

# **If These Halls Could Talk**

**Director's Cut: Film Guide (97 min)**

**Written By Leslie Anderson**



## **Meet the Cast:**

Back Row: Jahmelia, Jon, Julie, Will, Marilyn, Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) & Marc  
Front Row: Joe, Tyanne, Leif, Lee Mun Wah, Vera, Carmela — in Berkeley, CA.

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## Using the film guide:

Questions for each Chapter are suitable for individual, dyad, or group use. If utilized as group discussions, we recommend holding dyads or small groups discuss prior to the group, so that everyone considers their own response to the prompt.

*Classroom activities and homework assignments are listed below with the chapter to which they most closely correspond in parentheses, although many may be modified to use with other film sections.*

### Classroom Activities:

(1-12) Chapters 1-12 of the Film Guide are quick excerpts from the film. By playing the introductions, the facilitator builds anticipation much like a preview of a film about to be released. The goal is to stimulate interest, familiarity and, hopefully, curiosity. Chapters 13 onward are longer segments, with more in-depth Classroom Activities.

(13) Partner with someone different from you in this class and talk about whether Puerto Ricans are fully accepted in your community. What about Mexicans? Dominicans? Cubans? Salvadorians? Any other Latinos?

(14) Find someone different from you in this class and talk about how Asian names are perceived in your community. Do people have more trouble pronouncing them than other names? Are they accepted as American names? Do you know any Asian Americans who have been given an “American” sounding first name besides their Asian name (other than Lee Mun Wah)? What is an “American” sounding name?

(16) Partner with one or two people in your class and discuss and compare your answers to the questions above. Notice differences in how your partner(s) responded to the above questions. Are these differences in how you responded to the questions related to race, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, or other factors? Discuss this with your partner(s).

(18) In groups of four, discuss the following: When talking about his role as President of the BSU, and his efforts in “trying to recruit...everybody,” Jon says that when white students ask him, “Are there going to be black people there?” they are really asking, “Am I going to be comfortable there?” He talks about how this is a “one way street” for Blacks getting used to whites, but not the other way around. Discuss ways this might be true in your community/school/workplace.

(22) Lee Mun Wah says, “The great myth of this country is that if we don’t talk about it, it will just go away.” Discuss in small groups the ways we are discouraged from ‘talking about’ race and racism. In what ways is this message different for whites than for people of color? Create a list to share with the group.

(23) Lee Mun Wah says, “Something came long before you, didn’t it? We cannot pretend. The only way it will get better is first we have to find out what is not working out. The work is to come outside of ourselves to try and understand what it is the other person is going through.” In pairs, practice being a listener, reflecting what you hear from your conversation partner using Lee Mun Wah’s “Mindful Inquiry” prompts. Each of you will have 7-10 minutes as listener, then trade roles.

(24) In describing a classroom or other scenario where the conversation of racism is brought up, Joe says, “We don’t have time for that. My question is, why don’t we have time? We need to make time.” Who is the ‘we’ he is referencing? What do you think Joe is intending to convey? What is Joe leaving out? How might people of color and whites in the room hear Joe’s statements differently? Share your response with a conversation partner or small group that includes diverse perspectives. Talk about what angers you, hurts you and what seems familiar to you.

(28) Partner with someone whose racial identity differs from your own and share your responses to the above questions. Utilize the “9 Healthy Ways” and “Mindful Inquiry” communication prompts to hear and reflect what your conversation partner is saying. Each person should listen and reflect while the other discusses all responses. Then trade speaking/listening roles. Notice what feelings and thoughts come up for you during this activity and make notes for group discussion.

(29) Will says “If they take your thinking of being free, they’ve taken your freedom.” Scan news outlets (digital, print, visual) for stories that demonstrate “taking the thinking of being free” from people of color. List five current events that fit this description and the messages or negative stereotypes they reinforce. (At least two of the events should be local or regional for you.)

(30) Cultural Self-Portraits: Using paper plates or cardstock, each person should write the things they feel proud about and love about their cultural identity. Encourage decoration and self-expression. On the other side of the plate/page, write the painful or difficult parts of their cultural identity, including those discussed in the film. Partner with someone who is culturally different to process, using “9 Healthy Ways” and “Mindful Inquiry” communication prompts.

(31) Pair up with someone in your classroom and discuss the concept of how black men are portrayed and how they are ‘expected’ to act, following Marc’s comment about Obama. Identify at least five ways black men are discouraged from allowing race to become part of the dialogue. What do white people say or do to reinforce this, and what can an ally do or say to intervene? Share your ideas with the class.

(32) Identify three statements or actions in this film section where whites are being ‘taken care of’ or asking/expecting to be taken care of by the people of color in the room. Share with your conversation partner a corrective response for each that would deepen the conversation.

(35) Pair up with someone racially different than yourself and discuss the following: How can classes engage both people of color and white people in talking about race and racism without ‘using’ people of color?

(37) In small groups discuss the following: Why do people of color sometimes take care of white people in these uncomfortable conversations about race and racism? What is the impact on other people of color? What is the impact on white people?

(39) Mindfulness activity: Leif expresses his shame and says he is feeling horrible because he can’t connect and can’t cry. Lee Mun Wah coaches him by saying, “Don’t stop there. Explore and try and find out what happened. Where did you learn that from? ... Look at the whiteness that has so protected and numbed you that you can’t even cry.”

Why is it useful for white people to explore what it means to be white?

Notice for every block, Lee Mun Wah asks a question to dismantle it. How can asking questions be useful in your life the next time an assumption or bias shows up in your heart?

## Homework:

(1-12) Chapters 1-12 of the Film Guide are quick excerpts from the film. By playing the introductions, the facilitator builds anticipation much like a preview of a film- about to be released. The goal is to stimulate interest, familiarity and, hopefully, curiosity. Chapters 13 onward are longer segments, with more in-depth Homework assignments.

(13) Read/research on the internet how Puerto Rico became part of the U.S. Why isn't Puerto Rico an independent nation? Why isn't Puerto Rico a state? Is Puerto Rico a colony? When did Puerto Ricans become citizens? How is race perceived differently in Puerto Rico than it is in the U.S.?

