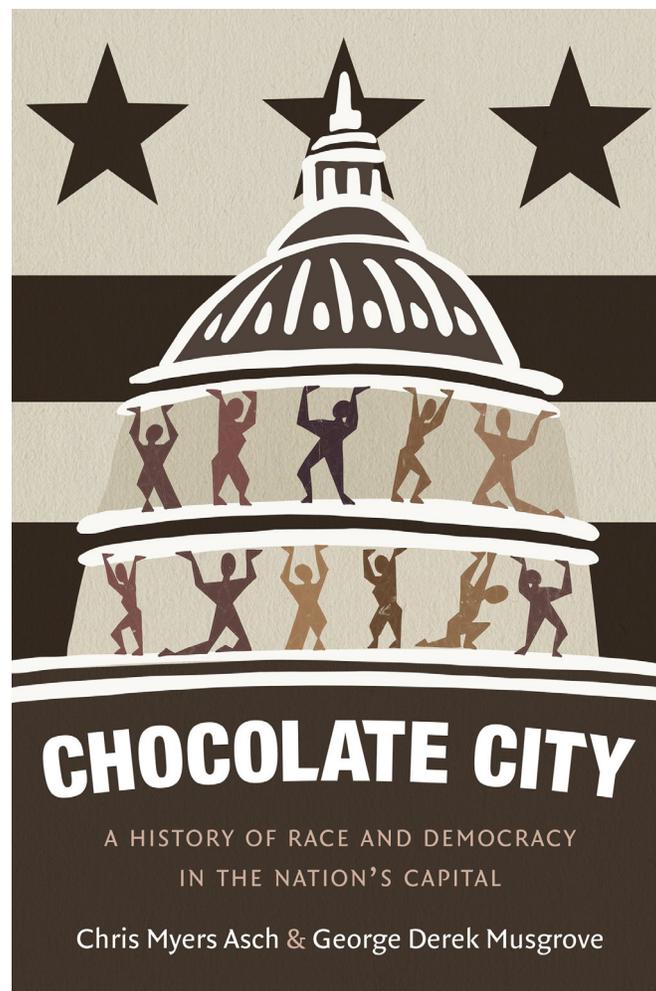


Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital

By Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove

Facilitators Resource Guide

Developed by staff at the Foundry United Methodist Church and the Edlavitch DC Jewish Community Center



Introduction

In the Fall of 2021, the Edlavitch DC Jewish Community Center and Foundry United Methodist Church, located across the street from each other in Washington, DC, began to dream about how we might partner together to build community that was intentionally anti-racist and anti-colonial. The resulting effort was creating a robust framework for reading and discussion groups that our communities created for the book *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* by Chris Meyers Asch and George Derek Musgrove. The book, which explores the history of D.C. from pre-colonial times to the modern day, uses the lens of race to illuminate the power of institutional racism, and the ways that we have and can continue building power to dismantle it. In order for our participants to get the most out of reading *Chocolate City* we have created this Facilitators Resource Guide as well reading and discussion questions and much more for each set of chapters our groups will read.

Included are in-depth explorations for each set of chapters we will read in two-week periods with comprehension and discussion questions as well as key terms to help guide the conversation at each meeting. We have also included helpful tips, tools, and instructions for facilitating reading groups and conversations about race, as well as tools like our Participant Reflection Journal and interactive “Map of *Chocolate City*,” that will help bring the history that Asch and Musgrove explore in such depth to life.

We hope that the journey of reading, discussing, and reflecting on *Chocolate City* is more than just an exploration of a region or city in its particularity but brings deeper understanding of how history continues to impact the lives of real people in our communities today and the ways we can more honestly tell the stories of our past to shape our collective future.

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Getting Started

Chocolate City is a rich book, full of detail, often including stories of people who are still alive! Because it is such a long text, timing and pacing--both as a facilitator and for your groups--is critical.

As you think about launching your own reading and discussion group, make sure you can answer the following questions as a facilitator:

- Do I have enough time to dedicate to reading the book and answering the discussion questions **before my group meeting**?
- What format (paper-back/hardcover, e-book, audiobook) will be most helpful for keeping me engaged with the text?
- Do I have the resources and knowledge I need to facilitate the group in whatever format it will be hosted? If not, what do I need to do before our group starts meeting?
- Do I have the bandwidth to communicate regularly with the group, including: regular reminders about upcoming topics and chapters covered, sharing additional resources, etc.? If not, do I have someone who can assist with this task?

