

Civic Conversations Summer Institute - 2021

Presented by:

The Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate
&
Essential Partners

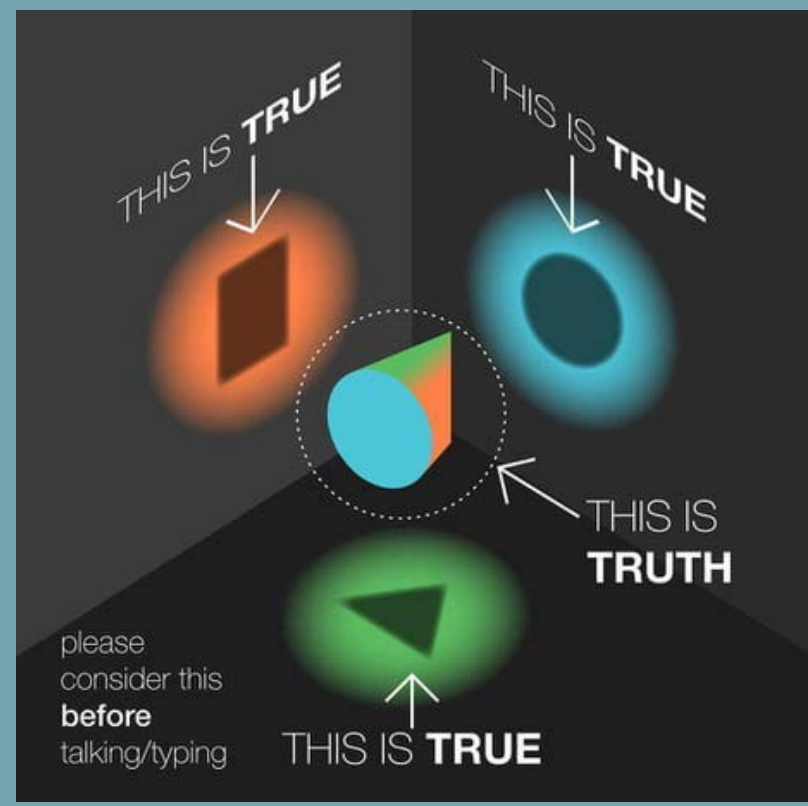
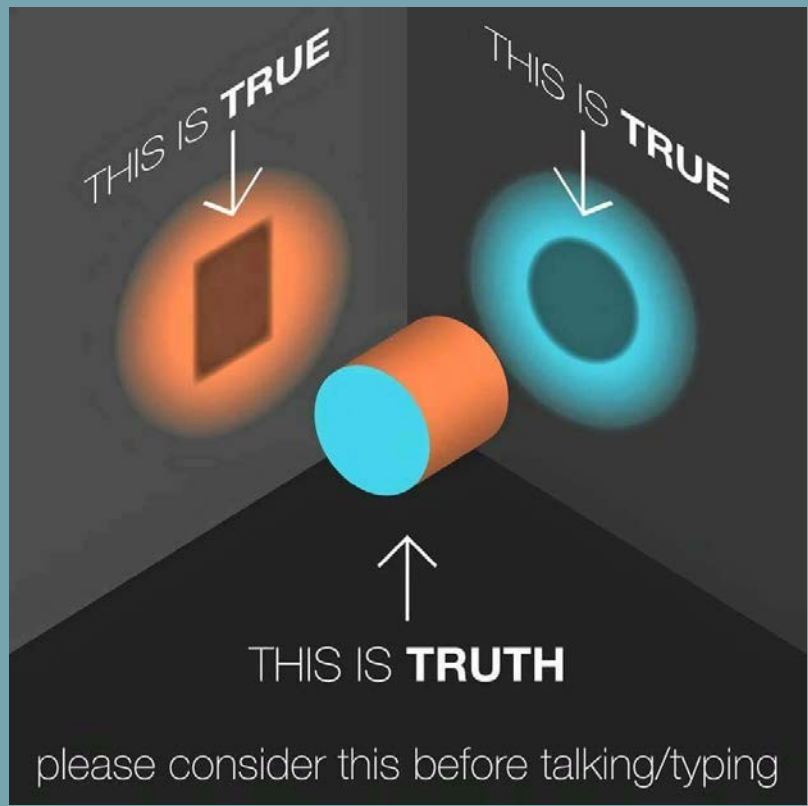
<https://www.emkinstitute.org/>

