



DISCUSSION GUIDE

How can religious pluralism defeat the forces of polarization?

Robert P. Jones

In This Episode...

Robert P. Jones, president and founder of the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), notes that white evangelicals now comprise 14.5% of the U.S. population, down from 25% two decades ago. He and Eboo reflect on the impacts of this demographic shift and what Americans really think about living in a religiously diverse nation.

Episode Guest: Robert P. Jones

Robert P. Jones is the president and founder of Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) and the author of “White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity,” which won a 2021 American Book Award. He is also the author of “The End of White Christian America,” which won the 2019 Grawemeyer Award in Religion. Jones writes regularly on politics, culture, and religion for The Atlantic online, NBC Think, and other outlets. He is frequently featured in major national media, such as CNN, MSNBC, NPR, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and others.

Suggested Discussion Questions

- Eboo and Robert discuss how Robert’s early formation came to influence his life’s work. What early religious, spiritual, or community experiences inform your work?
- Eboo talks about how, as religious diversity rises, it will be more important to accommodate people of all religious backgrounds. For example, making sure that calendars allow everyone to celebrate their holidays and that food options are available to those with dietary restrictions. In what ways have you seen the world become more accommodating of other religions in your lifetime? Can you think of a practical example of something that could be made more accommodating?
- Eboo and Robert confront the paradox that, while religious expression can be inspiring and encourage pluralism, it can also be coercive toward minorities. Robert is very concerned that the Bremerton High School Supreme Court case set a precedent that might enable state actors to create situations that exclude religious minorities. Eboo sees his point, but also thinks that there might be a pluralistic upside to more religious expression in the public square. Do you agree with Eboo’s assertion that it’s possible for public religious expression to inspire pluralism and outweigh any negative side effects? Why or why not?
- Robert talks about the need to write a broader array of traditions into the American story, just like interfaith leaders included Catholic and Jewish experiences in the national narrative during the 1920s. Where in our national narrative have you seen progress on this front? Have you seen this narrative broadened in your more local spheres – in your community, in your family, at work?
- Eboo and Robert discuss how mobilizing local congregations improved trust in the COVID-19 vaccination, ultimately improving public health outcomes. What are other public issues that you think could be helped by mobilizing trusted faith communities?