



Everyone Welcome? Discussion Questions

Below we provide some questions for folks wishing to have discussions about race using *Everyone Welcome?* as a resource.

The stories in *Everyone Welcome? Personal Narratives about Race and Food Co-ops* are intimate reflections on life, work and status in the United States from people currently or formerly engaged with food co-ops.

- What is your life story related to race in America?
- What are some major trends or historical events that have shaped your life? Have these trends or events impacted your thoughts about race?
- What have been your experiences with food co-ops?
- How have these experiences influenced your life and way of thinking?
- Whose stories felt familiar? Uncomfortable?
- What had you never heard or considered before reading these narratives?

The people of color in the personal narratives talked about ways they've felt marginalized, both in the larger society and within food co-ops.

- Think about groups you've belonged to. What has made you feel like an insider in those groups? An outsider?
- List two or three examples from the narratives that seemed like common experiences.
- What were some concerns expressed by people of color, and what did you think about them?
- How might you personally approach changing some of the dynamics discussed in the narratives that led to people feeling excluded?
- What changes at food co-ops that might help them be more racially inclusive?

Not knowing what to say or being silent often prevents white or dominant culture people from being strong allies.

- What do you notice about white silence in these narratives?
- How has the dominant white culture affected you? How has it benefited you in your life and work? What have been its negative effects on your life and work?
- If you are white, what could you do to overcome obstacles to taking action?

Co-op development and new co-op creation usually require significant resources to launch, and once open, to be successful. The narratives raise questions about who has the capital, time and knowledge in communities to achieve success in new co-op development.

- What do you think of the development climate for co-ops? Is it different for people of color or people in low-income communities?
- How do you think development resources are allocated from banks, foundations and other institutions?
- If you are currently involved in a cooperative, how does it support other co-ops in development?

Pairings

As part of a discussion group or one-on-one conversation, compare and contrast two narratives in a pairing that may reveal both differences and similarities in individual experience. For example, people growing up in the same state or community may have different experiences based on race, economic status or education. People involved in developing co-ops may have a shared agreement or different points of view on how co-ops are created. Some people grew up deeply rooted and sustained in their communities, others made radical changes to achieve a sense of personal identity or belonging.

Discussion could be further enriched by closely considering how, in certain narratives, people identify themselves and/or align with different experiences. Here are some suggested pairings under different topics or headings. Can you come up with some of your own?

Activism

Jessica Gordon Nembhard and Dave Gutknecht

Jade Barker and Ann Hoyt

Class Status

Jade Barker and Patricia Cumbie
Karen Zimbelman and Patricia Cumbie
Jade Barker and Jamila Medley

Co-op Development

Esteban Kelly and David Thompson

Co-op Culture

Gary Cunningham and Jaimie Markham
Jamila Medley and Annie Young
Bill Gessner and Jaimie Markham

Geography

Malik Yakini and Karen Zimbelman

Parental Views on Race

Ann Hoyt and Patricia Cumbie

Identity

Annie Young and Jamie Markham

Bill Gessner and Marilyn Scholl

Jessica Gordon Nembhard and Marilyn
Scholl

Esteban Kelly and David Thompson

Gary Cunningham and Jessica Gordon
Nembhard