

---

# Code Switch Listening Party Kit

---

When the political climate gets heated, how do we digest and reflect? This month's kit is here to help you navigate tough questions around race, identity and culture.



AUG

## What A Summer...

It's fair game to say that the political climate this summer has been *tense*. Between a highly polarizing election cycle and escalating racial tensions, things have felt straight up *overwhelming*. Tough conversations can feel impossible to start and challenging topics impossible to grapple with.

Lucky for us, the amazing team over at Code Switch has been hard at work finding important, thoughtful stories and asking the right kinds of questions that help us tease out the complicated nature and nuance of this summer's violence – as well as finding inspiring ways in which communities are trying to deal and heal. That's in addition to already being our spiritual guides for navigating complex conversations about race in general.

This month, our selection of stories aims to help you and your crew access tough conversations about race and privilege. We also have an amazing bonus: two thought-provoking, hands-on exercises designed just for this kit by Cynthia Silva Parker of the Interaction Institute for Social Change to help you take an extra step.

So when the going gets tough – come together to listen, discuss and explore what's going on out there, what's happening inside of us, and where we can go from here, together.

# WELCOME TO CODE SWITCH

Remember when folks used to talk about being "post-racial"? Well, we're definitely not that. We're a team of journalists fascinated by the overlapping themes of race, ethnicity and culture, how they play out in our lives and communities, and how all of this is shifting.

From left to right:  
*Adrian Florido,  
Shereen Marisol Meraji,  
Gene Demby,  
Kat Chow,  
Tasneem Raja,  
Alicia Montgomery,  
Karen Grigbsy Bates,  
Walter Ray Watson,  
Leah Donnella*



**1** \_\_\_\_\_

**Three Stories from Code Switch**

---

This month's selection of stories from Code Switch help us think and talk about race, privilege and policing.

**2** \_\_\_\_\_

**Three Interactive Exercises from IISC**

---

Cynthia Silva Parker offers thought-provoking questions and exercises to go deeper with this month's stories and topics.

**3** \_\_\_\_\_

**Snack Ideas**

---

Feed your bellies as you feed your minds.

**4** \_\_\_\_\_

**Guide To Hosting A Listening Party**

---

If you're new to this, our guide materials help you bring your listening party to life.

**CODE  
SWITCH**  
npr

**Three Stories**



## Can We Talk About Whiteness?

Host: **Shereen Marisol Meraji, Gene Demby**  
Time: **37 min 28 sec**

**LISTEN**



## Black & Blue

Host: **Shereen Marisol Meraji, Gene Demby**  
Time: **32 min 48 sec**

**LISTEN**



## A Letter From Young Asian-Americans To Their Families About Black Lives Matter

Host: **Shereen Marisol Meraji, Kat Chow**  
Time: **23 min 15 sec**

**LISTEN**



Interaction Institute  
*for* Social Change

# Three Exercises

# INTERACTIVE EXERCISES

## & CONVERSATION

### CATALYSTS BY:

#### CYNTHIA SILVA PARKER



**Cynthia Silva Parker** is an advocate for equity and justice for the Interaction Institute for Social Change

Cynthia Silva Parker builds the capacity of individuals, organizations and networks to work collaboratively for social justice. As a Senior Associate for the Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC), she delivers training, consulting, coaching, and facilitation services to nonprofit and public organizations focused on racial equity, environmental sustainability, community development and other aspects of social justice work.

The Interaction Institute for Social Change catalyzes the will and skill of the diverse public to create social justice and sustainability. They created three custom exercises to help deepen and expand your conversation.

1

**Assumptions  
Deep Dive**

**Identity Circle**

2

3

**The 4th Box**

# ASSUMPTIONS DEEP DIVE

## INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #1

**Purpose:** To practice exploring the “story beneath the story” and bringing hidden assumptions to the surface

**Time:** 30 minutes per episode, more time for a deeper conversation

**Materials & Set-up:** Print out a couple of copies of the transcripts or have the links ready as needed for reference

### Facilitator’s Guide

1. For each of the segments from the featured episodes below, work in pairs to answer the questions provided. Leave time for groups to share their answers with everyone.
2. Once all the groups have shared, ask for individuals to share reflections on what they have heard.
3. Tips: If your group is mostly white, you might want to start with “Can We Talk about Whiteness.” If your group is very mixed racially and ethnically, you might want to start with “A Letter from Young Asian Americans to Their Families about Black Lives Matter.” If there is a lot of energy in the group about police brutality, you might want to start with “Black and Blue.”

# ASSUMPTIONS DEEP DIVE

## “CAN WE TALK ABOUT WHITENESS?”

*“We’ve had this reflexive habit of talking about what’s normal or what’s default in American politics in ways that are really, really just about white people in white culture. But we’re not really used to talking about white people directly as their own identity group.”*

*“Whiteness is everywhere and invisible all at once. So trying to put your hands around it is like trying to hold on to air.”*

*“When you hear terms like middle Americans, soccer moms, NASCAR dads, a lot of folks are picturing somebody white.”*

*“We talk about everyone else as a clearly defined special-interest group - the black vote, the Latino vote, the urban demographic. But we tend to talk about white people’s concerns as just politics.”*

### Questions

1. When you hear “middle American” and “soccer mom”, what do you see? What are some other examples you can give where normative is equated with whiteness?
2. What impact do you think that has on people who are outside “the norm”?
3. What would it take to shift our sense of “normal” to include the full range of diversity in our society?