Knowing the answers to the questions above will help with determining when to launch your group and what you'll need to do that well. We encourage you to use the additional resources we've included in your Facilitator Guide along the way as well as consider the following:

- What meeting format (in-person only, online only, or a hybrid of online and in-person) best fits the needs of my community and my facilitation style?
- At what pace can my group(s) and I reasonably read and engage the text (every week, bi-weekly, etc.)? We discourage you from meeting any less than bi-weekly both to foster community between group members and to make sure that members are able to recall previous chapters and reading.
- What point, seasonally, makes the most sense to begin a group reading of *Chocolate City*? We encourage you to consider your personal and/or organizational calendar and identify an extended period in which you can schedule meetings without significant or prolonged interruption.

Once you've answered these questions, whether with your planning team or on your own, you're ready to begin your journey through *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in our Nation's Capital!*

Ready to get started? We suggest ordering copies of *Chocolate City* from a local, black-owned bookstore.

Not from the D.C. area? Although *Chocolate City's* focus is on Washington, D.C., the history it explores has profound impact on Maryland, Virginia, and--as the Federal District--our whole nation. Consider a reading and discussion group no matter where you are located, and approach it from the lens of your own local history as informed by particular experiences/impacts of slavery and institutional racism the book explores.

Additional Resource:

United States National Archives McGowan Lecture Series presentation with Drs. Chris Meyers Asch and George Derek Musgrove on YouTube.

Meeting Format

Group Meeting Schedule: We recommend meeting no less than bi-weekly to allow for continuity of conversation and community building among group members. Because the chapters can be quite long and in-depth, we encourage you to assign no more than two chapters per group meeting, with one chapter per meeting being preferable.

If your group decides to read the entire book and then hold just one discussion, we encourage you to set aside at least 120 minutes to fully explore the questions we've included in our reading guide.

Group Size: We encourage you to have no less than five (5) and no more than ten (10) members per group so that you allow ample time for conversation. The larger the group, the more you may consider using break out conversations or groups to explore specific questions with larger group conversation following.

The meeting format below is based upon a weekly or bi-weekly meeting that lasts between 60-70 minutes. You may want to lengthen the period of time based upon the size of the group and the amount of chapters you plan to discuss at each session. Depending upon what format you're meeting in (online or in-person or both), you may want to add additional time for group members to join or to allow time for the group to visit or chat with one another prior to beginning your discussion. **The format for your introductory meeting will be slightly different.**

- **5 minutes:** Welcome and Space Setting: use this time to help make sure folks are comfortable, know one another, etc. If you're meeting online or in a hybrid format, briefly outline how you want people to engage with the technology you're using and set standards/expectations.
- **10 minutes:** Reflection/Journal Discussion: use this time to discuss the reflection question/journaling prompt from the previous week. Invite participants to share additional knowledge they've gained or research they've done about the previous meeting's reading.
- **40 minutes: Group Discussion:** use this time to move through the provided discussion questions. If this is your first time facilitating a book discussion group, you may wish to refer to the section titled Tips on Facilitating Effective Group Discussions. Do your best to help people engage at least one question in each of the three included sections.
- **5 minutes: Wrap Up:** Take the last few moments of the meeting to summarize the conversation and remind participants the date of the next meeting as well as what chapters everyone should be reading.

Other Helpful Meeting Tips:

- Make sure that you've got a copy of the discussion questions and key terms for your assigned meeting with you for reference in advance.
- If meeting **in person** you may consider having a computer, tablet, or other way of displaying the interactive *Chocolate City Map*.
- If meeting online you may consider sharing your screen periodically and using the interactive *Chocolate City Map* to reference the reading or comments being shared.
- Make sure to send an email reminder to your group participants 3-4 days in advance of each meeting that includes: what you'll be covering in your upcoming meeting, where/how you'll be meeting (including the zoom link if meeting online), any other information folks may need to participate fully in your meeting.

