How to talk to your loved ones about a Donald Trump presidency

So you love someone who voted for Donald Trump. What are you going to do now? You might be hearing, especially if you're white, a lot of calls for you to "come get your people" and do your part in making change in the communities you have access to. But how? What do those conversations actually look like? This guide attempts to put you on a good path for answering that question and doing what you can.

Why bother?

The election's over. Who cares now? Although a terrible thing has happened and Donald Trump has emerged as the victor in our most visible democratic process, ***democracy happens every day***. Our communities exist every day. If you can help peel at the edges of the virulent minority that put Trump in power; if you can slow the tide that he rose to power on; if you can help someone move from vocally racist to silently racist, or silently racist to silently not so sure, or silently not so sure to vocally not so sure, and so on, don't you want to? This is not the only solution, but if you love and are loved by someone who voted for Trump, it's a solution you have unique access to. As we prepare for what's to come, the tactic of trying to talk to Trump supporters is a tool in your tool belt. Let's get to work.

Laying the groundwork: Taking Care Of You

This is going to be hard. You're going to have to set aside a lot of your feelings, beliefs, and maybe parts of yourself to have this conversation.

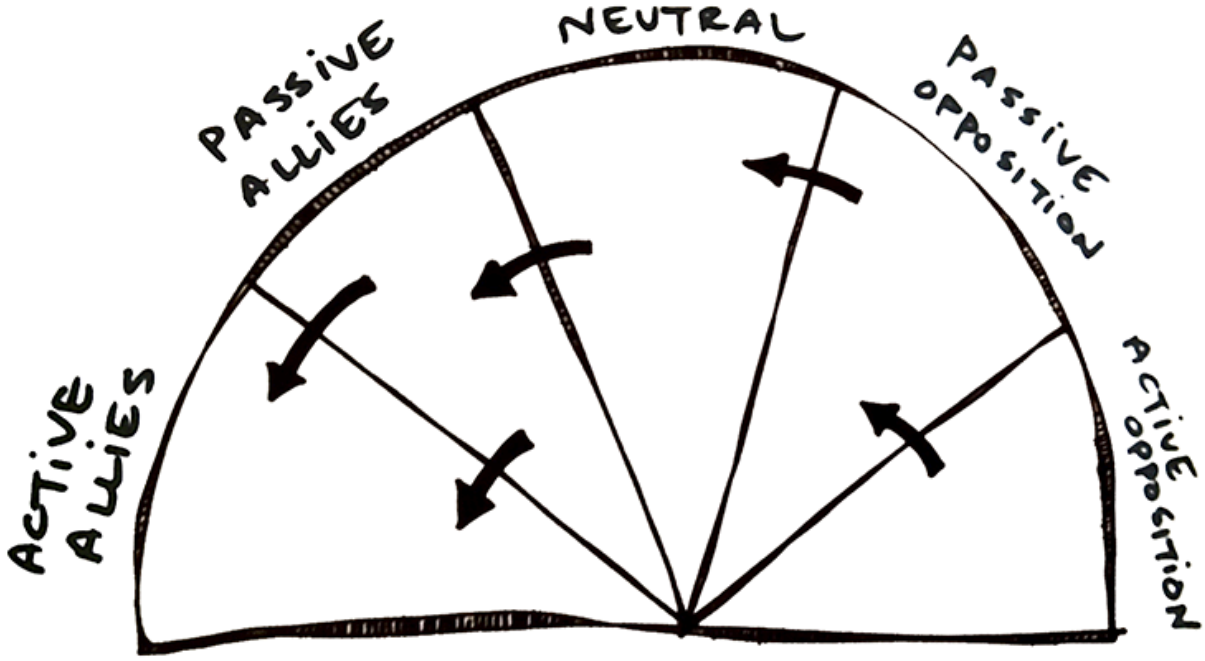
- **Are you ready?** You might be too mad or too sad to have this conversation right now. That's ok. Don't try to have an open and vulnerable conversation at a time when you aren't emotionally ok enough to handle it. You'll probably end up creating deeper division instead of moving towards your goals if you try.
- **Find a buddy**. Is there someone in your life who can be ready to receive a rage-text-storm from you after? Someone who can take you on a walk? Get that person in place.
- **Eat first**. Don't go in hangry.
- **Remember who you are**. If you have any marginalized identity at all, this conversation might hurt personally. If you have any friends with any marginalized identities, there is likely pain ahead in the conversation. Remember who you are and who you love. If their disagreement is too close to who you are, like if you know your relative is really homophobic and you're queer or trans, maybe you don't have to be the person who talks to that person about that issue, if it's too hard. You're allowed to take care of you. (At the same time, it's possible you have the most potential to influence them! You can try if you feel emotionally able to.)
- **Remember your audience**. If you are approaching the conversation from a lateral place of privilege, then use this to your advantage if possible. Many people that lean right view social equality as a threat to their own social position. If you can approach the conversation on equal footing, then you remove the possibility that they will use this

