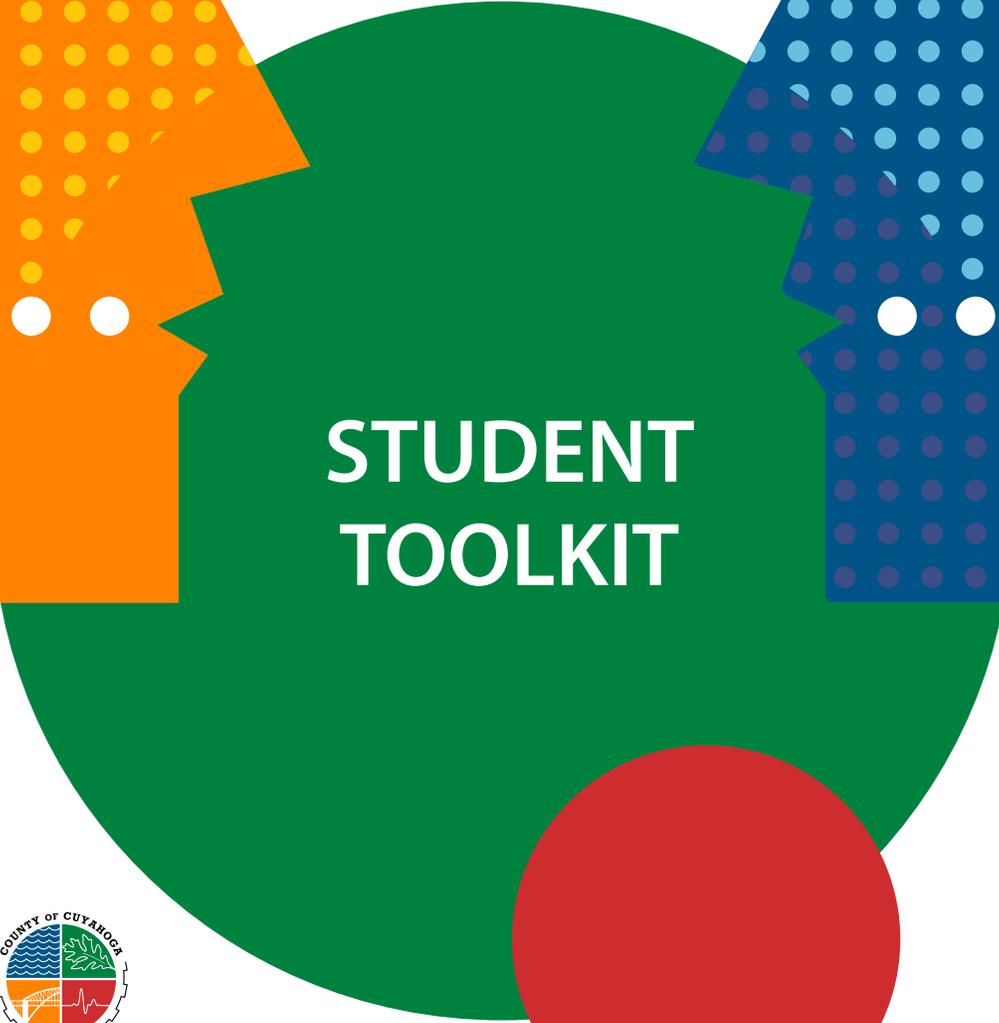


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# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

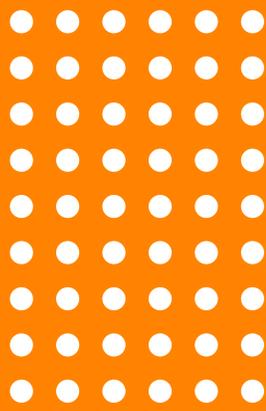


## STUDENT TOOLKIT



Cuyahoga County  
Together We Thrive

Created by Cuyahoga County Citizens' Advisory Council on Equity

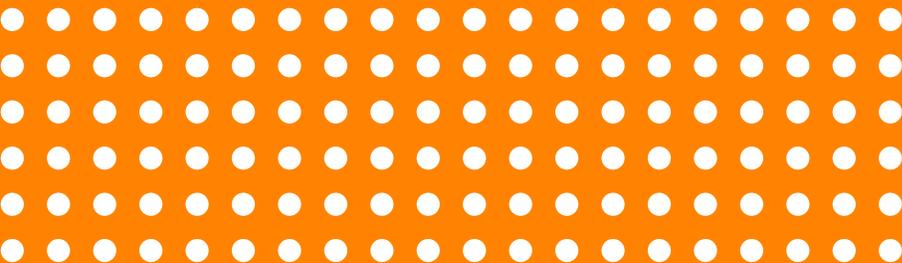


# Thank you for your interest in Community Conversations!

To help you get ready to have a good conversation,  
we have put this toolkit together.