¹You may want to spend longer on this at your first meeting or first few meetings. For helpful tips for online facilitation, please see Tips and Tricks for Educating Online

Introductory Session

- Depending on your meeting format, make sure you've referenced our resources for facilitating conversations and leading online group discussions.
- Send a reminder to group members 5-7 days in advance of the first session about your group meeting with instructions about how they can join (if online) or where to be (if in-person).
- Make sure your participants have purchased a copy of *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* on an e-reader or in hard copy. If purchasing a hard copy we recommend purchasing from Mahogany Books, a Black-owned local bookstore.
- If your group is gathering online via Zoom, consider sending out the handout titled "Participating as a Zoom Attendee" which we have provided. If you're using another platform for meeting online, be sure to send instructions about what tools people can use to participate and how you want them to use them. *Please note that for Edlavitch DCJCC participants, virtual meetings will all be conducted using one of our Zoom accounts

Session Goals:

- Group members meet and get to know each other.
- Provide an overview of the reading and discussion group, tools, topics covered, meeting schedule, etc.
- Establish a group "Conversational Covenant" to use moving forward. Be sure to include guidelines from Facilitating Conversations about Race in your covenant.
- Set the day of the week and the time of the day for all future meetings moving forward.

Gathering and Introductions (20 minutes)

Group introductions are a great way to establish group rapport, understand the reasons members have opted to join the discussion, and establish norms for your future meetings. As you facilitate this portion of the meeting, pay particular attention to group members' answers, as these may be helpful in how you facilitate the group or determine questions you'll explore in the future. In addition to the "Consider This" section below, here are some suggested introductory questions to get you started:

- (If from the DC area) What neighborhood or suburb is home? What can you tell us about it in a sentence or less?
- What's your favorite local spot to hang out (neighborhood, park, museum, etc.)?
- In a sentence or less, what's your favorite period of U.S. history and why?
- In a sentence or less, what are you most excited to get out of our time together?

Helpful Tips:

If meeting online:

- Ask people to update their names in the Zoom call to include their first/last name and preferred pronouns.
- Consider using an invitational conversation model. Ask members to introduce themselves and invite someone else in the call to go next. If you use this model, be sure to tell folks before you begin that it is ok to "pass" if they're called on before being ready to share.
- Depending on your group size, you may want to use break out rooms to invite brief, one-on-one conversation between group members who can then come back into the call and introduce one another.

If meeting in-person:

- Consider having nametags available for members to wear, especially if yours is not a previously established book group. Normalize adding personal pronouns (she/her, etc.) to nametags.

- Consider having a way for folks to see (projected, on a whiteboard, a handout) what introductory question(s) you're inviting them to reflect on.

If meeting in a hybrid (in-person/virtual) format:

- Pay particular attention to the location of your camera in the space. Invite group members who are in-person to directly address persons on the screen and to look at the camera when speaking.
- Check in with your virtual participants BEFORE you begin to make sure they are able to see and hear you in the room. You may consider doing a "sound check" with the person seated farthest away from the computer or microphone to make sure they're able to be heard legibly.
- If using the invitational conversation model for introductions, begin with those who've joined virtually and, if there is more than one virtual participant, have all those joining online go first. This will make it easier for them to see participant names, etc.

Reading Group Overview (15 minutes)

Topics to cover:

- Meeting format and platform details: if meeting on Zoom, make sure you provide an overview of the tools you'll be expecting people to use (breakout rooms, screen sharing, etc.).
- Meeting schedule: how much people will be expected to read for each session, how you plan to incorporate tools like the Participant Journal and interactive *Chocolate City* Map, and any other details about group location/platform people will need to know.
- Resources needed: make sure that people have acquired a copy of the book in their preferred format – paper copy or e-reader. If purchasing a paper copy, we recommend participants get it from Mahogany Books, a Black-owned local bookstore.
- Outline the sections of each discussion guide we are providing, including the key terms and journal prompt assigned to each.

There are three sections of questions for each chapter:

- **Comprehend:** Questions that invite participants to consider what they've read in light of previous readings and other parts of U.S. history.
 - **Respond:** Questions that invite participants to integrate the reading and how it informs or shapes their lives or the world today.
 - **Reflect (Journal Prompt):** A question that invites participants to reflect upon the reading more deeply. Participants can use their Reflection Journals we are providing to record their thoughts. Make sure participants know that we are offering physical copies of a Reflection Journal for everyone and that these can be picked up at either the Foundry or the EDCJCC.
- Share the interactive *Chocolate City* Map and how people can use it. If meeting online consider sharing your screen and showing people how to use the map, as well as sharing the link for the map in the chat. If meeting in-person, be sure to share or email the link after the meeting so people can easily access it at home.

