

IDENTITY

The Four Questions

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by Kristen Zimmerman

The formal telling of the story of Passover is framed as a discussion with lots of questions and answers. The tradition that the youngest person asks the questions reflects the centrality of involving everyone in the seder. The rabbis who created the set format for the seder gave us the Four Questions to help break the ice in case no one had their own questions.

The questions we ask at a seder set in motion the telling of the story. The usual four questions begin with “Mah nishtanah halayla hazeh? – Why is this night different from all other nights?” But Rabbinic commentary tells us that any genuine question can serve the same purpose.

Tonight, we burn with questions. We collectively acknowledge that we are in a moment of crisis, that we have actively or passively contributed to this crisis, and that we must treat this moment with urgency. In order to do this thoughtfully, we must ask ourselves (at least) four questions:

1. Why is racism a Jewish issue?
2. How is police brutality connected to racism?
3. Why on this night when we remember the oppression and resistance of Jews should we also think about the lives of people of color?
4. I don't want to accept that racism will always be present in our society. How can we fight racism in our own communities and at AU?