# ASSUMPTIONS DEEP DIVE

## “BLACK & BLUE”

*Recall the story of the 14 year old young black men pulled off the bus, stopped, frisked and held at gunpoint by police.  
(8:44 - 13:15)*

### Questions

1. What assumptions did the police make in that situation?
2. How did unconscious biases drive that behavior?
3. What else could have happened? What other behaviors could have been enacted in this moment?
4. If you were the police officer, what different assumptions could you have held? How would that have changed the story?

# ASSUMPTIONS DEEP DIVE

## “A LETTER FROM YOUNG ASIAN-AMERICANS TO THEIR FAMILIES ABOUT BLACK LIVES MATTER”

*“Even as we hear about the dangers Black Americans face, our instinct is sometimes to point out all the ways we are different from them, to shield ourselves from their reality instead of empathizing. When a policeman shoots a black person, you might think it’s the victim’s fault because you see so many images of them in the media as thugs and criminals. After all, you might say we managed to come into America with nothing and build good lives for ourselves despite discrimination, so why can’t they.”*

*“If black people just worked as hard as immigrants, they’d be better off, or if black people just obeyed the law, they wouldn’t be getting arrested.”*

*“When your parents - when they see you protesting and they feel like you’re risking everything that they struggled to build for you, there’s this tension, which Tien and her dad, they sat with for a while. And it was a tension of Tien feeling very passionately about social justice issues, but not feeling like she could talk about why she was spending so much time doing what she did.”*

### Questions

1. How did you come to understand the place of your group in the US racial hierarchy? Who is on the bottom or the top? How did that inform how your group fit into the structure?
2. How do you understand the specificity of anti-black racism? How could this story of #asiansforblacklives help people understand anti-black racism?
3. What is the basis of the tension between Tien and her dad? How do you understand what that is about?

# IDENTITY CIRCLE

## INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #2

**Purpose:** To create an opportunity for each of us to reflect on our racial identity and how it has affected us, and to learn more about others in the circle

**Time:** 20-30 minutes, more time for a deeper conversation

**Materials & Set-up:** Seats in a circle or some other way to make sure that people can see one another's faces

# IDENTITY CIRCLE

## INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #2

### Facilitator's Guide

#### 1. Ask the group to reflect quietly for a minute on the following questions:

- How do you describe yourself racially and ethnically?
- How does your racial identity (and your perceived racial identity if it's different) affect you in your life, workplace, or community?

*Silent reflection at the start helps participants be better listeners during the activity.*

#### 2. Ask everyone to abide by these simple ground rules:

- Listen without interrupting or engaging with your own “mental chatter.” Listen with your whole heart.
- Everyone gets equal time (Silence is ok if someone doesn't use up the whole time.)
- Confidentiality - No sharing of stories beyond this circle.
- Ask permission if you want to ask someone to talk more at another time about something they said in the circle. Accept graciously if they say no.

# IDENTITY CIRCLE

## INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #2

3. Use a timer to give everyone the same amount of time to share their responses to the questions above. These questions can be answered in one minute.

*Two minutes will give time for fuller stories, just do the math and be clear with the group how long the activity will last.*

4. After each person shares, ask the group to say “thank you” to the person.

*If a person only offers an ethnic description (e.g., “I’m Irish American” without also saying “I’m white”), prompt them to say how they identify racially. If they say that they don’t “identify” racially, ask how they believe they fit into the racial categories that are common in the US/how others tend to interpret them in racial terms.*

5. After everyone has shared, ask the group to take a few deep breaths together and reflect silently on what they have heard.