(16) Use the internet to find Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." Although this was first published in 1988, about 25 years ago, many of the white privileges listed are very relevant to our current culture. Select 20 of the white privileges that you think are the most impactful and discuss them with someone in your class or your partner.

(19) Respond to the following in journal form: Thinking about your own racial identity, what is hard for you to accept? What would it be like if you did or could accept yourself as your racial identity? What would (or does) make it hard for you to trust your own racial identity? How could you come to trust it more? Who has been and who could be helpful in the future as you learn to trust more about your own racial identity?

(21) Vera talks about thinking Israel was the racist country, then says, "I'm telling you, this place is the most racist place I've ever been to." Then she says, "September 10, it was Latinos and Blacks, And then September 11 came, and it's Muslims. It's a list. I top the list." Research on the internet events of experiences of Muslim citizens in the United States after September 11, 2001. Identify at least 10 events involving Muslim citizens or communities, including three in your state or region. Choose one incident to compare/contrast how it is similar to and how it is different from your own identity group and how they have been treated in your community.

(23) Jon shakes his head and wipes his eyes, saying, "I'm afraid because I don't know what's going to happen. I've never talked to people like this before...white people...I think about the past and how nobody talked about it...and how my ancestors had to deal with this for hundreds of years...I don't understand...I don't even know if I want to keep going...I mean, I get afraid...do I even want to know? Is it that deep?" Write about your own experiences of cross-racial dialogue about the impact of racism. What has been scary for you? What will it take for you to participate in such conversations in the future?

(23) Conduct an internet search for "Effects of Racism in America" and read several of the results.  
EXAMPLE: <http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/racism-stress.aspx>

After reading this information (3-5 internet articles), please write in your journal about:

What feelings came up for you while you were reading?

What were the one or two things that stood out for you the most in the pieces?

Did you learn anything new? What was it? Why is this important to know?



- (28) Read Peggy McIntosh's essay on white privilege, and seek at least one additional video web resource of a white privilege author. Bring this resource to share with the class at our next meeting.
- (29) Find or create a visual image, song, dance or poem written from the perspective of a person of color about racism and "not being able to take a break," and also one from the perspective of a white person exploring whiteness and "not knowing" what to do. These will be shared in the next class.
- (30) Divide a worksheet into three columns. On the left side, list 10 messages (stereotypes) that are held/taught by white America about people of color in the United States (messages like those Marilyn is asking Leif to identify). In the middle column, identify at least two ways these stereotypes are reinforced (advertising, news, etc.). In the column to the right, identify the ways these messages are harmful to people of color.
- (31) Develop a personal plan for 'staying with' the conversations about racism, including: what specifically you need to do next, who you need to include in the conversations to have multiple perspectives, what resources you will need to cultivate (including knowledge, friendships, etc.), what leadership role you can take, and what challenges you will face.
- (32) Using Marc's references to the history of slaves as a starting point, identify an historical event about which you were misinformed (taught only the white perspective), resulting in you internalizing inaccurate messages about people of color. How does this misinformation impact you? How does it impact white people differently from people of color?
- (36) "Until lions have historians, stories of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." –African proverb Searching library and internet sources, find at least five historical instances in which the stories of people of color have been valued less than the stories of whites about a turn of events. How is this related to societal power dynamics?
- (36) Research the impact of Texas school districts on textbook materials. Find at least one article referencing this debate on what is and is not included in textbooks, at least one article referencing the use of authors such as Howard Zinn or James Loewen in classrooms. Write an essay about whose stories are included in curricular materials if school districts only adopt traditional textbooks.
- (38) Joe and Tyanne identify with parts of themselves (Joe being gay and Tyanne being a woman), but they are uncomfortable in their whiteness. Write down five ways you identify yourself. Next to each item, write about your experience in that part of your identity.
- (39) Choose one of the identities you listed from the previous homework and between now and our next class period learn more about it. Write an essay describing what you learned.
- (40) Our culture does a lot to dehumanize people. Between now and the next class period, find three examples in movies, TV, magazines or newspapers that dehumanize a segment of our population.
- (41) Mindfulness exercise – Notice how Carmela, when asked to go deeper moves from her heart to her head and says, "I don't know." Between now and the next class time, notice when you move from your heart to your head.

What was the situation?

What triggered you to move to the safety of your head from the vulnerability of your heart?

Where does that come from?

What can you try next time to stay with your feelings?

(41) Leif has an awakening by changing his habit of walking in front. The simple act helped him see how everything he does and thinks is ingrained in him being a white man. Change one habit you have for a day. What new insights do you have?

(42) Inscribed at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi was the phrase, "Know Thyself." How might this two-word sentence be helpful for the white people to get started on creating the change they wish to see? Write an essay on your recommendations.

## Chapters 1-12: Introductory Content

For the brief introduction chapters, engage participants in a dialogue about how we present ourselves to each other—how do people decide what to we say about who we are? Prompt participants toward self-awareness. Ask them to notice what comes up for them as they are briefly “introduced”. Good general questions would be around what we say and what we don’t say.

1. How might racial identity influence how people choose what to say about themselves?
2. How are introductions different when we are with others whom we perceive as “like us”?
3. What changes in our introductions when we think others are “different” from us?
4. If you were going to be engaged in a weekend conversation about race in a racially diverse group, how would you introduce yourself? What might you leave out? Why? Discuss what feelings come up in this dialogue about introductions.

### Chapter 1: I Need A PhD

1. By whom do you think Jon doesn’t feel “heard”? Why?
2. The camera pans to three people on the couch (Will, Carmela and Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia)). What do you notice about their expressions? Why does Will smile?
3. Why do you think Jon adds, “...and I’m saying that, like in all seriousness”?
4. What would be a good reflection to let Jon know he is being heard?
5. If you wanted to find out what Jon wants us to hear, what would be a good question to ask him?

### Chapter 2: You Bombed Our Towers

1. What feelings is Vera implying when she says, “You can’t run, you bombed our towers.”
2. Vera says in her introduction, “You look like a terrorist”. What mindful facilitation questions might you utilize to understand the impact of these words for Vera?
3. What feelings do you have when you hear and see Vera talk about the experience of Muslim people?

