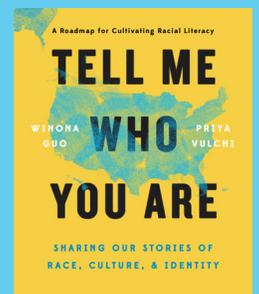


THE EDUCATOR'S COMPANION GUIDE

For middle & high school educators seeking to start
conversations about race and identity in the classroom
with *Tell Me Who You Are*
(Penguin Random House, June 2019)



Tell Me Who You Are shares what we've learned from traveling to all 50 U.S. states as two young women of color, listening to stories about race and intersectionality during our gap year before college. Our racial literacy work, though, began long before then.

In 2014, our sophomore year of high school, one of our teachers brought up the unjust death of Eric Garner in class. We then began to see how students and teachers alike were struggling to talk about race, though every part of our daily lives—from our neighborhoods to our friend groups—were shaped by racial division. We learned that kids start developing signs of prejudice and stereotyping at 3 to 4 years old. We co-founded the 501(c)3 non-profit [CHOOSE](#) to help change that.

We began by listening to people's stories, mostly in our hometown and the Greater New York area, before sharing them on our website. A year later, we published all of them, paired with statistics and systematic context, in one textbook called *The Classroom Index* funded by Princeton University's Department of African American Studies. We called our model a bridge for the "heart-mind gap" in our first [TED Talk](#), addressing both the "inability to understand each of our experiences, to fiercely and unapologetically be compassionate beyond lip service," as well as the "inability to understand the larger, structural ways in which racism operates."

When people in 40+ states started using that book, we knew we had to do better by sharing the stories of people beyond our local area. So we fundraised our whole senior year, persuaded our parents, and deferred college admission to travel to all 50 U.S. states. We listened to over 500 soul stories, and we learned a lot about ourselves. More about our personal journey in our second [TED Talk](#): "Lessons of cultural intimacy."

We imagine *TMWYA* as both a captivating page-turner, and a powerful educational tool for every American to equip themselves with the fundamental 21st century life skill of racial and intersectional literacy. While this book can

be read independently by parents, astronauts, business professionals, and truck drivers alike, we think it especially belongs in the classroom.

We care deeply about working with educators and students, like those we grew up with, who have taught us so much and also helped make CHOOSE real. We believe and hope in the power and responsibility of educators to shape an upcoming generation of socially-conscious changemakers. This companion guide is an educator toolkit designed, considering the complexity of the book's content, primarily for middle and high school classrooms. We propose two pathways of use:

1. As supplementary material to existing lesson plans across subject areas. Our story collection is a rich resource for sharing current, diverse perspectives. See "Stories by Subject" (4). Discussion of stories should be preceded by introducing the subject of race and how to talk about it; see the "Brief history of whiteness" (TMWYA 8) and "How to talk about race" (TMWYA 359) book sections.

2. As the foundation for a one or two week unit on racial and intersectional literacy. See "Create a Racial Literacy Unit" (8).

Of course, we encourage educators to innovate other creative ways to use the book, and, more broadly, to ensure that all young people are being recognized, valued, and taught the skills they need to navigate our diverse world. We appreciate that you value this mission too; let's all work together toward requiring racial literacy curriculum in every K-12 U.S. school.

Stay tuned by finding us @choose_org on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), & [Facebook](#). Sign up for our mailing list (www.chooseorg.org) to receive more resources, and email us your feedback or join our advisory team (team@chooseorg.org). We'd love to hear from you. Thank you.

In solidarity,
PRIYA VULCHI & WINONA GUO
CHOOSE Co-Founders/Co-Presidents



AT A GLANCE

4 ***STORIES BY SUBJECT***

8 ***CREATE A RACIAL
LITERACY UNIT***

9 ***SAMPLE LESSON PLAN***

10 ***STUDENT ACTION KIT***

STORIES BY SUBJECT

Below are some standard U.S. middle and high school subject areas, each paired with subject-specific ideas for talking about race and six stories to enrich existing lesson plans (for use at any time during the year, not just in a racial literacy unit). Though many more stories in the book are relevant and can be discovered by reading further, we hope that this sampling is a helpful starting point. If copies of the book are not available for every student, stories (and their explanatory footnotes) could be shared and discussed with photocopies or a projector.

We encourage all educators—especially those of subjects not included in the short list here—to look up specific keywords in the book’s index and to refer to the cross-subject lists on page 7.

