

America to me *real talk*

EPISODE GUIDE 01

Context Matters:
The Permanence Of Racism

Episode Guide 01

TOPIC

Context Matters: The Permanence Of Racism

America to Me focuses on a year at Chicago’s Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS), widely considered to be a safe, well-integrated, academically strong school. In Episode 1, we meet some of its students of color and their families, who have sacrificed to live in this popular district. Their stories begin to reveal the racial cracks and realities of the permanence of racism.

Organizing a Group Discussion?
Be prepared! Before you start, read the Organizer Guide.



ANALYZE

- How is OPRFHS successful at valuing all of its students’ racial and cultural identities, and where does it fall short?
- What’s the difference between desegregation and integration? Which has OPRFHS done well and what’s the impact?
- How is the racial divide reflected in students’ lives at school and at home?

DESEGREGATION VS. INTEGRATION

“Desegregation” is the ending of racial segregation in America’s schools and military, following **Brown vs. Board of Education**. “Integration” involves more than just mixing together people of different races - it involves leveling barriers, creating equal opportunities regardless of race, and developing a culture that values diverse individuals and traditions.

REFLECT

- Think about the social life in your school or community: do people of similar races stick together or do they mix? If they stick together, why?
- Is it important for people who share the same racial identity to spend time together, apart from the larger collective? Why or why not?
- What's your racial context and how does it inform how you navigate the spaces you occupy and the work you do?

ENGAGE

These can be group or individual activities. Encourage participants to share their findings with the whole group.

- Desegregation At Home** [1 hour]
If you're not familiar with it, review *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and research how your state / city / local community responded to it.

Places to look: Google your city's name + *Brown vs. Board of Education*, or city name + school desegregation.

- Historical Timeline of Integration** [1 day]
Create a historical timeline of racial integration of your school, institution or community. Is there more work that needs to be done? What can you do with this data?

Places to look: Your school's admissions office, public records, libraries, Teaching Tolerance.

RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Describe the racial demographics of a school (K-12) that you attended, and how you made decisions about which groups of students you befriended or spent time with. What did race have to do with your experience?