### Chapter 3: Why Is He Following Me?

1. Will says, “Right off the bat I’m thinking, ‘Why is this person treating me this way?’”. Who do you think he is talking about? Why do you think he is asking these questions?
2. What do you notice about Will’s list about the experience of being followed?
3. What is Leif’s reaction to Will as he says, “whether it’s the white person in front of me, behind me, whether to the side of me. You know, is that clerk following me, is that cop following me”? Joe’s reaction? Carmela’s? Yours?
4. What is familiar about what Will is saying?



## **Chapter 4: People Think She's Broke**

1. What impact might it have on Jon to have people think “one, she's young; two, we're broke; and three, she had me when she was a teenager.”?
2. How might this relate to what Jon said in section 1 (“I think this is the only place I can feel heard without a Ph.D.”)
3. Why do you think the media portrays black families and black women this way?

## **Chapter 5: I Have Black In Me**

1. Marilyn says, “I have Black in me, I have Indian in me, I have White; I have all this in me...” What feelings do you think might come up for Marilyn having to “choose” her identity in this way?
2. When Marilyn says, “I'm either hangin' with the Black people or the brown people, or I'm catering to the whites because the whites are going to pay me, they're going to let me have the education. You know, let me have a house...”, why does Marilyn use the word “let”?
3. Can you relate to Marilyn? Why or why not?
4. What does it mean to be “multi-ethnic” in this country? What's good about it and what's hard?

## **Chapter 6: I Leave My Orientation at My House**

1. What does Joe mean that he “leaves it at the door of my house when I leave”?
2. What do you leave at the door of your house when you leave?
3. What do others leave at the door of their houses when they leave? Why is that different from what you leave?
4. What “words spoken, that cut worse than knives” is Joe referencing?
5. If you wanted to reflect to Joe that you hear the impact of his words, what would be some effective things to say to him?

## **Chapter 7: There's Something Wrong With Us**

1. What does Tyanne mean when she says, “I feel like I'm supposed to be ashamed of it, in a lot of ways I am?”
2. When Tyanne says, “Like if they're poor they don't work hard enough and I try to hide that that's where I came from”...what comes up for you?
3. As a white woman, Tyanne continues, “So people won't expect me to be stupid or lazy...” How is this similar to and different from expectations of people of color?

4. How might what Tyanne says impact others in the room? How does it impact you?
5. Many say that “poor people choose to be poor.” What do you think?

### **Chapter 8: I’m A Lost Soul**

1. What comes up for you when Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) says, “You know, Lee Mun Wah, I feel like I’m lost...I’m a lost soul”?
2. Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) continues, “The hardest part is people giving you looks, calling you names, attacking you-physically. You had to pay the price...The price is to give up who you are.” What has caused her to “give up who she is”? What’s the price?
3. Who else has to “give up who they are”? Who does not? Why?

### **Chapter 9: How Can I Take Responsibility**

1. When Leif says, “How can me, as a white man, in this room, take responsibility for things that have happened, that are going on now... and that is a burden I can’t bear. I can’t do that.”, what comes up for you?
2. Who might have a strong reaction to what Leif says? Why?
3. Marilyn reacts to Leif when he says, “I can’t do that”. What do you think her reaction is about?
4. Carmela says, “I don’t view myself as fully human.” What does she mean?
5. Who is she identifying when she says she doesn’t trust “me, or you or you or you, and I know you don’t trust me”? How does it feel to hear her words?

### **Chapter 10: Talking About What’s Not Working**

1. Lee Mun Wah says “It’s not easy to hear, we’d love us all to be one people...”  
Who might have the hardest time hearing what he means? Why?
2. When Lee Mun Wah says, “The only way we’re going to heal is if we talk about what’s not working”, what does he mean by that?
3. What do you think “isn’t working”? What part do you play in that?

### **Chapter 11: Introductions**

1. What did you feel/think when Carmela introduced herself? Did anything surprise you about how she described herself? Why or why not?
2. What did you feel/think when Marilyn introduced herself? Did anything surprise you about how she described herself? Why or why not?

3. What did you feel/think when Tyanne introduced herself? Did anything surprise you about how she described herself? Why or why not?
4. What did you feel/think when Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) introduced herself? Did anything surprise you about how she described herself? Why or why not?
5. What did you feel/think when Jon introduced himself? Did anything surprise you about how he described himself? Why or why not?
6. What did you feel/think when Leif introduced himself? Did anything surprise you about how he described himself? Why or why not?
7. What did you feel/think when Vera introduced herself? Did anything surprise you about how she described herself? Why or why not?
8. What did you feel/think when Joe introduced himself? Did anything surprise you about how he described himself? Why or why not?
9. What did you feel/think when Will introduced himself? Did anything surprise you about how he described himself? Why or why not?
10. What did you notice was the same/different in the cast introductions due to gender/race/class?

## **Chapter 12: Arriving**

1. What do you see in this scene of the film?
2. What do you think Vera means when she says “what would my mom give to live here ... this like Heaven-on-Earth place, I’m happy to be here.” Why do you think this might be significant?
3. What do you think lies ahead for the people you’ve just “met” as they discuss race and difference over the next few days?
4. What would this experience be like for you to participate in?

## Chapter 13: Differences Are Good



1. Were you surprised to hear Marilyn talk about her father being the first Puerto Rican hired by the Secret Service? (He was hired during President Ford's administration 1974-77). What was surprising? What was not?
2. Why do you think that it was until the mid-1970's before the Secret Service hired its first Puerto Rican?
3. Why did Marilyn cry as she talked about her father's experience working for the Secret Service?
4. What messages about being Puerto Rican do you think she got from her father's experience with the Secret Service? What was the impact of her father's experience on her and her family?
5. Do you think that she talked about this with her white friends before this multiracial retreat? Explore the reasons why you think that she might have or why she might not have.
6. What did she say before she started talking about her father? What did she say about the role of 'stories'? What do you think this means to Marilyn differently than it might mean to others?