Create your Conversational Covenant (20 minutes)

- Introduce the purpose of your group's Conversational Covenant (to establish a framework and series of agreements for how you'll engage in conversation with one another). Share some examples of what these agreements might include (i.e. "We will prepare for each session by..." or "We promise to arrive to each session on time."). You may wish to share a copy of Creating a Group Conversational Covenant included for you in this guide in advance of the meeting so that people have a general idea of what they may want to include.
- Review Creating a Group Conversational Covenant yourself in advance and identify what you, as the facilitator, want to be sure to include. It can be hard for folks to come with things to add to a Conversational Covenant like this. Come prepared to prompt conversation by offering your own ideas or by noting parts of Creating a Group Conversational Covenant that would be helpful for the group.
- If meeting in person or in a hybrid format, make sure you're both monitoring the chat (for virtual participants) and that you've got a way to write down what ideas are shared. If meeting online consider using the chat, open a Zoom Whiteboard, or screen share a Word document as a place for people to share ideas. Put down every item that's named and if anything is repetitive, ask those who shared them if it is ok to combine ideas. If your group is large enough, you may consider asking for a volunteer who can record and type up your group's covenant for you.
- Pay attention to the voices that are offering ideas. Be sure to invite those who are speaking less to share as well. Encourage those who've lifted up ideas to wait until everyone in the group has had a chance to share before offering another idea.
- Once every member of the group has been offered a chance to share, go through the items on your list one by one, inviting the group to offer consent or disagreement to each. Once the group has arrived at a set of mutual commitments for conversation, make sure you keep a record of those commitments and distribute them to the group before your next session.
- Make sure your Conversational Covenant includes clear instructions for how it will be enforced during group meetings. See Creating a Group Conversational Covenant for help on this.

Closing Reminders (10 minutes)

- Make sure you've got contact information, including email addresses, for all of your group participants and that they know you'll be reaching out to them between meetings to share information about upcoming sessions. (The EDCJCC and the Foundry will provide each facilitator with their group list in advance).
- Share how group members can contact you with questions.
- Remind everyone the date, time, and location/platform of your next session, what they are responsible for reading, and that they will receive a copy of the Conversational Covenant before the next meeting.

Tips and Tricks for Educating Online

Starting a Meeting

- If it's your first time using Zoom, visit the Educating Guide: Getting Started on Zoom and complete the steps in advance of your meeting to get you set up.
- Schedule your meeting in the Zoom application for your desired date/time and copy the invitation details to send to your participants (please note that if you're part of the EDCJCC group, we will do this for you)
- Join your meeting a couple minutes early to ensure a proper connection then follow the below tips for a quality online learning experience. If planning to use breakout sessions, share links, etc., consider having this easily available or set up so that you can move to them with relative ease during the meeting.
- Contact participants 3-5 days in advance of your scheduled meeting with the link and details they'll need to join the call.

Tips and Tricks for Virtual Meetings

- For your first meeting, set aside some time to introduce your participants to Zoom if they're not familiar with it and ensure that they're able to connect their audio and video.
- Give an agenda or plan for each meeting by screen sharing the discussion questions for that meeting and mention what format (large group discussion, break outs) you will be using during that session. This gives students a clear idea of how the meeting will progress and what to expect.
- Discuss online etiquette in your first virtual meeting and periodically revisit the topics. Examples include muting yourself if there is background noise, when you should have your video on, and what to do if your audio or video isn't working.
- Take time to promote questions, comments, and reactions that appear in the chat as well as making sure to provide time for people to engage by unmuting themselves and speaking.
- Divide into smaller groups for a discussion on a certain topic. You can use Zoom's Breakout Room feature to either pre-assign or auto-assign people into groups for a short period of time so they may discuss things in a smaller group setting.

Facilitating Conversations about Race³

We want to acknowledge that both the Foundry and the EDCJCC serve a predominantly white community and expect the participants in our reading and discussion groups of *Chocolate City* to also be primarily white.

Discussing race and institutional racism requires courage. It's normal to feel discomfort as you reflect on your own experiences with racial inequality and deepen your understanding of racism. But the more you practice facilitating difficult conversations, the more you'll be able to manage the discomfort. The conversations may not necessarily get easier, but your ability to press toward more meaningful dialogue will expand. Stay engaged; the journey is worth the effort.

