



Circle Scripts for Black Lives Matter at School

Provided by ROCRestorative Team

Dear Educator, please note:

1. While these are written for classes that are already in the habit of using the circle process (talking piece, equal power, respectful listening, etc.), they can be adapted for discussion in any classroom which has already established a trusting environment where people feel safe being honest and open.
2. These are meant to open up dialogue about our experiences with race and structural racism; they are not meant to teach new content. It is our belief that these conversations will promote powerful relationships and understandings that will carry into your academic lessons. We also encourage you to educate yourself and your students about the content of Black Lives Matter.
3. We suggest devoting a full class period, or approximately 45 minutes – hour to this discussion.
4. Of course, feel free to adapt these to various ages and to your students. The most important part is to create an opportunity where it is encouraged and safe to talk about personal experience with race.
5. As a teacher in this circle, and especially if you are a white teacher, please be mindful that your words and expressions will send messages about whether it's really ok for students to share honestly. Remember that their experience of race is not personally and exclusively about you. Strive for open listening and follow the circle rules about not commenting back to what's shared.

zCIRCLE SCRIPT SAMPLE #1

Opening: Do whatever your circle routine to settle in is—deep breath, stretch, etc. Ask students to listen as you read one or two of the quotes below. Choose your quotes based on your students.

“We should all know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.” – Maya Angelou

“When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But when you listen, you may learn something new.” – Dalai Lama

“We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.” – James Baldwin

“I love America more than any other country in the world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually.” – James Baldwin

Round 1: Can you share a specific memory of a time that someone made a judgment about you because you were Black, white, Latino, African, Nepali, etc.? (This could be about skin color, race, religion, gender identity.)

Round 2: What connections can you make / want to say / ask?

Possible Round 3: Is there anything else anyone wants to add? (Let people know it's fine to pass on this round.)

Round 4: What are you thinking or feeling after hearing each other's stories?

Round 5: Do you think this is something we should keep talking about, or learning about? Why or why not?

Closing: I'm grateful for everyone's sharing from their heart today and I'm grateful that we care about each other enough to listen to each other's stories. Thank you.

CIRCLE SCRIPT SAMPLE #2

Opening: Do whatever your circle routine to settle in is—deep breath, stretch, etc.

Read Langston Hughes ["I Too Sing America"](#) and ask students to listen. Read again, letting the words sink in.

Round 1: What feelings do you think the poet was feeling in the poem, or what feeling did the poem make you feel?

Round 2: Can you think of a time that you have been treated a certain way because of the color of your skin?

Round 3: Connection round—what connections can you make to what's been said, or what do you want to add?

Round 4: The poet talks about the "darker brother" and he uses that to stand for all African-American people. What do you think/know about how our country is treating people of color, and specifically Black people these days?

Round 5: What can we do to make things better for Black people in our community/class/school/City/country?

Round 6: Connection round—what connections can you make to what's been said, or what do you want to add?

Closing: I'm proud of all of us for having this conversation. Thank you for bringing your best self to circle.

CIRCLE SCRIPT SAMPLE #3

Opening: 4 Square Breathing- Breathe in for 4 sec; Hold for 4; Exhale for 4; Pause for 4. Repeat as you see fit.

Round 1: Give everyone an index card. Ask them to take a minute to write or draw their response to these questions:

- On a scale of 1-10, how much do you think your race shapes who you are / your life experience this far?
- Why did you answer this way?

Then, go around and ask them to share their answers.

Round 2: Give everyone a few minutes to respond to the next question on the back of the card.

- Can you share a specific memory of a time that someone made a judgment about you because you were white, Black, Latino, African, Nepali, etc.? (This could be about skin color, race, religion, gender identity.)

Round 3: What connections can you make / want to say / ask?

Possible Round 4: Is there anything else anyone wants to add? (Let people know it's fine to pass on this round.)

Round 5: What is one thing you learned, or a new idea you have after hearing each other's stories today?

Note: Using the note cards gives students a chance to write or draw to get their thoughts together. Also, if you think students won't be comfortable sharing, you can collect the cards for each round, mix them up and re-distribute them. Then, students would read someone's answer aloud, but it wouldn't necessarily be their own. This can feel safer if your group isn't totally used to sharing.

CIRCLE SCRIPT SAMPLE #4

Scroll to the top of this document for educator notes if you like.

This is more of an academic circle. Students should read/access these materials either before coming to circle, or in circle.

- Read the Guiding Principles of BlackLivesMatter, found here:
<http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/>
- Read the article, “The Problem with Saying All Lives Matter”
<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/current/nation/problem-saying-all-lives-matter>

Round 1: What are some of the basic principles of the original Black Lives Matter movement that interested you or struck you on a personal note? (Ask students to listen and build off of what others have already said, rather than just listing them all over again.)

Round 2: Based on what you already knew about Black Lives Matter, did any of these principles surprise you, or add to what you thought?

Round 3: What are some reasons that saying “all lives matter” isn’t so helpful, according to the article?

Round 4: Is there a difference between BLM and All Lives Matter? Can both be right?

Closing Round: What are your final thoughts or questions about this topic, one sentence?

CIRCLE SCRIPT SAMPLE #5

Scroll to the top of this document for educator notes if you like.

This is another circle that would fall under the “academic” category. If you choose to use the transcript, students should have opportunity to read it beforehand. If you use the video, it could be shown as the opening.

Opening: Read (or have a student read) the transcript or watch the video of Jesse Williams’s speech at BET awards
<http://time.com/4383516/jesse-williams-bet-speech-transcript/>
<https://youtu.be/orXogk3euMA>

Round 1: What was your gut reaction to Jesse Williams’ speech?

Round 2: What do you think Williams meant when he said, “Freedom is always conditional here”?

Round 3: Williams said, “If you have a critique for the resistance, for our resistance, then you better have an established record of critique of our oppression.” What do you think of that quote? How might it be connected to BLM and the media coverage of BLM?

Round 4: What imagery that Williams used stood out to you?

Round 5: After reading/ hearing his speech, what might you want to say to Williams? Are you inspired to take any particular action?

Closing: Give one word to capture your feelings about Jesse Williams’ speech.