

# Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools

By Glenn E. Singleton




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*Create a systemwide plan for transforming the district office, schools, and classrooms into places that truly support ALL students achieving their highest levels!*

This updated edition of the bestseller continues to explain the need for candid, courageous conversations about race so that educators may understand why achievement inequality persists and learn how they can develop a curriculum that promotes true educational equity and excellence.

- **NEW!** Revised Courageous Conversation Compass
- **NEW!** Racial autobiographies
- **NEW!** Case study on St. Paul Public Schools, which has stayed on track with the Courageous Conversation protocol and framework
- **NEW!** Links to video segments of the author describing the work
- **REVISED!** Activities and checklists for school and district leaders
- **REVISED!** Action and implementation steps

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

*"What this book has given me is an effective set of tools to support me in understanding, first, my own racial biography and then how to discuss with my team race and its impact on education. The lessons from this book offer a useful starting point for every school district that wants to change mindsets, policies, and outcomes. Singleton takes readers on a personally and professionally transformative journey toward understanding and action."*

(S. Dallas Dance, Superintendent 2014-09-23)

*"All students, especially white students, need to read, think, converse and write about issues of race, racism and whiteness if teachers are to help move society into a more racially aware and just place for all. The work of Glenn Singleton and Pacific Educational Group gives educators the tools they need to have those **Courageous Conversations**."*

(Jackie Roehl, 2012 Minnesota Teacher of the Year 2014-09-23)

*"Brave and grounded, patient but pointed, **Courageous Conversations About Race** delivers a rare combination of critical information, illuminating perspective, and truly useful tools to get and keep us all engaged in the most important work of our time. A great nation is not defined by its ability to assimilate all of its citizens, but by its ability to provide equitable opportunities for all of them. This book shows us how."*

(Dr. Anton Treuer, Author, Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask; Executive Director, American Indian Resource Center 2014-09-23)

*"When I finished reading this book, I immediately wanted to share it with others. Glenn Singleton provides strategies and tools to help one examine one's own racial identity. His curriculum and modes of inquiry promote self-discovery and self-awareness. The racial autobiographies allowed me to deepen my racial consciousness and become a more effective **Courageous Conversation** practitioner. Mr. Singleton is the best equity practitioner I have worked with—provocative, stimulating, mindful of the sensitivities of this topic, and devoted to fulfilling our racial equity mandate."*

(Ellen C. Stein, Head of School 2014-09-23)

*"In the first edition of his groundbreaking book, **Courageous Conversations**, Glenn Singleton made a powerful case that, in order to dismantle racism, it is first necessary to talk about and understand how power and privilege are related to race. In this second edition, he takes it one step further, adding racial autobiographies and supplements to make it even more accessible to diverse audiences. This work is sorely needed if we are ever to reach educational and social equity in our nation."*

(Sonia Nieto, Professor Emerita - Language, Literacy, and Culture 2014-09-23)

*"The City's leadership team has used Pacific Educational Group's training and the **Courageous Conversation** protocol effectively to launch our racial equity work. Sharing these concepts and approaches with our partners, Saint Paul Public Schools, has created a level of trust and understanding around racial equity we didn't have before."*

(Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor 2014-09-23)

*“Aotearoa New Zealand and especially Auckland, is becoming increasingly diverse. Our learner population reflects that diversity, including Maori, Pacific and over 100 other ethnic groups. We are striving to create an environment that enables equity of success for all. That involves learning how to engage with these learners on their terms, and confronting how people of different racial backgrounds understand and interact with each other. Courageous Conversations provides vital insights that guide our journey.”*

(Rick Ede, Chief Executive)

*“Courageous Conversations About Race has guided our cultural transformation at Portland Public Schools toward becoming a more racially aware and culturally responsive institution - from our classroom instruction to our business and hiring practices. This protocol not only provides a way in to difficult conversations, it gives each of us the tools to see, own and act upon our role in perpetuating the status quo and understanding the urgency to reframe the paradigm for the success of all students.”*

(Carole Smith, Superintendent)

*“Courageous Conversations About Race came across my desk at a time that I had almost given up on engaging in discussions of race and equity. I was exhausted from countless painful and unproductive conversations on this sensitive topic. I quickly learned why so many people choose not to engage in these conversations - because it is hard. This book not only inspires educators and system level leaders to courageously address what we have all become comfortable with ignoring, but also gives us concrete tools for productively entering a conversation about race.”*

(Veronica Benavides, Doctoral Candidate)

*“In a nation that too often eschews either real dialogue or courage when it comes to issues like race and inequality, and particularly in regard to education, Glenn Singleton has demonstrated over many years just how important fearlessness can be in transforming schools and communities into places where justice is possible. The Courageous Conversation approach to enhancing equity is invaluable to the struggle for a more fair-minded and truly just America.”*