potential defense mechanism. If you're relatively immune to whatever negativity they are displaying, then consider that to be armor and fight accordingly to challenge their beliefs.

What to do

These are some general principles for interacting with your loved ones.

- **This is not a one off conversation**. You are not going to talk to a Trump voter once and emerge from a single conversation a social justice warrior. This is the opening of a long haul. Be ready for the long game. Make space for people to move into. Remember the spectrum of allies:



    - You need to move people along from where they are now, not where you think they should be. Can you get someone who would scream at a Muslim person in the street to think about not doing that? Can you get someone who swears they aren't racist to hold their friends accountable when they say racist things? Can you get someone who voted Republican because they always have to realize the sea change that has occurred? Remember: you climb a staircase one step at a time, not by jumping all the way to the top.
- **Get offline.** When you fundamentally disagree with someone, Facebook fights are not the way to go. Talk in person if you're able and feel safe doing so, or on the phone if not.
- **If possible, talk one on one.** While you are going to have to deal with the holidays, and many of these strategies can work with a group, it's easy for a likeminded group to gang up on you (or for you to find someone "on your side" who is more interested in venting their spleen than changing minds). It's harder to do that one on one. In the same vein, if you have to go digital, choose email over facebook.
- **Ditch the lingo.** Your social justice language is not going to work here. Don't talk about privilege, marginalization, oppression, patriarchy, etc.

    - **Get ready to say some stuff you don't actually agree with!** You know that women are their own people and "what if it was your daughter?" is a deeply problematic thing. You know the discourse of the "hardworking immigrant" is super flawed. But you can only bite off so much at once. If you can get someone to move with imperfect discourse, use discourse that you know is imperfect.
- **Don't lecture.** People don't want to be yelled at. It feels really, really good to yell at them but if you are serious about using this tactic to create a world with less hate in it, skip the yelling.
- **Start from inquiry**. Ask questions. Find out why they voted the way they did. Don't assume you know. Try to understand what exactly they believe and why.
- **Let them know where you agree**. Find the most basic thing that you agree on, let them know you agree, and add a caveat. If they say, "these protestors are rioting in the streets! Why aren't they worried about the crime in their own community?" you can say, "I agree that violence is bad and there are a lot of different problems that need to be solved. What do you think about the problem of police violence?"
- **Use humor if you can, acknowledge the absurdities.** This is a tricky one, because humor can go horribly wrong too. But humor over common experiences of unfairness, absurdity (e.g., bureaucratic tangles), and sheer ridiculous situations can help break up the tension if it is reaching too much of a point.
- **Find common points of shared experience.** Scaffolding to support the conversation's more testy ground is really important. Going right for the hardest part is risky. Build up to it by establishing common ground. The truth is, there are many common areas of frustration with inequality, unfair treatment, and pain of living in this modern commercialized segregated bureaucratic world. We can find these common points to build bridges. Common points of mutual enjoyment can be found. If you both didn't enjoy the experience of Obama's inauguration, find some other thing - like man on the moon, or when we got Bin Laden or when you spent 4th of July together. Common frustrations with the DMV, the voting process itself, cost of living, information overload, can be found. Find your own and find a way to convey that you share some concerns, reactions.
- **Engage their interests, not their positions**. Interests are things like "health care is important." Positions are things like "Obamacare is [good/bad]." If your positions aren't aligned (and they probably aren't!) you end at "well I guess we'll have to agree to disagree." If you can engage on the level of interests, you can build a frame to talk about positions in the future.
- **Feelings and stories, not facts**. You're probably operating from a different set of facts than your loved one. Fighting them about the details of what they're wrong about is unlikely to actually change their minds. Talk about how you feel ("I'm scared of losing my health care because I have a chronic condition") and stories from your friends ("My Muslim friends have seen a huge uptick in hate speech since the election") instead of getting into an academic discourse.
    - **This means affirming their feelings too**. Let them know you hear their fears. They're scared of immigrants? Talk to them about why. What do they think

