

WORLD TRUST PRESENTS
**THE WAY
HOME**



Heart to Heart Conversations™
CONVERSATION GUIDE



CONVERSATION GUIDE

Heart to Heart Conversations™ presented by World Trust

Mission Statement:

The purpose of our work is to uplift the human spirit through transformation of self, communities, and organizations. Through national and international conversations, people are invited to look at their most deeply embedded assumptions. Our goal is to reveal and examine the ideas and fears that keep us apart.

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An invitation to you

Dear Friend,

We invite you to host a Heart to Heart Conversations™ program with your friends, family, or close associates. It can take place in your home or in any comfortable setting. Your conversation is part of a nationwide conversation on oppression with a focus on race and culture. The purpose of the dialogue among you and your friends is to stimulate introspection and learning for the purpose of healing and transformation.

We have written this conversation guide and audio tape with a sincere desire to help you, even if you have never done something like this before. These materials provide a basic structure that shares what we would do if we were hosting the conversation with you.

This program is not about providing instant answers or solutions. We hope to encourage an ability to wrestle with tough issues through internal soul searching, an openness to not having all the answers, and a willingness to be influenced by others' experiences.

Thank you for the courage to host a Heart-to-Heart Conversation™ program.

Sincerely,

Shakti Butler
Executive Director, World Trust
and the World Trust Staff

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ABOUT WORLD TRUST

World Trust is a non-profit organization that in 1994 launched Heart to Heart Conversations™, a national program of public dialogue designed to help people share deep feelings about race and culture. Through these conversations, participants are encouraged to look deeply within themselves, to discover and recognize their embedded assumptions, and to challenge them as part of the process of transformation.

In 1996, World Trust initiated The Women's Video Project. Over the course of eight months, sixty-four women representing a cross section of cultures in America, came together to share their experiences of oppression through the lens of race. Through eight ethnic councils, (Indigenous, African-American, Arab, Asian, European-American, Jewish, Latina, and Multiracial), the women explored their stories of identity, oppression, and resistance.

Video can be a powerful tool for extending these conversations to a broader network of people. In environments that support authentic dialogue, we ask new questions of ourselves and others that open the mind and heart and spark *transformative learning*, healing, and change.

Transformative Learning as a Pathway to Change:

Transformative learning is more than the accumulation of additional information. Transformation means experiencing a deep shift in the basic premises of thoughts, feelings, or actions. It shifts the seat of consciousness. When this shift takes place, the lens through which we see is dramatically and permanently altered.



INFORMATION ABOUT THE MATERIALS

Heart to Heart Conversations™ Package

- ♥ **Conversation Guide-** (This booklet): All the information you need to host your own Heart to Heart Conversations™ Program
- ♥ **Audio Conversation Guide-** (Optional): A “substitute host,” which leads you and your guests through the program, narrated by Shakti Butler
- ♥ **The Way Home Video Tape-** (90 minute VHS): The core of the Heart to Heart Conversations™

How to Use Materials

Please be sure to examine all of the materials before you host a conversation. Feel free to use the materials in any combination that is appropriate for you and your guests.

Option A:

Watch the video in one sitting using the complete conversation guide or audio tape). Please note this Heart to Heart Conversations program guide provides a step-by-step process for use with this option. If you have less time you will need to modify the use of the guide and the tape. *4 hours*

Option B:

Watch the video in sections. Modify the conversation guide and tape to suit your objectives. Your time commitment may vary from four hours to a period of days, weeks, or months.



PREPARING TO HOST THE CONVERSATION

While it is important that the actual event itself remain informal and relaxed, hosting a Heart to Heart Conversations™ Program involves planning and preparation. The host should set the date at least three weeks in advance.

Steps to follow in planning your event:

Week 1

1. List the people you want to invite (5-20).
2. Determine the location. Many people will use their home or the home of a friend. You may also use a room in a community center, or other comfortable location.
3. Determine which option you will use and how much time you need.
4. Decide if you want to serve refreshments and whether you will provide them or will ask participants to bring something to share.
5. Send invitations (See addendum for sample letter, p. 13).

Week 2

6. Follow up invitations with a phone call.
7. Review the materials again, including video, audio, and conversation guide. Consider how you will handle your role and how you can help the conversation.

Week 3— Day of the Event

8. Organize food and refreshments.
9. Check video tape, video cassette player, television set, tape player, and audio tape.
10. Organize the supplies (see box on p. 4).
11. Copy the journal questions (pp. 10–12) and guidelines (p. 4) as hand-outs or write them out on large sheets of paper to put up on the walls.



