

CELSJR Pre-Curriculum Reflection Questions - Required Videos

These will raise a lot of questions for you. We expect you to leave the discussion with more questions than answers, and hope that you will bring those living questions with you to our discussions.

Facilitators: *You do not need to have all the answers or be an expert in these topics. Your role is to facilitate dialogue and help guide a discussion. We encourage you to be participant facilitators: members of the group who are wrestling with the questions, the discomfort, the uncertainty, and helping to hold that space and guide the group through that experience.*

Aamer Rahman: Reverse Racism

- What does Aamer mean by “reverse racism” and what is his basis for saying it doesn’t exist?
- How does Aamer’s “time machine” description explain why racism is more than just color prejudice? How does it explain the history of racial power structures?

A Brief History of White Privilege, Racism, and Oppression in America

- In the introduction, the speaker says that the “real work we have to do” is to get a significant number of people to understand the “core concepts of the issue” (of white privilege, racism, and oppression). What do you think are the core concepts? Do you feel that you understand them? What would you like to understand better? Discuss as a group and come to us with questions.
- Before watching this video, did you realize that racial oppression was written into the US Constitution and subsequent laws? Which examples surprised you? After watching this video, what do you think about the statement that “race and racism were constructed in the United States through law”?

Moving the Race Conversation Forward

- In a discussion of racial justice, how does it deflect from the core issues to say that racism is no longer a problem because there are successful people of color like Barack Obama and Oprah? Is this an example of individual or systemic racism?
- After the narrator explains the four types of racism, he concludes: “If you want a real, fully clear-sighted conversation on racial justice, you have to be talking about both levels [individual and systemic].” Why is this? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- At 3:57, the narrator says, “We cannot have real talk about any of the biggest issues that

affect us all as individuals if we are not also thinking about the systems involved.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

- What does it mean to be “systemically aware”?
- How will becoming systemically aware change the way you watch and discuss the news?

Tim Wise: On White Privilege

- In the beginning of this clip, Tim Wise says, “If you know the whole history of the concept of the white race, where it came from and for what reason, you know that it was a trick, and it worked brilliantly.” What was the “trick” and how has it worked?
- Did you know, before watching this video, that there was “no such thing as the white race” before early colonial America? Why was it developed in that time and place, and how has the definition of whiteness changed over time?
- How do the concepts of race and class overlap in this history lesson? How did the creation of whiteness divide people of low socioeconomic status and divert them from their common problem of economic inequality? How did power play a role?
- 500 years later, race and class are deeply related issues, but not the same issue. Why might it be inaccurate to say that in the 21st century, “the big issue” is not race, but class? Why might it be more accurate to say that while both issues intersect, racism makes class divisions more severe? Have the issues of race and class become so confused that it is difficult to have a productive discussion of either?
- In discussing the Civil War, Tim Wise poses the question, “How do you get poor people... who don’t even own slaves to go fight to keep your slaves for you?” How does he answer this question? Do you see any modern examples of this still taking place? (Note, for example, the parallel between the fear that drove poor whites to fight for slavery and the fears that drive poor whites today to fight against amnesty for undocumented workers).

Federalism: Lessons of Katrina

- Ted Koppel concludes this report by saying, “For five days, America, first responder to the world’s emergencies and leader in communication, failed to communicate and was agonizingly slow to respond to its own people in distress.” Below is a list of some of those communication breakdowns and slow responses. Read through the list and name the systems that were involved in those breakdowns.

