

# Participant Handout: February 28, 2023

## 2023 Courageous Conversations: Courageous Love

### Purpose

The Purpose of Courageous Conversations is to learn from one another and to hear each other's perspectives shaped by our experiences of racial, ethnic and religious bias. The intent of these conversations is not to persuade, debate, or convince one another of our positions, but to make space for each of us to learn about one another and to be heard, especially when discussing topics on which we might disagree or hold different views.

In our sixth year we will focus on **Courageous Love**. The conversation is inspired by Valarie Kaur's work on **Revolutionary Love**. We will be focusing on: *Love of the Divine, Love of Ourselves, Love of our Neighbors, and Love of our Opponents*. Tonight, the focus is on **Love of Opponents**.

### Opening Question

Please take one minute to think/write your response, and then answer in 30 -60 seconds when called on.

- Please share your name, and any affiliation you would like to share
- Share one thing that is misunderstood about your religion or culture that you want people to know.

### Agreements

- We can **"pass"** if we are not ready or do not wish to respond.
- We will -
  - Listen to understand & speak to be understood encouraging others to do the same.
  - Refrain from expressions of judgment and from attempts to persuade others.
  - Make space for silence and reflection.
  - Speak one at a time, not interrupt a speaker, avoid side conversations & phones
  - Respect given time limits & make space for others to speak when less structure.
  - Speak for ourselves and not on behalf of others & let others do the same.
  - Respect confidentiality by not sharing what you hear with attribution of the speaker
  - **Zoom:** Please keep confidentiality by using headphones or engaging in a space in your home where others cannot hear
  - **Zoom:** For reasons of confidentiality, do not record the dialogue on your device
  - **Zoom:** Use the chat function to let (Tech) support know if you need anything or having technical difficulties, but not for side conversations
  - **Zoom:** To promote trust, please leave your camera on.

### The Role of Facilitators

Facilitators are here to guide you through the conversation plan. To ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to speak they will be timing responses to the questions. They will let you know when your time is up. That is the signal for you to finish your sentence, not your paragraph. In addition, they may give reminders about the Agreements, your role, and our purposes here. They may also offer a process suggestion to benefit the group, but they won't participate in the substantive conversation. Their job is to support your conversation.

### The Role of Participants

These conversations are designed to be dialogues – a search for mutual understanding – not debates. The Agreements set norms for participating that serve that goal. The most important are listening and seeking both to understand and be understood. When you Listen: Listen for points of connection as well as differences. Notice if you're triggered by something. It can be very helpful to make a quick note to remind yourself of something you want to pick up on later. Then return to listening.

## Dialogue Questions

- Share a time when an opponent treated you with kindness and respect. How did that shift the relationship. Or share a time when you had a conversation with an opponent with empathy and curiosity. How did that go?
- *Optional 2<sup>nd</sup> Question:* Describe a time when you had the opportunity to help an opponent, but didn't. How was fear involved in your holding back? What did you learn from that incident?

## Connected Conversation

This is the time to **learn more** about what others have said and to **make connections** between what is on your mind and what you've heard. It is important to ask questions of genuine curiosity. (something you don't know and are interested in hearing more about). Or you may ask for clarity, or more explanation to understand the person. Aim to be honest about language or questions you hear that are problems for you — and be willing to explain why. Consider how to share the meaning and values behind your statements and stories.

- Reminder that all of the communication agreements are still in effect, including the “pass” rule. So, if you're asked a question and you wish not to respond, just pass – and you don't have to explain why. Try to make space for everybody to be heard.
- No go-round, anyone may start when ready.

## Closing Question

- In the context of race and religious bias, what is one thing you will do this week to make a difference in the world?

## Self-Help Tools for Participants

- ⊕ If you feel cut off, say so (“I'd like to finish...”)
- ⊕ If you feel misunderstood, clarify what you mean. (“Let me put this another way...”)
- ⊕ If you feel misheard, ask the listener to repeat what she heard you say and affirm or correct her statement.
- ⊕ If you feel hurt or disrespected, say so. If possible, describe exactly what you heard that evoked hurt feelings in you. (“When you said \_\_\_\_, I felt \_\_\_\_.”)
- ⊕ If you feel angry, express the anger directly (“I felt angry when I heard you say x...”) rather than expressing it or acting it out indirectly (by trashing another person's statement or asking a sarcastic or rhetorical question).
- ⊕ If you feel confused, frame a question that seeks clarification or more information. You may prefer to paraphrase what you have heard. (“Are you saying that...?”)
- ⊕ Stay curious about what other people are saying and about what you yourself are thinking and feeling.
- ⊕ Be comfortable with silence. In the silence comes reflection, creativity and space for less vocal participants to speak.