

***Talking About Race:
A Workbook About White
People Fostering Racial
Equality in Their Lives***
Study Guide

A Publication by Kaolin

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FOREWORD

Say not, I have found the truth, but rather, I have found a truth. - Kahlil Gibran

As a child, my favorite game of pretend play was school. The written word was my passion. My penchant for using exclamation points to emphasize my enthusiasm was thwarted by a grade school teacher who pronounced this grammatically incorrect. I am going to be a writer! Wrong. I am going to be an educator! Wrong. *Cautioning me on aspiring to more attainable goals, I wondered? Did political correctness stifle her elaboration of what these attainable goals were?* Taunts from peers and family members alike of “talking too white” and “acting white,” ranked second in insult only to “your mama!” Fighting words!

How do we begin to assign racial identity to concepts and how does that identity carry weight in ways that are negative or positive? Wouldn't it be amazing if we could all return to the essential innocence of childhood? Where best friends were classmates who shared their milk and nap mats? As children, best friends were as diverse as the blue-eyed blond little boy who shared his graham crackers, or the little brown girl that held your hand in line. When did we drop her hand? When did the blond-haired little boy's offer of graham crackers become distasteful? And when did we notice? We live in a world that strains us through sieves in a process of perceived distillation. This process divides us by socioeconomic status, classism, sexism, ableism and now more than ever political partisanship. The proclamation of every child to be anything they want to be if they work hard enough is now delivered in accusatory tones. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps resonates with chants of “Make America Great Again.” You can be anything, unless your parents are undocumented immigrants; anything at all unless your faith is deemed threatening. Anything at all unless you walk in certain communities armed with no more than iced tea and skittles. Where did it start? And how can we change things if we cannot even talk about it?

Kaolin's work is to be lauded as a catalyst for initiating these conversations. Her book, *Talking About Race: A Workbook About White People Fostering Racial Equality in Their Lives* may be one of the most important literary works put forth in our lifetime. To say that conversations about racism are painfully uncomfortable and can be provocative does not scratch the surface of this topic. Kaolin takes the conversation to the often most overlooked participant at the table, the white person living in America. She entreats every white person to examine race through the lens of a social construct - of an imbalance of power. Reactions to this subject matter will include a myriad of emotions, though never often enough does it incite respectful exchange, introspection and reconciliation. Race relations and discussions of racism are an uncomfortable dance at best. The partners are not just reluctant, but are often dragged to the dance floor kicking and screaming. Until we are willing to actively listen, and not just hear long enough for us to offer a chorus in the form of rebuttal, **everyone** will be locked into this unfortunate dance. The music will continue to rise and fall in unfortunate crescendos.

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