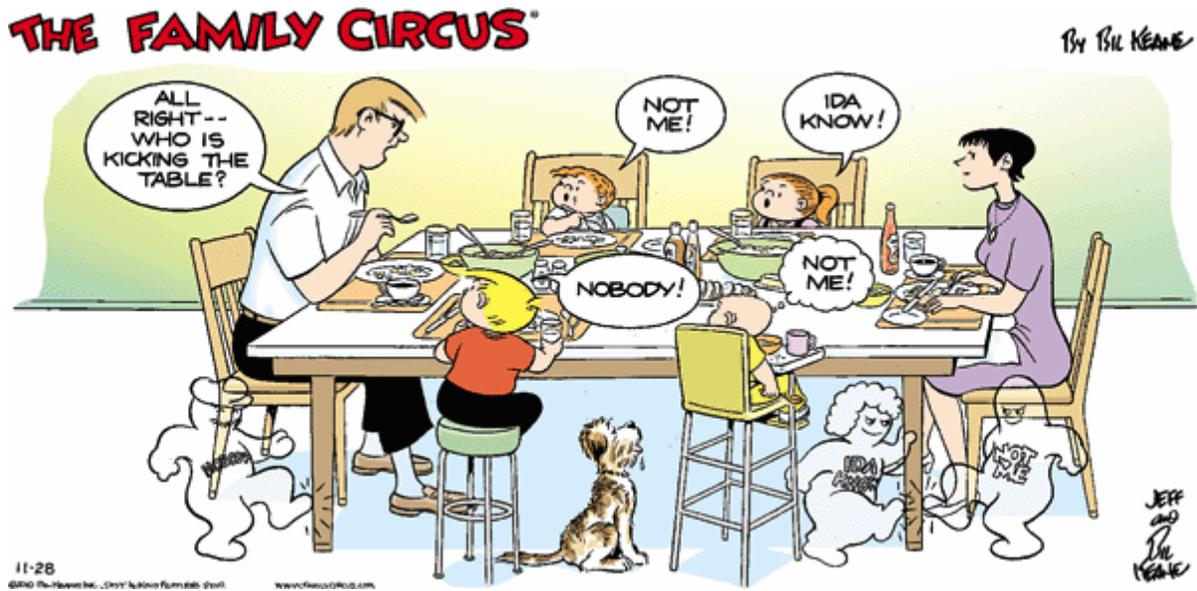


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- Loss of internet and phone communications for city officials at Hyatt on Day 1
- Pres. Bush goes to Arizona on Day 2 and talks about working with federal, state, and local coordination - but is referring to immigration, not the hurricane/flood
- Gov. Blanco asks for “everything you’ve got,” but federal agencies need specific requests to fulfill
- By Day 3, Mayor Nagin knows how serious the devastation is, governor “less so,” federal executives “oblivious”
- 30,000 people in the Superdome (when prediction was 10,000)
- FEMA Director Brown:
 - At press conference: “I don’t want to give people the impression that New Orleans is filling up like a bowl, because that’s just not happening.” (It was.)
 - In interview: says there is food and water at the Convention Center when anchor knows there is not.
- Director of Homeland Security Chertoff found out about the levee breaches on Tuesday - National Weather Service had issued notices Monday morning and afternoon when they happened
- For five days, city officials kept getting word that buses were en route - requested 500, then 1,100 buses to get 70,000 people out of the city. Federal agencies were going through red tape contracting buses while “I got a city buried.” (Local Emergency Director Terry Ebbert)
- Tuesday night: Blanco orders evacuation of Superdome, but “empty gesture” - no timetable, no plan, no trucks or buses
 - Local homeland security director sent people to Convention Center
 - “People were simply being moved from one hell-hole to another”
 - “We had buses show up with no idea where to take people once they got on

the bus. That was supposed to be coordinated by FEMA.” - Police officer

- At Convention Center: No police, no National Guard, no buses, no food, no water...
- “Who is in charge here?” “NO ONE!”



- According to Terry Ebbert, “There’s only one organization in the US that has the capacity [to handle this and get all these people out], and that’s the military...they need to be in front from the beginning, not in the back four or five days later.”
- **Human suffering: Integration and Meditation**
- **Group leader:** Please read the following facts and images from the video out loud. Group members: please try to stay present with these and pay attention to your internal responses. Where do you feel it in your body? What emotions bubble up?
 - “Human suffering incredible by modern standards”: prediction from the National Weather Service hurricane warning on Friday, August 26, 2005.
 - Federal officials promise “quick response” and “resources” “before, during, and after the storm,” but the next few days turn those into empty words.
 - Mayor Nagin orders a “mandatory” evacuation - but 28% of NOLA residents live below the poverty line and many do not have the means to leave or a place to go
 - “When buses arrived Friday morning, some parents were so desperate they passed

sick babies over the crowd to guardsmen, begging them to take them." - Ted Koppel

- "I've been a Marine all my life... and on Wednesday and Thursday... I had never seen such human suffering." - Terry Ebbert
- African American New Orleanians who attempted to leave the city over the bridge into Jefferson Parish were met at the parish line with attack dogs and machine guns. They were told they had to turn back because a looter had set the shopping center on fire and the local police wanted to protect their property.
- "From the inside [of the Convention Center]... the [military] rescuers looked more like people prepared to put down a prison riot." (28:29) (Koppel)

As you have taken in these statements, how have you felt them? What physical sensations accompany the emotions? How do you digest them? How do you let them go? How do you integrate these feelings and information into your own experience?