Supplies

bell, drum, or some other device to call for attention
clock or watch
paper and pens
crayons and colored pencils
tissues
talking piece (see p. 5)

CARE OF THE GUESTS

It is reasonable to expect that challenges may arise during the course of your conversation. Your patience and willingness to understand differing points of view will be required. Try to create an environment that models openness and respect. Here are some tips for creating such an environment:

A. Conversation Guidelines

We recommend you read this list of guidelines to the group and ask participants to agree to follow them. You may also ask participants to generate agreements. *We suggest you use these as handouts or write them out on large pieces of paper to put up on the walls.*

- ♥ What you share within the context of the conversation is confidential, honored and respected.
- ♥ Use “I” statements.
- ♥ Avoid critiquing the video or others’ experiences; focus on your own experiences and feelings.
- ♥ Be honest and willing to share.
- ♥ Listen with curiosity and the willingness to learn and change. Resist the desire to interrupt.
- ♥ Be brief.
- ♥ When sharing in the larger group, build on others’ stories.
- ♥ Suspend judgment. Be open to the kernel of wisdom in each person’s story.



World Trust's intent

It is World Trust's intent to develop in people the capacity for holding multiple perspectives, thoughts, and feelings. Often complex issues can become over simplified or reduced to standard responses and reactions (things are either "right" or "wrong", "good" or "bad," etc.) It is important to practice "sitting" with discomfort, especially if we are feeling hopeless about our seeming inability to affect the outer world. This can be a first step toward being able to effect change.

B. How to Assist Respectful Sharing:

- ♥ **Appoint a timekeeper** to help people keep to agreed upon time limits for sharing. (Set up these limits in advance with the group, e.g., each person has 2 minutes to share, etc.)
- ♥ **Name an assistant host** who makes sure each person feels listened to and/or acknowledged. Although we recommend that everyone listen and acknowledge each other, the assistant host checks in with individuals to ensure that the conversation guidelines are being followed.
- ♥ **Encourage sitting in a circle** to allow everyone to see each other and assist the flow of conversation.
- ♥ **Pass around a talking piece** (stick, rock, or other object). It serves as a visual reminder to the person holding the piece to speak from their heart and to the others to listen fully.

C. Tools for Deepening the Conversation

Program Tools:

- ♥ **Mind-body learning:** One way we can work internally is to observe and listen to the cues and feelings that our bodies give to us. Have you noticed the increased heartbeat you experience when you feel you have something important to say. Does your throat tighten when you are holding back? By paying attention to our bodies, we can learn valuable information about what is affecting us, what we want to explore, and what we want to say.



♥ **Dialogue:** Dialogue is a process that is different from discussion. Discussion usually consists of people talking “at” each other while defending or perpetuating their own ideas. Dialogue is concerned with creating meaning by listening to others and being willing to be influenced by their wisdom. (See bibliography for resources on the Dialogue process.)

Dialogue may not be concerned directly with truth — it may arrive at truth, but it is concerned with meaning. David Bohm

♥ **Silence:** We live in such a pressure-filled society. Sitting in silence yields time to notice one’s thoughts and feelings. It provides time for reflection and contemplation. Observing what and how one is thinking and/or feeling gives space to allow learning to take place.

♥ **Journaling:** Writing your thoughts down on paper often clarifies what you are willing to share. Writing to yourself motivates you to give voice to those feelings that are difficult to express. The time provided to journal creates a space of solitude in which you can hear your own voice.

Writing is a way to work through embarrassment, shame, sorrow and anger in order to get to celebrate myself. Alison Luterman

♥ **Active Listening:** Active listening means listening attentively. It is essential in dialogue. Often, instead of listening, we are practicing or rehearsing what we want to say. Sometimes we are internally defining our own point of view. Giving our full attention to one another while practicing the suspension of judgment paves the way to greater understanding.

D. Refocusing the Group

- ♥ When conflict occurs, listening and acknowledging each person’s perspective opens the channels of communication
- ♥ If conversation becomes heated, take a break and/or provide space for journal writing or silent reflection
- ♥ If people are stuck in critiquing the video or each other, redirect their attention back to their own experience (See conversation guidelines p. 4).



Now you are ready to begin.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONVERSATION

Host's Welcome

20 – 30 minutes

Thank everyone for coming and share briefly why you chose to host a Heart to Heart Conversations™ Program.

Start Introductions. Begin a brief introduction process — e.g., Have everyone say their name and tell why they have come to the program, or what they are looking forward to receiving from it.



