

A woman with braided hair and hoop earrings is shown in profile, speaking to a group of people. The background is dark and out of focus, showing other people in a group setting.

“MASKS OFF” FACILITATOR GUIDE

A guide for using the “Masks Off” video series to host an honest conversation about racism.

THIS FACILITATOR GUIDE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

Healthy Neighborhoods is a committee consisting of community members representing an array of organizations throughout Northeast Ohio. Healthy Neighborhoods' goal is to develop messaging that illuminates social determinants and their impact on place and health, while providing opportunities for community members to engage in issues around health and equity.

Since 2017, Healthy Neighborhoods has created content intersecting the topics of race, place, and health in ways that allow the broader community to have transcending and enlightening conversations. Prior projects include a short animation, *Do You SEE What I SEE* (which highlights social determinants of health) and *TOXIC - A Black Woman's Story* (which dispels myths around the infant mortality crisis in Northeast Ohio).

In our latest effort, the "We Wear the Mask" Campaign, we seek to illuminate issues related to racism and inequity by posing the question, "What does it mean to wear the mask today?" The "Masks Off" video series explores this question and more. We could not have created this series without the support of all our wonderful community partners.

View our community partners and learn more about the "We Wear the Mask" Campaign at cle4equity.org.

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WE'RE PROVIDING YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO HOST A DIALOGUE ABOUT RACISM – ALL IN ONE PLACE.

Consider hosting a discussion about one (or all three) of the topics below. We'll give you the tools you need to do it – video clips, discussion questions, and more – all in one place. To view the resources that accompany this guide, please visit this page at cle4equity.org:



1. WHAT IS “MASKING” AND IS IT STILL NECESSARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY? ∨

2. NAVIGATING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN PURSUIT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM ∨

3. COUNTING THE COST OF THE LOSS, RACISM RECOVERY ∨



Not into QR codes? Following is the direct link to this facilitator guide's corresponding web page: cle4equity.org/we-wear-the-mask-video-series-facilitator-guide

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

WHY IS “MASKS OFF” SPECIAL?

Because it provides an example of what an honest dialogue around racism might look like in the United States. It is our goal to model civil conversation about hard-to-discuss issues.

This guide is designed for discussion around the [“Masks-Off” video series](#).

These films were created with the intention of igniting local conversation and connection to dismantle internalized racism and to accelerate the development of a healthy and affirming racial identity — in other words, to unearth and heal from internalized (*subconscious*) false beliefs and to internalize an authentic, healthy identity.

This strategy, coupled with others, will help *change-agents* respond to life and community conditions from their best selves — to mitigate the cycle of having broken systems, trying to “fix” broken systems.

This guide contains tips for framing a conversation about racism with ground rules, key terms, and discussion prompts to elicit conversation after each video.

It is designed to accompany the video clips and additional content provided on the *Facilitator Guide* page of the website here: cle4equity.org/we-wear-the-mask-video-series-facilitator-guide

The tips and recommendations of this guide are applicable for all types of gatherings, whether large community group discussions or smaller, more informal conversations with colleagues, friends, or family.

ABOUT THE “MASKS OFF” VIDEO SERIES

The “Masks Off” video series provides an example of what an honest dialogue around racism might look like in the United States. It is our goal to model civil conversation about hard-to-discuss issues.

The series was shot in 2 parts:

- 1. Part 1 - Black Conversation:** features a full-length, moderated conversation amongst a group of Black people discussing racial issues from their perspectives.
- 2. Part 2 - White Conversation:** features a full-length, moderated conversation amongst a group of white people discussing racial issues from their perspectives.

These videos were then broken down into shorter, theme-based vignettes, which serve as the focal point for the discussion prompts outlined in this guide.

An intentional decision was made to film the 2-part series in racially separate groups, demonstrating that some aspects of racial equity work are better done in a caucus, and some, to be done cross-racially.

(Caucusing was already demonstrated in the “Masks Off” videos and vignettes so that diverse audiences could objectively view other people’s vulnerability and feel more inclined to share their own experiences, without necessarily needing to caucus at their own event.)

Both the full-length films and “Masks Off” vignettes can be found at cle4equity.org.



FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

The subject matter of the “Masks Off” series can be difficult to talk about.

Before starting your discussion, co-create or review a set of ground rules. Ground rules help ensure that everyone is on the same page from the onset and they reduce the risk of the discussion becoming unproductive or getting out of hand.

When discussing a subject such as *racism*, it is also recommended that the facilitator normalize feelings of discomfort and remind people of the vulnerabilities that may arise. Ideally, you want people to *lean-in* to the feelings that may surface, without feeling pressured. People may choose to share very personal experiences, but they should never feel compelled to share their pain for the sake of someone else’s learning or entertainment.

Following are 3 sample ways to approach ground rules.

