

READING GROUP GUIDE

WORDS
OF CHANGE

ANTI- RACISM

POWERFUL VOICES,
INSPIRING IDEAS

KENRYA RANKIN

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Anti-Racism: Powerful Voices, Inspiring Ideas* frequently uses the terms *White supremacy* and *anti-racist*. Did your understanding of what each meant change after you read the book?
2. This book makes it clear from the beginning that it has a goal: “On the following pages, you will find wisdom, inspiration, and encouragement from people who are doing the work of banishing racism.” Did you feel encouraged to work toward ending racism after reading it? If so, what quotes really inspired you and why?
3. “School and work are important, but our real job is to use that privilege, however invisible it may seem on the worst days, to bring down the hierarchy,” reads the introduction. What are the different kinds of privilege someone can have? Which do you have—and how can you use it to fight racism?
4. There is a difference between declaring “I love all people” and being anti-racist. Angela Davis calls it the difference between being “non-racist” and “anti-racist.” What do you think it means to be anti-racist?
5. Who did you want to learn more about, based on their quote? And why?
6. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work fighting apartheid in South Africa, said, “Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another.” What do you think is the connection between being different and needing others?
7. Brené Brown said, “We have to keep listening even when we want to scream, ‘I’m not that way. This isn’t my fault!’” Who do you think she is speaking to in this quote? And why is listening well essential to being anti-racist?
8. Shawn Dove believes that a “belief in the humanity of Black people” is a first—and necessary—step to dismantling White supremacy. What are some examples from popular culture and current events that show a lack of belief in Black people’s humanity?

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9. What does it mean for White people to comment on and police Black people's bodies, as Roxane Gay talks about in her quote? What are some current examples of this? And how has social media contributed to—or helped fight against—this problem?
10. This book stresses the need for White people to be allies in the fight against racism. What is an ally? And what are ways that White people can do this without relying on Black people to, as Zack Linly said, “take time out of our days to educate them.”
11. Lizzo believes that asking someone to prove racism is another tool the oppressor uses to discredit people. Have you ever had to prove that something you experienced or witnessed was racist? How did that impact you emotionally?
12. “Never / trust anyone / who says / they do not / see color. / This means / to them, / you are invisible,” wrote the poet Nayyirah Waheed. And Franchesca Ramsey says being color-blind “has no effect on structural and institutional racism” and allows the problem to continue. Why do you think a lot of well-meaning people say they are color-blind? And how would you respond if someone told you this?
13. Often racism is discussed in very concrete ways—unequal pay, disproportionate numbers of arrests, police shootings, and other things that can be counted or seen. Yet a number of the quotes talk about the intangible consequences of racism; how it is, as Ruth King said, a “heart disease.” How do you think racism is a heart disease?

This guide was prepared by Ayana Byrd, an author and journalist who has been writing about race, racism, and anti-racist movements for her two-decade-plus career. Yet now as a new mother, she is thinking more passionately about how words and actions will shape the future for the next generation. Her work has appeared in publications including the *New York Times* and *Essence*, and she has an essay in Kenrya Rankin's *How We Fight White Supremacy*.