Being uncomfortable: feeling uncomfortable (for you and/or your participants) should not mean being unsafe, if it can be avoided. Acknowledge from the beginning that conversations about race are difficult and that shaming is not part of the group's culture. Discomfort, however, is part of the deal and will lead to developing a more anti-racist framework for living our lives as individuals and in community. Your Conversational Covenant should help create a safe and trusted space for the entirety of your reading and discussion group experience.

Being vulnerable: avoiding conversations about race and racism can arise from our own fears of being vulnerable. As you prepare to engage in difficult conversations, consider this question: What will a discussion about race and racism potentially expose about me? Addressing your own fears of vulnerability as well as those of your group participants will help the conversation stay honest and productive.

Dealing with strong emotions: discussing and reflecting on our own role in institutional racism for those of us who identify as white can bring on strong emotions of guilt, defensiveness (white fragility), frustration, and even anger. These are not easy emotions to manage and they are not easy emotions for others to deal with. Therefore, it is important that people be allowed to express how they feel and for people to be okay with the discomfort. However, it is important the emotions do not overtake the conversation.

Acknowledge the hopes and fears that everyone brings to the table as they set out on this months-long journey of understanding our history and collective role in present-day structural racism. Consider having participants list some hopes and fears as part of your first or second session so people can see that they have shared hopes and fears in this endeavor.

Setting some ground rules: consider including the following into your Conversational Covenant, or sharing these separately with your group:

- Acknowledge that racism is a problem. This is the starting point of the conversation. We may disagree as to the nature or extent of the problem, but denial of the problem is a non-starter.
- Assume good intentions. Everyone is in the room because they desire to make things better.
- Participate by actively listening and actively sharing. Participation is a two-way street. Listening is as important as sharing. Participants should agree to do both.
- Push back respectfully. It is likely that people will not agree with each other. It is important that people are able to disagree with each other and that they do so in a way that does not create environment where other people will be afraid to speak up for fear of being attacked.

³ Sources: UMSL's Facilitator Guide for Departmental Discussions about Race and Teaching for Tolerance's Let's Talk: Discussing Race, Racism, and Other Difficult Topics with Students

- Avoid guilt and blame. We are all born and socialized into a society that we did not create. Therefore, it is not reasonable or productive to feel guilty or to blame others. At the same time, we all have a responsibility to work towards making things better for everyone. By acknowledging responsibility without guilt or blame, we can put our energies in a more productive direction.
- Avoid minimizing or dismissing others' experiences. Recognize that multiple perceptions and experiences can co-exist and that others' experiences are just as real and valid as your own.

Tips on Facilitating Effective Group Discussions

Effective facilitation of a discussion involves the recognition and employment of different perspectives and different skills to create an inclusive environment. Discussion is a powerful mechanism for active learning; a well-facilitated discussion allows the participant to explore new ideas while recognizing and valuing the contributions of others. As the facilitator, it is your goal to create a safe, inclusive, and inspired space where participants trust each other, feel comfortable making mistakes, and grow from their collective experience. Creating an inclusive environment: reflect on what each participant brings to the group and make sure to encourage sharing of different perspectives. Ask participants to reflect on what they each bring to the group; what surprises them or challenges them? What perspectives are they most familiar with and what perspectives make them uncomfortable?

Do:

- Allow participants to introduce themselves – you can even set up an ice breaker to have pairs of people introduce each other.
- Be clear up front about expectations and intentions amongst participants and the facilitator (remember to reference your group's Conversational Covenant).
- Use inclusive language. Be mindful of people's preferred pronouns, names, etc. Encourage participants to include their pronouns in their Zoom name (if applicable) or on their nametags.
- Ask for clarification if unclear about a participant's intent or question.
- Treat participants with respect and consideration.
- Develop an awareness for barriers for learning (cultural; social; experiential, etc.).
- Provide sufficient time and space for participants to gather their thoughts and contribute to discussions.
- Provide opportunities for participants to pair-share.
- If the group starts to veer in the direction of negativity and/or pointless venting, ask them how they would like to address this.
- Step back when a group is functional/functioning – help participants become independent learners; take control of their learning.

