



# Call and Response

by Veronica Chambers and Jennifer Harlan

ica. Before reading this book with students, teachers should spend time considering their understanding of this text and how this understanding is shaped by their own experiences and identities. It will be important for teachers to begin with confronting their own biases and ideas around race before embarking on this text with students. How does this reflection prepare you to teach this work? Considering the identities and experiences of your students, what supports need to be in place before you begin reading this text in the classroom? How will you ensure that classroom conversations do not cause harm to students? How can you create community agreements that will support student engagement? Below you will find a few resources that may help you as you think about creating a classroom environment for having these important conversations.

- *Not Light, But Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom* by Matthew R. Kay
- Smithsonian: National Museum of African American History & Culture. [nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race](https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race)
- *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* by Glenn E. Singleton

## Introduction & In Pictures

### Discussion Questions

1. On page 3, the authors mention the signs from the protests in Berlin, citing signs that read, “Justice can’t wait.” What does this mean to you as it relates to this country? Has justice been waiting? What do you think it is waiting for? Why do you think it is taking so long for justice to become a reality for everyone?
2. On page 3, the authors mention the signs from the protests in Canada, including a sign with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” What does this quote mean to you? Do you think this statement is true today? Why or why not? What are threats to justice in America?

### Writing Activities

1. On page 4 the authors discuss Alicia Garza’s 2020 interview with *Vanity Fair* and share the quote “We all want to live lives where we feel safe, where we are able to live with dignity, and where we’re connected.” In your journal, write about ways we could work toward safety for everyone. Who do you think is most safe in your city, state, and/or country right now? Why? Who do you think is least safe in your city, state, and/or country right now? Why? What could be done to create safety for those who do not currently have it? Be prepared to share your reflections.
2. In your journal, respond to this quote, “The power of the people is greater than the people in power. And when the people stand together, they can change the world” (p. 4). What examples have you seen of this throughout history or now? When has the power of people been greater than the people in power? Continue to revisit this question as you read this entire text. Continue to add examples with evidence from the text throughout the book.

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## Photo Analysis

Choose any of the photographs from the In Pictures section (pages 6–15) and complete a photo analysis using the questions below. Be prepared to share your reflections and your analysis.

1. What do you notice? What are some important details from this photograph?
2. What is the photographer's message?
3. How does the photographer convey this message to the viewer?
4. What questions do you have based on the photograph? How can you find the answers to these questions?
5. What do these photographs tell you about the movement?

## Chapters 1–5

### Discussion Questions

1. In Opal Tometi's interview with *The Guardian*, she said in part, "This movement is about all of us and recognizing that Black people aren't a monolith" (p. 22). What does this quote mean to you? Why is this quote important to understanding the Black Lives Matter movement? Be prepared to share your responses with your peers.
2. In chapters 2 and 3, the authors share how social media was used to spread the message of the Black Lives Matter movement. What was the role of social media at the beginning of the movement? What are ways social media can be used to enact change? How does it allow us to share our narratives? What else does social media allow us to do?
3. Garza stated on Facebook "#BlackLivesMatter is a collective affirmation and embracing of the resistance and resilience of Black people... It is a rallying cry. It is a prayer... #BlackLivesMatter asserts the truth of Black life that collective action builds collective power for collective transformation." (p. 28). What stands out to you from this quote? What do you learn about the movement from it? What does this quote mean to you? Discuss your responses with a partner, and be prepared to share with the class.
4. In DeRay Mckesson's quote from *The New York Times Magazine*, he said, "Nothing I saw looked like America to me" (p. 35). What does America look like to you? How is this similar and different from how Mckesson saw it at that time? Share your thoughts about what America looks like to you with a partner. How are your perspectives similar or different? Why do you think they are similar or different?
5. In chapter 3, we as readers learn about how some people in the Black Lives Matter movement rejected some of the older leaders (p. 42). Create a chart that compares / contrasts the Reverend Jesse Jackson and the Reverend Al Sharpton's approaches to activism with the activists from the Black Lives Matter movement. Use specific evidence from the text to support your responses.
6. In chapter 4, we as readers learn about the different roles of police officers. What do you think the role of police officers should be in your community and why?
7. In chapter 4, we learn about "inside" and

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“outside” people in the movement. How was President Barack Obama an inside man and an outside man? Why is it important to have inside and outside people in the movement? Use evidence from the text to support your responses.

8. In Tometi’s interview with *The Guardian*, she said in part, “Leaders are everywhere” (p. 53). Who are some important leaders in your community? Why are they important within your community? How are they similar to/different from the leaders you have read about in this book?
9. Systemic racism is connected to power structures. Who has power in America? Who does not? Why are these power structures in place? Who benefits from them? What power do you have?
10. Chapter 5 discusses the persistence of systemic racism. With a partner, create a chart that shows how systemic racism persists in schools, sports, health care, and prison systems. Use examples from the text to help you complete this chart. What other examples can you think of that are not mentioned in the text?

