



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism

**“White fragility is the secret ingredient that makes racial conversations so difficult and achieving racial equity even harder. But by exposing it and showing us all—including white folks—how it operates and how it hurts us, individually and collectively, Robin DiAngelo has performed an invaluable service. An indispensable volume for understanding one of the most important (and yet rarely appreciated) barriers to achieving racial justice.”**

—Tim Wise, author of *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*

#### Summary

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 education 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.

#### Robin DiAngelo (from [robindiangelo.com](http://robindiangelo.com))

**Academic:** I received my PhD in Multicultural Education from the University of Washington in Seattle in 2004. Dr. James Banks was my dissertation Chair. I earned tenure at Westfield State University in Massachusetts. Currently I am Affiliate Associate Professor of Education at the University of Washington. I have taught courses in Multicultural Teaching, Inter-group Dialogue Facilitation, Cultural Diversity & Social Justice, and Anti-Racist Education. My area of research is in Whiteness Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis, explicating how whiteness is reproduced in everyday narratives. I am a two-time winner of the Student’s Choice Award for Educator of the Year at the University of Washington’s School of Social Work. I have numerous publications and books, including *Is Everybody Really Equal?: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Critical Social Justice Education*, co-written with Özlem Sensoy, and which received both the *American Educational Studies Association Critics Choice Book Award (2012)* and the *Society of Professors of Education Book Award (2018)*. In 2011 I coined the term *White Fragility* in an academic article which influenced the national dialogue on race. My book, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard For White People To Talk About Racism* was released in June of 2018 and debuted on the New York Times Bestseller List.

**Professional:** I have been a consultant and trainer for over 20 years on issues of racial and social justice. I was appointed to co-design the City of Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Initiative Anti-Racism training (with Darlene Flynn). I have worked with a wide-range of organizations including private, non-profit, and governmental.

**Personal:** “I grew up poor and white. While my class oppression has been relatively visible to me, my race privilege has not. In my efforts to uncover how race has shaped my life, I have gained deeper insight by placing race in the center of my analysis and asking how each of my other group locations have socialized me to collude with racism. In so doing, I have been able to address in greater depth my multiple locations and how they function together to hold racism in place. I now make the distinction that I grew up poor and white, for my experience of poverty would have been different had I not been white” (DiAngelo, 2006).

Discussion Guide:

<https://robindiangelo.com/2018site/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/WhiteFragilityReadingGroupGuide.pdf>