(Tim Wise, Antiracism educator)

*“The ‘so what’ and ‘what now’ options this guide presents for self and institutional learning are clear. The ‘so what’ describes the necessary work in addressing the under education of ‘children of color’ and the ‘mis-education’ of white students and many current educators. The ‘what now’ is framed by the important message that ‘this is not easy work’ and it is fraught with the unaddressed dangers for those who undertake to do it. It is those dangers that allow racism to persist in our country.”*

(Randall Lindsey, Emeritus Professor)

*“Glenn E. Singleton has provided yet another powerful and still relevant book in this useful revision. If you are serious about engaging in exercises that can truly interrogate race and unearth privilege for the purpose of obtaining equity in our schools, read this book. Indeed, this book inspired me to do my own racial autobiography, and also inspired my principalship students to start the journey to become more racially*

*aware leaders who can skillfully lead courageous conversations. Since then they have taken action through practice, often using this volume, to make impactful changes to eradicate inequities in their schools in meaningful, life-altering ways.”*

(Mark Anthony Gooden, Associate Editor)

*“Courageous Conversation About Race (CCAR) protocol has provided significant depth to my diversity and inclusion practice at the University of Western Australia (UWA). Since the inception of our work in 2008, CCAR has provided a robust and comprehensive framework to embed cultural competence across all facets of university life. CCAR is now a regular feature on the annual UWA staff development calendar and this programming is now being emulated in fifteen universities across Australia and New Zealand.”*

(Malcolm Fialho, Associate Director)

*“The protocols of Courageous Conversation have changed my life as a leader, an educator, and fellow citizen of our forever-changing world. As a white woman, I have deepened not only my racial consciousness but also my ability to engage, both personally and professionally, in richer and truer capacities. I once heard Cornell West say that the heart of a strong, liberal education rests within the ability “to be prepared for the conversation and to be prepared to be changed by it. Courageous Conversations have allowed me that sort of preparation.”*

(Ellanor N. Brizendine, Head of School)

*“The work Glenn is doing through Courageous Conversations About Race will stir you intellectually and move your personal beliefs beyond what you knew possible. This is the first approach I’ve seen that moves everyone along on their journey based on where they are personally first. The application is Glenn’s work goes beyond education and into many sectors of our society and industries. I am excited to see how his work can impact the advertising industry. Writing mission statements, policies and coming up with programs are all boxes many companies check. That part is too easy. And I think many companies will admit to feeling stuck. Glenn’s approach takes true courage to get real about one major obstacle which is - the belief system I have that may block my perspectives on diversity. Cheers to Glenn for challenging the conversation!”*

(Keesha Jean-Baptiste, Director of Human Resources)

About the Author

**Glenn Eric Singleton** hails from Baltimore, Maryland. A product of public elementary and independent secondary school, Singleton earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania and his master’s degree from the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University. Singleton began his career as an Ivy League admissions director. In 1992, he founded Pacific Educational Group, Inc. (PEG) to support families in their transitions within and between K–12 and higher education. His company rapidly grew into a vehicle for addressing systemic educational inequity by providing a framework, guidance, and support to K–12 systems and institutions of higher education focused on meeting the needs of under-served students of color. He is now its president and chief executive officer.

Singleton and his associates at PEG design and deliver individualized, comprehensive professional development for educators in the form of training, coaching, and consulting. Working at all levels, from beginning teachers to superintendents at local, state, and national levels, PEG helps educators focus on

heightening their awareness of institutional racism and implementing effective strategies for eliminating racial achievement disparities in schools. In 1995, Singleton developed Beyond Diversity, a widely recognized seminar aimed at helping administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders identify and examine the intersection of race and schooling. The Beyond Diversity seminar is the foundation for the PEG Systemic Racial Equity Framework and its theory of transformation, which focuses on leadership development, teacher action-research, and family/community empowerment. Today, participants around the world use Singleton's Courageous Conversations Agreements, Conditions and Compass, introduced to them in Beyond Diversity, as they strive to usher in culturally proficient curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Over its 20-year history, PEG's scope of work has expanded to include online professional learning, independent school partnerships, and international efforts in Canada and Australia that focus on educational equity for indigenous populations. PEG hosts an annual Summit for Courageous Conversation, in which scholars, educators, community members, and other stakeholders convene to identify strategies and best practices for creating high-level, equitable learning environments for all students.

Singleton currently resides in San Francisco, California. He is the founder of the Foundation for a College Education (FCE) and currently serves on the FCE Advisory Board.

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