

The Art of Conversation

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The last few years have been challenging for many people, including me. In an article published by Sherman James in 2017, *The strangest of all encounters*, he summarized a study conducted in 2003 about racial inequities in the health care system referencing a 1966 speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to the National Convention of the Medical Committee for Human Rights (MCHR), where he “denounced social injustice in health care as the most inhumane form of inequality.” I struggle to understand why we are still having this conversation 55 years later around respect, access to health care, socio economic disparities, and mistreatment because of skin color, ethnic origin, religion, or recently gender identification.



In 2019, Dr. Crystal Tyler Mackey, Virginia Tech Extension Specialist, hosted Coming Together for Racial Understanding dialogues for Virginia Cooperative Extension. These small group discussions with colleagues affirmed how much our personal and multicultural experiences influence how Extension interacts with communities. We shared and listened to each other without judgement. It was refreshing to have people that have not lived my experiences to actively listen and contribute to the conversations.

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand: they listen with the intent to reply.”
Stephen R. Covey

Balancing Life: Tips for Healthy Conversations about Racial Healing - ALCE-209NP
https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/pubs_ext_vt_edu/en/ALCE/ALCE-209/ALCE-209-video.html

Webmaster, Southern Rural Development Center. “Home.” Southern Rural Development Center, <http://srdc.msstate.edu/civildialogue/index.html>. Accessed 16 February 2022.

James, Sherman A. “The strangest of all encounters: racial and ethnic discrimination in US health care.” 8 May. 2017. Accessed 16 February 2022.