

## Beyond conversations: What are next steps to bridge the disparity gaps?

Written by Sheila Regan, TC Daily Planet, Behind the Story  
Wednesday, 15 January 2014 16:21

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When I look back at the stories I've worked on this year, there's one theme that appears over and over. From black baby dolls being hung from a noose at a high school, to protests over Miss Saigon, to a professor being reprimanded after teaching about institutional racism, race and racism keep coming up.

Maybe, just maybe, we as a society are ready to start having meaningful dialogue about privilege and racism in a way that will actually bring about changes — from our educational system to transportation to housing and the criminal justice system. Although simply talking about it will not necessarily bring about the needed changes, at least it's a start.

Sometimes, I worry that I live in a liberal bubble between Facebook and the people I regularly interact with, who are constantly talking about race and privilege and gender and class, etc. Sometimes my social media world creates a place where I rarely encounter people I disagree with, and when I do, I usually am inclined to either unfriend or hide them.

So I have a somewhat skewed sense of the national or even local dialogue about race, because I happen to know a lot of artist/activist/academic types who tend to have such conversations regularly. Still, I do feel like it is something that people are talking about in other spheres, especially coupled with conversations about rising inequality in this country.

My hope is that some of these conversations about race now can translate into changes, and that can make our society better. What that looks like, I'm not so sure, although I do have some ideas. I'd like to see issues of race and privilege addressed more fervently in the public schools. I'd like it if the arts and cultural institutions here in Minnesota would work on expanding the diversity of both their artist base and their audiences. I'd like to see the disparities in employment, achievement, housing, health, etc between whites and people of color diminish.

While I don't know how that's going to happen, I know is that it is urgent.

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