



# *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo

## Group Discussion Guide

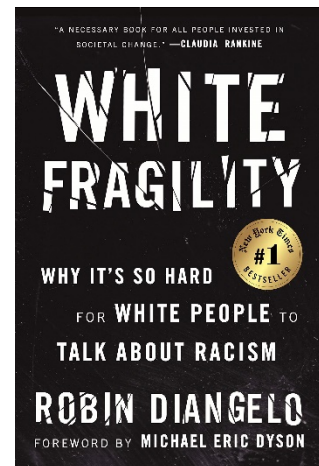
### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The questions and discussion topics that follow are designed to enhance your group's discussion of *White Fragility*, by Robin DiAngelo.

### ABOUT THIS NOVEL

The New York Times best-selling book exploring the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged, and how these reactions maintain racial inequality.

In this “vital, necessary, and beautiful book” (Michael Eric Dyson), antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and “allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to ‘bad people’ (Claudia Rankine). Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively.



### DIGITAL RESOURCE

Dr. Robin DiAngelo Discusses ‘White Fragility’  
Seattle Channel  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45ey4jgoxeU>

### DEFINITIONS

**Prejudice** is prejudgment about another person based on the social groups to which that person belongs.

**Discrimination** is action based on prejudice.

When a racial group's collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control, it is transformed into **racism**, a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intention or self-image of individual actors. Racism is a structure, not an event.



## *White Fragility* Discussion Questions

1. How can we use the definition of racism as a systemic structure, and not acts of individuals, to create awareness and acknowledgement that racism exists and how we might work to interrupt it?
2. What is the impact of white people not knowing racial history?
3. Consider some aspects of your identity other than race (i.e., gender, sexuality, religion, class, ability, nationality, age). How does race shape how you experience these identities? For example, how might being white shape how you experience disability? Poverty? Gender identity and expression?
4. How would you respond to someone who says, “Doesn’t it all come down to what your parents taught you?”
5. The author states that white ignorance is not simply a matter of not knowing; it is a highly effective response that protects white investments in racism and thus is actively maintained. Discuss this statement.
6. If we accept that racism is always operating, the question becomes not “Is racism taking place?” but rather “How is racism taking place in this specific context?” How does awareness of that change how we think about our lives and our actions?
7. The author states that it isn’t enough for white people to be nice and that, in fact, racism depends on white people simply being nice. Discuss this statement. How does niceness alone uphold the racial status quo?
8. How can a white person still enact racism in a close relationship with a person of color? Doesn’t the close relationship itself prove that the person is not racist? Explain how and why enacting racism in a close relationship with a person of color is not only possible but inevitable.
9. Discuss the suggestions for continuing the work of antiracism. Which are the most challenging? How can you meet those challenges?

### **AFTER YOUR CONVERSATION**

We would love to hear about your conversation. If you would like to share any of your discussion notes, comments or photos with Legacy Foundation, please send them to [mfishback@legacyfdn.org](mailto:mfishback@legacyfdn.org)