## Chapter 14: I'm Included



1. What did Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia)'s family use for food to survive when they were traveling in the jungle during the Viet Nam war?
2. Why was her name shortened when her family came to the US and was processed through immigration?
3. Have you heard of other instances where immigrants have had their names shortened or changed? What are the unspoken messages that are conveyed to the immigrants by this name changing process?
4. Why did Lee Mun Wah tell Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) that we could all learn to pronounce the name given to her by her parents? What did he use as examples of other names of Americans that we learned how to pronounce?
5. How did Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) respond to Lee Mun Wah and the group pronouncing her given name? What did she say?
6. What did you see in her face after this exchange?

## Chapter 15: How Are You Really Feeling?



1. What is happening every day to Vera's family and friends back home in her country? How does she feel about this?
2. What did Vera say Joe did that really touched her? How was this different for her from her usual experiences?
3. Why does Vera think that people don't want to hear about the problems in the Middle East? Do you think agree with her conclusion? Do you think it is the same or different for people to hear about problems in Latin America? In Africa? In Asia? Why?
4. Would you be able to listen to Vera, a Palestinian Muslim woman, tell you about the problems in the Middle East and how they affect her? What might keep you from listening empathetically?
5. What does Vera say about why she wants people "to know, to understand, to feel, just a little" about it?
6. Vera says, "I go to the classroom, and nobody cares." Who in your community or your school might also feel like Vera does, that nobody cares? Why?



## Chapter 16: It's What You Don't Do Or See



1. Do you agree with Lee Mun Wah that racism, sexism and homophobia are not just what you say or do but also what you don't do, don't say and don't see. Why or why not?
2. Had you noticed or been aware of this before hearing Lee Mun Wah's perspective? How do you explain your awareness before hearing Lee Mun Wah's perspective?
3. What are some examples of racism that are manifested by what you don't say? Or don't do? Or don't see?
4. What are some examples of sexism that are manifested by what you don't say, or do, or see?
5. What are some examples of heterosexism/homophobia manifested by what you don't do, say or see?
6. How does Lee MunWah's statement relate to white privilege? Male privilege? Heterosexual privilege?
7. How does this concept relate to able-bodied privilege? What are some examples of able-bodied privilege manifested in what we don't do, don't say and don't see?

## Chapter 17: Wear Something To Represent The Norm



1. What did you think about Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) saying that she felt that she couldn't dress, talk or be in public in a manner that represented who she really is inside? How did you feel about what she expressed?
2. Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) said that she wanted "to walk out there, being who I am internally, representing my people, my community," but she can't do that. She said that if she did that people would "look at me, like, really weird." Do you think this is true? How does this work in your community?
3. Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) said that she felt that she had to present herself as being American, as fitting the norm. Do you know what she is talking about? How do you experience that 'norm' in your community?
4. What are the messages about the 'norm' in your community? How do differences in race and ethnicity fit into the 'norm' in your community?
5. Who sets the 'norms' in your community? How are they set and maintained? How do you think Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) might experience the 'norms' in your community?
6. Before you watched this film and heard Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) talk about the 'norms' she felt she had to meet to be seen as an American, had you been aware of these 'norms'? How have these 'norms' affected how you talk, dress, behave, etc.?

## Chapter 18: Wearing A Veil



1. Vera says that when she lived in the U.S. before without a veil, she was “the exotic hot girl,” but when she returned, she was “the crazy fanatic religious terrorist.” What did it mean for her to be considered white in this context?
2. What do you think the veil means to non-Muslims? What fears have you been taught or heard about Muslims? How might those fears impact Vera on her campus?
3. Vera says, “Even if they want to listen they want to take you out to coffee and say, ‘tell us about Islam.’ They don’t want to learn, they don’t want to go deep.” What feels painful to Vera about this? What would be a good question if you wanted to learn more about how this impacts Vera?
4. What does Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) mean when she says, “I’m not going to validate your stereotypes, your assumption that that’s how my community is, that’s how my people are, because that’s not how it is.”? What would be a good question to ask Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) if you wanted to learn more about her anger about her experiences?
5. Jon says, “I can understand what you two are saying because I have to leave my culture at the door.” What does Jon bring in when he leaves his culture at the door?

## Chapter 19: Hard Time Trusting White People



1. What is your initial reaction to Carmela when she says, “I have a really hard time... trusting...white people... [who behave in a way that is hurtful or dominating or racist]?” What do you think she means? What do you think it means to her that the people she is talking about are also ‘white,’ as opposed to saying that she might have a hard time trusting people of color, for instance, who say the same things?
2. Carmela says she doesn’t want to “sit here and talk about whiteness as if I’m outside of it, because I’m not.” What do you think she is struggling with here?
3. What makes it hard for Carmela to trust her racial identity? What might be helpful to her to deepen her trust of her racial identity?
4. What might be difficult for Carmela in discussing this in the group? What about this conversation might be difficult for whites in the group? What about this conversation might be difficult for people of color in the group?
5. Carmela puts her hand to her chest and says it is “horrifying.” Why do you think this feels horrifying for her? What would be a good question to ask Carmela if you wanted to deepen the discussion with her about this being horrifying?

## Chapter 20: You Start Passing



1. Marilyn says, “When I think of that, how difficult it is, I feel exhausted. I feel singled out. And you get so tired, and you start, you know, passing like I do...” What does she mean by “passing”?
2. What does Marilyn gain, and what does she give up when she “passes”?
3. Why does she say she is upset with herself, too?
4. Marilyn says she “doesn’t feel like the pain anymore ... but the pain doesn’t go away. You can numb it, but it comes back.” What pain is she talking about, and how might she or people who look like her numb it?
5. Why does Jon say to Marilyn that it pisses him off that she is able to pass? What does Jon say the impact of Marilyn’s ‘passing’ is on him and people who look like him?
6. Jon says, “There’s two ways to be numb—either you don’t accept it or you’ve been beaten up so much that that part of you is just numb... it’s like hitting dry skin, you know, it’s like... there’s no more life there.” How do you think Jon has become numb?

## Chapter 21: This Place Is The Most Racist



1. Vera says that Americans are not emotional. How is it different for different groups of 'Americans' to show emotions?
2. When Vera says, "It's their place, it's their rules, it's their game." Who is 'they' that she's talking about?
3. Vera says, "There's no place for me on this planet. I need to hide everything about my identity now." In what ways can you relate to this? In what ways is it different for you than for Vera?
4. Vera says she needs to look 'normal' so she can 'pass'. What does 'normal' look like? What does it feel like to be 'outside' of whiteness?
5. Tyanne was visibly pained when Vera was talking. What do you think she learned from hearing Vera speak?
6. Why do you think Tyanne could only see a 'small part' of the person (when seeing a woman with a veil)? Can you relate and why?
7. Vera says, "I'm trying to act rational. What else can I do to belong?" How is this familiar and how does this surprise you? Is there anything Vera can do to belong? If she could, what would it cost her to belong in that way?