## Activities

1. On page 52, President Obama is cited for discussing activists who are “making history as we speak.” We are making history now. What are some historical events that have happened in your lifetime that you would like to explore? Create a list that you might be interested in learning more about and choose an event to research. You will research this event and create a presentation of your choice to share with the class.
2. Pages 55–59 provide a timeline of important events from the civil rights and Black Power movements (1954–1968). Choose one of these events to research further. Which event would you like to learn more about and share with others? Who was involved in the event? What was the purpose? Was the goal of the event achieved? What impact did it have on the movement? Create a digital presentation to share with your classmates. \*Note to teacher: You can combine these presentations in a digital format and allow the students to take a virtual tour of the presentations.
3. Pages 60–65 provide a timeline of important events of the Black Lives Matter movement (2012–2020). Using a U.S. map, map the events from the timeline if a location is provided. Did multiple events happen in the same location? Were some events connected to other events? What do you notice? What questions do you have? Choose at least one event to research further. Be sure to note the key people involved. What was the result? How did this event impact the Black Lives Matter movement? Prepare to share your findings with others.
4. In chapter 5, we learn about voting rights. Research the history of voting rights for Black people in the early 1900s and research the issues concerning voting rights in America in recent years. How are these issues similar? What obstacles did Black people face when voting then? What obstacles do Black people face when voting now?

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## Chapters 6–10

### Discussion Questions

1. Pages 116–119 show the different roles people have at a protest. Why is it important to organize these roles? Why are these roles important? What other roles could be created to support people at protests?
2. Page 127 discusses the idea of shifting money from police departments to focus more on other systems, such as education, housing, mental health, etc. Considering all you have learned from this text about inequities within these systems, if you were in control of a state budget, how would you reimagine these systems to improve circumstances for Black and Brown people? How could these systems be improved? What would it take to have equity across these systems? You can choose one area to reimagine or address several of them. Be prepared to share your ideas with others.
3. Chapter 10 ends with a call to pay attention to the things happening in your own community and encourages readers to start asking questions. What questions do you have about your community? What could be done to improve your community? What role could you play in community improvement?
4. How has the Black Lives Matter movement drawn attention to and impacted important social issues? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. Earlier in the book the authors cite Martin Luther King and his discussion of freedom. As you reach the end of the text, what are

your thoughts about freedom? Who has it? Who does not? Why? What will it take for everyone to truly be free?

6. How has your understanding of the Black Lives Matter movement changed since you began reading this book?

### Writing/Creative Activities

1. In chapter 7 we see the role of music in activism. With the help of your teacher, choose a song from the throwback protest playlist on page 96 or the Black Lives Matter playlist on page 97 to explore and analyze. Read the song lyrics at least two times. Annotate the lyrics, noting specific text you find interesting, questions you have, connections, etc. Note figurative language the writer uses and consider how the authors share their message in the song. What is the message of this song? Is there a call to action? If so, what is it? How do the songwriters reveal their message? How does the figurative language impact the message? How is injustice represented in the song? How does the song represent the movement? Be sure to use evidence from the lyrics to support your answers. Write your responses in your journal. When you are finished, share your song and responses with a classmate who chose a different song. How are your songs similar? How are they different? \*Note to teacher: Before helping students choose songs, you may want to review the lyrics and narrow the song options based on the needs of your students. Students could also be given the opportunity to

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explore more songs and/or write their own songs or poems related to a social issue that is important to them.

2. Throughout this book we have seen how art can be used to communicate important messages. Create a piece of artwork (song, collage, mural, poem, etc.) to showcase the big ideas you have taken from this book. What have you learned? What are your takeaways? What do you want to share with others?

## Artwork Analysis

Choose any of the photographs from “Murals With a Message” (p. 98–107) and complete a photo analysis using the following questions. Be prepared to share your thoughts and your analysis.

1. Spend some time with this image. Complete a thorough initial viewing. As you review this image initially, what stands out to you? What are your initial thoughts? Make a list of these thoughts.
2. Review the image again. Which parts of the mural speak to you as a viewer? How/why do they speak to you?
3. How does this mural help you understand the movement better?
4. How does this mural help to tell the story of the movement?

5. Why do you think the authors of this book chose to include this mural?
6. What new knowledge do you gain from this mural?

## Research Activities

1. In chapter 6, we as readers learn about athletes who made sacrifices to stand up for what they believed. They saw a problem in society and worked to address the problem. What is a problem in your community that you would like to see solved? Research the problem and develop a plan to solve it. Who would be involved in this solution? What resources would you need? What would be your timeline?
2. Chapter 10 shares the stories of many youth organizers and activists. Research other youth organizers nationally or internationally. What are they advocating for in their work? How have they enacted change? Based on your research, what strategies have these organizers used to be successful in their activism?

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