Together Lexington

Courageous Conversations
Race Relations
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Facilitation Services Provided By

THE FACILITATION CENTER
FUNNELING IDEAS INTO ACTION

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Purpose and Outcomes

Overall Purpose: To encourage meaningful discussion and awareness among all members of our community.

Meeting Purpose: To identify community concerns regarding race relations in Lexington and share ideas on how to address them.

Outcomes:
- Prioritized list of key race relations in Lexington
- List of ideas for how the community might address these issues
- Recommendations for next steps

Introductory Activity and Opening Conversation

Participants were given postcards and asked to select an image that spoke to them regarding race relations in Lexington. Participants then introduced themselves and shared their postcards at their tables.

Volunteers were asked to share their postcards with the larger group, then to identify what stood out to them from what was shared. This conversation led to further discussion on current, local events that have been encouraging/discouraging as it relates to race relations and the impact of these events on the community. Some of the salient themes are captured below.

- Common interests can unite, such as "band parents"

- Differing views

- Innocence of youth – we all cry in one language

- Lack of understanding for what other races think/feel

- Many of the postcards shared were in black and white

- Micro-aggressions

- No white men were in attendance

- Only people of color volunteered to speak from each table

- Postcards didn't portray people of color

- The only postcards portraying people of color were two dimensional

- Topic is uncomfortable and is often the elephant in the room

- We have a long way to go, but love is possible

- What do white people say when they are with each other?

What are the key race relations issues in Lexington?

Participants were asked to answer the key question within their small groups and encouraged to think broadly, including multiple community aspects. Once all of their issues and concerns were listed, each small group was asked to identify the two most critical issues for the community to address. Their prioritized responses are presented below.

Critical Issues and Concerns

- Confederate statues, Rupp Arena name
- Diversity dialogue
  - What do white people think? What about straight white men?
- Exploitive images of people of color, i.e., black males and females
- Fear of discomfort keeps people out of conversations; comfort is a privilege
- Inequality of resources and allocation
- Lack of authentic action to ensure people of color, minorities, and immigrants are included and have ownership in the decision-making process, whether it's city-government or school boards
- Lack of educational equity
  - Achievement gaps, system benefiting some but not all
- Lack of inclusion, in-depth conversation, and action
- Lack of people of color in leadership or decision making positions
- Miseducation of children of color
  - Low expectations, achievement gap
- No representation in the government building
- Segregation in activities (social enjoyment)
- Self-segregation and ignorance of each other's cultures
  - As a white person, I'm not sure what I have to offer in a conversation about race

Additional Issues and Concerns

- Better forms of communication; better newspaper, talk radio
- Race balance is lacking in board rooms
- Communities labeled "red lines"
- Complacency
- Cyclical socio-economic level (lack of) contributes to education achievement
- Denial of white privilege in all systems
- Diversity in leadership – no role models

- Education

- Faith community is divided

- Family structure

- Hold onto an old school vision

- Housing
  - Neglect and pigeonholing with concept of "affordable housing" – no freedom of choice

- Jobs
  - Hiring opportunities and lack of advancement

- Lack of community support for young people

- Lack of <u>empathy</u>, <u>tolerance</u> and <u>understanding</u> of people in leadership positions in regards to cultural diversity

- Lack of opportunities for professional advancement

- Misperception of a "Hand Up" versus a "Hand Out"

- Mobility

- "Necessary evil"

- Racial disproportion of youth and adult levels in criminal justice system

- Redlining = gentrification

- Socio-economic and personal advancement opportunities; pay for the expertise of people of color
  - Example: Volunteering at schools – do people of color have the time? Economic impact

- Understand the anger and pain people have

- White people can't/won't admit their biases, privileges

How can the community address this challenge?

Using their prioritized critical issues and concerns, each small group was asked to answer the key question. Listed beneath each critical issue or concern are their ideas on how they can be addressed.

Diversity Dialogue and Fear of Discomfort

- Days and times for voting – understand the impact of the timing of things; employment can influence access to voting

- White facilitators to engage in conversations about race with other white people; expand sources of information

Inequality of Resources and Lack of People of Color in Leadership Positions

- Better educate children

- Intentional efforts for recruitment

- Invest and train individuals for leadership

- Long term strategic plan to get students in pipeline

- Team working toward common goal

Lack of Authentic Action to Ensure Inclusion and Ownership in Decision-Making

- City leadership at events (like this one) to be listeners, then take action by implementing a plan to address race relations in Lexington

Lack of Educational Equity

- Professional development or learning opportunities on "Own Biases" and "Cultural Responsiveness" to school personnel

Lack of Inclusion, In-depth Conversation, and Action

- Change school curriculum to include actual history of people. Teach about the veracity of systematic racism.

- Empathy versus tolerance

- Those with the resources and connections have to pool them to contribute to, engage, and support those who lack them. Sacrifice is difficult, but necessary in putting talk into action.

