

# **It Starts at Home: Confronting Anti-Blackness in South Asian Communities**

Queer South Asian National Network, based on curriculum from East Coast Solidarity Summer  
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## **WHY THIS GUIDE?**

We are a group of queer South Asians who believe that undoing anti-Blackness starts at home: in our families, given and chosen; in our communities; in the intimate spaces where conflict can often be hardest.

We understand that this should not be the work of Black people: this is our work, and it always has been. We understand that we will never be free until Black people are also free; our freedom is bound up, inextricably, in Black liberation.

We are committed to doing this work, and to providing the tools for other South Asian organizations, communities, leaders, and more to do this work. We hope that this guide is useful for other South Asians to hold these conversations within their own communities.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- Understanding anti-Black racism
- Breaking down how we are socialized to understand and reject Blackness
- Acknowledging and addressing what anti-Black racism looks like in our personal lives and communities
- Developing culturally competent ways of addressing anti-Black racism
- Laying the groundwork for effective allyship with Black communities that acknowledges privileges and shared oppressions
- Develop practical skills to fight anti-Black racism and support the #BlackLivesMatter movement
- Practice interrupting oppression

## **SUGGESTED MATERIALS:**

- Chart paper & markers
- Paper for participants to draw
- Crayons/colored pencils/markers

## **TIMING:**

- Ideally 2 hours
- For a 1 hour version, run the following sections:
  - Opening
  - Why Are We Talking About This Now?
  - Starting With Our Socialization
  - Bringing it Home

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,** contact [email.qsann@gmail.com](mailto:email.qsann@gmail.com).

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## **OPENING (10 minutes)**

### *Introductions*

- Ask everyone to introduce themselves with names and preferred gender pronouns (PGPs). If anyone is unsure, explain that PGPs are how you want to be referred to, e.g. he, she, they, etc. If there's less than 10 people, also ask participants to say why they are here.

### *Community Agreements*

- Ask everyone: what do you need in order to participate here?
- Take note of different answers. Leave the notes in a visible place.

## **GROUNDING: OUR EXPERIENCES OF RACISM (20 mins)**

### *Drawing Exercise*

- Explain that we're going to ground this conversation in our own personal experiences of racism: both experiencing and perpetuating racism. To start, ask everyone to draw their response to the following prompts:
  - Think about a time when you experienced racism in your own life. What was this experience? What was your response? If you haven't experienced racism, why may that be?
  - Think about a time when you perpetuated racism? What was this experience? What was it like?

### *Debrief*

- Ask for a few people to share. Make sure to ask for examples of both experiencing and perpetuating racism.
- If participants are highlighting only experiencing racism, speak to that. Ask participants why it's easier to talk about experiencing racism than perpetuating it.

## **WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS NOW? (10 mins)**

### *Historical Context*

- Explain the importance of talking about South Asian anti-Blackness in this particular historical moment. You can use the talking points below:
  - The movements around #BlackLivesMatter, in response to Michael Brown's murder in Ferguson and Eric Garner's in Staten Island, have reinvigorated a national conversation around race. As South Asians, we have a complicated racial position in the U.S.: our communities experience racism, but also often perpetuate racism, especially against Black communities in the U.S.
  - Many of us have experienced racism - for some of us, this is because we live in a post-9/11 world. For others of us, racism is a daily part of life. However, we rarely create space to do our own work - to think about the ways in which we actually perpetuate racism, specifically against Black communities.

### *Our Definition of Racism*

- This definition of racism is taken from the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond. Explain racism as prejudice + power using the talking points below:
  - Keep in mind our working definition of **racism**: Racism = prejudice + power. Because South Asians are often seen as less threatening, and sometimes as wealthy, we have conditional power in society. When that power is combined with prejudice, against other people of color, we are perpetuating systemic racism.

## **STARTING WITH OUR SOCIALIZATION (20 mins)**

### *Large Group Discussion*

- Explain that we’re going to start from the beginning: with our first introductions to Blackness and Black people. We need to understand the source of our anti-Black racism in order to challenge it.
- Guide discussion using the following questions:
  - At birth:
    - Ask: What do we know about racism when we are first brought into the world?
    - Nothing! All of our socialization around race is learned. We are going to work on unpacking that learning.
  - First socialization:
    - Ask: What do you recall as being your first socialization around Blackness? What’s the first thing you remember learning or experiencing with or about people of African descent?
    - What was this like?
    - What messages did you receive?
  - Reinforcement:
    - Ask: How is this first socialization reinforced?
    - What are or were the institutions and cultural factors that reinforced this first socialization?
    - Examples can include: media, family gatherings, school, etc.
    - Why didn’t you ignore these messages?
  - Present day:
    - Ask: How is anti-Blackness continuously reinforced in our communities?
    - How does this make us feel?
    - Have these feelings ever made you feel good/powerful/safe? How/why?