Don't:

- Use certain conventions or language that will exclude certain groups from understanding the context of the discussion or make them feel uncomfortable.

- Assume participants all have the same expectations when the group first convenes.
- Over-generalize behavior or have stereotypical expectations of participants (tokenism).
- Use (or allow others to use) disrespectful language or tone, or disrespectful non-verbal communication.
- Convey a sense of self-importance or superiority.
- Allow only the dominant or more verbal participants to take over the conversation.
- Discourage alternate views or counter-arguments.
- Try to be someone else - be yourself.

Keep discussions constructive and positive by establishing rules for participants. Ask them to:

- Only share personal experiences – don't make general statements about groups of people.
- Be aware of dominating the discussion – allow others to participate who haven't spoken yet.
- Request that if participants challenge others' ideas, they back it up with evidence, appropriate experiences, and/or appropriate logic.
- Stay on topic so that the meeting time is used appropriately.

Create an encouraging atmosphere for participation: ask follow-up questions and paraphrase comments for everyone to ponder. A combination of initiating and probing questions can be an effective approach to bring out participants' ideas further.

- Ask the contributor for further clarification and/or elaboration.
- Re-visit past contributions and incorporate them into subsequent discussions.
- Encourage others to add their reactions or ideas to build on someone's comment.
- Don't be afraid to admit your own ignorance or confusion if you don't know something – invite others to provide resources, and use the opportunity to discuss with the group how one might go about researching the issue.
- Discomfort and silence are ok, particularly with conversations about race - but balance with a clearly stated context and purpose.

Creating a Conversational/Community Covenant for Your Group

The creation of a community covenant must always begin IN community. It is critical that you, as the facilitator, assist your community in clearly understanding together what you share, where you're going, and what you'll do along the way to get you there. The easiest way to do this is to lead the group in a conversation which helps instill a sense of:

Who we are: for example, couples, parents, Christians, Jews, curious, doubters, etc.

What we do and how we do it: this is a great way to establish patterns of behavior, group dynamics, etc. You can offer some of the following as examples to guide the conversation of the group. Please note that some of these overlap with the guidelines from Facilitating Conversations about Race but that other bullet points from that list should also be included.

- To act in good faith. I will engage in good faith. I will be sincere, fair, open, and honest, regardless of the conversation's outcome.
- To show respect. I will show respect. I will be polite and give due regard to others' feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions. I understand that I do not have to respect (admire) someone to show them respect.
- To participate fully. I will read and engage the resources that are required for me to be in conversation with others when we meet. I will be on time to meetings that I attend.
- To listen as much as I speak. I will be mindful of how much I'm speaking and create space for and invite others to share their thoughts and ideas.
- To give the benefit of the doubt. I will "give the benefit of the doubt" when someone says something that sounds ridiculous to me, recognizing that they may know something I don't. I will ask them to explain in more detail rather than accusing them of being stupid.
- To not talk behind someone's back. I will never say anything behind someone's back that I have not already spoken to their face.
- To disagree constructively. I will refrain from name-calling and ad hominem attacks and engage in carefully reasoned arguments.
- To speak the truth. I won't use rhetorical tricks to try to win an argument. I will speak what I genuinely believe is the nuanced truth.
- To aim to discover the truth. I will not enter into a conversation to change anyone's mind to my way of thinking but to learn and get close to the truth of matters jointly.
- To focus on what we can change. I will focus on what we can do differently in the future since we cannot change what we did in the past.
- To take responsibility for the conversation. I will take responsibility for the quality of the conversation and the abidance of the rules, both in principle and in spirit. I will gently call out anyone I feel breaks a rule and be happy to be called out if I violate any rules myself. I will help ensure that everyone is included in the conversation.

- To not be overly polite and apologize for things I did not say. I will not be overly polite and say sorry for things that I did not say.
- To follow the covenant, even when others fail to do so. I will abide by the rules regardless of whether another person breaks them. If someone launches an ad hominem attack on me, I will not take it as an excuse to respond in kind.
- To lighten up and approach the conversation in good humor. I recognize that humor is a hallmark of a constructive, generative conversation and take the conversation in good humor.
- To keep group confidentiality. I accept that I am free to use any information I receive, but neither the identity nor the other participants' affiliation may be revealed.
- To not weaponize the rules. I will not twist or distort the rules to my advantage.