Miseducation, Achievement Gap, Low Expectations

- Empower parents

- Instill pride and self-esteem in kids

- Let teachers experience their implicit bias training in cultural competency

- Passionate educators

No Representation in Government Building and Confederate Statues

- Be careful who sponsors things; make sure they represent views of inclusion

- Boycott – hit them in their pocket (this is for those of the privileged culture), if you want to help!

Segregation in Activities and Exploitive Images of People of Color

- Acknowledge white privilege and the damage it has done

- Create public mechanism for truth and reconciliation

- Genuine allocation of resources to causes that advance inclusion
  o Use as a guiding principle

- Remove institutional images and language that do not reflect everyone!

Self-Segregation/Ignorance

- Create opportunities for interaction/friendship

Key Next Steps

Participants were asked to provide recommendations for next steps based on the conversations.

- Create a specific action/initiative based on conversation

- Develop guiding principles as a community

- Involve decision-makers/sponsors

- Match ideas with "On the Table" discussions

- Share contact information to use as resources

- Show up at sponsor staff meetings with a panel to address the topic

Meeting Debrief

To bring the session to a close, participants were asked to complete an evaluation. The complete evaluation results will be tabulated at the conclusion of the 12 conversations, but the closing three questions are included below to inform the remaining conversations. Duplicate responses are denoted with an asterisk.

1. **What worked for you during tonight's session?**
   - More honest conversation****
     - As the evening progressed, people seemed more open to being honest
     - Candor
     - Open conversation, not afraid of bringing up the roots of racism
     - The desire to be open and honest

   - Small group**
     - Group discussions/Topic relative
     - Table talk followed by open discussion

   - Non structured open forum *
     - Open dialogue topics; flow of conversation

   - Moving from small groups to large groups in conversation*
     - Small and large groups

   - Chance to dialogue with people of other cultures*
     - Talking to different people

   - Being in the space with women of color; that is always healing for me

   - Separating people by color code on our name tag

   - The atmosphere created was conducive to ensure everyone was heard and topics were addressed

   - The facilitation encouraged people to talk

   - The food and location (comfortable chairs)

   - Timing and location

2. What would have made tonight's session better?

- Include white men in the conversations**
  - o Need representation of white men
  - o Reaching out to white males

- More diversity*****
  - o Don't turn away the white people
  - o Engage city leadership and white men
  - o Have balanced members of people (white, people of color, occupational, etc.)
  - o Include races from more varied socio-economic positions
  - o Involve some white men and younger people

- Longer period of time*
  - o Make it longer; allow for personal anecdotes

- A call for attention as part of your group of rules so facilitators won't have to "raise voice" to get everyone's attention after a group activity

- Announce framework for setup in advance (before session starts), i.e., why sponsors are not attending/that people were turned away due to size of room and session

- Better promotion through social media; no one read the paper; why wasn't this on 107.9 or 103.9

- Directions to location could have been better

- First, safe space is a misnomer. It sets up the idea that everyone's thoughts, opinions, and contributions are equal. You can't ever truly guarantee safety. I would advocate for brave space over safe space.

- Get the sponsors at the meetings

- Keep the conversation going – invite more people than seats available

- More team/table time to talk more personally

- Move groups at least once and lengthen time so there is greater understanding and perspective

- Take a panel that represents this group into the community (chamber of commerce, city council, etc.) on a continual basis

- Teach before talk; Micro-aggressions, history of racism, etc. should have been discussed so everyone is on the same page

3. Do you have any lingering comments and/or questions?

- This is a great start

- Thank you***
  - Thank you for organizing this
  - Thank you for taking steps forward!

- Great first step. Work on keeping the conversation moving forward – look for action items*
  - This is a great start

- Develop plan of action of one or two items to take forward based on conversation here – continue dialogue

- Diversity of images of people in first exercise

- Do not cut off registration

- Great effort – please engage different people and advertise better. Get city leadership to listen.

- I just don't see how this conversation has advanced racial equity. We generated all these action steps, but none of the decision-makers/power holders are here. It feels like oppressed folks in the room are being asked to come up with solutions to problems they didn't make.

- I'm leaving these conversations with zero expectations that anything will come of this; interesting to see white women leading but no women of color were leading; this is why we don't trust white women.

- Need to build relationships before we really share deeply. If we spent more time in small groups, I think we could have dug-in a bit more

- Some of the positive about the community could have been noted

- Sponsors should be at _every_ meeting

- The way these were advertised missed _many_ people. We didn't know in _many places_. Was social media utilized?

- This group is speaking to the choir. The song needs to get out to the non-believers.

- This just felt really mellow/watered down. Not _enough_ discomfort.

- Who makes the decisions about these meetings? It is not clear on the site and it looks suspicious.