

DISCLAIMER: This document was created by and for a Facebook Group that coalesced around discussion and support of Elizabeth Warren's Presidential bid. It was not produced by or for her official 2020 campaign staff.

Dear White People:

Welcome! We're excited that you're here. We assume you've already read the general rules of the forum, but we wanted to take some time to be more specific about the issue of race and how we'll be handling it here.

Here are our guidelines for white people engaging in this forum about race

- *Focus on [impact, not intention](#).* That means you must think more about how what you said hurt a Person of Color (POC), rather than defend your intentions by saying that you "didn't know," "didn't mean to," or "that wasn't what I meant." White people need to own their racial ignorance. If white people were investing in learning about race, they would already know. So defending intention is defending your right to be ignorant and thus, always innocent when accused of doing/saying something racist. That doesn't fly here.
- *Don't be [fragile](#).* According to Robin DiAngelo, a white woman who coined the term, White Fragility is, "a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation." In other words, white people need to toughen up and deepen their abilities to listen, to learn, and to not know the right answer. Typical fragile responses to being called on saying something racist include: "You don't know me. How dare you call me a racist?" "You're making generalizations about white people. That is [reverse racism](#)." "I have a right to an opinion. I was just sharing my opinion." None of these responses are valid and they won't be tolerated here.
- *Don't [whitesplain](#).* Don't counter a POC's lived experience with your opinions. If they say they have experienced racism, they have. It's extremely condescending and invalid for someone who is white to assume more expertise on the topic of racism than a POC.
- *Do accept a callout [graciously](#).* You likely have a lot to learn and you will make a mistake. That's ok. Yes, it's embarrassing and maybe frustrating. You'll live. The best way forward is to apologize, name what you did wrong, and then hush. If you want more detail on why your gaffe was a gaffe, reach out to the moderators for a Direct Message (DM) conversation. Please don't ask a POC to explain your mistake to you...which brings us to....

- *Don't ask for [free labor](#).* People of color spend an inordinate, exhausting amount of time explaining racism to white people. Asking them questions and putting the burden on them for your education (and demanding it without payment is rude. Ask another white person to explain, or find ways to pay for people of color to be mentors. There are courses and subscriptions. We mention some below.
- *Don't claim "[color-blindness](#)"* It's been well demonstrated that racism is a thing and that the world is rife with it. When you oversimplify that situation by saying you "treat all people equally because you're colorblind, you invalidate all of the terrible experiences that make lives of POC harder. You blow past your own white privilege and the role it's played in your success. It's a pseudo-enlightened ideology that allows you to ignore your own role in reinforcing racism. Color-blindness is not a thing.
- *Don't use your friends or colleagues of color as '[props](#).'* Don't [point to your one Black friend](#), or Asian brother-in-law, or Hispanic coworker as proof of you not being racist. It doesn't work that way. Association is not the same as doing the work of [dismantling internal bias and racism](#). Related to that, people of color are not a [monolith](#). Not all black people agree, nor all Native Americans, etc. What you shouldn't do is cherry pick the statements of the one black person you know who agrees with you to back up your argument. And you shouldn't presume to speak for any group. Listen, amplify, and step back so people in marginalized groups can lead.

Why are we bothering to add additional rules for navigating race? And why are we addressing White People specifically? Well, here's the thing:

1) Racial issues and how we talk about them are important in this group.

Racism is both [pervasive](#) and [painful](#), and people of color experience it daily, whether that happens through [micro-aggressions](#), [systemic racism](#), [institutionalized racism](#), or [outright violence](#). Additionally, when they come to discussion spaces like this one, they are invariably talked over, insulted and treated to an online version of the same kind of racism they live with every day in the real world. It's [exhausting](#) for them. You might have read about the not-so-great story of [Pantsuit Nation](#), which became a toxic place for women of color because white feminists in the group prioritized their own comfort above the pain of others. That phenomenon is unfortunately a common one and happens primarily because most white people don't know how to participate sensitively and effectively in these difficult conversations. Too few white people have done the work to learn about race and think about what their role is in the world with respect to changing the status quo and being accountable for the past. If you're white, that might be you. Why is that likely? Consider the following:

- *White people are raised to be racially illiterate.* Did you read in school about the [Tulsa Race Massacre](#) of 1921, when a mob of white people rioted and pillaged the black business district of the city, killing 300 African Americans, injuring more

than 800, and burning down 35 city blocks? Did you know that [4,045 African Americans were lynched](#) in the U.S. between Civil War Reconstruction and WW II? Do you know what [redlining](#) and [contract buying](#) are, and how those practices have affected black home ownership and generational wealth? Did you read about the [fate of the Osage Tribe](#)? Do you know the [story of the Chinese migrants](#) whose uncredited labor in hazardous, back-breaking conditions built the Central Pacific Railroad? Have you heard of [José Martí](#)? No? But somehow we all know what happened in 1492. Your history lessons were whitewashed, omitting major events that would have dispelled the perception of discrimination and racism being something “from a long time ago.” It’s not your fault that you were given a distorted picture, but it is your responsibility to learn the truth now and do something about it. Start with the resource list below.