What you will learn:

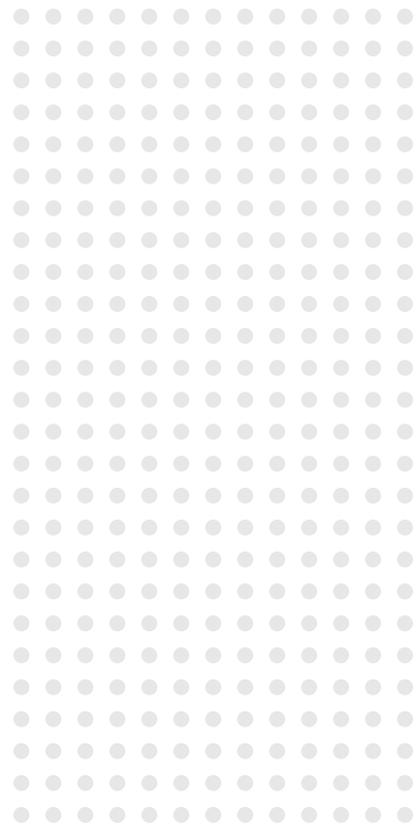
- Why do we need to talk about racism?
- Why did the County (and other cities, counties and states) decide to pay attention to racism?
- What is a Community Conversation?
- Why does the County want your help?
- How do the Community Conversations work?
- What are the different roles?
- Helpful tips for people in the conversation
- Your Next Steps



## Why do we need to talk about racism?

You can't change what you ignore, or what you hope doesn't exist. It's important ALL people no matter what they look like, where they live, who they love, where they are from, people are treated equitably. Equitable treatment means all people get access to the same opportunities. Sometimes differences and history create barriers to opportunities. Equitable treatment removes those barriers.

For hundreds of years racism has made it so Black Americans are pushed aside and treated disparately. Disparate treatment is when a person is treated differently from others in ways that cause harm. Because of the long history of mistreatment and racism, many Black Americans experience significant difficulties in their lives. Racist policies and actions by our government and other institutions have made it harder for Black Americans to access a good education, quality healthcare, well-paying jobs, and safe homes. They also don't get opportunities to start their own business based on discrimination, when trying to borrow money and racist policies and practices that prevent Black Americans from building generational wealth.





## Why did the County decide to pay attention to racism?

The County government is focused on helping all residents in need, no matter the color of their skin. When the County offers supports for things like job training and for small businesses we now make sure there is a strong focus on helping minorities.

The pandemic highlighted the impacts of racism and illustrated how racism makes life harder and deadlier for Black Americans than White Americans. Black people got sicker and died at higher rates than Whites.

So, the County Executive worked with County Council to pass a resolution, which is an official opinion of a legislative body, declaring racism a public health crisis. They also set up groups to better understand how racism is hurting people. **That's where YOU come in!**

# What are Community Conversations?

They are conversations with a group of people who are all agreeing to talk about a topic. Each conversation has a Host and a Recorder.

Community conversations are a great way to get ideas and issues out on the table.



## Why does the County want your help?

The County wants to hear from a LOT of people; we want as many people as possible to have meaningful conversations about this important issue.

We already worked with other groups to host Conversations and had over **200 people join!**

But we noticed something. There were no young people at the table.

So, we need to hear the voices of young people. Our work is to get as many different young people to talk about racism as we can.

Young people are an important voice in this discussion.

# So, HOW can you hold a Community Conversation?



You can host a Community Conversation virtually on a platform like **Teams, Zoom, Skype, or Google Hangout.**

There are special roles needed so that the Conversation goes well.

## **YOU WILL NEED A HOST.**

The Host asks the group the questions and makes sure people are staying on topic.

The Host also makes sure the Conversation keeps moving forward. The Host should be someone who is comfortable taking the lead and is good with people.

## **YOU WILL ALSO NEED A RECORDER.**

The Recorder takes notes on the most important points made. The Recorder can use the Response Template sheet to collect the information. The Recorder should be someone who is good at taking notes.

Of course, you are going to need people to ANSWER your questions! Get 3-8 of your friends together. You don't want a big group because then some people won't get a chance to speak.

