



# Guide to Difficult Conversations About Anti-Blackness

*How to talk to your immigrant family about racism*



# Real change begins with us.

Throughout history, Black Americans have been systematically denied dignity, humanity, and justice. Even today, our customs, policies, and practices are deeply rooted in intolerance and cruelty. As strongly as we demand justice and equity for immigrants, we must also demand the same for Black Americans who face deadly and daily racism and injustice.

Real change begins with us. It requires us to first confront the ways that we ourselves have been complicit in anti-Blackness, and also have difficult conversations with our immigrant families about ways that it is pervasive in our own cultures and homes.

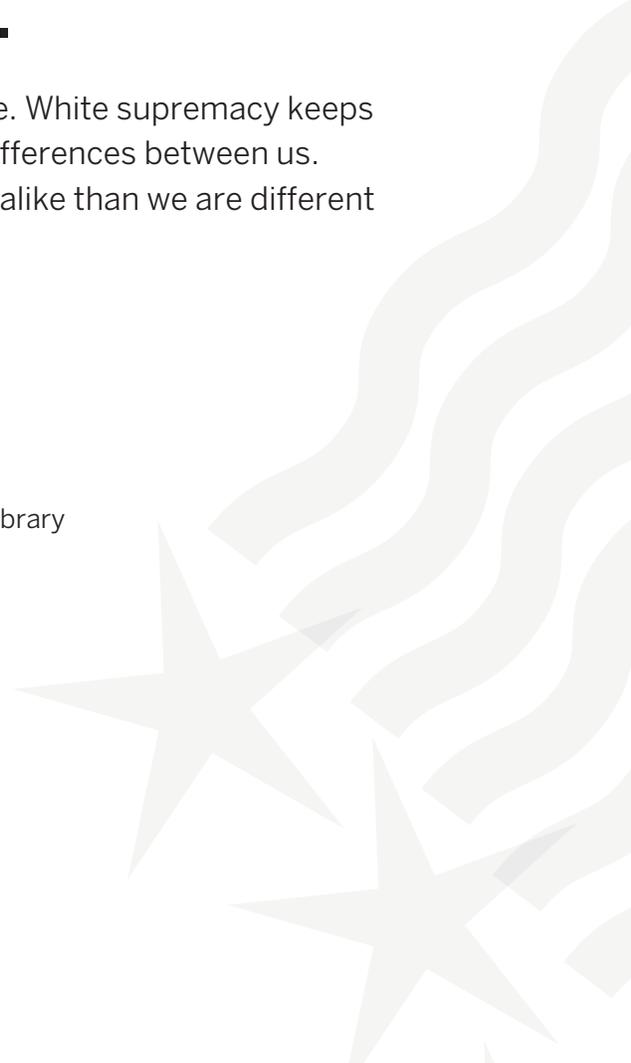
We cannot afford to tiptoe around this issue in the name of respect or deference. It is not possible to avoid conflict *and* be anti-racist. We have to make a choice. This moment requires courage. It requires us to take a stand for what is right.

## 1 Educate yourself.

Learn about the history and realities of Black people. White supremacy keeps communities of color divided by emphasizing the differences between us. Use history to remind your family that we are more alike than we are different and that this fight is about all of us.

Here are a few great places to start:

- [Eyes on the Prize](#) (Free with login)
- [About Race](#) and [Code Switch](#) podcasts
- [The 1619 Project](#) from the New York Times
- [A People's History of Harlem](#) from the New York Public Library
- Learn about [Ida B. Wells](#), [Ella Baker](#) and the [founders of #BlackLivesMatter](#)
- [Letters for Black Lives: Follow-up Conversations Guide](#) ([Translated](#) in 30+ languages)
- Use [age-appropriate resources](#) to learn about race with younger family members



## 2 Harness the power of story.

People can be reluctant to have a conversation about their own beliefs and behaviors. As you prepare to have this conversation with your family, it may help to start by watching a film or television show together. Pop culture often provides a social script for how we see and treat those around us. Use these stories to ease into the conversation. Commenting on fictional characters is low stakes, and your family may be more open to sharing opinions on the characters and their actions.

