



## **Discussion Guide for *Antiracism in Animal Advocacy: Igniting Cultural Transformation***

Thank you for reading our book! We hope this document will provide you with the opportunity to have deep and meaningful conversations. You can find more information about the book on our website: [encompassmovement.org/book](http://encompassmovement.org/book). The audiobook is available at [Our Hen House](#) and web versions of the essays at [Sentient Media](#).

### **Guidelines for the discussion**

We offer the following guidelines that have been lifted from the #1 New York Times Bestseller, *You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo published by Seal Press. The full reference for these guidelines can be found [here](#):

1. If you are in a majority white space, talk with Black, Indigenous, and people of the global majority (BIPGM) in advance—in a private, safe setting—to hear their concerns about the upcoming discussion. Ask what subjects they are eager to discuss, and if there are subjects they do not want to discuss. Ask what would make them feel safe and comfortable. Then, incorporate these needs and boundaries into the agreed-upon parameters of the discussion. Be prepared to enforce them instead of waiting on the few people of the global majority in the group to risk ostracization by speaking out.
2. Be aware of who in the group is given the most space to talk and try to center the conversation around voices of the global majority—and, in particular, women and nonbinary people of the global majority.
3. Ask all attendees what they hope to get out of the book, and out of the group discussion. Encourage group members to verbalize their intentions so that everyone has a better chance of reaching aligned goals.
4. Make space for the fear, anger, and hurt of BIPGM. Abuse is never okay, but what is often called “abuse” in heated discussions on race is often simply BIPGM expressing very justified emotions about living in a white supremacist society. It’s fine to maintain firm boundaries about what sort of language and behavior is and is not tolerated, but consider reading about tone policing before you decide what language is acceptable.

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5. Do not allow racist statements or slurs against BIPGM. When BIPGM finally feel safe enough to honestly talk about their experiences, nothing hurts more than to be answered with a racist reply. It is an act of violence against BIPGM and a betrayal of the group. Be very clear about this from the start, and be prepared to remove offenders if they are making BIPGM feel unsafe.
6. Try to tie the discussion to issues that are happening in your group's community.
7. Don't be afraid to pause conversations that are becoming overly heated, or if you feel that BIPGM in the group are not feeling safe.
8. Do not allow white group members to treat their discomfort as harm done to them. It is the instinct of our culture to center white emotions and experiences; don't let that happen in these discussions. The comfort of white attendees should be very, very far down on the priority list. If white attendees feel strongly that they need to center their feelings and experiences in the discussion, set up a space away from the group where they can talk with other white people. Do not let it take over the group discussion or become a burden that BIPGM in the group have to bear.
9. Don't allow BIPGM to be turned into therapists or dictionaries for white group members. If you are white, you shouldn't be looking to the BIPGM in the group to absolve you of your past sins, process your feelings of guilt, or help you understand every phrase in the book that gives you pause.
10. Acknowledge that your discussion is a very, very small step in your efforts to tackle issues on race. Even if you are reading this book to help you process a specific issue affecting your community, workplace, or organization, chances are that it will not be solved in a few gatherings. This book is meant to help you have better conversations in the hope that you will have many of them. Centuries-old constructs of race and generations of systems of oppression are not torn down in a few hours. Appreciate the small moments of progress as you make them—because every bit of progress matters—and also know that you will still have more to do. Do not allow yourself to become overly discouraged by the task ahead of you.
11. For BIPGM in the group: please know that you have every right to your boundaries, your feelings, your thoughts, and your humanity in this discussion. You have the right to be heard, and your experiences are real and they matter. Please remember that. And thank you—thank you for your generosity in joining yet another conversation on race. If you do not hear this from other members, please hear it from me. You are appreciated.

## Questions to discuss

1. As you review the glossary of definitions, what definitions were new to you? What definitions do you feel need more explanation or context?
2. In the foreword by Aryenish Birdie, she states "Racism is a problem white folks created, so the burden should be on whites to break it down and rebuild. However, to date, this hasn't happened."
  - o How does this statement make you feel? What would it look like for white people to bear this burden? How can white folks lead in breaking down racism while also being deferential to BIPGM?

## Awakening

3. In Shayna Rowbotham's essay "*Chinese Eyes: Exploring Identity and White Supremacy in Animal Rights*" she says, "The years of my life spent living with a false sense of whiteness mean that I am often scared of "getting it wrong" and view much of the work I have to do in the same way a white person might. But I also understand that I am a product of my environment and while in many ways I've felt tied to whiteness, I have been subjected to racism and have harbored internalized racism."
  - o What has your journey of racial awakening been like? What's your experience been like with your own racial identity? What are some moments that opened your eyes to racial inequity in our movement?
4. In PJ Nyman's essay "*White Veganism Doesn't Serve Me Either*" they say, "Vegan activism can be an appealing framework for white liberals, precisely because it appears all-encompassing. It's also convenient that non-human animals can't hold us accountable for the quality of our allyship. In practical terms, the decision not to use animals and animal-derived products (and encouraging others to do the same) in itself does very little in challenging us to face our own role in systems that oppress other humans."
  - o What does it mean to collectively choose to be antiracist, in order to change the course of our movement and our impact on animals? Why is it important to be [antiracist versus non-racist](#)?
5. In Mikaela Saccoccio's essay "*How Philanthropy in Farmed Animal Advocacy Reinforces White Bubbles*" she says, "No funder in our movement intends for their philanthropy to entrench racial inequity—yet not intentionally promoting racism isn't enough. In isolation, each funder's individual decision about where to donate might make sense for their philanthropic portfolio. Then, when you look at funders' donation decisions in aggregate, you see the harsh statistical skew toward whiteness. The problem belongs to everyone, and therefore it belongs to no one. Racial inequity in farmed animal philanthropy has thrived off of the bystander effect."
  - o How have you seen the bystander effect play out in your life/your organization? Consider your family, classmates, teachers, extracurricular activities, coworkers,