immigrants are going to do? How can you relate that to your own fears of a Trump presidency?
    - **Share your own stories of political awakening**. If you have loved ones who voted for Trump, you probably didn't spring from the womb a perfect enlightened being. Be ready with some stories of times you changed your mind. "I didn't used to understand why people come to America – can't they just stay where they're from? But then I talked to some people who came here from other countries, and what I learned is [x]"
    - **Share your own stories of how a Trump presidency will impact you**. This might be the scariest thing to do, but if your loved one loves you back, your own stories of what Trump policies will mean *for you* can be incredibly impactful. They might like that Trump wants to overturn Roe v. Wade, but if you can talk about how you're at risk for an ectopic pregnancy and abortion restrictions might mean you can't risk getting pregnant at all, it's possible that will impact them.
- **Notice where they identify confusion.** This is NOT about finding where you think their position is ideologically inconsistent. This is about noticing where they sound unsure or conflicted – "I really think we need to keep immigrants out, but the Somali lady at my job is so nice." Encourage them to consider that conflict that already exists within them.
- **Take breaks**. Run to the bathroom and text a friend. Get a glass of water. Make space if they're getting emotional, too. Show them that you are willing to care for them even if you disagree.
- **Invite them to try something new**. Be ready with a few actions they can take that you think might be just on the edge of their comfort zones. Can you get them to commit to saying something next time a friend says something gross about women? Can you get them to volunteer with you at an organization that serves refugees? Can you get them to commit to watching a movie like Boys Don't Cry or reading a book like Redefining Realness and talking about it with you? Even if the conversation doesn't go well, you can try saying things like "Well, dad, just for me, can you stop calling gay people faggots?" or "Can you at least read this article and tell me what you think?"
    - **You're not racist? Time to prove it.** A lot of Trump supporters do not like that he's racist, if you ask them about it. They'll say, "Well, I don't like what he says about Mexicans, but no candidate is perfect and I agree with him in other ways." (That's a racist position. You know that's a racist position. Do not say, "that's a racist position" no matter how much you want to. I swear it won't help.) Invite them to say something about that kind of rhetoric when they hear it. Don't expect them to stop being conservatives, but if they claim conservatism and racism aren't synonymous, invite them to prove that.
- **Be there with them**. Make sure you let them know that the conversation isn't over and they can reach out to you if they want to talk more about what you've said.

Give them space. Let them marinate on what you're telling them. This isn't going to happen over night.

Another great resource on this topic is this guide from Captain Awkward.

If there are vulnerable groups that they have an affinity with, invite them to find a way to get involved supporting that community. Getting involved and meeting those people might change their perspective a lot.

[THIS PART IS STILL A DRAFT]
[Hey folks, had to close down editing at least for a little while due to vandalism. Please feel free to download your own version of this document and make it your own!]
But what about specific arguments? How can you respond to the specific things that people say to you without exploding? Here are some ideas:

Immigration

Them: We need a wall to keep out the Mexicans.
You:

- What are your experiences with Mexican immigrants?
- Can you tell me more about what that would accomplish?

In addition, many people who are undocumented were brought here by their parents when they were children or came independently when they themselves were very young. They have no other home--they grew up in the United States and consider this country home and they love the United States just like you and I do.

- They say: It's only rhetoric. There's no way Trump will actually build a wall or deport everyone. He can't just do that- he would need congress. You're overreacting. You have to be open. Now that he is president he will be more careful with his words.