## Chapter 22: Afraid Of The Unknown



1. Leif says, “I’m starting to realize that I am racist, but I’ve always pictured a racist as someone in the KKK or a neo-Nazi. But I’m starting to realize it’s a lot less than that.” What is Leif realizing that he is now labeling “racist” that he had not labeled that way before?
2. Leif says that he has had assumptions about different groups of people, who are represented in the room. What do you think those assumptions are, and how did Leif come to have those assumptions about “Puerto Ricans, Italians, Asians, Islamic people,” and even “whites”?
3. Lee Mun Wah says, “A lot is coming up. But it sits in here...because we have a thousand unfinished experiences in our lives that keep getting stimulated in this room.” What is the risk of having some of those conversations? What is the risk of NOT having some of those conversations? How is this familiar to you in your life?
4. Jon says, “I’m afraid...because I don’t know what’s going to happen. It’s unmarked territory.” Why does this conversation bring up feelings of fear for Jon? How can you relate to that fear?
5. When Jon says, “I never talked to people like this before. I mean, white people,” how can you relate to this? What conversations have you had about race with someone who was racially different from you? What scares you about these conversations?
6. Jon talks about his ancestors and what they had to go through and “nobody talked about it,” and then he says, “I don’t even know if I want to keep going.” What would the impact of Jon NOT talking about this be, on you, on him, on people of color and on whites?

## Chapter 23: They Tricked Me



1. What might Vera be feeling when she says, “They tricked me, you know, they fooled me into this school.” What emotions do you see registered on her face? What could you say to deepen the conversation with her?
2. Vera talks about finding the “one black boy from the brochure—in the library” and saying to him, “You’re the reason I’m here.” She tells this story with some laughter and everyone joins her in chuckling about the ironic truth of the situation. Why does Vera laugh when she tells the story? Why do others laugh? If you laughed, why? What isn’t funny about the story?
3. What might be familiar for Vera about this situation?
4. Who else might have similar experiences to Vera’s? How might whites perceive the recruiting photos differently than people of color?
5. Who is ‘they’ that ‘tricked’ Vera? Explore reasons why a university does this and what it might mean? How might whites explain this differently from people of color?
6. What comes up for you when you think about being in a place where you were led to believe things were different than they are?

## Chapter 24: We Are Afraid To Talk About The Issues



1. Joe says, “You leave the safety of this place and try to start that conversation.” What will be hard for Joe about having this conversation? What will he need to do to continue having it?
2. Jon says, “When you talk about it, it’s like healing. You can’t forgive someone without expressing the hurt and anger and bitterness toward the situation.” What could you say to Jon to deepen the conversation? What could Joe do/say to Jon to stay in the room with him? What keeps Joe from doing/saying this?
3. Leif says, “I thought I knew...but I never knew. I never really knew.” What emotion is Leif feeling and how could you respond to him to deepen the conversation? What do you think keeps Leif from saying what he is feeling in this moment?
4. Vera says, “We need to talk about diversity because we need the other side to listen.” What is happening in the room that indicates the “other side” is listening? What is happening in the room that indicates the “other side” could listen better?
5. Tyanne talks about trying to talk with other white people about race. Will smiles when Tyanne says, “It’s hard to get deeper.” What might be coming up for him? What could Tyanne say to Will to deepen the conversation?
6. Vera says, “As bad as I want it to work, sometimes I’m also afraid that it might not.” How could the conversation with Vera be deepened?

## Chapter 25: I Was Shutting Down



1. When Will says, “It always feels strange when I hear white folks talk about what needs to happen,” what might be familiar about this for him? What does this touch in you?
2. Will says he was shutting down and going away, because it “means nothing to me.” He talks about ‘not being able to be honest,’ and that he has to “hope and trust that someone will realize that I want to connect, not because I want to shut someone down.” What could you say to Will to deepen the conversation?
3. Will says (to Leif, but to the group as well), “It’s just...havin’ to sift through all the bullshit, that’s the hard part.” What comes up for you when you hear that Will does not trust Leif? What could Leif say to stay with Will’s feelings?
4. Leif says, “I can honestly tell you that I came here with no agenda...with an open heart...on last minute notice.” What does he want to communicate about himself, and how might the people of color interpret what he is saying? What do you hear from other people in the room that give you a sense about how Leif is being interpreted?
5. When Jon says to Leif, “I don’t think you’re taking full responsibility...not just for what you’ve done but what your ancestors and other people have done has a direct tie... I don’t ever hear that,” what does this bring up for you?

## Chapter 26: I Only Have My Home and Church



1. When Vera says she “trusted everyone immediately because they took the time to be here,” what does that touch in you? Would you have this level of trust? Why or why not?
2. Jon says to Leif, “He can make this decision to come in one day because when he gets back, he doesn’t have to deal with it anymore.” What might be familiar to Jon about this? What could Leif say and do to deepen the conversation with Jon?
3. What do you feel when you hear Jon say, “I have to go back and be black.”? He gets to go back and be white. 80% of the places you go you see yourself...actually 90-95% of the places you go you see yourself.”
4. Jon says, “The only places where I can go that I see black folks and I feel safe are my house and church. That’s it.” How is ‘safety’ different for Jon than for you? How is it similar?
5. What could Leif or Tyanne say to Jon to deepen the conversation?