They were used by the facilitators to engage the participants in the “Masks Off” videos. If appropriate, use one of these options, or invite participants to help create their own.

1. SAMPLE FRAMING USED BY VELETTE GAVIN (VERGE IMPACT PARTNERS), FACILITATOR FOR THE "MASKS OFF" BLACK GROUP DISCUSSION

- We invite you to create and work in a brave space, together.
- Honor one another’s voices and stories. (There is enough room for everyone.)
- Speak your truth. Hear the truth of others.
- Cypher, don’t battle – meaning, you can add to someone else’s comment but don’t criticize or judge it.
- Embrace discomfort & messiness.

2. SAMPLE FRAMING USED BY ADELE DIMARCO (YINOVATE), FACILITATOR FOR THE "MASKS OFF" WHITE GROUP DISCUSSION

- This is head & heart work.
- Vulnerability is strength.
- This is a safe space, but it may be an uncomfortable space. Hold it anyway.
- Embrace discomfort & messiness.
- Stay the course. Don’t abort the mission due to the discomfort.

3. SAMPLE FRAMING FROM COMMONHEALTH ACTION (WWW.COMMONHEALTHACTION.ORG)

- Use “I,” not “you,” statements.
- Practice respectful listening and talking.
- Be present and honest.
- Honor the code of confidentiality.
- Pause to accommodate literacy moments if someone is unclear about jargon or the meaning of a concept or word.
- Assume good intentions.

CONTEXT SETTING – KEY TERMS

Before playing any of the video segments, help ensure your participants have a common understanding of foundational key terms that are crucial to a dialogue about racism.

RACISM

THE 4 LEVELS OF RACISM

INTERNALIZED RACIAL OPPRESSION

INTERNALIZED RACIAL SUPERIORITY

MASKING

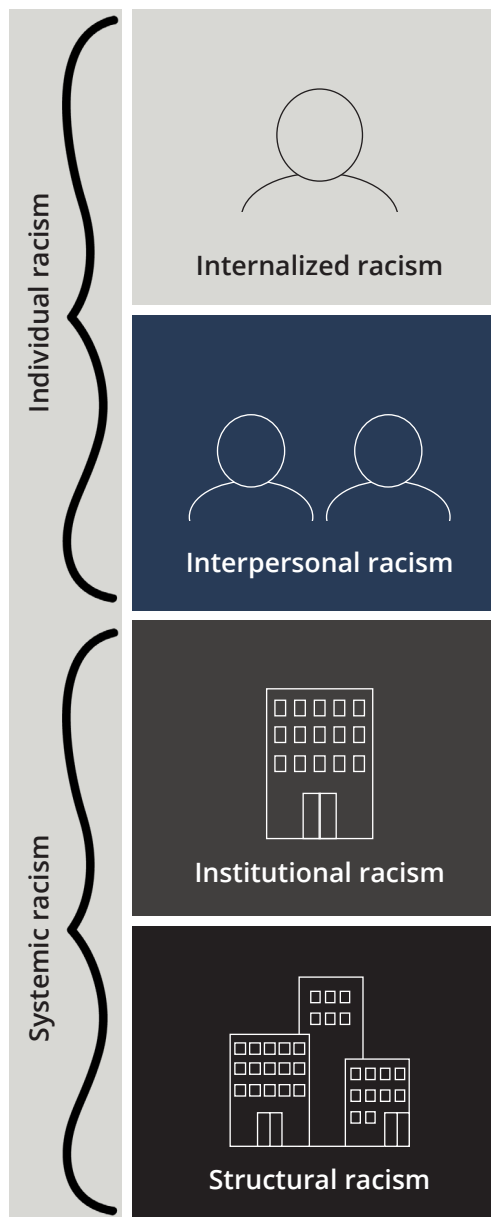
RACISM

1. A system of advantage based on race.¹
2. **Racism** is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.²

THE 4 LEVELS OF RACISM

The 4 levels of racism³ include:

1. **Internalized racism** lies within individuals. These are private beliefs and biases about race that reside inside our own minds and bodies. For White people, this can be internalized privilege, entitlement, and superiority; for people of color, this can be internalized oppression. Examples: prejudice, xenophobia, conscious and unconscious bias about race, influenced by the white supremacy.
2. **Interpersonal racism** occurs between individuals. Bias, bigotry, and discrimination based on race. Once we bring our private beliefs about race into our interactions with others, we are now in the interpersonal realm. Examples: public expressions of prejudice and hate, microaggressions, bias and bigotry between individuals.
3. **Institutional racism** occurs within institutions. It involves unjust policies, practices, procedures, and outcomes that work better for White people than people of color, whether intentional or not. Example: A school district that concentrates students of color in the most overcrowded, under-funded schools with the least experienced teachers.
4. **Structural racism** is racial inequities across institutions, policies, social structures, history, and culture. Structural racism highlights how racism operates as a system of power with multiple interconnected, reinforcing, and self-perpetuating components which result in racial inequities across all indicators for success. Structural racism is the racial inequity that is deeply rooted and embedded in our history and culture and our economic, political, and legal systems. Examples: The “racial wealth gap,” where Whites have many times the wealth of people of color, resulting from the history and current reality of institutional racism in multiple systems.