bookshelves, artists (music, TV, movies, or otherwise), etc. — how segregated are these? Who are you connected to and how does this impact where you spend your time and resources?

## Introspection

6. In Christopher Eubanks' essay "*As a Black Man, I Felt Uncomfortable Becoming an Animal Activist*" he says, "Ignoring social justice allows inequity to thrive, leading to turmoil and internal conflict within the movement. Ultimately, ignoring social justice deters the progress we can make for the animals."
  - What acts of resistance have you seen or perpetuated yourself to incorporating racial equity into the animal protection movement? How have you interacted with these acts of resistance? Did you stay silent or speak out? What were the consequences to your decision?
  
7. In Jamie Berger's essay "*Racism in Me, the Movement, and the Meat Industry*" she says "By refusing to address the meat industry's racism—and our own—many white animal advocates, including myself, have been complicit in the very system of oppression we say we want to dismantle. We are replicating the meat industry's power structure within our own movement. Redistributing this power in both sectors is the only way to achieve our goal of creating a more compassionate world."
  - In what ways are you complicit in systems of human oppression? How can you challenge yourself to redistribute power? What does redistribution of power look like on a small scale? Large scale?
  
8. In Unny Nambudiripad's essay "*How My Cultural Identity Informs My Animal Advocacy*" he states, "It turns out that my lineage had played a greater role in my commitment to ending animal suffering than I initially understood. I just needed to reconnect with my roots in order to reconnect with my advocacy—but this time, it was my own experiences (not the ones written about by a white man) that informed my activist beliefs and tactics."
  - How does your lineage and/or culture influence your beliefs? What do you know about your lineage?
  
9. In Malina Tran's essay "*The Need for Ethical Consistency in Animal Advocacy*" she says, "Oppression does not exist in a vacuum. Perceiving animals as separate from and inferior to humans, invoking an "us versus them" mentality, has normalized their abuse... The "animal" category manifests itself in the human species when dominant groups subjugate marginalized people. When people are viewed as animals, objectifying and harming them become justified actions. Historical and contemporary examples include, but are not limited to, the detention of undocumented migrants and the policing, incarceration, and killing of Black people."
  - How have you seen this play out in your community? How does comparing non-human animals to human animals cause tension when viewed through the lens

of white supremacy? For example, if humans are part of the animal kingdom, why can it be problematic to compare humans to non human animals?

### Accountability

10. In Dana McPhall's essay "*What I've Learned by Applying an Antiracist Framework to My Animal Advocacy*" she asks the following powerful questions that we encourage you to grapple with to start dreaming of the future we desire:
  - "What would it look like to imagine a world where I'm not defined by the racial and gender constructs imposed upon me [as a Black woman]? Where people racialized as white are no longer invested in whiteness? Where the lives of nonhuman animals are no longer circumscribed within the social construct "animal?" Where huge swaths of our planet are not considered disposable, along with the people and wildlife who inhabit them?"
11. In Brooke Haggerty's essay "*Using Research and Data to Create an Inclusive Animal Rights Movement*" she challenges us to "set aside Klan images and think of white supremacy culture as an unnamed system in which cultural norms and structures (held in place by systems of power) encourage and reinforce white privilege. In other words, whites control the dominant narratives (wealth, government, military, education, media, entertainment, etc.) in our society."
  - What are covert ways white supremacy shows up in our work? What would it look like to develop an antiracist framework for doing animal activism?

### Leading

12. In Michelle Rojas-Soto's essay "*Oppression Without Hierarchy: Racial Justice and Animal Advocacy*" she states, "For the sake of the farmed animals we advocate for, we must realize that the white "American experience is not neutral. It is not a clean slate on which we can sprinkle bits of diversity and ethnicity for flavor. We must check ourselves every time we center whiteness in animal advocacy, which happens every day, because white supremacy culture is leading us astray."
  - What does she mean by "the white American experience is not neutral"? What are some examples of this showing up in your work? What kinds of power do we have to create an equitable movement?
13. In the afterword, written by Michelle Rojas-Soto, she states, "The reality of social growth and progress is that it takes many people staying consistently engaged in justice to push for change from lots of different angles and across lots of different systems simultaneously. And while we can try to be strategic, we never know in advance what the tipping point will be or when it will come."
  - What is your plan for staying consistently engaged in this work? How will you measure progress and hold yourself accountable? How would an equitable movement directly and indirectly impact non-human animals?