

DESCENDED FROM THE PROMISED LAND

THE LEGACY OF *Black Wall Street*

A woman in a long brown coat stands in a derelict, abandoned building. The floor is covered in rubble and debris. The word "GREENWOOD" is painted in large, white, block letters on a wall behind her. The scene is dimly lit, with light streaming in from a window or opening in the background, creating a somber and historical atmosphere.

GREENWOOD

CROSS COMMUNITY APPENDIX:
FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS ACROSS
DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

ODYSSEYIMPACT!

TRANSFORMFILMS®

Over the past year, the United States has faced a series of hardships and tragedies. Now more than ever, people are in need of compassion and support from those around them. But rather than bring the country together, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has seemed to deepen the divide between Americans. A study from the summer of 2020 found that 77% of respondents felt the country was more disconnected than before the viral outbreak, a clear signal that change is necessary to heal both old and new wounds to society.¹

The following is a guide for those looking to be a part of such change; a first step to ultimately bridging the gaps between disparate communities in America. This resource is intended to aid the delicate process of relationship-building between communities that may have had little interaction with each other in the past or that may even have a tense history together. Though the prospect of cross-community dialogue may seem daunting at first, it is essential to recognize that anyone is capable of starting these conversations – regardless of age, ability, or background. The only requirement is a genuine desire to understand, to empathize, and to share.

But before such cross-community discussions can be held, ask yourself: what is a community? What communities are you a part of? While many people instinctively associate communities with categories pertaining to someone's background, such as ethnicity or socioeconomic status, thinking that these are the only possible types of communities is limiting and inaccurate. In fact, communities can be based on any number of factors – including location, beliefs, and interests, such as hiking!

People are typically part of many communities, although they may not be aware of it, and not all these communities may hold the same importance to them. As defined by the American Journal of Public Health, a community is “a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action.”² As such, people often have overlapping identities and experiences that make systems of discrimination complex and multifaceted; a concept also referred to as intersectionality.

Understanding how communities are built better informs how different communities can come together. According to social identity theory research, people may identify with different groups depending on how significant that group is at that time, such as national identity during war.³ Knowing this can help people take advantage of varying contexts to emphasize shared identities during cross-community dialogue. Moreover, this research tells us that in-group bias – the habit of favoring those of the same group – is extremely common and can hinge on even the most arbitrary or random of groupings. Since we tend to preferentially treat our own communities, getting to the bottom of how we interact with and define these groups is imperative to improving relationships with outside members.

Below are a series of reflection questions that altogether can help you untangle how you define your communities and guide you through the process of building cross-community relationships.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Before first reaching out:

1. Identify **the communities you are a part of**, and which among those are **most significant** to your life and experience.
2. Identify **the communities you feel distanced from**, and try to isolate the **reasons for why** you might feel this way.
3. Identify the **topics you want to discuss**. Are there **communities that are directly impacted** by these topics? Make sure to reach out to these communities and **offer them a position of leadership** in these conversations.
4. Reflect on **intersectional communities**. Who belongs to multiple communities? **Do you?** How so?
 - a. Feel free to reach out to others in this reflection, while keeping in mind that **no one is obligated to engage**.

During cross-community outreach:

1. Discuss and discover **mutual values, experiences, and opinions** in sharing.
 - a. Be as **specific to your circumstances** as is comfortable!
 - b. How might you have **bridged different communities in the past?** How might this be applicable in the present and future?
 - c. Identify relevant types of **oppression and trauma**.
2. Generate concrete steps to **work against injustice** and to **help heal trauma**. (For guidance on how to assist those experiencing trauma during your screening and/or conversation, please consult A Trauma-Informed Approach to Screenings)

3. Reserve space for people to be **cognizant of their own privilege** that they may bring into these conversations.
 - a. Ask yourself: are you approaching a less privileged group? Strive for **awareness beyond your perspective**.
 - b. What **enabling resources** might you have had, which have helped you get to this point and participate in these conversations?
 - c. How might you **ensure accessibility** to your conversation input?
4. Reflect on your **group takeaways** as well as any **individual revelations or discomfort**, and ensure **group understanding**, clarifying as needed.
5. Establish the importance of **following up** with each other and **maintaining these new relationships** – or at least, new understandings.
 - a. Discuss when people could possibly meet again, such as at joint meetings.

Throughout your conversations:

1. Be open to **negotiation**. Understand that the goal is not persuasion nor explicit allyship. Aim instead for **mutual respect, inclusivity, and understanding**.
 - a. To this end, **don't be afraid** of “hard questions!”
2. Allow people to be **as present as they are comfortable being**, and to enter/exit conversations **without judgement**.
3. Maintain **safe spaces** where everyone's input is valued, with the exception of causing others harm.
4. Establish **group norms and community agreements**. Some suggestions:
 - a. One speaker at a time
 - b. Unpack the perspective, not the person

- c. Actively listen and respect
- d. Avoid generalizations
- e. Hold space/allow for silence
- f. Embrace discomfort
- g. Turn to curiosity
- h. Check for understanding
- i. Step up, step back
- j. Confidentiality
- k. Own intentions and impacts

(For clarification of these and further suggested discussion norms, consult the [Tannenbaum Guidelines for Conducting Purposeful Conversations](#))

5. Look for and use **resource providers**, centering especially on less academic, clinical, or explicitly scientific resources for greater emotional accessibility.

AUTHORS

Angel Hoyang & Alayna Lee

EDITORS

Louis Otero & Jenise Ogle

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

[Click here to view the Facilitator's Guide](#) →

for *Descended from the Promised Land: The Legacy of Black Wall Street*

¹ Pew Research Center, America's Exceptional Political Divide [here](#).

² American Journal of Public Health, What is Community? An Evidence-Based Definition for Participatory Public Health [here](#).

³ BBC Radio Mind Changers, Henri Tajfel's Minimal Groups [here](#).