

RACISM

Deeper Awareness | Bolder Action

This study guide is designed to provide questions that incite discussion, invite reflection, and inspire action. It was written to accompany The Moderator's Town Hall conversation with civil rights leader and former ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young.

Timestamps linked to the Town Hall recording are included in this guide, should a discussion leader choose a "pause and talk" approach rather than asking participants to watch the Town Hall in its entirety prior to meeting. This guide can also be utilized across multiple meetings, given that some questions might spark heartier conversation than one meeting will allow.

The video of this Town Hall can be accessed by using the following link: <https://vimeo.com/462037655>

@23:55 When it comes to the importance of language, Ambassador Young shared about a conversation he had with his daughters in which he referred to young women in his office as "girls". In that story, Ambassador Young mentioned that certain types of questions "give permission to talk about your anxieties, insecurities, and weaknesses" when it comes to talking about people of different races. The two questions he offered were:

- **What was the worst experience you ever had involving a person of another race?**
- **What was the most encouraging or inspiring experience you've had with a person of another race?**

@10:58 Ambassador Young recalled a number of key moments from his life which were building blocks to his eventual work with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These recollections included a trip in 1941 to watch the future Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall, argue in court.

- **From your own life, do you recall a time when you learned about or experienced racism in such a way – that the moment stayed with you years later?**
- **How has that moment shaped the way you think about, talk about, and approach conversations such as this?**
- **What other sources do you believe have contributed to your own personal biases, when it comes to conversations about race?**

@11:58 In comparing the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s to the Black Lives Matter movement of today, Ambassador Young made a few key distinctions. The first is the way in which the movements have been organized and communicated. The second is the clarity of the overarching message. While there is a shared commitment to social change without violence by both movements, the focus of leaders in 1955 was *“To redeem the soul of America from the triple evil of racism, war, and poverty.”*

Read Matthew 5:1-10

- **How does the message of the Civil Rights Movement align with these words of Jesus?**
- **Where do you see similar alignment with those who are a part of Black Lives Matter?**
- **For those familiar with history, where did tension or disagreement exist in the church when it came to the message and the calls to action of the Civil Rights Movement?**
- **Where have you found there to be discord, today, with those who claim to follow Christ and all that's surrounding the message and actions of Black Lives Matter?**

@20:57 When Ambassador Young was mayor of Atlanta, he knew that *“law enforcement had to be reimaged.”* He spoke about the concept of community policing, where citizens gave input regularly. He shared that the city raised police compensation 75% under his leadership and worked to address the larger complications of a city growing from 1 to 5 million people.

- **If you were tasked with the responsibility of reimaging a community agency devoted to ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens - and you had to take a faith-based approach to this work – what types of rules and resources would your agency have?**

@27:30 In a conversation with his father about a Nazi headquarters located in his hometown in 1936, Ambassador Young said his father told him *“white supremacy is something you're going to run into your entire life. It's a sickness. You learned in Sunday school that God made one blood, all the nations of the world... and nothing can change that. Now these Nazi party people don't understand that. But don't let them get you upset. You don't get mad with sick people – you help them.”*

- **Do you believe the idea that one race is superior to another (white supremacy) is an idea we'll run into our entire lives? Why or why not?**

Read Mark 2:16-17

- **In what ways does the church approach white supremacy or racism like a disease?**
- **In what ways do we treat it differently than a disease?**
- **If the church doesn't approach people who are openly racist as ill, sick, or unhealthy, what approach is the church utilizing and is it effective in truly naming and addressing racism?**
- **When you see open displays of racism, are you, personally, more inclined to react with anger at the inhumanity, compassion because of the sickness, or in some other way?**

@38:40 When it comes to symbols of racism, it was interesting to learn that the confederate flag has its roots in the flag of Saint Andrew of Scotland - who was crucified for being a Protestant. Ambassador Young said this was the meaning of the flag for 15 centuries... but *"only 5 years was it in the possession of segregationists."* He then went on to say, *"I'd rather focus on the substance of racial discrimination, rather than the symbols."*

- **What value, if any, is there in the tearing down of symbols that represent segregation, enslavement of a people, and an era that was fraught with darkness?**

Read Matthew 6:19-21

- **How could these words of Jesus influence the church's stance, when it comes to approaching the symbols *and* the substance of racial discrimination?**
- **If you know someone who finds value in such historical pieces and symbols, what would happen if you asked them Ambassador Young's question *"What is it that you're celebrating?"* What do you think they'd say?**

@51:25 When Ambassador Young was mayor of Atlanta, he talked about the intentional work the city did to engage businesses owned by minorities. With the airport, 25% of all contracts had to be with companies that were run by people of a minority demographic. With the Olympics, it was 40% of the contracts.

- **Should local churches – or entire denominations – intentionally work to incorporate people groups who are underrepresented in their congregations? Why or why not?**
- **How do you see churches doing this well – or not doing this well – today?**
- **What do you believe are the barriers that inhibit us from becoming more diverse congregations?**
- **Does your local church look like the community around it?**

@54:50 Ambassador Young talked about Dr. King's emphasis on essential workers. He said, "Essential workers are people that we can't do without." For instance, "If you don't have sanitation workers, you have diseased cities. ...We gotta rethink the value of humanity."

- **When we think about our congregations being reflections of the Kingdom of God - who do we believe to be essential? Who are the ones we "can't do without"?**
- **How are we making intentional efforts to connect with people from all walks of life?**

@44:40 Ambassador Young shared that In 1865, slavery was valued at \$4 billion dollars. Then,

@59:30 He then quoted the first verse of Psalm 24 and said "We've had a series of people who won't admit that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness there of."

- **What other billion-dollar industries do you believe our country – or other nations – are unwilling to part with today, that may not hold Kingdom value?**

@1:06:30 To close, Ambassador Young shared about a night when he worried his home, his wife, and his children were in danger of an attack by the Ku Klux Klan. When he asked his wife to hold a rifle at the window in defense, her response wasn't just "No" but... "If you ever forget that under that sheet is the heart of a child of God – you don't have anything to preach."

- **How did this story resonate with you?**
- **How might such a story inspire the church to be an example to the world?**

*"Jesus is still the best role model I've ever run into. And the closer I get to His Spirit and His understanding of good and evil, of life and death, of sin and salvation, the more comfortable my life is. And, of course, that's one of the advantages... my religious upbringing was out of slavery. But so was the Hebrew children. And the challenges that come with life also come with the power of the Holy Spirit." | **Andrew Young @1:01:05***