You: Yes, these things would be difficult for him to do, but they are possible. But, let's say they aren't possible and they will never happen--- Trump's rhetoric still matters. Our president is the role model for all of us; his words hold great weight. If he calls Mexicans "rapists" what message does that send to our young people about foreigners or how to treat other people? And at the same time, I take your point that politicians often say certain things when they are campaigning and then do other things once they are in office. This is how they appeal to their base. That's a fair point--but because Donald Trump has never been in government before we don't know what he will do when he gets into office. His campaign promises are the only words that we have to go off of. Shouldn't we expect that he will do what he says?

In addition, his words have made a lot of people scared that their families will be broken apart. What do you think he can or should do to calm people's fears?

Supreme Court

They say: We need strict constitutionalists who will take the Constitution literally. We've had too many liberal judges who ignore the Founding documents in favor of whatever is politically correct.
You say: Can you offer an example? [It's way easier to discuss a specific issue or specific rights than broad-brush issues like theories of constitutional interpretation.]

They say: I just believe we need pro-life judges. Abortion is wrong. That's the end of it.
You say: It sounds really important to you that your politics align with your faith. Can you tell me a bit more about your faith and what it means to you?
You continue: My understanding is that Jesus was a refugee himself, born into an oppressive government (he was a minority, and he lived under Rome's very violent rule). He very much advocated that we should look out for the poor and marginalized. For me, voting Democrat makes much more sense than voting Republican if I want to honor my faith.
You continue: Maybe we could talk about some of the complexities of the issue. There are a lot of people who want us to think that some people are "pro life" and some people are "pro abortion." But no one is pro abortion. There are rules about when abortions are allowed or not allowed, and no one is having a late term abortion without an entire council of doctors ruling that this will best protect both the mother's and child's lives. An abortion is always a tragic decision. No one wants to have to make that decision. I think we share a concern for mothers and babies - other than outlawing abortion, what other changes or policies would you like to see that would improve health for women and children?
You continue:I am very interested in supporting policies that provide healthcare for the poor, contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancy, a good foster care and adoption system, a social safety net, women's health clinics, and a strong education system (shown to lessen early pregnancies). We think that it's really important to take care of everyone, not just the unborn. That, in my opinion, would be what it means to be pro-life--- to deal with all the complexities of life and be supportive to people who are dealing with hard things.

If we are serious about reducing the number of abortions in the US, we should look at effective ways of reducing unwanted pregnancies. Education and ready access to birth control are proven methods of reducing the need for abortions, and actually are more effective than legislation.

Roe v, Wade passed in 1973. Prior to that, the estimate is that 5,000 American women died each year from illegal abortions in the 1950's and 1960's. Women were dying, and illegal abortions were seen as a public health issue. The statistics show that restricting access to safe and legal abortions don't stop them from happening, but more women may lose their lives while trying to obtain one.

Obamacare/Health Care in general
Them: I shouldn't have to pay for someone else's healthcare just because they are lazy

You: You already pay for other people's healthcare when they can't afford health insurance and so end up in the emergency room for issues that range from fairly routine to crisis. Emergency medicine is expensive and when people use the emergency room as a last resort, those costs gets passed on to you because all medicine becomes more expensive and thus your own health care gets more expensive. But if people get regular, less-expensive preventative care they are far more likely to avoid the emergency room.
*You may also want to emphasize that Obamacare is hugely important for people who have pre-existing conditions. You almost certainly have someone in your family or friend group with a pre-existing condition. Previously, it was legal to discriminate against such people.

Energy/Climate
Them: These swings in climate are natural. It's not caused by humans. We don't need to do anything about this.
You: Maybe you've heard that 97% of climate scientists cite human activity as the source of globally rising temperatures. As an analogy, if 97 doctors told me that I needed my appendix out and three thought my ailment might be caused by something else, I would probably get my appendix out. (Too harsh? Too biting? Maybe)
Them: Obama's war on coal is the reason we're out of work.
You: A lot of people in mining communities are suffering and need our help, but even without any environmental regulations, natural gas would be cheaper than coal, and automation would mean fewer people need to work the mines. Destroying the EPA won't bring those jobs back, but it could mean your water ends up like the people in Flint's. We need to find a way to create new kinds of jobs or even consider a universal basic income.
If we can put aside the "why" (obviously Co2 is proven) and focus on the results. Either way the issue has to addressed. Many climate change deniers don't deny climate change just the reasons behind it (they believe it is the sun for instance). So the issue of dealing with the consequences remains. I find this gets me to a more civil place in the discussion.