- *White people don’t understand that white supremacy is NOT just men and women in hoods, or skinhead goons. It is a [global, systemic and widely institutionalized set of norms](#) that favor whiteness and Western culture. It has become an internalized pattern of thought, unconscious bias, and unchallenged set of assumptions.*
- *White people buy into the false binary of racist/non-racist as character defining moral positions, rather than understanding racism as an unconscious bias that affects behavior in ways that (logically) are not apparent to those who’ve been brainwashed. The truth is that you grew up in a culture and society that was shaped by white supremacy, and you carry racism in you. All white people have unconscious bias, which means they are all capable of saying or doing something racist. Getting called out is a blessing that gives you a chance to recognize how your bias surfaces and hurts other people. It’s not “an attack.” [It’s not about your moral character or inherent goodness.](#)*
- *Most white people [don’t see race as a problem](#)-- mostly because it doesn’t affect them, and they benefit from the system as it’s currently designed.*

What does this have to do with politics and an election? Well, race was enough of a known Achilles Heel for the U.S. that Russia [specifically stirred that pot](#) to increase tension, steering whites toward Trump and [undermining the black vote](#). We don’t solve that racial tension by telling people of color to pipe down and stop dissenting. We don’t solve it by asking people of color to stop talking about their pain or stop holding white people accountable to preserve “[civility](#).” We also can’t solve it if the very discussion forums we set up for political conversations become unsafe places where people of color predictably experience racism.

We solve it by white people stepping up and addressing the core bits of racism inside them. This election is personal, and has a lot to do with how much we are willing to learn about social inequity. The only thing that could tie Democrats together more strongly than conservatives (who often put [unity above self-interest](#)) is a tent big enough

to embrace and include everyone: the true meaning of diversity. To do that, we need to ensure that Democrats (and Warren specifically) truly represent all of those voices—not just take their votes for granted. We’re not going to beat Trump by talking to coal miners and courting whites who voted for Trump. We’ll beat him because we’ve listened to diverse voices tell us what needs to be done to earn their votes.

Your commitment going forward

These ideas might be new material to some of you. You might be thinking:

This is confusing and causes me anxiety. I don’t understand it, but I would like to. But I’m worried that I will mess up and be in trouble.

You probably will mess up! And that’s OK. All of the white people who are part of the moderator and discussion facilitator team have messed up, LOTS. It’s part of the journey to becoming an aspiring anti-racist and a better human. We all need to be willing to risk failure. Some emotional discomfort pales in comparison with what people of color experience routinely. Also, we know many of you need guidance and want to be able to chat and ask questions. We’ll be setting up some threads/discussions that will be targeted to white people aspiring to become anti-racist. They will be facilitated conversations and designated learning spaces where you can ask anything without creating emotional labor for a POC. We’ll answer you directly and without hostility, and there will be members of the group who’ve been recruited to comment, based on their collective wisdom around these issues.

Part of our journey is learning how to be gracious and keep our cool when we get called out. We’d love for you to stay and commit to that practice.

Or, you might be thinking...

This is bullshit. It’s a side issue to the election and not something that I want to spend time on. It’s simply more identity politics dividing us.

If you feel this way, **then please leave. This space isn’t a good fit for you.**

Other resources

You can find online articles and links to opportunities to learn below.

Books:

[The New Jim Crow](#)

[So, You Want To Talk About Race](#)

[White Fragility](#)

[Making a Difference: My fight for Native Rights and Social Justice](#)

[An African-American and Latinx History of the United States](#)

[The Train to Crystal City](#)

Articles:

[9 Phrases Allies Can Say When Called Out Instead of Getting Defensive](#)

[White fragility is real: 4 questions white people should ask themselves during discussions about race](#)

[Explaining White Privilege to a Broke Person](#)

[Reverse Racism is Not Real](#)

[Citizenship & Social Justice: Curriculum for White Americans To Educate Themselves on Race and Racism from Ferguson to Charleston](#)

Resource Libraries/Aggregated Resources:

[Justice Resource Links](#)

[Anti-Oppression Resources](#)

[Advocacy Work Resources](#)

This was a collective work, built on the knowledge and teachings of many, many people of color. We are indebted to their work.