



**ANTI-RACISM
COMMITTEE**

**Welcome
to the
Book Discussion
of**

**The Bluest Eye
By Toni Morrison**



Opening Prayer:

Eilise Rouse

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Opening Prayer:

Opening Prayer: A 3-minute Guided Meditation on Love

God of Love, let us open to your presence here tonight.

May we begin with minds and hearts that stretch and are shaped by your infinite Love in all its multiplicity. Imagine you are in front of a mirror, gaze upon yourself as I read the following words-

Loving God, you call upon us to eradicate the injustice of racism which keeps us separate not only from one another but from the very fullness and purpose of your Love. Be with us as we attempt to open to your Love within our intrapersonal life and experience, a love so intimate it exists in our very image and likeness to You, yet can feel so clouded by cultural norms and standards we grow distant from the very presence of it within our own bodies, not knowing or aware of the fullness of beauty we share in You.

May we feel tonight rooted in your love for us as individuals, as it is the very source of our internal and external well being.



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Imagine the mirror is lowered and those gathered here tonight, even the characters from the book are sitting side by side you around a fire:

God of Love, we gather together to open to the warmth of your Love between us, you call upon us to search for and to know YOU through one another and in this way grow in your Love as we relate to one another, even the fictional characters in the book we have shared, as fellow human beings.

Be with us as we are present to one another, strengthen in us our capacity for listening and sharing our stories, our lived experience, our vulnerabilities, our questions and ideas. Grant us acceptance of our differences that may run as deep as our commonalities.

May we be open to letting your Love IN to our relationships with one another, holding hope and grace for one another as we seek to repair the damage done by a society we exist within that is all too often advantaged through a willful ignorance and complicit acceptance of racism, a scourge whose greatest antidote is the power of your abiding Love.



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Now imagine we are gathered all together in an open field, all of our parish, together along with Toni Morrison, her characters and those ancestors who have been part of the work of the 400+ years of anti racism in this country:

Loving God, we gather together to open to your Love among us, a Love that endures all things, that seeks to be fully known and fully realized in every encounter and grows exponentially here in community.

May we share in tonight a willingness to bear witness to the pain and suffering of racism as it is explained through the gift of Toni Morrison's literary genius, may this time together generate distinct acts of intra and interpersonal healing, for with your Spirit we may kindle the Love that nourishes us in a way we may together Embody Love, Beauty and Mercy in the world.

Amen.



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**Introduction
Background of Author
Toni Morrison:**

Stephen Sammut



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**Review of
Ground Rules for
Dialogue:**

Anne Patricia Minicozzi



GROUND RULES

FOR DIALOGUE

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As you engage with fellow attendees today, please use these ground rules for dialogue:

Be fully present

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As you engage with fellow
attendees today,
please use these
ground rules for dialogue:

**Speak from the
“I” perspective**



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As you engage with fellow
attendees today,
please use these
ground rules for dialogue:

**Be self-responsible
and self-challenging**



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As you engage with fellow
attendees today,
please use these
ground rules for dialogue:

Listen, Listen, Listen
Before speaking



As you engage with fellow attendees today, please use these ground rules for dialogue:

Lean Into Discomfort

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As you engage with fellow
attendees today,
please use these
ground rules for dialogue:

Take Risks –

Make Mistakes –

Then Let Go



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As you engage with fellow
attendees today,
please use these
ground rules for dialogue:

**Accept Conflict
& Resolution
as Necessary for
Learning**



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As you engage with fellow
attendees today,
please use these
ground rules for dialogue:

**Be Comfortable
with Silence**



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As you engage with fellow
attendees today,
please use these
ground rules for dialogue:

**Be Crisp –
Say What is Core**



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As you engage with fellow
attendees today,
please use these
ground rules for dialogue:

Honor
Confidentiality



Your participation today
indicates you will abide by
these ground rules
for dialogue.

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**Thank
You!**



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Thank you
to

Teresa Nance, PhD,
Vice President for Diversity,
Equity and Inclusion,
Villanova University

for providing these
"Ground Rules for Dialogue"!



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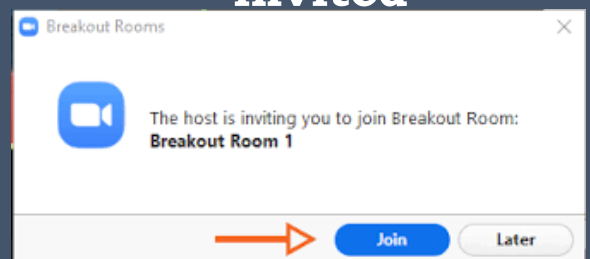
TODAY'S PROGRAM:

Breakout Rooms:

**Facilitated Interactive
Experience**

Dr. Kathryn Getek Soltis

**Click “join” when
invited**





Discussion Questions

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1. In your own life, who or what defines or defined “beauty” for you? How do these standards shape our world—exterior and interior—and create longings and despair in their unattainability? Does our Christian belief that we are all made in the image and likeness of God have any relevance to the characters in the book? To you?



