



This book discussion guide for Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God mirrors the format we used at PTS to host internal conversations around the book. The protocol suggested for convening the group and kick starting conversation was designed to help create safe, bounded space; Brown forces her readers to confront challenging issues, and they are not easy to discuss. We offer these suggestions as a way for you to think about how to lead a similar discussion in your own community. Our hope is to help build commitments to relationships and social action that resist anything that separates people from each other and elevates some groups over others. If you already have an *esprit de corps* in your community and want to dive immediately into the questions, then bypass the process suggestions.

In our multiracial seminary community, we used paired leadership for the book groups –one black and one non-black leader. If the demographics of your community allow for this – or, if you can pair with another community to have a more diverse group – there are clear benefits to non-homogenous discussion groups. We also broke our discussion into two sessions – one for each half of the book.

Some logistical things to remember:

1. Your job is to facilitate conversation, not lead the room or teach.
2. Pay attention to body language in the room.
3. Use nonjudgmental observational comments to draw people out; “I notice... I wonder... I see that...”
4. Don’t be afraid to remind people gently to allow others to speak and stick with the community guidelines.
5. These issues can spark strong emotional reactions. Thank people for their contributions, affirm that this is hard stuff, and use pastoral care 101 skills to synthesize and make observations that can move the conversation along.

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**Room materials:** Make sure the room has enough chairs for everyone and materials to help with processing (paper, pens, etc.). Write the 5 community guidelines for discussion on the board/paper in the room:

Begin with prayer (provided)

Introductions of the people and the process– **10 min max**

- \*If you want to use “mutual invitation,” describe the process:
  - The leader (or other designated person) will share first. After they speak, he/she invites another by name to share. That invitee can share, pass, or say that they would like to talk later. This method will be used until everyone in the room has introduced themselves.
- Each facilitator introduces her/himself and gives 3 words that refer to why they are so concerned about this stuff – why they committed themselves to being here for the afternoon.
- Have participants go around the room and offer the same information. 3 words only!
- Read aloud the 5 community guidelines (separate paper). Ask everyone to say “Yes” if they agree to accept them.

- The goal is to have everyone in the room share at least once before anyone shares for a third time.

*Note: It might be important to remind folks along the way about what we are here to do/not do.... This is sensitive stuff, and many people will have painful personal stories.*

**Discussion questions – see other sheet**  
**(max. 15 minutes each)**

**Closure**

*Begin to wrap up the discussion about 8-10 minutes before the group is supposed to disband. Don't go over time – it is important to show good stewardship of time and boundaries.*

1. Thank people for their commitment and the good, hard discussion. Ask them to take a breath and pivot towards transitioning out.
2. Using mutual invitation, ask each person to close by finishing one of these sentences: "I wonder," "I notice," "I appreciate" as they summarize their thoughts from the discussion.
3. Close with a short prayer.