

# America to me *real talk*

## EPISODE GUIDE 02

Living or Surviving:  
Whose Humanity is Valued?

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## TOPIC

### Living or Surviving: Whose Humanity is Valued?

As we meet more students at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS), we start to see where the students of color are able to live as their authentic selves, and where they're just surviving. Extracurricular activities like Spoken Word Club offer safe, validating spaces for students like Charles and Chanti to explore their racial identities. Yet students like Ke'Shawn and Terrence are left searching.

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



## ANALYZE

- Where at OPRFHS do we see students of color just surviving and where do we see them living? Why are extracurricular activities like chorus, cheerleading, and spoken word so appealing to the school's students of color?
- Consider how Deanna (the cheerleading coach) and Jessica (the literature teacher) interact with their students of color. What's similar and different about their approaches?

- Teacher Jessica Stovall talks about her work being "life or death." Administrator Chala Holland talks about "surviving" versus "living." What distinctions are being made and why do you think Jessica and Chala use this language?

### WHAT IS RACIAL IDENTITY?

**Racial identity is a person's identification with a particular race that shares common characteristics with that person. Multiracial individuals identify as being a part of multiple racial groups.**

## REFLECT

- What's the racial makeup of your school, institution, and/or community? How does that shape your experience in that space?
- Where at your school, institution, or community do you see your racial identity represented and valued? Where do you not feel valued?
- At OPRFHS, it seems the teachers seeking change are women of color. How does your school, institution, or community value the voices of women of color?

## ENGAGE

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

- The ME in Media** [10 min.]  
Reflect on your first memories in which you saw your racial identity and culture represented in books, television and film. How often do you see your racial and cultural identity represented in those forms of media? Take some time to share your experiences with a partner.
- Spaces of Value** [1 day]  
Investigate who at your school is responsible for ensuring that students of all races and cultures are affirmed and valued. If no one is currently responsible, who should be responsible, and who should be held accountable? Come up with examples of what this looks like when it's done well and when it's not done well.

### RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

**Describe a time in your educational experience when you felt racially valued or affirmed because of, or in relation to, your race.**

- **What do you remember about the experience and what was the racial impact of the experience on your life?**

