

## Discussion Guide

## “Under Our Skin”

### Northwest Regional Christian Church

[2 page Discussion Guide; Terms & Participants sheet; About This Project]

Video link: <http://projects.seattletimes.com/2016/under-our-skin/#>



### What will be your discussion setting?

Small group: Elders/Deacons; Official Board; selected invitational group

Large setting: congregation-wide invitation; intra-church diverse group

### Determine the length of the study

The breadth and power of the presentations make it unlikely that you will want to do the study in a single setting. Introduction and all 12 terms make a total 1-hour viewing time. Most segments are 5, 6 or 7 minutes in length. You could do the entire series in one session (2-2½ hours)

- You could do the series in 3-sessions (1½ hour each)
- If you choose an abbreviated 1-session (1 ½ - 2 hours) you could use the terms: Introduction, Institutional Racism, Racist and White Privilege (total 19:10)
- Or you could choose 1-session with the Introduction and a selection from the 12-terms

### Creating an open/accepting environment

Because of the sensitive nature of the videos and the difficulty of exploring these terms you may want to establish group norms for a safe and open environment. These can be posted on newsprint and at the beginning of the session form a brief discussion of Ground Rules and a secure a commitment to them. Here are some suggested ground rules:

1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
3. Focus on ideas. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks.
4. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
5. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on her or his experience, share your own story and experience.
6. The goal is not to agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
7. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses - they can be as disrespectful as words.

Guide for Setting Ground Rules - <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html>

### Determining the goal/purpose of your study

In your setting and with your group, what is an appropriate goal/purpose for your study? A possible purpose statement might be to:

- Explore race/racism at a deeper level
- Hear other people's stories that I have not heard before
- Be aided by the personal reflections /stories of the video participants
- Challenge our own assumptions and move us to greater understanding/empathy

### Preparation before the meeting

1. Take some time for your own personal inner preparation: Review the video segments to be used. Reflect on what your life-experience has been around the terms selected. Where have your values/prejudices been challenged? What has shifted for you? What makes you uncomfortable? Ask for direction and openness for your own learning along with your leading.
2. Set-up and test for smooth video viewing. Arrange chairs for ease of viewing and maximum discussion following
3. Create a worship setting: lighted candle, symbols of racism (newspaper pictures, internet images, multicultural items); symbols of reconciliation; perhaps a small green plant or flowers.
4. If group members are not known to one another; provide name tags.

### The viewing and the discussion

- You may want to start with beverages and light refreshments
- Have the Purpose Statement and Ground Rules posted on newsprint up front
- Share in quick, informal personal introductions if necessary
- As appropriate share your own story about race: background, own struggle, growth
- Go over the Purpose Statement; ask for agreement; offer a time of silence; Opening Prayer
- Introduce video segment selecting data from “About this Project” (see below)
- View the video

- You may want to provide a 5-minute stretch and break
- Group discussion – depending on your group you can use some of these questions or create your own:
  - What touched you most from the sharing?
  - Is there something you hadn't thought of before?
  - What questions would you like to ask the participants?
  - Of the participants, who would you like to have more conversation with and why?
  - Did something challenge the way you have traditionally seen this/these terms?
  - Did you bump into something that you want to explore further?
  - What might we take from this discussion that can help us individually, our congregation, our world?
- View the video again
- Final question: anything more we are being led to see or do?

## Closing the meeting

You may choose to close with a brief devotion/meditation. Here are several biblical passages around which to develop a closing thought:

“In Christ’s family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ’s family, then you are Abraham’s famous “descendant,” heirs according to the covenant promises.” Galatians 3:28-29 The Message

“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.” Romans 12:5 NRSV

“From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view;<sup>[a]</sup> even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view,<sup>[b]</sup> we know him no longer in that way.” II Corinthians 5:16 NRSV

Express appreciation for everyone’s presence and participation. Invite them to explore further the other parts of “Under Our Skin” on their own. <http://projects.seattletimes.com/2016/under-our-skin/#>

Close with silent prayer, a prayer or a hymn. “Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race” CH 485

“Help Us accept Each Other” CH 487

[You may want to end the first session with only prayer and then start each session after that with a devotion or meditation that would set the tone. This way the group is already one session into the study and will know what to expect and can approach the meditation and subsequent video and discussion as a continuation of the first discussion]

## Evaluation; looking back

- What went well?
- Who seemed the most engaged?
- Where there any sticking points?
- Is there any need for follow-up with anyone?
- Where do I feel good/stressed about my leadership with this study?

What next steps we need to take as a congregation?

What is next for me?

**“Under Our Skin”**

**0:00 indicates running time**

**TERMS (12)**

**INTRODUCTION 1:24**  
**INSTITUTIONAL RACISM 5:09**  
**PERSON OF COLOR 6:00**  
**RACIST 5:26**  
**ALLY 6:56**  
**MICROAGGRESSION 7:19**  
**ALL LIVES MATTER 4:13**  
**POLITICALLY CORRECT 4:07**  
**COLORBLINDNESS 5:21**  
**SAFE SPACE 5:02**  
**DIVERSITY 5:21**  
**WHITE PRIVILEGE 7:11**  
**WHITE FRAGILITY 4:35**

**PARTICIPANTS (18)**

2:25 Duck Bae  
1:50 Autum Bennett  
2:34 Keli Corender  
1:57 Louis Chuade-Sokei  
2:39 Jerrell Davis  
3:00 Rachael Decruz  
3:34 Michael Dixon  
2:15 Leija Farr  
4:17 M. Lorena Gonzalez  
3:17 Darrell Hllaire  
2:52 Varisha Khan  
1:38 Lucas Nydam  
3:29 Mark Olson  
1:40 Marci Owens  
3:38 Greg Rickel  
3:47 Sean Riley  
3:44 Cynthia Tee  
3:01 Tariqa Waters

## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Under Our Skin grew out of conversations about how we at The Seattle Times cover race at a time when national and local events — the furor over police shootings, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, protests on college campuses and charged campaign rhetoric — dominate headlines.

In our newsroom, we've found ourselves talking more candidly about race and racism, subjects that simmer beneath the surface even when they're not on the front page.

As a news organization, we've covered the local events as they've occurred, but we have a desire to probe the issues more deeply. And there have been instances when our stories have caused offense or led to misunderstandings. This project is just one effort under way in the newsroom to do things differently.

Discussions about race, inclusiveness and sensitivity clearly aren't new. They can leave us feeling depleted and wondering whether anything has really changed. But we believe the personal reflections and stories from the people who participated in this project will inspire all of us to think and talk about these issues in a deeper way. For those who freeze up at the prospect of talking about race, we hope this project will help break the ice. For those who tend to take sides right away when the issue of race comes up, we hope Under Our Skin will challenge assumptions and build common ground.

We decided to examine words and phrases that we noticed people using — and interpreting — very differently. Then we invited 18 people who represent a mix of backgrounds and perspectives to our video studio to talk about what those expressions mean to them. In a few cases, our subjects suggested terms we hadn't included and we added them in subsequent interviews.

Our conversations went well beyond the words into the experiences in each of the interviewees' lives. They often lasted several hours, and were insightful, thought-provoking, honest, at times funny — and sometimes uncomfortable.

We invite you to share the videos with friends, family, colleagues, students — and let us know what results from that. We'd also like to hear your ideas for future coverage because this is the beginning of what we hope will be an ongoing conversation with you, our viewers.

You can reach us at [underourskin@sdeattletimes.com](mailto:underourskin@sdeattletimes.com).