



BE *the* BRIDGE

MOVING TOWARD
RACIAL RECONCILIATION

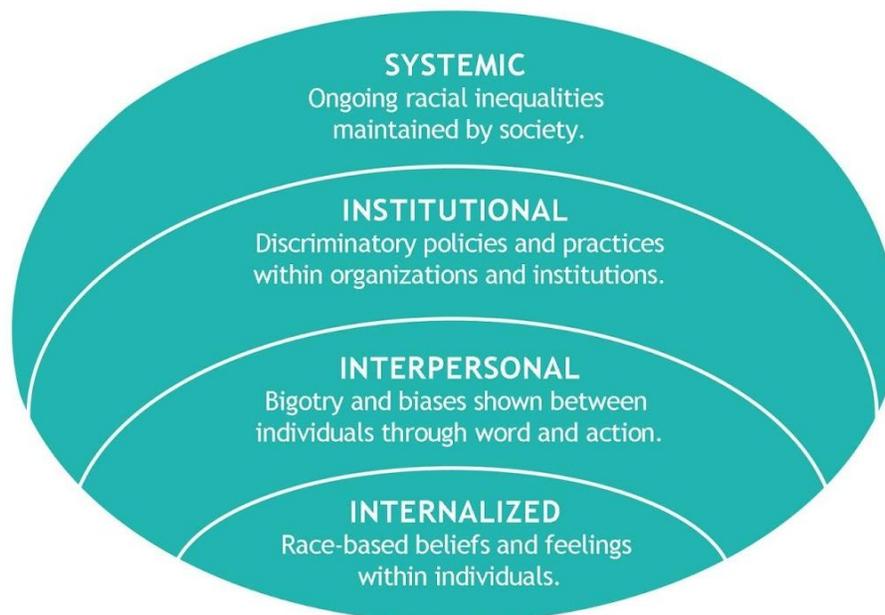
Be the Bridge for Boston Groups - Spring 2021

Purpose of the Groups

- To build on introductory racial justice work that has been done across many churches (such as Be the Bridge) to nurture shared language, theological framework, and friendships with diverse Boston-based Christians towards racial justice as a core part of the Church's mission
- To understand various initiatives that are happening in Greater Boston towards systemic racial justice
- To hold people accountable and support one another in actively working against racism and towards reconciliation, equity, and justice in our day-to-day lives
- To proactively engage in the movement towards racial justice in this crucial cultural moment and see Christians lead in declaring the foundation of racial justice within the gospel

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LEVELS ON WHICH RACISM EXISTS



Structure

- Monthly Speaker Series from February to June - Locally-focused resources and speakers who are working in a particular aspect of justice (education, housing, incarceration/police reform, economics) to share with the group
 - Each session will include a 20-minute presentation, followed by Q & A, practical action steps, and prayer. This speaker series is open to the public for anyone to join (1 hour total)
- Following the speaker, there will be small groups that will meet for 30 minutes with people who have committed to attending the four speaker series talks and meeting at least one other time per month for support and accountability in living out God's call for racial justice in our day-to-day lives.
 - Open to anyone who has done significant introductory racial justice learning/work with Be the Bridge or another program. If you are looking for more of an introductory learning group on racial justice, email Rev. Kelly (kelly@uniteboston.com) to find out about other introductory groups that are taking place
 - Group size is approximately 8-10 people with intentional diversity given to age, race, gender, denomination, etc. We may form themed groups based on different communities where individuals are seeking to implement racial justice (workplace, church, family/friends, school, neighborhood)
- There will be no charge for participating in the small groups, and there will be a \$10 recommended donation for attendance at the speaker series. All proceeds will go to support the highlighted speaker and ministry.

Speaker Series

Additional Small Groups

Thursday February 4 7:00 to 8:00pm speaker -Small groups until 8:30pm	Thursday February 18 7:00 to 8:00pm
Thursday March 4 7:00 to 8:00pm speaker -Small groups until 8:30pm	Thursday March 18 7:00 to 8:00pm
Thursday April 1 7:00 to 8:00pm speaker -Small groups until 8:30pm	Thursday April 15 7:00 to 8:00pm
Thursday May 6 7:00 to 8:00pm speaker -Small groups until 8:30pm	Thursday May 20 7:00 to 8:00pm
Thursday June 3 7:00 to 8:00pm speaker -Small groups until 8:30pm	Thursday June 17 - Time TBA Celebration BBQ with participants from the fall and spring

Commitment

The speaker series is open to the general public, and people are free to come and go with no commitment. For those that are interested in participating in the small groups, we ask that participants commit to attending each of the speaker series and the additional small group sessions. Because developing relationships take time, the more someone is able to consistently come and invest in this community, the more everyone will benefit.