Tip: For many people, the "war on coal" is seen as the government taking away a steady job that allows them to provide for their family. Focusing on future environmental issues is not on the same level as the immediate and very real issue of not being able to feed your family.

National Security
They say: The liberals are ignoring radical Islamic Terrorists. We can't just let these people into our country without knowing anything about them. We need a way to vet them.
You say: Tell me more about your media sources. What makes you feel so scared? What are you watching and listening to during the day?
You continue: That sounds scary indeed. But I think it's important we put things into perspective. You are actually far more likely to die from falling out of bed or having furniture collapse on you than you are from a terrorist. You are vastly more likely to die in a car accident (hundreds and hundreds of times) than from a terrorist. Yet you still have furniture. You still sleep in a bed at night. And you still choose to drive each day. You don't let your fear keep you from going to

work, doing what you believe in every day, or going to see the people you care about. Terrorism wins when you let your fear drive your actions. Terrorism wins when you let irrational fear change what you believe and how you treat others. The best way to fight terrorism is to bravely continue loving and welcoming people. But maybe it wouldn't hurt to drive a bit less =)

Freedom of Speech
They say: Political correctness has damaged the freedom of speech.
You say: Freedom of speech does not guarantee freedom from the consequences of that speech. Otherwise, that in itself would encroach on the freedom of speech of others. For example, the First Amendment protects against incarceration by the government from your views, but it does not protect you entirely from civil litigation, termination of your employment, and societal backlash. There are consequences outside the scope of the government's jurisdiction for your speech. Your words can hurt both yourself and others.

They say: There's too much of this PC crap in society. I shouldn't need to police what I say.

From their perspective: Many conservatives feel that "political correctness" is over-applied and that people are just "too sensitive these days.
You can say: There is a fine line between "political correctness" and human decency.

It may also be worth mentioning that there IS a certain amount of PC/defensive culture that exists, and is a) nonexclusive to liberals (mention male gamer culture and any change applied to it) , and b) not what this election is about at all. People are legitimately fearing for their lives because of human rights. If anything, the election makes the line between "PC culture" and human decency much clearer.

They say: I like Trump because he "tells it like it is."
You can say: I understand that many Democrats and Republicans are fed-up with politicians who seem to do nothing. But some of the things Trump has said strike me as dangerous. Like when Trump encourages South Korea to develop nuclear weapons. That doesn't strike me as telling it like it is--it is dangerous for our country and our allies around the world.

Education
They say: Common Core is federal government overreach and it's wrecking education.

You say: I can agree that there is way too much testing happening in schools. As states have come to believe that they are not preparing college and career-ready students, they have turned to testing as a way to measure student growth. In many states, this has resulted in a wide range of tests and standards that can seem contradictory and confusing to good teachers. Often, test results aren't processed until students have moved on, so teachers can't even act on the information they get. Districts spend a ton of time and money trying to understand what the results even mean. Common core was originally designed by educators to offer some concrete

guidelines about what being on track for college and career would mean at different grade levels. It was never mandated by the federal government, through its adoption was encouraged. One of the biggest problems with Common Core was that it rolled out so quickly, textbook makers didn't really have enough time to write strong curriculum. The result was a confusing mess of class materials.

Race

You think that everyone who voted for Trump is a racist and a bigot and that's just ridiculous. We voted for Trump because of economics and policy. (Another variation of this is talking about "political correctness." See Freedom of Speech section above.)