HUMANITIES: ENGLISH AND THE ARTS

Authors’ Recommendation: The global spread of the English language is connected to the European project of colonization, making English and Whiteness thornily intertwined—and students are noticing. For example, in response to an curriculum predominately teaching works by white men like William Shakespeare, John Milton, and T.S. Eliot, Yale University students wrote a petition in 2016 to the English department asking that they “decolonize” the curriculum because it “creates a culture that is especially hostile to students of color.” Question why books by Black authors like James Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time* and W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* may only be assigned in sociology classes, not regular English literature classes. The same applies to the arts: racism is not entertainment. To this day, choir songs typically consist of European languages, and play casts often feature White leading characters.

If people of color are included at all, they often appear as enslaved people or exotic novelties.

Instead, introduce more people of color into the limelight. Choose stories that reflect our global diversity. For the visual arts, for example, you could study the relationship between race and visibility, or consider why how we see is racialized by assigning readings like Jasmine Nicole Cobb’s “A Particularly ‘Ocular’ Institution,” or studying artists like Kerry James Marshall, Carrie Mae Weems, and Gordon Parks. Across humanities classes, TED Talks like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s “The Danger of a Single Story” can speak to the power of narrative and perspective. On language, talk about why “the words we use matter” with stories from chapter 5 of *TMWYA*. A bibliography of suggested reading starting from elementary school will also be available on the CHOOSE website.

Stories to Share:



295

Aubrey

Strength through hip hop dance in her immigrant journey



353

Monique

Actors, television, and Black womanhood



171

Brontë

A theater student grappling with being called “White”



355

Kao Kalia

An author writing her Hmong people into existence



21

Queen Esther

The Black roots of country music



73

Rhonda

The portrayal of indigenous people in children’s literature

MATH, SCIENCE, AND TECH

Authors' Recommendation: Some ideas you can implement tomorrow: Treat diverse historical figures as role models. Just as you credit Newton or Einstein, discuss non-White mathematicians too. Also discuss how bias might appear anywhere from code, to math problems. This was a real math problem given to Alabama middle school students: “Leroy has 2 ounces of cocaine. If he sells an 8 ball to Antonio for \$320 and 2 grams to Juan for \$85 per gram, what is the

street value of the rest of his hold?” Don’t ignore that “Black-sounding names” were assigned to characters dealing drugs. Broadly, challenge what you think of as relevant to STEM. Consider Black Lives Matter, for example, as a climate justice movement—just as communities of color experience the brunt of climate change, racialized state-sanctioned violence against people of color is another way in which our environment kills people (see: Flint water crisis).

Stories to Share:



44

Ed

A meteorologist told he couldn't do math



230

Jane

Micronesian treatment and health



98

Shermaine

Scientist's challenges getting her PhD



205

Robert

Indigenous medical breakthroughs



163

Amanda

A racialized daily experience in tech



346

Steph

“Model minority,” clean energy

HEALTH & ABILITY

Authors' Recommendation: Dr. Howard C. Stevenson, a clinical consulting psychologist, and author of *Promoting Racial Literacy in Schools: Differences That Make a Difference*, said, “We know that men and women who experience racism have a host of health risks, from high blood pressure to breast cancer to lower life expectancy. These risks seem to be related to chronic stress that disrupts sleep habits over time. Any kind of stress can have these effects, but racial stress tends

to be something people don’t talk about.” When teaching students how to live healthy lives, it’s crucial to discuss and affirm racism’s effects on our physical and mental health. How do people with intersectional identities too—including class, gender, ability, and sexuality—take care of their health in a system not built for them? For example, how should people with disabilities get around campus? Or how can we be more intentional about the gender pronouns we use?

Stories to Share:



106

Deb

Mental illness, domestic violence



272

Patience

Health gaps from income inequality



182

April

Physical disability after trans hate crime



134

Sandra

Intergenerational trauma and love



140

Tyler

Breaking away from alcohol, substances



86

Lauren

Cerebral palsy and talking about ability

SOCIAL STUDIES

Authors' Recommendation: Think about whose history you're teaching, and from whose perspective you're teaching it. McGraw Hill published the following in one of its textbooks: "The Atlantic Slave Trade between the 1500s and 1800s brought millions of workers from Africa to the southern United States to work on agricultural plantations." Africans "brought" to America were not "workers or indentured servants," they were enslaved people. Or, as discussed further in *TMWYA*, the "new world" was only "new" from the perspective of white colonists, not for the indigenous populations already here. So, be intentional about investing

in counternarratives—like the first-hand stories in *TMWYA*, which also illustrate how historical racism has evolved to match the times. Talking about America's origin story? In addition to the Declaration of Independence, discuss the *Popol Vuh* or local indigenous texts. Discuss colonialism, capitalism, and the patriarchy. Is there only a paragraph about the Japanese American Internment Camps in your textbook? Then spend some extra time teaching it on your own. For U.S. history, every story in Chapter 2, "The Past is the Present," can be used to not only reimagine our history, but also connect it to contemporary context.