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2. Eyes both see and are seen in The Bluest Eye. What do these visual interactions with the eyes—to see and to be seen—reveal about the characters, how they see themselves, how they view the world, and how they believe the world views them? Is there significance in the title The Bluest Eye? Why not Blue Eyes? Why do you think Morrison chose to use Eye in the singular rather than Eyes?



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3. **The Bluest Eye** was published in 1970. At the time Morrison was writing the novel, the racist society that condemned Pecola Breedlove was still very much in place, and Morrison took great risks --- both within the Black community and American society as a whole --- to tell this important story. While advances in civil rights and racial attitudes have been made in the intervening years, it is arguable that many of the core issues so vividly evoked in the novel remain. What evidence is there that racial self-hatred continues to ruin lives? What present-day cultural factors could contribute to tragedies like Pecola's?



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4. In the foreword of the book, Toni Morrison comments of the challenge of centering the novel's focus on the vulnerable character of Pecola Breedlove—a poor, black, lonely little girl. Morrison mentions that she desired to avoid giving readers the comfort of simply pitying the young child, instead of reflecting and questioning themselves on their participation in her demise. "One problem was centering the weight of the novel's inquiry on so delicate and vulnerable a character could smash her and lead readers into the comfort of pitying her rather than into an interrogation of themselves for the smashing." Morrison admits her disappointment that despite her efforts, "many readers remain touched but not moved."



After your reading of the book and this discussion, what do you hope to take forward so that you are in fact “moved” by this work as the author intended? Will you bring anything to your prayer or faith life? Has your reading prompted you to take action?

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TODAY'S PROGRAM:

**Concluding Remarks and
Observations:**

Dr. Kathryn Getek Soltis



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Further Questions for Discussion:

5. The novel begins with an excerpt from the classic “Dick and Jane” primers that were used to teach schoolchildren to read. The easy primer’s prose repeats without punctuation and then, again, to seemingly rote repetition, garbled and blurred without pause. What do Dick and Jane represent to Morrison and to most of the novel’s characters? How are those representations frustrating and, ultimately, damaging to these characters? In your own life, are or were there examples of “rote repetition” in your education or upbringing that influenced your perceptions and beliefs?



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Further Questions for Discussion:

6. "Quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow." With these lines, Morrison's child narrator, Claudia MacTeer, invites the reader into a troubling community secret: the incestuous rape of her 11-year-old friend, Pecola Breedlove. What are the advantages of telling Pecola's story from a child's point of view? Claudia would appear to connect the barrenness of the land to Pecola's tragedy. In what ways does Morrison show how Pecola's environment --- and American society as a whole --- are hostile to her very existence?



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Further Questions for Discussion:

7. At a certain point in the novel, Morrison, through her narrator, states that romantic love and physical beauty are "probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought." (p. 122) How do the lives of individual characters bear out that statement? Pecola's connects the idea of beauty with being loved. To what extent are we all guilty of making that connection?



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**Thank you for
participating in the
Book Discussion
of**

***The Bluest Eye*
By Toni Morrison**



Upcoming Events:

Cayce Farina

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**Half of the
2022 meetings
are still available
for hosting
by a rotating chair!**

- **1/25/2022**
- **4/26/2022**
- **5/24/2022**
- **10/25/2022**

2/22/2022 at 7:00 p.m.
on Zoom



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Eilise Rouse:

"Creating more loving, just and equitable Catholic classrooms:
how to have tough
conversations on the injustice of
racism and grow in Faith
alongside our children"

3/22/2022 at 7:00 p.m.
on Zoom



Dave Mc Carraher:

"Racial Equity in present day
Housing and Real Estate
Finance"

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6/28/2022 at 7:00 p.m.
on Zoom

Stephen Sammut:

“The Intersection of
Anti-Semitism and Racism:
The Role of the Church”



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9/27/2022 at 7:00 p.m.
on Zoom

Sister Anne Wootten, RSM:

Book talk on *Four Hundred
Souls: A Community History of
African America, 1619-2019*
by Ibram X. Kendi



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Upcoming Events:

**For more information
Email Cathy Van Kula,
Director of Christian
Service at
service@stvparish.org**



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Closing Prayer: Open Our Eyes to Beauty

Open our eyes Lord

To see the dignity and worth of all people

To not place extrinsic value on human life

Open our eyes Lord

That we may see.

Open our eyes Lord,

That those who are cast off, considered less than

Discarded and marginalized

May be seen in their fullness, their intrinsic beauty

Open our eyes Lord

That we may see.

Open our eyes Lord

Keep them open to racism in all its overt and covert forms

That we may manifest in its place Justice and Mercy and Love

Open our eyes Lord

That we may see.

Open our eyes Lord,

That we may see the gift of beauty surrounding us

Each of us here beautifully committed to being anti racist

Open our eyes Lord,

That we may see.

Amen.