## Chapter 27: I Wonder How Deep It Goes In Me



1. When Joe says, “It’s like, yeah, we do have to go back and clean up the mess...alright, how do we, as white people, do that?” What are some reasons Joe doesn’t know this?
2. Carmela talks to Joe about why she has had a hard time trusting him, saying, “You divert the conversation.” What does she mean by this? Can you name an example of what she is describing?
3. Joe says, “Yeah, I do like to take a step back from it...because I like to believe I’m objective, I’m not, I have my own biases...but I wonder how deep it goes,” what is he saying about being a white man? What is he not saying?
4. Joe, “I would like to think I’m a decent enough human being that that hasn’t rubbed off on me, but I’m scared to find out exactly how racist I am.” Why does Joe use this word, ‘decent’ and how might this comment impact the people of color in the room?
5. Lee Mun Wah says to Joe, “You would still be a decent person, even if it were true.” What does this mean to you? What feelings came up for you when you heard this?



## Chapter 28: You Don't Like White People



1. What does Carmela mean when she says, “It’s not normal for whites to talk about race and racism constantly, constantly?”
2. What is the ‘constant contradiction’ Carmela is talking about?
3. What is the ‘assault’ that Carmela talks about? How might people of color feel hearing this?
4. What is Carmela ‘going through’? What will it take for to keep going?
5. What might keep Carmela from continuing her exploration of the meaning of her whiteness?

## Chapter 29: A Break



1. What does Leif communicate to Will when he says, “I don’t know what to do. What do you see when you see me?”
2. Will says to Leif, “I don’t necessarily want your help.” What is he suggesting Leif and other whites can do about racism?
3. What does the concept of a ‘break’ mean to you? What do you think it means to Will?
4. When Will says, “This might be a life-long thing,” about exploring racism, what feelings does that bring up for you?
5. What part of this conversation brings up familiar feelings for you around discussions about race and racism? What are those feelings?
6. How could Leif respond to Will to deepen the conversation as Will is saying, “I never get a break from that, just because of my skin color.”?
7. Will calmly brings up feelings of rage and anger about whites being able to take a day off. How did this feel to you to hear him discuss these feelings?
8. What prompts Lee Mun Wah to say to Leif, “Stay with him.”? What might Leif be feeling and why is it important for him to stay in the conversation?

## Chapter 30: White Privileges



1. Why does Marilyn seem frustrated when she says to Leif, “I’m not talking about the town. I’m talking about what your family talked about.”?
2. What does Leif mean when he says, “We feel for these people.”? How is this perceived by the people of color in the room?
3. Leif talks about his experiences of learning about racial inequities. He says, “You’ve heard it a million times, I wasn’t there.” What is his frustration about? What meaning does this phrase carry for people of color?
4. What impact is Leif having on the people of color when he says about his feelings in the workshop, “It’s not good enough.”?
5. In what ways does Leif benefit from racism?
6. What keeps Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) from telling a friend that she thinks they did something because of her skin color?
7. What does Marilyn mean when she says to Leif, “Feeling it makes you alive. It makes you part of us.”?
8. How did you feel when Tyanne talked about getting advantages in her class and employers hearing her last name? What angered you about that and how do you think that affects both people of color and whites?
9. Why do you think Leif’s Native friend was pulled out of the car? What’s familiar about this whole incident? What did Lee Mun Wah mean when he said, “That’s a privilege.”?
10. Lee Mun Wah says to Leif, “Will you be able to stand in here, on your own? Because there is no luxury to just ‘take a break.’” What will it take for Leif to stay with this conversation, and to stay with the internal and personal work of dismantling racism?

## Chapter 31: It's Going Too Soft



1. What did Lee Mun Wah sense was “off” or “missing”, and what did he see that let him know this?
2. Why did Lee Mun Wah invite Marc and Jahmelia to join the group? What was your reaction to this addition?
3. Marc says, “You’re mad at America for tricking you into believing you’re something that you’re not.” What does he mean?
4. Leif says he was “ready to go there” but was told he “wasn’t ready.” That he “didn’t know what he was getting himself into.” What feelings or experiences does this touch in you?
5. How could Leif respond to deepen the conversation when Marc says, “I can’t let them down by letting you in.”?
6. When Marc says (about Obama), “He doesn’t act anything like the black men that I know,” what does this mean to you?

## Chapter 32: You're The One Who's Irritating Me



1. Leif says, “Maybe I can’t [understand] until I go out and put myself in those vulnerable positions.” How could he do that in this moment in the group? What would he say or do to do this?
2. Why doesn’t Leif become vulnerable in the group?
3. Marc says to Leif, “I can imagine that’s how my people felt when they were taken from their country and forced to do all these horrible things. ‘I don’t know these people, I can’t understand these people but I can see their anger, I can see their hate.’” How could Leif respond to Marc to “stay with him”?
4. When Marc reaches over to Leif and says, “Damn the textbooks,” then persists to invite him back into the conversation in the room, what could Leif say to stay present?
5. Leif says, “I never understood that was my people. That I am that.” How can you relate to this, or what reaction do you have to Leif’s realization?
6. When Marc says to Leif, “That shit’s gonna be hard and you’re gonna have to be uncomfortable every day,” what feelings do you have and how do those feeling relate to your past experiences?
7. How could Joe respond to Jahmelia to hear her and to deepen the conversation?
8. What does Marc want Tyanne to hear/see? What could she say to Marc to deepen the conversation?

## Chapter 33: It's Not the Same



1. Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) says, “Each time we talk about our oppression it’s different from yours... I feel like when we talk about our experiences you say, ‘Oh, it happens to me too.’” What do you think angers Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) about whites saying this?
2. Why is it important to Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) that “it’s not the same. It’s not the same experience.”?
3. What could you say to Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) to reflect back that you hear her? To deepen the conversation with her?
4. Jon says, “This is blowing my mind.” He says to Tyanne, “Do you realize that we as colored people have just catered to you for two days and we didn’t even know it?” What are the people of color saying that they have done to “cater to” the whites in the room?
5. Marilyn says to Vera that she is contributing to the racism by just taking care of her [Tyanne] again. Why might Marilyn feel this way? How can you relate to Marilyn, Vera and Tyanne in this conversation?
6. Marilyn says that her “experience with black people has never been as negative and as angry as...as it’s always been with white people.” Does this surprise you? If not, list some examples of familiar experiences. If yes, why do you think you are unfamiliar with experiences such as Marilyn’s? Who else in the room would you expect to have had similar experiences to Marilyn’s?