Stories to Share:



34

Melina

Developing White identity; "The Big Three" systems



287

Kimmy

"The generational curse": healing from a broken system



188

Jason

Jewish oppression and privilege, conflict and capital



252

Aaron

Organizing against the multiple levels of structural racism



127

Rosa

The impact of laws and "two closets to come out of"



154

Treniya

Why slavery still matters; lineage and learning about self

FOR U.S. HISTORY



102

Butler



243

Louise



233

Nastesho, Mohamed, Hayat



57

Autumn



76

Jo



68

Ashley

FOR U.S. GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



303

Karen



315

Hermon



117

Vaughn



265

Angela



178

Mareo



291

Javier

WORLD: LANGUAGE & TRAVEL

Authors' Recommendation: Studying a second world language for at least one year is compulsory in more than 20 European countries, but not in the U.S. Nevertheless, learning world languages has been shown to increase cultural appreciation and foster the development of global citizens. As a world language teacher, you have the unique ability to travel through time and space with your language to further a cultural dialogue. Beyond learning a language's

accompanying culture, identity, and history, you can also spark important conversations about immigration, the fallacy of reverse racism, cultural appropriation, and expanding what languages and identities are inaccurately assumed to be "American." Furthermore, you could discuss how something like "travel" can be a different experience for people of different identities, or how "race" as a concept may show up differently around the world.

Stories to Share:



42

Liz

Traveling around the world as a Black woman



236

Neda

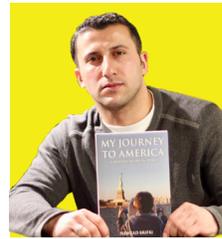
Maintaining cultural connection in White America; Farsi, music



31

Vic

Organizing in Chinatown communities



173

Newzad

Kurdish statelessness and contributions to the U.S.



191

Renee

"We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us!"



25

Justin

The U.S. vs. Senegal: perspectives on slavery

FOR ANY SUBJECT AREA

1. TERMS

Intro to key vocab (like "race," "intersectionality," "white privilege"); could pair with pgs. 1-13, 359-363



14



83
(chapter intro)



39



252



34

2. EDUCATORS

We hope these stories from other educators may inspire ideas for your own teaching. Also see 151, 324, 328, 129...



258



339



349



124



199

3. STUDENTS & IDENTITY

As students ourselves, we cannot overstate how powerfully these have struck us—stories with advice we wish we heard in middle school, stories about lives so different from our own... Must-reads incl. 197, 202, 74, 255, & 48.



261



332



157



306



276



95



268



343



214



227

CREATE A RACIAL LITERACY UNIT

Our book is split into ten chapters, each one exploring one key takeaway synthesized from our 50 state trip. If you're an educator with the ability to create your own racial literacy unit, consider the following steps for using *Tell Me Who You Are* as one of your central texts.

DURING

GET INTO IT! Before you start, discuss the book introduction (1-10) and “How to talk about race” sections (359-363).

See sample lesson plan on right. For each chapter, discuss its takeaway, stories, and statistics. Discussion questions could range from “How does this story make you feel?” to “How are both racial domination and racial progress reflected here?” Involve other resources.

AFTER

Ask your students the same or similar questions again to conduct a **post-evaluation!**

Next, split up the chapters accordingly.

If you're covering every chapter, *TM-WYA* works best when read in chronological order. Otherwise, choose to teach topics ranging from race's impact (chapter 1) to intersectionality (chapter 3) to activism (chapter 10).

BEFORE

First, determine how much time you have. A quarter? One semester? An entire year?

Before you start, ask your students to do a simple **pre-evaluation** based on the chapters you chose. For example, adapt from the short questions below:

1. How can we define “racism”? “Intersectionality”?
2. Name the contributions of as many people of color as possible in the field we are studying.
3. How does your racial identity impact who you are?

To wrap up, transition from literacy to leadership: how will students translate what they've learned into action? **Distribute the student action kits** on page 10.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

(ABBREVIATED & TO BE ADAPTED FOR YOUR CLASSROOM)

Overview

Today we will introduce the concept of “race.” We will start by establishing a shared language for our discussion. We then aim to begin developing a historical and sociological framework for thinking about this topic.