### *Debrief*

- Highlight the importance of acknowledging that we live in a country built on anti-Blackness. It’s part of our laws, our economy--our “justice” system. We need to recognize how we contribute to that anti-Blackness in order to confront it.

## **BRINGING IT HOME: MOVING TOWARDS LIBERATION (20 mins)**

### *Large Group Discussion*

- Thank everyone for sharing their own continuing socialization around anti-Blackness. This is powerful, but also vulnerable work. Acknowledge that it can be hard to see only

the ways that we perpetuate racism--without acknowledging and brainstorming the ways that we actively resist.

- Guide discussion using the following questions:
  - Ask: Are we committed to undoing anti-Black racism in our own communities?
    - We need to be. In many ways, that is the role that we need to play in this burgeoning movement: We need to challenge the ways that our communities participate in anti-Black racism.
  - Ask: What are ways that we already do this?
    - Take ideas from the group. If participants are having trouble coming up with examples, invite them to talk in pairs. Hang this list up.

### *Bringing It Home*

- There is always someone, or maybe many people, who we absolutely dread having these conversations with. Who is that for you?
  - Ask: Who are the two people that you can't imagine having this conversation with? Who is it hardest to confront?
    - Take a couple of answers from the group. Answers often involve our families, given and chosen.
  - Write down those 2 people in your life whom it's hardest to confront. **Think of at least 3 strategies you could use to interrupt anti-Black racism with them.**
    - Remember that these strategies can be big or small: bringing someone with you to a protest, talking about the prison industrial system, highlighting Black leadership in your city, talking about moments you've stood up against racism, or anything else.

### *Debrief*

- Ask a few people to share out. Write down strategies folks come up with and put them up in the room.

## **ROLE-PLAY: PRACTICE INTERRUPTING OPPRESSION (25 mins)**

### *Practice*

- Thank everyone for sharing, and give people a moment to take a deep breath. Acknowledge that this is a hard topic, and hard conversations to even imagine!
- Announce that the group is going to role-play a couple of these hard conversations.
  - Ask for a volunteer who is willing to model the strategies they just wrote out. They will act as themselves.
  - Ask this volunteer to give life to the situation: who are they talking to, what is the context? E.g. my dad and I are watching the Lakers game after he gets home from work.
  - Ask for another volunteer to act as the first volunteer's "dreaded conversation" person.
  - Role-play. Allow the conversation to go on for 5 minutes max.

### *Debrief*

- Applaud your volunteers!
- Ask them to reflect first:

- How was that for you?
- How are you feeling?
- Ask the room:
  - What went well?
  - What could either volunteer have done differently?
- Role-play 1-2 more times, depending on how much time you have.
- During the debrief, acknowledge that these 'dreaded' conversations are ongoing and may not have breakthroughs after the first time. It is important, nonetheless, to continue having these conversations with friends and family.

## **CONCLUSION (15 mins)**

### *Wrap-Up*

- Reflect on what the group has done in a short amount of time: you've identified your own experiences perpetuating racism, interrogated where that racism comes from for you, and brainstormed and practiced ways to interrupt anti-Black racism, in big ways and small. These are all crucial pieces of change work, especially for non-Black communities of color. We need to change ourselves, first.
- Ask: What's one way that you will use the information from this workshop when you leave here? If there are less than 10 people, invite everybody to share. If there are more, invite everyone to share with a partner, and then take a few examples.
- Thank everybody for coming. Make sure you get contact information (email addresses, phone numbers, etc.)
- Give everyone a copy of this curriculum when they leave, and encourage them to have these conversations with their people.

## **FOLLOW UP (After the Workshop)**

- Please let us know how it went! Fill out the google form at <http://queersouthasian.wordpress.com/2014/12/19/it-starts-at-home-confronting-anti-blackness-in-south-asian-communities/>