## Chapter 34: Why Am I So Angry



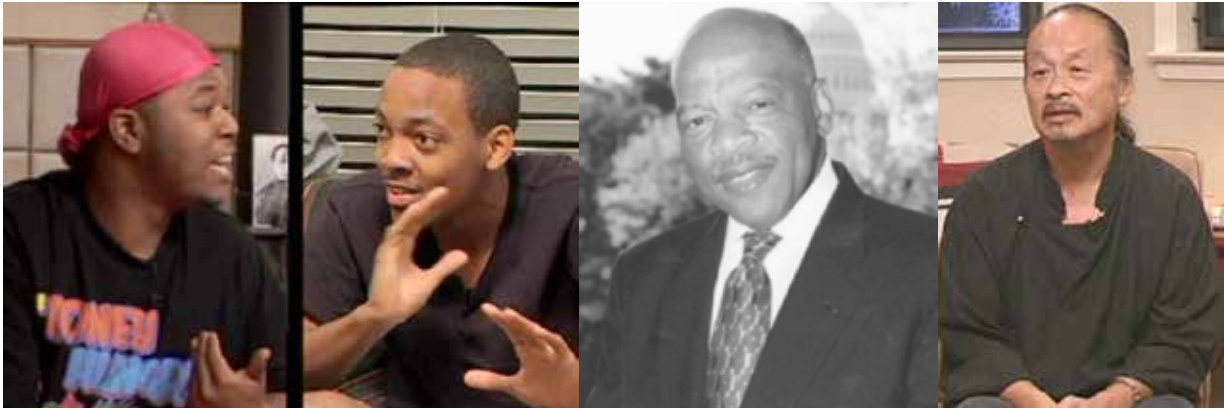
1. Marilyn asks out loud why is she “so angry? Why do I take everything so personally? Why am I so passionate?” Then answers, “Because that’s who I am. But I’m always denied it.” What are some ways that Marilyn and others who look like her are denied feelings of anger and passion about racism and about their experiences?
2. In what ways do whites benefit from Marilyn and Marc and other people of color not expressing their feelings of anger and passion?
3. What is your reaction when Marilyn says, “That’s why you white people will never understand the passion. Because you are never denied anything. Ever. And you never cry about anything.”? What would be a good reflection to Marilyn to deepen the conversation?
4. When Marilyn says to Marc about her father, “He wanted to join the war because he didn’t want to wake up the next day. Because if somebody kills him he doesn’t have to wake up, to ever deal with this.” Why does she direct that comment toward Marc? What does she say she appreciated about him? What might this mean about trust relationships in communities of color? How is this similar to and different from trust relationships in communities of white people?
5. When Marilyn says, “That’s why I’ve always trusted people of color,” why does she feel more safety and trust with people of color? What does she say is missing from her interactions with white people? How might the silence of the white people in the group impact Marilyn in this moment?

## Chapter 35: It's Hard For Me To Trust White People



1. Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) says, “It’s really hard for me to trust white people. You only need me when you know I have the answer to that question. I feel like I’m being used.” What does Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) say is missing from her interactions with white people? What could a white classmate say or do to make a connection with Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) at her school?
2. When Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) says, “To get funding for our events, we have to get the white people in there,” and when white people don’t come “our funding gets cut,” what is familiar about cultural and/or anti-racist events where only a few white people show up? What is the impact on people of color and on white people?
3. When universities or companies who “talk about diversity all the time” sponsor cultural or anti-racist events that are not well attended by whites, what meaning do you think people of color conclude from this? What meaning do you think white people conclude from this? Why do you think these conclusions are drawn?
4. Maiv Ntxhiav (Sia) asks, “Why can’t you be there to learn? From the heart? Not from a damn extra credit.” How would you answer honestly about why white people are not there to learn, from the heart, or with more people?
5. Jahmelia says, “We’re smiling because that’s how we’re going to deal with this.”

## Chapter 36: He Can't Say The Truth



1. Marc and Jon talk about being afraid of white people walking toward them on the street, because, “What are you going to say I did?” Marc continues, “All you have to do is make up a story. That’s how much power you have. That’s my life. In the blink of an eye, it’s extinguished. Because that one white person. Just made up a story.”
2. Lee Mun Wah talks about Congressman John Lewis being spit on, and when white people said it didn’t happen, suddenly it “didn’t happen.” Texas school leaders decide the Civil War wasn’t about slavery it was about state’s rights, and “bam. The book gets changed.”
3. Lee Mun Wah asks, “History being re-written. What does it do? Can any person of color change a text book in America?”
4. Jon says that President Obama “can’t do a good job. Because if he said what he wanted he’d get kicked out. He had to say there’s no black America there’s no ‘white America’, just the United States of America.” Jon says, “He doesn’t believe that. He has to hide so much of himself and that’s discouraging for me.”

## Chapter 37: The Numbness



1. Will says the anger doesn't come from "not being heard, I'm getting used to that. It's the pass that white people get in these conversations." What does he mean by getting a 'pass'?
2. Will says that Leif and Tyanne and Joe "slowly go into themselves." What is the impact on people of color when white people go numb? What is the impact on other white people?
3. When you talk about your experiences you only talk about what you can't do. And what you don't feel. Is this true?
4. When Leif begins to talk, he says, "As me. Not as a white person, but as me," Will and other people of color in the room correct him. Why do they do this? Why is it important to them that Leif speak 'as a white male'?
5. Then Leif says, "As a white male, I tried to open up and I was shut down." Will says to Leif, "You are not shut down. This is how you are. You have lost a piece of yourself as a human being." What would Will say that Leif has lost?
6. Will asks Leif, "What does it feel like when the emotion that you feel is numbness?"
7. To the black men, Will points out, "We keep going to the past, to what our ancestors did, to protect ourselves now." What does he mean by this? How does talking about past stories protect someone in the present?
8. How does Will say it affects him when he sees white people shut down?
9. Tyanne says, "You're right. I feel numb in my body, I even feel numb in my toes. I never even noticed until you said it." Why does Tyanne not notice this? What might this say about her as a white woman?