Lesson Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Define key terms like “race,” “racism,” “intersectionality,” and “white privilege”
- Identify the “four dimensions of racism” and the ways they shape our lives
- Explain how these terms and dimensions have developed over time

Materials

One copy of *Tell Me Who You Are* for every instructor and student. Or, at least one copy for the instructors, and photocopies of relevant book pages for every student.

Assigned Student Preparation

Read pages 1-24 of *TMWYA* (which includes the author introduction, a brief history of Whiteness, a definition of race, a framework for thinking about race, as well as the introduction and two key stories from the first chapter, “Race Impacts Everything”).

Day 1 Agenda (1 hour)

1. Watch the authors’ [TED Talk](#), “What it takes to be racially literate.” (15 min)
2. Briefly introduce the book before discussing reactions from the project, reading, and talk. Consider framing some students’ journey with racial literacy as potentially paralleling the student authors’ own journey. (15 min)
3. Discuss community norms for having this conversation (adapt from “How to Share Your Story” on page 359) (15 min)
4. Review the “Brief History of Whiteness” assigned reading on pages 8-9; draw rough timeline on the board (15 min)

Day 2 Agenda (1 hour)

1. Split into small groups and assign each a race-related term to discuss, define, and develop examples for. Four groups can each cover one of the “four dimensions of racism” on page 10 of the book; others can cover terms like “intersectionality,” “privilege,” “cultural appropriation,” “ally,” “trauma,” “codeswitching,” or “racial profiling.” (5 min)
2. Ask each group to begin by reading a relevant story from the book, showing how the term impacts real people’s lives. See the “terms” list on page 7 of this packet or the “stories by subject” for some relevant stories. (30 min)
3. Each group presents briefly on their term as everyone takes notes. (25 min)

STUDENT ACTION KIT

You're a student. You're passionate about racial and intersectional justice. You're "young" but you don't believe that should stop you from making a difference. This is for you.

First, engage in racial reflection. Critically think about how race and intersectionality have shaped your life. Self-educate. Journal. Maybe think-out-loud with those you trust.

Next, think about if you want to share your story. (Check out a super exciting opportunity to the right!) Only. Share. Your. Story. If. You. Want. To. Think about safety (*Are you endangering yourself or others by giving specifics?*), trauma (*Will this be healing, or cause further trauma to yourself or others?*), and purpose (*Why are you sharing it? How will sharing your story help yourself or others?*). This is a personal choice. If you do decide to,

you have the incredible power to inspire, educate, or connect with others.

For detailed steps on translating reflection into change, check out the last chapter of *Tell Me Who You Are* ("Let's All Get To Work"), where we explain our formula for change: **Consciousness + critique = contribution**. Beyond the formula, check out some action ideas below and brainstorm your own. Remember, some of the most powerful ideas will not only incorporate your individual talents (cooking, coding, leading, etc), as discussed in the book, but also mobilize others to work with you as a team.

Stay tuned with our journey on social media (@choose_org), and reach out with any questions or concerns. We want to hear all about your progress and share your hard work!

CHOOSE **TEDEd** Student Talks

SHARE YOUR STORY WITH TED

EMAIL TEAM@CHOOSEORG.ORG

Diversity & Equity Council: *Create and select a student-led stakeholder committee to organize meaningful events throughout the year.*

This could be organized as club, but may be more effective as an administration-backed committee. You want the power to implement school-wide events and changes. Decide to what extent you want teachers and administrators to be involved, but involve someone you really respect to be a mentor to you or the team. If such a person does not exist within your school, look to your local community.

Racial literacy education & cultural competency training: *Create opportunities for yourself and others to develop racial literacy.*

Take a class about race; if that doesn't exist at your school, ask if you can self-educate via an independent study for course credit. With others, you could start by helping equip community leaders with the cultural competency training they need. For example, push administration to require professional training for district faculty and staff. Or, form a recognized group of socially-conscious student leaders, and then work individually with club leaders—for example, the yearbook, newspaper, and debate team—to make sure they are operating equitably.

Exhibitions & Assemblies: *Organize public events—in your local library, shop, or school—to rally your community.*

What's one specific topic your school could really benefit from learning more about? Anti-Blackness? The opportunity & achievement gap? Microaggressions? Consider a school-wide assembly with a professional speaker, a community panel, or students sharing their stories. Or, use CHOOSE's story-stat model to interview community members and create an exhibition of stories. One idea: have everyone write their own six fun facts on photos of themselves (see Mrs. Witherspoon's class example above, inspired by our book model) and hang them up!



The CHOOSE Org © 2019
www.chooseorg.org
[@choose_org](https://www.instagram.com/choose_org)

