

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for Parish Book Groups Reading

How To Be An Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi

The questions below are designed to be used by a church-based book group conducting a three-session reading program centered on Kendi's book. If possible, we recommend holding the three meetings in three successive weeks (for example, on three consecutive Wednesday evenings) in order to create the greatest possible sense of continuity, momentum, and cumulative learning. For each session, chapters to be read in advance and appropriate discussion questions are provided.

SESSION 1: Introduction and Chapters 1-6

Discussion Questions:

1. The central message of Ibram X. Kendi's *How To Be An Antiracist* is that the opposite of *racist* isn't *not racist*. The true opposite of *racist* is *antiracist*. "The good news," Kendi writes, "is that racist and antiracist are not fixed identities. We can be racist one minute and an antiracist the next." What does it mean to have to constantly reaffirm your identity as an antiracist? What might we win and/or lose as individuals by living with this viewpoint?
2. In *How To Be An Antiracist*, Kendi shares his own experience with racist thinking. How does his honesty help give us space to acknowledge and name our own racist behaviors and attitudes? How has racist thinking affected your life?
3. Kendi writes, "The only way to undo racism is to constantly identify it and describe it—and then dismantle it." What is involved in maintaining this mindset in our everyday lives? What are some of the challenges you've encountered in this effort?
4. If you are ready to make a commitment to strive to be an antiracist, what is the first step you will take? How will you check yourself and hold yourself accountable when you recognize that you are being racist?
5. Kendi thinks that we should assess political candidates as being racist or antiracist based on the ideas they express and the policies they support, rather than listening to what they say is in their minds or their hearts. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

6. In his chapter on ethnicity, Kendi states that valuing immigrants from European countries and devaluing immigrants from Latin America is a form of racism. How is this type of racism expressed, shared, and spread in American society? How has it affected your life?

SESSION 2: Chapters 7-12

Discussion Questions:

1. In our society, the problem of crime is often discussed in racial terms, despite the fact that levels of violent crime are more closely correlated with unemployment levels than with race. How might our society change if dangerous neighborhoods were described as “high-unemployment neighborhoods” rather than “Black” or “minority” neighborhoods?
2. How does evaluating other cultures on the basis of Western European cultural standards trap us in racist ideas?
3. Is it possible for us to assess other cultures on the basis of their own cultural standards? What challenges do we face when we strive to learn to do this?
4. At times, inequities between Light and Dark African Americans are as wide as those between Black and White Americans. How have you seen *colorism* play out in real life or in the media?
5. What part does *classism* play in the inequities that exist within communities of color? How do racism, colorism, and classism interact in our society?
6. Kendi writes, “White supremacist is code for anti-human, a nuclear ideology that poses an existential threat to human existence.” In what ways could white supremacy pose a threat to the happiness and even the survival of white people? How has the danger of white supremacy impacted your own life?

SESSION 3: Chapters 13-18

Discussion Questions:

1. Kendi argues that to be antiracist, one must stand against *all* forms of bigotry. How are various kinds of bigotry connected with one another? Why is standing against other kinds of bigotries so essential to standing against racism?

2. Kendi concludes *How To Be An Antiracist* by comparing racism and cancer. What do you think of this comparison?
3. Kendi believes we can defy the odds, heal society of racism, and create an antiracist society. Do you share this hope? What is the role of hope in the antiracist movement? What role can be played by other emotions, such as anger, pride, fear, grief, and joy?
4. What efforts can/should be made within your congregation to promote antiracism?
5. What role can your parish church play in supporting efforts to make your local community into an antiracist community?
6. What can/should the Episcopal Diocese of New York do support the antiracist work of our individual parishes, of our city and region, and of our nation?