- Of course not. I absolutely believe you and am in no way calling you or Trump supporters racists. Obviously, we are all good people just trying to move our country forward. That being said, has Trump said anything that you've disagreed with on race? For me, I really did not like the way that he called Mexicans rapists. Also, What do you think about the things that have been said towards black, Mexican, and Middle Eastern people since the election?
- I know you don't have racism in your heart. I'm really upset about [specific thing that happened to someone you know] -- how do you think we can come together to stop things like that from happening?
- What kind of people do you think we need to make sure are a part of Trump's administration in order to ensure that the focus stays on economics and cleaning up corruption in Washington?
- By voting based on economics and policy, you made a choice about your immediate concerns, which is understandable; how can you extend empathy and support to those who were left out of that decision?
- I also think bringing up history can help. A student of mine last year said that there shouldn't be some monitoring on jokes and people need to have thicker skins. I asked him his opinion on race jokes, he honestly said they were funny and permissible. I told him when I was teased/mocked for being jewish at his own age. He was appalled and I asked him that there is harshness when tell those kind of jokes. Left an impact on the kid and all it took was sharing some personal material.

LGBTQ+ Rights

Men are men and women are women and I'm sick of all this politically correct crap.
Do you know any gay people? What do you think of them? If they say they just want the same thing that you and I have, do you have a problem with that?

I don't see why gays should get special treatment.
Can you tell me more about what you mean by special treatment?Special Treatment? Having the same rights as everyone else is not special treatment. Being able to marry is not special treatment. Not having to do conversion therapy is not special treatment. Being able to hold hands with one's partner is not special treatment. It's a right.

Just recite the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. It's literally spelled out in the Constitution. If they argue, here are a few gems to throw back (politely of course):

- "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States" → States' rights don't apply here.
- "Nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law" → Marriage is a contract, which in essence, is the combining of property of two people. By infringing on marriage rights of any citizen, the government would be infringing on property rights. Making this more relevant to today: denying the right to marry to certain groups denies them the right to community property and, for example, payouts from a life insurance policy from a deceased spouse.
- "Nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" → If one citizen can marry, any person can marry. Equal protection. The laws cannot be applied to just some citizens. Either government relinquishes its jurisdiction over marriage entirely or it must allow any citizens wishing to marry to do so.

Pro tip: If you are talking to a fiscal conservative, be sure to continually stress that marriage is essentially the right to property. Many of them literally believe in the right to property over all else, and you might actually convince them for real with this talking point.

GENDER ROLES / WOMEN'S RIGHTS / MISOGYNY

My Dad sometimes complains about things like "women get all these different varieties of stuff, and men only get one or two" for shopping options, and things like that. It comes off as "what about men's rights?" but it's a valid critique of gender roles.
If you get someone who takes it a step further, and says things like "what about men that get raped?" or "men commit suicide at higher levels than women" -- even though it's likely derailment, try encouraging them to talk about that. You could say "Yes, men sometimes go through sexual violence too. What's even sadder about that is that they're often not believed -- people think 'real men' couldn't let that happen. I think that's terrible." OR for suicide: "Yes, that's unfortunately true. Why do you suppose that is?"

Your goal being to get them to open up and share any frustrations they have with toxic masculinity/gender roles, then bond over that frustration. You could go back and forth, sharing feelings like "as a woman, I feel ashamed and judged when I wear certain clothes. I wish I didn't feel that way. Do you ever feel self-conscious about what you wear, like you have to look a certain way, or you'll be judged?" or "Sometimes some of my guy friends feel really frustrated and pent-up when they're angry or upset. They feel like they can't show emotion or people will think they're too girly. I wonder if that could be part of the suicide problem -- men feel like they've gotta be tough all the time, and it gets overwhelming (you know this is a part of it, but this way you and the guy can arrive at the idea together)."

Hillary Clinton
Clinton would have been a disaster for this country!

I agree no one should be attacking anyone. When people started shouting at a protester at a Clinton rally, President Obama made it a point to call them out and say that behavior was not ok

(http://nypost.com/2016/11/04/obama-defends-trump-supporter-at-clinton-rally/) It would make me feel a lot safer if Trump were to stand up and do the same, to plainly condemn violence and say that the hate speech and attacks in his name are not OK. And it would definitely set my heart at ease to know that you will speak up and stand up against that kind of behavior too, no matter whom it's directed at.