



Climate Change is Racist

Discussion questions – by chapter

Climate Change is Racist is a short book that aims to provoke further discussion – thank you for being a part of that conversation. The following questions are for those who are discussing the book chapter by chapter. If you're planning just one discussion at the end, download the separate sheet of questions from earthbound.report/ccir

Preface and Introduction

- What has drawn you to read this book and explore the intersection of race and climate?
- What are you hoping for from the book?
- The author describes an incident of racial prejudice that he experienced, and that this is not the same as experiencing structural racism. How would you describe the difference?
- What was your reaction to the two contrasting maps in the introduction? (You may like to download and show the colour versions available from the website)
- In your experience, do White people and people of colour understand racism differently? Is there a lack of awareness of structural racism in society?
- The book describes climate change as a civil rights issue. Do you agree?

Chapter 1

- The author critiques the use of 'we' to create a universal human experience of the climate crisis. Have you come across this language?
- Do you agree or disagree with the statement "climate change is a White problem"?
- Is there enough attention on the power structures behind climate change – eg the fossil fuel companies? Are we too quick to talk about personal carbon footprints and what we can do as individuals?
- For your community, do you feel that climate change is something that you are implicated in, or something that is being done to you?

Chapter 2

- Had you heard of any of the under-reported disasters that the chapter mentions? How do you find out about climate news from marginalised regions?
- The book compares the damage of carbon emissions to ‘second-hand smoke’. Have you heard climate change described in this way?
- How might the conversation about climate change be different if we were more aware of the devastation in some of the world’s poorest countries? Or would it be different?

Chapter 3

- Naomi Klein describes the outsourcing of environmental risk to marginalised communities in ‘sacrifice zones’. What has your experience of sacrifice zones been? Have you ever lived in or visited a place that felt like a sacrifice zone?
- Ibram X Kendi is quoted in the chapter, saying that racist ideas spring from self-interest rather than ignorance or hatred. Do you agree?
- Can you think of any examples of environmental injustice that are local to you?

Chapter 4

- What patterns of advantage, or patterns of disadvantage, do you see at work in your community?
- The author compares his own privilege to having a dice numbered three to nine. If you were to reflect on your own circumstances, how do you feel your equivalent dice would be numbered?
- The chapter briefly describes how climate change has a greater impact on women, children, older people and several other categories. Which of these categories had you thought about before? Were any of them new to you?
- If a crisis were to hit your own neighbourhood, are there any particular groups that would face a greater risk? Is there anything you could do to help?

Chapter 5

- The way we are taught history can acknowledge past wrongs, or it can ignore them. Do you think the history that you were taught was fair and balanced? What have you discovered for yourself later that you think should have been taught?
- Colonialism is usually associated with taking land, but in what ways might climate change function like colonialism?
- The book compares economic debt and ecological debt. How does an understanding of ecological debt change our ideas of who owes what to whom?
- Do you agree with the statement “the climate crisis arises from racial injustice and the plundering of the global South, and it is in itself a form of exploitation of the global South”?

Chapter 6

- Have you ever thought of climate change as violence?
- The book uses the idea of ‘slow violence’, which happens over time. What examples of slow violence can you think of, either locally or globally?
- The author concludes that “climate change is racial violence”. Do you find that a helpful idea?
- How could you build peace in your community? Are there opportunities to address climate change and inter-personal violence at the same time?

Chapter 7

- Have you experienced conversations where people have changed the subject to avoid talking about climate change?
- Do you sense that you have a degree of climate privilege? Or have you personally experienced loss or harm from climate change?
- How do we hold fossil fuel interests to account?

Chapter 8

- Do you think that suffering is talked about enough in discussions of around the climate?
- What can we do, as individuals, to address our own biases and build empathy for others?
- Are there any books, films or stories that have helped you to imagine the impact of climate change in other parts of the world?

Chapter 9

- The author describes his surprise at how White privilege could complicate the simple pleasure of bird-watching. Have you ever been surprised at places where race has come into play?
- Have you experienced a setting where you stood out, or where there were few people like you? How did you feel?
- The author says that “from an early age, climate change is mentally categorised as an environmental issue, to do with nature and animals more than people and justice.” Has that been your experience?
- What minority perspectives would you like to hear more of in the conversation around the climate? Where could you find those perspectives?

Chapter 10

- Ibram X Kendi is quoted in the chapter, suggesting that “do nothing climate policy is racist policy”. Do you agree?
- Should compensation be paid for the damage of climate change? How could that be done?
- How could restorative justice approaches (rather than retributive justice) help to move the discussion about compensation forwards?

Chapter 11

- Have you been part of a group that struggled with diversity? What, if anything, helped to diversify the group?
- Where are the opportunities to work intersectionally in what you do, and where you are? What groups in your community could you support?
- Would you agree with the author's observation that a "moment of awakening is underway as climate and race come together"?
- If you consider yourself an activist, could you take the Intersectional Environmentalist Pledge?
(See www.intersectionalenvironmentalist.com/take-the-pledge)

Chapter 12

- Have you taken any personal actions on climate change? What motivated those actions?
- Do you think that you understand the difference you can make on climate change? And on race? Or do you think that you have more listening and learning to do?
- The author concludes that as a climate activist, he must be an antiracist - and as an antiracist, he has to be a climate activist. Do you agree that these issues are "one story, one struggle"?
- How do you feel called to respond to the challenge of the book?