Four + Agreements for Courageous Conversation

Stay engaged.
To stay engaged is a refusal to let your heart and mind “check out” of the conversation while leaving your body in place. It is a personal commitment each person makes, regardless of the engagement of others. It means remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue.

Speak your truth.
To speak your truth you must be willing to take risks and be absolutely honest about your thoughts, feelings and opinions and not just saying what you perceive others want to hear. Until we can become completely honest, the dialogue will remain limited and ultimately ineffective.

Experience discomfort.
To deal with the reality of race in an honest and forthright way, we ask participants to agree to experience the discomfort that is to be expected due to the problematic state of racial conditions in our society. (If educators experience division as they deal with issues of race and equity, we suspect that they were already silently divided. Although discomfiting, giving voice and meaning to this divide can begin the process of healing and transformation.)

Expect and accept non-closure.
To engage in courageous conversations about race is to recognize that you/we will not reach closure in our racial understandings or in our racial interactions. There is no “quick fix” or solution to the challenge of our racial struggle as individuals, or as a society. Therefore, we must commit to an ongoing dialogue as an essential component of our action plan.

PLUS + Confidentiality
To support each other in our risk-taking we agree to respect the privacy of each individual’s identity, and life experiences, but reserve the right to share ideas and content publicly.

Notice Patterns of Participation
To support each other in our risk-taking we agree to participate fully. Everyone’s voice is important and is a valuable contribution to the conversation. This includes watching our air time, “Stepping Up” if we tend to process silently in our heads, and “Stepping Back” if we are verbal processors to allow ourselves to do some internal reflection.

24—48 Hour Rule
To make sure we are being honest with ourselves and others, we must practice sharing things that bother us directly with the other person (not with others). We agree to speak directly to one another, and if we have not done so within the 24-48 hours following our feelings, we agree to make peace with the situation and let it go.

No Hearsay Rule
We agree to go to the source for any information we are confused or upset about. We don’t gossip or spread rumors.