Recommended films and television shows:

- [21 essential films about Black lives, in every major genre](#)
- [11 essential Black TV series you can watch right now](#)
- [Just Mercy](#)
- *The Hate U Give*
- *The Black Power Mixtape: 1967–1975*
- *Mudbound*
- *Selma*
- *The Get Down*
- *13th*
- *When They See Us*
- *The Sun Is Also a Star*
- [And more](#)

*NOTE: Be careful about consuming “Black” culture that is not controlled by Black creators. From music, art, and fashion to sports and entertainment, Black culture has become synonymous with American culture and is coveted all over the world. Black culture is often appropriated and commodified by non-Black creators in ways that perpetuate anti-Blackness, deepen health, economic, and educational disparities, and can contribute to premature death for Black people, particularly at the hands of law enforcement. If we consume and benefit from Black culture, we have a responsibility to center, uplift, and defend Black lives.*

## 3 Be vulnerable.

None of us is perfect. If we want to have a dialogue with our family about how they can be better, we have to be willing to admit the ways that we can be better as well.

Meet your family where they are. Was there a time when you believed a harmful stereotype to be true? A time when you used words that you didn’t realize were painful? Take into account your family members’ ages and lived experiences, but don’t be afraid to [speak with young children](#) about race.

We all have a journey that starts somewhere, and sharing how you came to recognize your own blind spots can help someone feel a little bit safer to share their starting point with you.

## 4 Be curious and listen.

Perhaps we assume that our families believe one thing, and we may be surprised to learn that they believe something different. We need to ask questions and lead with curiosity. More importantly, we need to listen to understand instead of listening to respond or argue.

Some questions to ask:

- What was your experience of Blackness in your home country?
- What ideas did you learn about Blackness when you came to America? How did you learn them?
- What personal experiences have you had that make you believe that those ideas were true or not true?
- What reaction do you have when you hear someone say “Black Lives Matter”? What about when you hear someone say “All Lives Matter”?
- Can you think of a time when you’ve had a thought or when you said or did something that was anti-Black?

## 5 Connect the dots.

Now that you have a deeper understanding of where your family stands on this issue and where they are coming from, make the connection between Black history and their own. For example, it’s rarely acknowledged in immigrant circles that the 1964 Civil Rights Act paved the way for the critically important 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.

Refer to characters in films and television shows you watched to point out similarities or differences in what is being communicated. Pull from your own journey and recognize the experiences that helped you get to where you are.

Remember, this is not about winning an intellectual argument. It is about meeting people where they are, making them feel safe, and helping them reach a new understanding.

# 6 Center. Elevate. Activate.

Once your family is able to understand racism through their own experience and history, it's important to center and elevate the experience of the Black community.

Black Americans bear the brunt of racism, but racism hurts us all. It is the responsibility of us all to take action and fight back, not just today, but as part of our everyday practice.

Here are some actions that you and/or your family can take together to defend Black lives:

- Challenge people around you when they make problematic jokes or statements about Black people. Why do they think it's funny? Who is harmed by jokes like theirs?
- Hold people around you accountable who embrace Black culture as "cool" but perpetuate anti-Black narratives in their actions and thoughts.
- Continue to consciously [unlearn racist beliefs](#).
- Investigate ways to [raise racially conscious children](#). It's never too early to start.
- Regularly watch films and TV shows by Black creators that center Black characters with your family.
- Look at the policies and hiring diversity in your own workplace. Are there conversations you can start for improvement?
- Be a conscious consumer, support businesses that actively support Black communities. Prioritize Black- and family-owned businesses when you can.
- If able, donate to mutual aid funds and/or [organizations fighting on the frontlines for Black communities](#).
- Attend a rally or protest. [Here are some tips about how to protest safely](#).
- Designate time to make calls to elected officials and sign petitions asking for more just treatment of Black people, incorporate it into your family's routine.

For more action ideas, visit [Movement for Black Lives \(M4BL\)](#) or visit [Define American](#).