## Chapter 38: What It Means To Be Out Of Control



1. Lee Mun Wah says, “He told you a story and you’re still thinking about ‘me’. I’m a gay man, ... I’m a woman ...” Being able to empathize with someone because you have a similar experience can help you understand, but it may prevent you from getting out of yourself so you can see and feel how things are different for others. It may also prevent you from being with the person who is speaking, who may just want you to be present with them. How is this true for Joe and Tyanne?
2. How does their behavior affect the trust in the room? What message does it send to whites? To people of color?
3. What do Joe and Tyanne miss because of it? What do the people of color miss?
4. Lee Mun Wah asks, “Why are you so caught up with how to do it? So caught up and so scared that you get numb? Why aren’t you crying?” Why is it tempting to want to do the ‘right thing’ in a diversity conversation?
5. Why does Lee Mun Wah label this “being caught up with being right” as a part of “whiteness”? Is this familiar for you? How?
6. During this part, Tyanne’s feelings are hurt. She is angry and she looks away. Why is Lee Mun Wah coaching Tyanne to get out of herself?

## Chapter 39: People Of Color Are Less Than Human



1. Joe realizes he is detached from a part of his humanity, which makes it hard for him to see Marc as fully human. He says, “I’m hearing stories, but it’s not important because I’m not seeing you as human ... And I begin to realize that I am so pretentious, arrogant and privileged to be able to feel that way.”
2. How does Lee Mun Wah help Joe expand his awareness of himself, which gets him more in touch with his humanity so he can see Marc, when he says, “I have a different take on your arrogance. You are a gay man and so you carry, like a badge of courage, because you have some oppression, but I think it’s hard for you to say you are a white man.”
3. How does not being in touch with his whiteness keep Joe from seeing Marc?
4. Leif says, “It’s like a piece of my soul’s gone. I don’t know how to get it back. I don’t know why I’m not crying.” What comes up for you when you hear him say that? Is it familiar to you? If so, why?
5. How does this impact his ability to build trust in the room?
6. What other aspects of Leif’s life might be affected?
7. Compare how some African Americans go to church to dream of a better world somewhere else and the white people in the room looked away and went numb to preserve the world they believe they have here.
8. What comes up for you when you hear Jon say, “I wake up and look in the mirror...Just because the shade is darker.”



## Chapter 40: I Feel Like Killing White People



1. Both Will and Leif confess that they don't connect very well. From the outside, how might their behaviors be confused as the same?
2. Why do they each have different reasons for not connecting? What are some of the reasons white men and men of color might not connect well?
3. Why might have Will and Leif's parents taught them to behave this way?
4. How does Will make a connection between not seeing people as people as the reason why Leif doesn't cry? How does he show good modeling?
5. Jahmelia tells Will, "It's been painful to watch you, like you said, lose your humanity." She says she sees he's brilliant and talented and that she's afraid he may not access it again. She continues, "That's very painful for me. I think it's important that you know I see that." What does she mean? Could she say that to you? Why or why not?

## Chapter 41: Your Guilt Is Not the Ticket



**Mindfulness Exercise** - Lee Mun Wah provides some insight into developing mindfulness by asking Leif to think about what he doesn't notice: Take a minute to write down three things you don't know or think you don't notice. Share with a partner and discuss how you could know these things or notice them.

1. Lee Mun Wah asks after talking about not seeing racism end in his life, "How many of you who are people of color believe your children will go through the same thing?" Some answered yes and some answered no.
2. For those of you who are people of color, how would you answer? Why?
3. Carmela says, "We're in a war for our humanity." What does she mean?
4. How does that include both people of color and whites?
5. What does Lee Mun Wah mean when he says, "Your guilt is not your ticket out of this room. Your 'I don't know' is not your ticket out of this room?"

## Chapter 42: Whites Talking To Whites



1. As you watch this part, notice how people in the film are holding their bodies and expressing themselves nonverbally. What do you see? What does this tell you?
2. Discuss what's happening in this snippet of dialogue:
3. Leif says, "To sit here and know that every word is going to be judged and analyzed. It's a small taste of what people of color have gone through."
4. Tyanne replies, "It's not about analyzing something, it's about people."
5. Joe says, "I feel ashamed that I have somewhere in my consciousness that this is not a whole person. It's nauseating."
6. Tyanne replies, "It's not about intellectualizing everything, which is exactly what you're doing."
7. When Tyanne asks Leif if changing everything sounds realistic, Leif responds emphatically, "Yes!" It makes Marc smile. Why do you think he smiled?
8. At the end of this part, the white people in the room get stuck. What would you ask to help them out?
9. What advice would you give them?

## Chapter 43: Do You Believe Him?



1. What does Leif mean when he says, “I have already lost a part of my humanity.”?  
In what ways is that familiar to you?
2. When Leif says he is willing to lose his family and that he has to change, do you believe him? Why or why not?
3. What is Will trying to say to Leif, in terms of what he needs to get past?
4. What did Lee Mun Wah say to Will that helped him (Will) continue talking to Leif?
5. What were three things Will said that Leif needed to do?
6. Why did Marc not think that Leif would follow through? Does that resonate with you, too?
7. When Lee Mun Wah said to Marc, “You will only believe him (Leif), if what?”, what did Marc and Jon say in response?
8. What did Lee Mun Wah mean when he said to Leif, “This will be the hardest thing you have ever done.”?

**Classroom Exercise:** Talk what you personally could do to end racism and also some of the obstacles that could keep you from actually doing it.

## Chapter 44: What Would You Say?



1. If you could face this country, what would you say about racism?
2. What does Will mean when he says that he was destroyed by white people who thought they were doing great work?
3. What does Will mean by “I need you to take it personal.” ?
4. What did Will say would happen if white folks took racism personally?
5. What does Tyanne mean when she says, “It shouldn’t be easy because of all that has happened.”?
6. When Joe says he needs to take responsibility, what does he mean? In what ways do you need to take responsibility?
7. Why does Marilyn feel it is important to look into her eyes? What’s good about that and what’s hard about that?
8. What happens to Marilyn when folks look away?
9. Why does Marc say, “I’d slap your hand away.”? What does he need?
10. What does Marc mean when he says, “But, I’m not going to be stupid.”?
11. After everyone shared, who did you believe and why?
12. Who didn’t you believe and why?
13. What would it take for you to believe that racism could someday end or at least be unlearned?

**Classroom Exercise:** Share what’s hard talking about racism and what’s good talking about racism.