



Talking about Race: Community Dialogues and the Politics of Difference (Studies in Communication, Media, and Public Opinion)

Katherine Cramer Walsh

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It is a perennial question: how should Americans deal with racial and ethnic diversity? More than 400 communities across the country have attempted to answer it by organizing discussions among diverse volunteers in an attempt to improve race relations. In *Talking about Race*, Katherine Cramer Walsh takes an eye-opening look at this strategy to reveal the reasons behind the method and the effects it has in the cities and towns that undertake it.

With extensive observations of community dialogues, interviews with the discussants, and sophisticated analysis of national data, Walsh shows that while meeting organizers usually aim to establish common ground, participants tend to leave their discussions with a heightened awareness of differences in perspective and experience. Drawing readers into these intense conversations between ordinary Americans working to deal with diversity and figure out the meaning of citizenship in our society, she challenges many preconceptions about intergroup relations and organized public talk. Finally disputing the conventional wisdom that unity is the only way forward, Walsh prescribes a practical politics of difference that compels us to reassess the place of face-to-face discussion in civic life and the critical role of conflict in deliberative democracy.

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