Once you have your group together, make sure everyone can meet on a certain time and date and then let everyone know the information they need:

**DATE**

**TIME**

**LOG IN LINK**

**PASSWORD**



You should also send out the **GREAT WAYS TO HAVE A GOOD CONVERSATION** sheet when you send out the other information.

This way, everyone will know what to do when they join.



## It's Time for Your Community Conversation! Now What?

Once everyone has joined the conversation, the Host explains the purpose of the conversation and how the call will proceed.

The Host also explains their role is to help have a meaningful Conversation and make sure everybody is provided a chance to speak up.

The Host will also introduce the Recorder and explain he/she will take notes during the conversation so the County can learn more about how young people feel about racism and how it impacts their lives.

Everybody should introduce themselves by providing their name and what school they attend. You should consider doing an **“icebreaker.”** For example: What are you most excited about in your life right now?

The Host will let everyone know they will be asked three questions for discussion, and they will have approximately 15 minutes to answer each question.

Once the group is finished with their Conversation, the Host will thank everyone who joined for their participation!

Your Conversation can take as long as you'd like—it all depends on how much participants have to say. Most conversations last about an hour.

These Conversations will look different for everyone. The important point is that you are having the discussion.



## How to Prepare for Community Conversations

TO HAVE A GOOD CONVERSATION, PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL COMFORTABLE SHARING DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES AND OPINIONS—THEY JUST NEED TO DO IT IN AN OPEN MINDED AND INCLUSIVE WAY.



The Host will ask three guiding questions

01

We know that Black and Brown community members are impacted by racism. How are you, your family, your friends, and your community impacted by racism? For example, how does racism effect education, jobs, safe housing, the justice system, safe places to relax and hang out, or access to healthy food?

02

What do you think needs to change? For example, what changes can improve education, jobs, safe housing, safe places to relax and hang out, access to healthy food, treatment by law enforcement among other things?

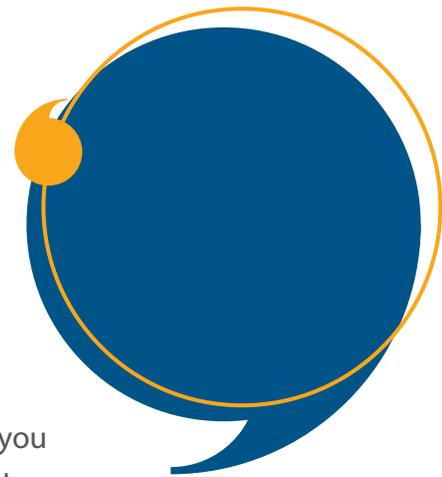
03

Do you have specific ideas for ways to make positive change happen in any of these areas? What organizations and people do you see as important to help make these changes?





# Pro Tips for Hosts and Recorders



## For Hosts

- It's your choice if you would like to take part in the conversation. But if you do, you still need to make sure the conversation continues to move and stays on topic.
- Make sure a range of people have a chance to speak.
- Keep an eye on the Recorder and slow the Conversation down if it looks like he or she needs to catch up on note-taking.

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## For Recorders

- Take notes using a notebook, notecards, or a laptop computer—whatever works best for you.
- Don't feel like you have to capture every detail—just the highlights.
- Don't hesitate to ask people to repeat or clarify something they've said.



# How to have a great conversation

## SPEAK FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE

- Be honest and willing to share.
- Speak only for yourself and don't speak for others or for an entire group. Use "I" statements.
- Focus on your own experiences.
- Share examples.

## RESPECT THE GROUP

- What you share during community conversations is honored and respected.
- Be mindful of the time.
- If you tend to share a lot, challenge yourself to listen more.
- If you tend to remain quiet in group discussions, challenge yourself to speak a little more.

## LISTEN TO LEARN

- Listen with curiosity and be willing to learn from others and to change your mind.
- Allow yourself to stretch beyond your comfort zone.

## BE AWARE OF YOUR IMPACT

- Resist the temptation to interrupt.
- Be open to the wisdom in each person's story.
- Use the skills you have to help the whole group have a good conversation.
- Be courageous.

# Next Steps

Once you have your conversation  
your Recorder can send their notes to:  
**[equity@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:equity@cuyahogacounty.us)**

Your experiences and ideas will be shared  
with the Cuyahoga County Citizens'  
Advisory Council on Equity and Cuyahoga  
County Executive Armond Budish.





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