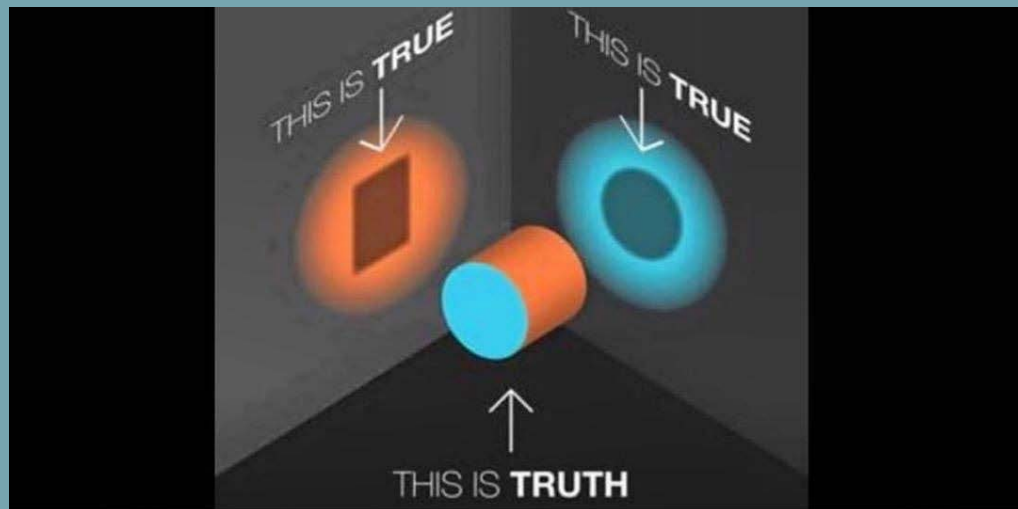
<https://whatisessential.org/>

Teachers acquired and enhanced skills required to create rich, respectful and meaningful conversations, among their students; particularly conversations about challenging topics.

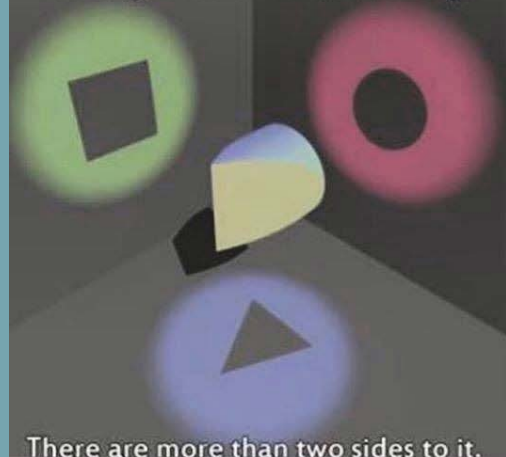
This institute was particularly appealing because it addressed one of the most significant challenges to our democracy: Either/Or Thinking.







Actually, that's a false dichotomy.



There are more than two sides to it.

Your perspective on reality may not be wrong.



But that doesn't mean you're the only one who might have some insight on the truth.



The cornerstone of this institute is the Dialogic Lesson, which has seven parts:

- 1. Grounding in purpose**
- 2. Communication Agreements**
- 3. Connecting Question**
- 4. Time to reflect before engaging**
- 5. Timed speaking without immediate response**
- 6. Questions of Genuine Curiosity**
- 7. Closing**



What was our experience?

Helpful to go through the process focusing on public protest in general first:

- Allowed us to get comfortable with a less challenging/generalized topic before we looked at a specific protest.
- Allowed students to bring up specific protests themselves rather than teacher providing one.
- Allowed students to hear similarities and differences in their experiences; allowed them to know one another better.
- Otherwise reluctant students joined in.

What was our experience? (continued)

Focusing on January 6th in particular:

- Students shared their reactions which included fear, frustration, anger, hopelessness, embarrassment and confusion to name a few.
- A great deal of agreement. For example, this was not an effective form of public protest, and participants were doing more than exercising their First Amendment rights.
- Students felt this might be a good thing for the first time through process. Paved the way for conversations that might involve more disagreement.

What was our experience? (continued)

Focusing on January 6th in particular:

- Key differences between this protest and other protests that had taken place over the previous summer were noted and examined.
- Race and political philosophy were concluded to be defining aspects of participants
- Questions were raised regarding the response to this particular group - might it have been different if the demographic makeup of the group was different?
- A great deal of agreement - had to make a specific effort to see other perspectives.

Additional Resources

[Lesson plan submitted for Civic Conversations Institute](#)

[Student Handout for this lesson](#)