At this point, if you have decided to use the audio tape turn it on now. If you do not choose to use the audio tape, please continue with the guide.

Welcome from World Trust

2 minutes

Please read the following welcome:

Welcome and greetings to all of you from World Trust! We are happy that you have agreed to participate in a national program of Heart to Heart Conversations™. To support this conversation, we have made a video *The Way Home*. The video is rich with the stories and experiences of sixty-four women representing eight ethnicities and multiple cultures. In spite of the wide cross section of voices, we know that many of you may not see yourselves represented within the fabric of this presentation. Please forgive us and know that we have been bound by time and space. We have attempted to offer something for everyone in this video, and we hope that you find meaning for yourself in this presentation.

We believe that people throughout the country — by engaging in authentic dialogue and using a few simple exercises that help you delve more deeply into self and others — can create the potential for healing and change. We invite you to open your minds and your hearts and to embrace a willingness to learn.



An African Teaching Story

3 minutes

Please read the following story:

Anansi the Spider had been summoned by Sky-God to receive a special present: a huge calabash full of wisdom. Anansi was beside herself with excitement at this precious gift. Now she would be the smartest person in the world. Think of the advantage she would have over all the other creatures, since she would be wise while they remained foolish! But what if someone found out and tried to steal some of her wisdom? "I'll hide it in the top of the tallest tree," she decided. "Then no one else will be able to look inside the gourd and see what I have." It was rough going trying to walk on six legs and carry the big calabash in two of her spindly arms. She quickly became exhausted. Kweku the monkey saw her struggling and suggested, "Why don't you fasten a strap around the gourd and put it around your forehead so you can drag the weight behind you? That will make it easier to get up the tree."

"What?" Anansi stopped in her tracks. "How did you think of that?"

"I don't know," Kweku shrugged. "I just thought of it."

"But I'm supposed to possess all the wisdom in the world?" Anansi sputtered. She saw at once that she had been fooled, and in her chagrin she heaved up the gourd and BROKE IT on the ground. Wisdom pooled out everywhere; into the air, the water, and into the earth itself. All the animals flocked around and each carried off a little bit of it. The elephant, the bird, and the tiger each captured an inherent bit of common sense that would help them and their children stay alive. The trees stood still and drank deeply of the wisdom as it fed their ancient roots. In this way, wisdom came to be part of the world in rocks and wind and rivers and animals and humans, in each and every living thing.

As Anansi the Spider learned, wisdom is meant to be shared with everyone. Each one of you holds a precious piece of information or questions that you can share with your friends: what the world looks like through your eyes, how your upbringing taught you to see things, and what it means to stand in another's shoes. By sharing your separate pieces, you are participating in creating a new story.



Take a stretch break.

5 – 7 minutes



Share conversation guidelines (p. 4) with the group. You may choose to post these on the wall or give them out as a handout. 5 minutes

4

Watch the video.

92 minutes



Take a stretch break.

10 minutes

Description of the Video

Sections 1 – 8 consist of introductions to each of the eight councils. The sequence of the introductions are Indigenous, Latina, African - American, European - American, Multiracial, Jewish, Asian and Arab.

Sections 9 – 21 are the topics of conversation. Each section is approximately 5 minutes in length. They are:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Controlling the Land | Power and Silence and Privilege |
| Am I This or Am I That | Becoming American |
| Finding Identity | Individual Reality vs. Cultural Reality |
| Oppression Internalized | School Stories |
| Standards of Beauty | Experiences from Light to Dark |
| Oppression Institutionalized | Relationships |
| Consciousness and Healing | |



THE CONVERSATION

Please note this guide is structured for a conversation after the video has been viewed in its entirety. If you choose to watch the video in sections, we recommend watching a section of the video, followed by rounds of silence, journaling, discussion, and then repeating the process.



During the conversation take breaks between exercises as needed.

Round 1. Personal Level

30 minutes

The purpose of this first section is to work at the personal level, in order to build a capacity for honoring multiple perspectives and emotions. Ask the group to sit in silence for a few minutes before raising the following questions. Provide time between each question for reflection and journaling.

- ♥ “What within the video resonated for you? What moved you? Who was easiest for you to identify with? Who was the hardest?”
- ♥ “Note words, phrases, or segments from the video that remain with you.”
- ♥ “Notice if there were parts of the video that brought up feelings for you, perhaps feelings of shame, guilt, envy, anger, sadness, recognition, joy, upliftment or other feelings?”

