

America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 07

Whiteness

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TOPIC

Whiteness

In Episode 7, the students at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS) experience a series of thrilling victories (Kendale’s overtime win and Charles’s rise in spoken word) and crushing blows (Terrence’s graduation news and Ke’Shawn’s home situation). As they fight to achieve the “American dream,” we begin to see the white cultural origins of that dream and how it impacts everyone’s lives at OPRFHS.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- Where and how do you see whiteness showing up in OPRFHS, and how is it valued by the administration?
- What does it mean that Brendan’s dad does not want to be referred to as white?
- Consider the ways that Caroline’s mother and Thelma Dye’s daughter experience Thelma’s relationship to her own family and the family she worked for. What seems to be visible and invisible to Caroline’s mother? What’s the impact of the relationship on Thelma Dye’s family?

WHAT IS WHITENESS?

Whiteness is a social construct based on White cultural norms (habits, practices and ways of being). These norms are valued and privileged as the standard that all individuals and institutions are expected to embody and aspire to.

REFLECT

- How did this episode broaden your perspective of the social construction of race in America?
- Ke'Shawn says that “people are confusing peace with quiet...” Who benefits from the quiet? Is your community quiet or vocal when it comes to issues of race? What does this show about your community? How can you create peace?
- How is race predictable in your school, community, neighborhood, and housing practices? Are there interventions? How are people interrupting those predictabilities?

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- The Privilege Walk from Paul Kivel** [30 min.]
Read and guide your group through Paul Kivel's exercise on class and race.
- BaFa' BaFa'** [2-4 hrs]
Read and guide your group through this face-to-face learning simulation designed to help people understand the impact of culture on our behaviors and the behaviors of organizations.

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe a time when you were quiet or vocal about a situation related to race. Explain why you chose to engage in the manner that you did and what race had to do with your decision.

