

BLACK LIVES MATTER SCENARIO (ACTIVITY AND DEBRIEF GUIDE)

50 minutes

This is a handout for the How to Have a Conversation on Race Without Everyone Running Out of the Room workshop.

Learning Objectives

- Create a brave space for courageous conversations with union members to discuss issues pertaining to race and how it affects the labor movement
- Maintain a better understanding for leaders of how racial and class inequality affects our unions
- Understand that leaders cannot win larger labor fights unless they work with the community—particularly communities of color—and that we are being divided by corporations and politicians to weaken our movement
- Learn that leaders have a role in advocating for systemic issues that affect communities of color, such as education, justice system, public safety and its relationship back to building a stronger labor movement and a more conscious nation
- Articulate leaders' fears around working with Black Lives Matter and other groups organizing for racial justice, as well as to dispel the myth

Materials and Logistics

This activity will take **50 minutes**, divided as follows:

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| Welcome, Introductions and Ground Rules | 10 minutes |
| Scenario Background | 10 minutes |
| Exercise | 20 minutes |
| Group Debrief | 10 minutes |

Materials Needed

- Sign-in sheet
- Butcher paper/whiteboard
- Markers
- Copies of the following scenario

AGENDA

Facilitator: You can print out this page and pass it around to your participants. Organize your room into small groups, preferably five to six people, but no more than seven. Give them clear instructions on time and allow them to read the scenario and go through the guided questions. Ask them to use a flipchart to write their answers.

Welcome, Introductions and Ground Rules

10 minutes

Facilitators will introduce themselves and establish ground rules and group agreements.

Scenario Background

10 minutes

Kingston, Pennsylvania, is a suburb outside of Pittsburgh. In the 1970s, Kingston was an up-and-coming suburban neighborhood for working-class and wealthy families who wanted to move outside of the city for a better life.

At the end of the 1980s, the Kingston area had massive job loss after the closing of steel mills, food factories and other large businesses due to trade agreements that moved entire industries outside of the region. Labor jobs were hit hardest, with a total loss of 40% of union membership. The loss of jobs led to the closing of businesses, less money for schools and more money for police and prisons.

Terrance Brown is an African American 20-year-old community college student from Pittsburgh, but he moved to Kingston when his mom retired from her union teaching job. He has one child with his girlfriend, Ashley—with whom he resides. Terrance works during the day at the local bank and does a graveyard shift at Target to help pay for day care and rent. He works those jobs in order to make a livable wage, as both are set at the current minimum wage—\$7.25 an hour.

Last week, Terrance was working the late shift at Target, but left in a hurry to catch a ride with a friend. At 4 a.m., Terrance realized he had left his house keys at work, so they made an illegal U-turn to get back to the store. The police took notice of the car and followed them to the back of the Target. As Terrance went inside, the police waited for him to return as his friend waited in the car. When Terrance came out of the building, the police told him to freeze and put his hands in the air. Terrance tried to explain to the officers he was an employee picking up his keys. Terrance took a step toward the officers while reaching in his pocket to show them his keys. Thinking Terrance was reaching for a weapon, the officer mistook the gesture and shot Terrance. The wound, which was meant to stop Terrance from moving forward, accidentally killed him.

Pause and answer these questions:

1. What is your visceral reaction to what happened to Terrance?
2. Based on what you know thus far, how should the labor movement respond?

Terrance's friend Brian recorded the entire incident on his iPhone and immediately took it to Terrance's mother. Officer Jeff Williams, a white 27-year-old police officer, expressed his apologies, but noted that in the moment, he feared for his life. Officer Williams is part of a local police union not affiliated with the Pittsburgh Federation of Labor.

You are the Executive Committee of the Pittsburgh Federation of Labor, which is the local labor body for Kingston, Pittsburgh and three other suburbs in the area. People of color make up 30% of your membership.

The Black Lives Matter activist group is asking for the PFL to stand with Terrance's mother and support demands for justice toward his untimely death. The asks to the PFL include:

1. Support the firing of Officer Jeff Williams.
2. Demand an indictment for the murder of Terrance Brown.
3. Provide resources to canvass and phone bank around the upcoming election to support a local candidate for mayor whom labor has not yet endorsed, but is beloved by the community.
4. Raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

Exercise

20 minutes

With your group, please answer the following questions:

1. How should the PFL support the Black Lives Matter demands?
2. What is your strategy for garnering PFL support around these demands?
3. Are there other demands/campaigns in which the PFL should engage with the community and Black Lives Matter?

Group Debrief

10 minutes