Round 2: Small Group Sharing

30 minutes

Form groups of two (dyads). Ask each person to share their feelings and/or journal entries with their partner. Remind them that as one person shares, the other person listens. Give each person 5 minutes to share. You, or a timekeeper, may want to ring a bell after 5 minutes to let people know when to switch.



Optional Exercise

Direct each dyad to join another so that each guest sits within a conversation circle of four. Ask each person to share a seed or kernel of wisdom that they gained from their own story or from their dialogue while working in their dyad. Ask them to:

- ♥ “Take time as a group to talk about what moved you deeply and what has come up for you as a result of listening to each person speak.”
- ♥ “Notice if themes emerge at the group level that you have in common and/or if there are places where you have differences.”

Round 3: Institutional Levels of Oppression 30 minutes

At this point, the conversation can lead to addressing oppression at the institutional level and its relationship to the personal.

This level is intended to help us recognize that we participate within systems that may oppress others.

Invite the smaller circles to form a larger conversation circle. Review the earlier guidelines (p. 4) for enhancing dialogue. They are important in this exercise. Ask the following:

- ♥ “Think back on what you have been taught by authority figures, peers, and the media about who is good and who is not good, what is normal and what is not normal.”
- ♥ “While watching the video, did you become aware of any myths or stereotypes that you have been holding about people from other groups?”
- ♥ “Did you learn anything — about yourself or those groups — that surprised you?”

Optional Exercise

“Notice a story that illustrates institutionalized power as it relates to oppression. It can be a personal story, something you have witnessed, or something from the video. First, write your thoughts about it.” Give them a few minutes. “Share your story with the group.”



Round 4: Next Steps

At this point, you may be ready to go home! However, for the brave, here are some questions to consider if you want to continue the discussion, schedule a time to meet later, or think through some of the following on your own:

- ♥ “How can I practice what I’m learning from this experience?”
- ♥ “Who can I ask for support? How can I more fully be myself, and share more of my experiences with friends and associates from different backgrounds? Who is hardest to share with? What do I fear?”
- ♥ “Is there a concrete action that I want to take — whether small or large — that can help transform institutional oppression around issues of race and culture? What support do I need to do this? What support can I offer others?”

PARTING WORDS

Expect additional feelings, thoughts, and memories to come up over the next days and weeks as a result of seeing the video and talking and writing about the issues it raises. You may want to continue to write in a journal. Your group may want to schedule another meeting in order to talk in greater depth. The work of celebrating our differences and rejoicing in our shared humanity is endless. There is much to share and learn about each other, many wounds to heal, and new projects to undertake. World Trust, and everyone from the Women’s Video Project hope that this video inspires others to take up the work of speaking the truth and healing the rifts that separate us. We expect that each individual, group, and community finds growth and learning in ways that extend our imaginations, as never before.



ADDENDUM

Sample Invitation Letter to Guests

Dear Friends,

I am inviting you to a showing of a film that means a lot to me. It is called *The Way Home* and features diverse women talking about and across racial division in this country.

We will be listening to the stories of Indigenous, Latina, African - American, European - American, Asian, Arab, Jewish, and Multiracial women spotlighted in the video. This film is designed to raise questions rather than to answer them — to be a jumping-off place for future dialogue rather than a definitive statement. It's the hope of World Trust's Women's Video Project, who produced this video, that it get into the living rooms of people across the country, and become a mirror, weather vane, lightning-rod, and catalyst to get us started on our own conversations.

I want to share this video with people who are sensitive to issues of social justice and who are willing to engage in examination of our own histories and prejudices, though that may not always be comfortable. It is essential that we look within for our own answers. It is equally essential that we look outside at the institutionalized violence and racism that have separated us from one another.

The idea that we, as a small group of concerned individuals can begin to make a dent in this huge problem of racism excites me. All across the country, in living rooms, community centers, churches and synagogues, this video will be shown and discussed by people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. You are invited to come with an open heart to add your voice to this national conversation.

Please join me for an evening of listening, sharing, and reflection that I hope will be food for thought and transformation for a long time to come. The showing will take place on _____ at _____ and we will spend two hours afterward processing the issues raised in the film. Please RSVP.