Supporting Organizations



The Race & Christian Community Initiative at the Emmanuel Gospel Center



Testimonies

“UB’s sponsorship of Be the Bridge was a practical, strategic, and timely activity for fostering unity within the Body of Christ, as well as strengthening the Church’s engagement for racial healing in the world.” (Gregg Detweiler)

“I am grateful for UB’s heart and efforts to bring unity and racial reconciliation in Boston and metro Boston. Be the Bridge was challenging, informative and motivating.” (John Lynch)

“In the Be the Bridge groups, we were able to get to know each other over an extended period of time. People in my group shared experiences of what it could be like to live as a racial minority in this country. I feel now that I have a group of friends and peers living in different parts of the city, from different kinds of churches, who I can reach out to as our churches in the Boston area seek to work together across racial lines and for racial justice.” (Morgan Crago)

“Be the Bridge was a great opportunity for me to meet brothers and sisters in Christ from different churches and different backgrounds. It was a blessing to hear their stories and their perspectives, and to be challenged by the call to be reconciled to one another.” (Michael Oh)

“Be the Bridge Groups are a God-send. Christians need a place to come together, learn and grow together, ask questions safely and discuss hard realities, but in a way that is focused on Jesus and His mission. That is the glue that binds us all together. Highly recommend Christians join a group and grow together.” (Blake Whitney)

“I am very grateful that a group like Be The Bridge exists through UniteBoston, a staple in the Boston church community. It encourages hard work and commitment to the (costly) racial unity of our city’s church across many branches. I’ve gained many new brothers and sisters, white and people of color, to walk with and co-laboring with on the complex issue of racial justice. It brings the issue local and personal, and encourages us to engage as the church together. If you are looking for a way to engage in seeking racial justice in yourself, your family and community, UniteBoston’s Be the Bridge group is an excellent place to begin-- I especially commend the resources given to study each week that are very thought provoking and challenging.” (Pradeepan Parthiban, Antioch Church)

What can I expect from engaging in this process?

One of the most daunting aspects of embarking on a journey like this is not knowing what to expect. It may be helpful to think of it as you would any aspect of your Christian discipleship—a Spirit-led rearrangement of categories, assumptions, values, and beliefs:

- You'll develop greater awareness of God's desire for people of every tongue, tribe, and nation to form a united body in Christ.
- You'll be given tangible steps to take in order to transform your current views and vision regarding racial diversity.
- You'll have your assumptions and stereotypes challenged and your worldview expanded.
- You'll begin to bring interracial healing and transformation into your sphere of influence.

What will be required of me?

- Humility and openness to learning new things, recognizing your own biases and how you could be participating in systems of harm
- Interest in becoming aware of your own racial/ethnic identity and its impact in the world
- Listening to—and really hearing—others
- Willingness to trust God and take risks
- Commitment to the process, even when it gets difficult
- Disconnecting from privilege and power
- Showing up on time, being present, and completing small homework assignments to incorporate our learnings into our daily lives

Communication Guidelines

People are incredibly complex. Their worldview is shaped by a variety of factors including: ethnicity; family of origin; religious upbringing; hometown; and life experiences. In a community group, we bring this diverse group of people together to hopefully work towards a shared objective or destination. Much like a congested interchange, we must recognize that everyone is not coming from the same starting point and some travel (process) at different speeds.

Tensions tend to ratchet up when discussing the issue of race in America. Most often, people of color are introduced to the topic of race at an early age while white individuals begin these discussions at a much later age. This creates a difficulty when digging deeper into these conversations. Often, viewpoints on race may be wrapped up in one's personal identity, influenced by family members or upbringing, and/or connected to one's religious/spiritual/moral beliefs. Unfortunately, challenging ideas around race may be seen as a personal challenge or an indictment on America.

The following communication guidelines are meant to help all of us journey together towards racial righteousness and justice in a brave and rewarding way. They help each of us to establish brave

spaces while discussing race. We affirm that each of us are fearfully and wonderfully made and have a variety of unique backgrounds, values, and experiences.

We will:

- **STEP UP, STEP BACK**

- Be mindful of taking up much more space than others. On the same note, empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.

- **BE ENGAGED IN THE JOURNEY, NOT JUST THE MOMENT**

- Acknowledge each other's perspectives, even if you disagree with them.
- We encourage you to participate in discussion, activities, reflection time, and outside readings to the fullest of your ability.
- Sometimes, we will have to hang out in uncertainty and not rush to quick solutions, especially in relation to racial understanding.

- **FIND COMFORT IN DISCOMFORT**

- It can feel daunting to dive into the unknown abyss of racial conversations. It takes courage to move toward what is uncomfortable and unnatural but honest conversations help bring healing and reconciliation.

- **BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER**

- Allow everyone the opportunity to speak.
- Ask questions when you don't understand; don't assume you know what others' thinking or their underlying motivations.
- Listen deeply to, and honor, the feelings of anger, pain, and joy in those who have been the targets of racism.
- Listen deeply to, and honor, the feelings of shame, fear, and grief in those who are waking up to the reality of racism in our churches, neighborhoods, and nation.
- Be aware of the fact that tone of voice and body language are powerful communicators. Some postures or facial expressions (e.g., crossed arms, eye rolls, loud sighs) can silence, provoke, intimidate, or hurt others. Others (e.g., facing and looking at the speaker, staying quiet, nodding) can show you are listening respectfully.

- **SPEAK FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE INSTEAD OF GENERALIZING**

- Don't expect any individuals to speak on behalf of their gender, ethnic group, class, status, etc. (or the groups we perceive them to be a part of).

- Don't generalize or project onto others. Use "I" statements instead of blaming, accusations, or becoming defensive.
Example: Instead of "You never listen to anyone, and you're not really listening to me now" use "I feel that my concerns are not being heard"
- Avoid inflammatory language, including name-calling. Be sensitive to words or ideas that may trigger racial trauma for marginalized individuals.
Example: "thugs" "welfare queens" "drug dealers" "You took it the wrong way," use "That was just one person" "Everybody is not like that"

- **ASSUME THE BEST OF EACH OTHER**

- **KNOW WHAT IS INSIDE THE CIRCLE AND OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE**

- Observe confidentiality and don't share someone else's story without their permission