CONTEXT SETTING – KEY TERMS (CONTINUED)

INTERNALIZED RACIAL OPPRESSION

Internalized racial oppression⁴ is defined as a complex societal, multi-generational process that teaches Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) to believe, accept, live, or act out negative societal definitions of self. This can show up as a rejection of other BIPOC, rejection of self, assimilation, covering, anti-Blackness, worshipping whiteness, and in other ways.

INTERNALIZED RACIAL SUPERIORITY

Internalized racial superiority⁴ is defined as a complex societal, multi-generational process that teaches white people to believe, accept, and live out superior definitions of self. This can show up as entitlement, unwillingness to acknowledge or inability to see privilege, saviorism, anti-Blackness and conscious racism, unhealthy white racial identity, denial of racism and in other ways.

MASKING

Masking, in this context, refers to the metaphorical masks that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) – particularly African Americans – wear to survive and thrive in America. Some wear a mask in the workplace, in court rooms, during encounters with the police, at the hospital, and at various times in their daily lives.

The mask is worn for a myriad of reasons, including: physical and psychological protection, to “fit in” with white culture, or as a refuge or hiding place from “white gaze.”

Some have likened it to “code-switching,” the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation to appeal to the dominant culture.

Masking is not about being phony. Rather, it is highly associated with internalized racism and the behaviors it elicits. It can be thought about as having “double consciousness,” a concept coined by WEB DuBois. In his renowned book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, he describes it as, “always looking at one's self through the eyes” of whiteness and “measuring oneself by the means of a nation that looked back in contempt.”

1. *Portraits of White Racism*, Second Edition, David T. Wellman, September 24, 1993 by Cambridge University Press. First published January 1, 1977.
2. Obtained from the Racial Equity Tools Glossary at <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary> which states the source on their website as: “What Is Racism?” – Dismantling Racism Works (dRworks) web workbook.
3. Obtained from Race Forward at <https://www.raceforward.org/about/what-is-racial-equity-key-concepts>.
4. Obtained from Erica Merritt, MA, CDP, BCC Founder & Principal Consultant, Equius Group, at <https://equiugroup.biz/>.

SEGMENT 1:

“WHAT IS MASKING AND IS IT STILL NECESSARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY?”

**Facilitation tip: At the end of each session, conclude with a check-out question to officially end the experience and to leave participants with a few sentiments that capture the impact felt by those in attendance. Sample check-out question: “What has shifted or changed for you as a result of this conversation tonight?”*



MASKS OFF VIGNETTE 1.1 - BLACK CONVERSATION

1. What stood out for you as you watched the clip? Why?
2. What connections do you draw between masking and internalized oppression? (personal experience or witnessing)



MASKS OFF VIGNETTE 1.2 - WHITE CONVERSATION

1. How does masking or unmasking differ based on your racial identity? Share examples from your experience.
2. In what way is internalized racism (either oppression or privilege) impacting the spaces where you exist? Family, Work, Faith Community, Neighborhood, etc.

SEGMENT 2:

“NAVIGATING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN THE PURSUIT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM”



MASKS OFF VIGNETTE 2.1 - BLACK CONVERSATION

1. How do you navigate the tension between a mask to survive and taking it off to thrive?
2. What are the conditions necessary for you to remove your mask at work?



MASKS OFF VIGNETTE 2.2 - WHITE CONVERSATION

1. How do white standards of professionalism shape your experience at work?
2. What is the cost to Black people to comply to these standards?
3. How does this vary for other people of color?
4. What is the cost to white people?

SEGMENT 3:

“COUNTING THE COST OF LOSS, RACISM RECOVERY”

**Please note: This discussion is specifically focused on tapping into our feelings and emotions about the losses associated with racism - not only the feelings that emerge at the surface level but also the deeper emotions. The questions remain the same after each video clip so that participants can reflect on whether or not their feelings changed based on the Black group conversation versus the white group conversation and why.*



MASKS OFF VIGNETTE 3.1 - BLACK CONVERSATION

1. How do you feel after watching the video?
2. How do you know you feel that way? Meaning, is there a deeper emotion undergirding the feeling(s) that surface?



MASKS OFF VIGNETTE 3.2 - WHITE CONVERSATION

1. How do you feel after watching the video?
2. How do you know you feel that way? Meaning, is there a deeper emotion undergirding the feeling(s) that surface?

VIEW ON THE WEB AT CLE4EQUITY.ORG:



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