Sincerely,



Commonly Asked Questions:

- ♥ **Why does this documentary only include women?** In our work facilitating dialogues using various films and videos that address culture and race, one of the most commonly asked questions is, “Where are the women’s voices?” In spite of the overall success of using these works, it has been obvious to many that the voices of women need to be heard. *The Way Home* is a celebration of the power that women’s perspectives, voices, and ways of knowing bring to the dialogue.
- ♥ **Why are there separate ethnic councils of women within the video?** We often express ourselves differently when we are among people who we consider to be most like us. The councils provide a safe forum for women to open themselves up authentically while giving us an opportunity to hear conversations we generally are not privy to in interethnic circles. The council process opens a window into how we are both similar and different and how we might begin to respect the complexity of a diverse society.
- ♥ **What is the value of story ?** Historically, stories have been used to teach and to heal across communities and nations. An individual story has been known to inspire a movement. A collective story has been known to liberate a people. We honor the power of storytelling to reveal our humanity, transmit wisdom, and create change
- ♥ **How did the women come together?** An interracial council representing each of the eight councils met for one year. These women then formed and became the co-facilitators of the eight separate councils. The only guidelines were that each group should be diverse in terms of age, class, education, sexual identity, etc. Each ethnic council convened four to six times before being videotaped.



Glossary

In addressing race and culture, it is important to move beyond clarifying terminology and to get to the heart of the dialogue. We hope this optional tool assists you in the learning process.

Prejudice: Inaccurate and/or negative beliefs about a group of people. Prejudice is manifested through attitudes, behavior and /or lack of access to equal opportunity, (i.e. jobs, education, etc.)

Racism: The institutionalization of collective prejudice resulting in a system of advantage based on one race having power over others. In the United States, it is the systematic oppression of people of color by white people. This subjugation is supported by cultural beliefs, stereotyping, and institutional practices

Anti-Semitism: The systematic discrimination and collective prejudice against Jewish people based on cultural and/or religious practices.

White privilege: Unearned benefits that accrue to white people based upon skin color; awards or advantages given to white people without their earning them or asking for them. White privilege is usually invisible to the receiver.

Internalized racism: The conscious or unconscious acceptance by a person of color of the underlying assumptions of racism. This is a root cause of the injustice people of color may show toward each other

Ally behavior: Active behavior by a member of a dominant group (in the cases of racism, by a white person) to dismantle the oppression of a target group (in cases of racism, people of color)

Levels of racism

Personal racism: An individual's conscious and unconscious attitudes and behaviors based in a systematic oppression of people of color

Organizational racism: Policies and practices in a given organization that perpetuates a system of advantage based on race

Institutional racism: The sanctioning and perpetuation by institutions (educational, legal, health care, financial, political, religious, cultural, etc.) of a system of advantage based upon race



Bibliography

Here is an abbreviated list of relevant works. **These materials are not available through World Trust.** Contact your local library or bookstore to obtain materials.

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With great love and respect,

we offer this letter of thanks for the support that has brought this project into being. It's been three years since its inception. The love for the project has passed through many hearts and hands. We thank those who welcomed us into their homes to share their personal lives and stories and who brought new questions to spark the conversation. Thousands of donations poured out from across the country. These gifts — large and small — have kindled the fire. We give tribute to the hundreds of volunteer hours donated in tending its gentle flame. Our sincerest hope is that the conversation spreads its light and illuminates our way home.

Sincerely,

The World Trust Staff and family

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Laura Rifkin

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THE WAY HOME

Over the course of eight months, sixty-four women, representing a cross-section of cultures in America, came together to share their experiences of oppression through the lens of race. Separated into eight ethnic councils, (Indigenous, African-American, Arab, Asian, European-American, Jewish, Latina and Multiracial) the women explore their stories of identity, oppression, and resistance. It is the intention of **World Trust** to use this video as a catalyst for powerful learning, healing, and transformation.

The **Heart to Heart Conversations™ Program** focuses on issues of race as they intersect with gender, class, and sexual orientation.

“The Way Home is a fountain of healing truths. This work is living proof that there are no important issues facing humanity today that we can afford to tackle without the centrality of women’s leadership.”

*Victor Lewis, MA, Cast of The Color of Fear,
Co-Chair of the National Organization for Men Against Sexism*

“This work goes beyond a basic awareness of racism to explore the subtle, rarely acknowledged roots of self-hatred and lack of understanding among even the most progressive people.”

*Gary Delgado, Executive Director,
Applied Research Center*

“Shakti Butler’s film, The Way Home, dares to speak the unspeakable about the politics of oppression and race in the United States. Women’s voices... powerfully fill the emotional and dangerous void of what is often left unspoken between us. This film offers... hope for our future generations.”

*Fabienne McPhail,
Director, Women’s Center, Stanford University*

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