6. Ask everyone to go around and share one word about what struck them about this activity.

# THE 4TH BOX

## INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #3

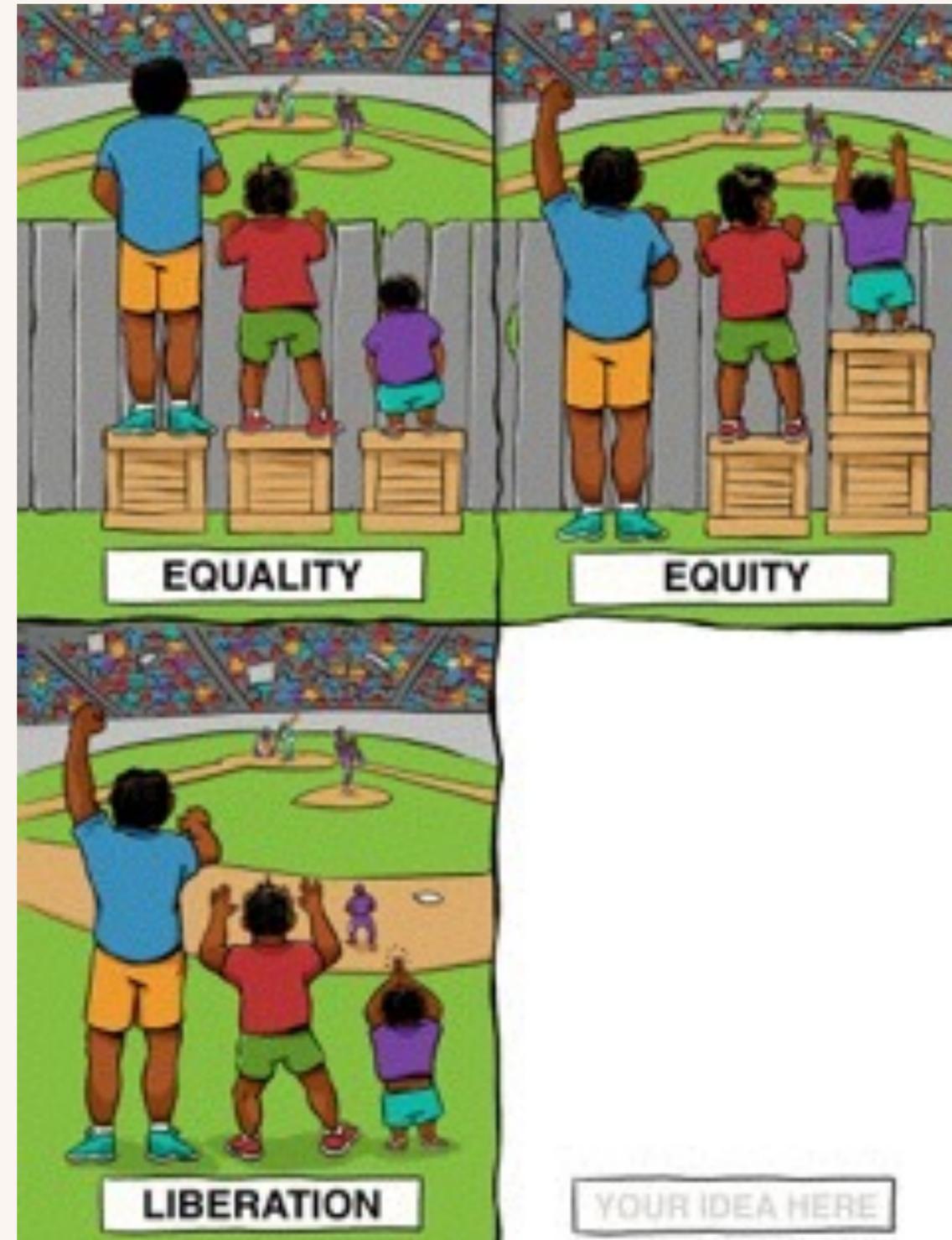
*Created in partnership with the Center for Story-based Strategy*

**Purpose:** To expand political imagination

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

### Materials & Set-up:

1. #the4thbox Cutout kit: enough sets for people to work in groups of 2 or 3  
<http://www.the4thbox.com/>
2. Scissors, markers and/or colored pencils for each group



# THE 4TH BOX

## INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #3

### Facilitator's Guide

1. Ask the group to take their kit and start working with it. It is not important for pictures to be beautiful or perfect. This is a rough sketch or concept.
2. Use the following questions as prompts if they get stuck:
  - What other story could be revealed in this setting?
  - What other "psychic break" could you make up?
  - What other underlying assumption here could you challenge?
  - Who built that wall in the first place and/or who took it away?
3. Leave time for groups to share their image and explain what they are trying to convey.
4. Once all the groups have shared, ask for individuals to share reflections on what they have heard.



# Key Ingredients For A Fun Party: Snacks & Jams



**FRIED PLANTAINS**

**SPICY, CRUNCHY CHICKPEAS**



**LEMONADE À LA BEYONCE**



# How to Host an #NPRListeningParty

# WHAT IS A LISTENING PARTY, ANYWAY?

At an NPR Listening Party, great audio storytelling gives you and your crew the chance to take a break from screens, listen together, and go deeper with thoughtful discussion and stories of your own.

It's easy. All you have to do is:

- **Gather friends in a cozy place**
- **Have some light snacks & drinks**
- **Hit airplane mode, listen and discuss!**

Show us how you host your own #NPRListeningParty and together we can spread the mission of public radio for a more informed, engaged, and empathetic world.



# HOW TO GET STARTED



## 1 Pick a day and time.

Weekday evenings and weekend brunch work great. Consider other events happening in your community already and schedule around them so you don't have to compete. We recommend carving out about 90 minutes for the whole event.



## 2 Pick a venue.

We recommend hosting at your house to keep things cozy and casual. But if you have other ideas or access to an intimate space, go for it! Ideally, aim to keep the group no larger than 20 people so that everyone gets a chance to speak.

# HOW TO GET STARTED



## 3 Send your invite.

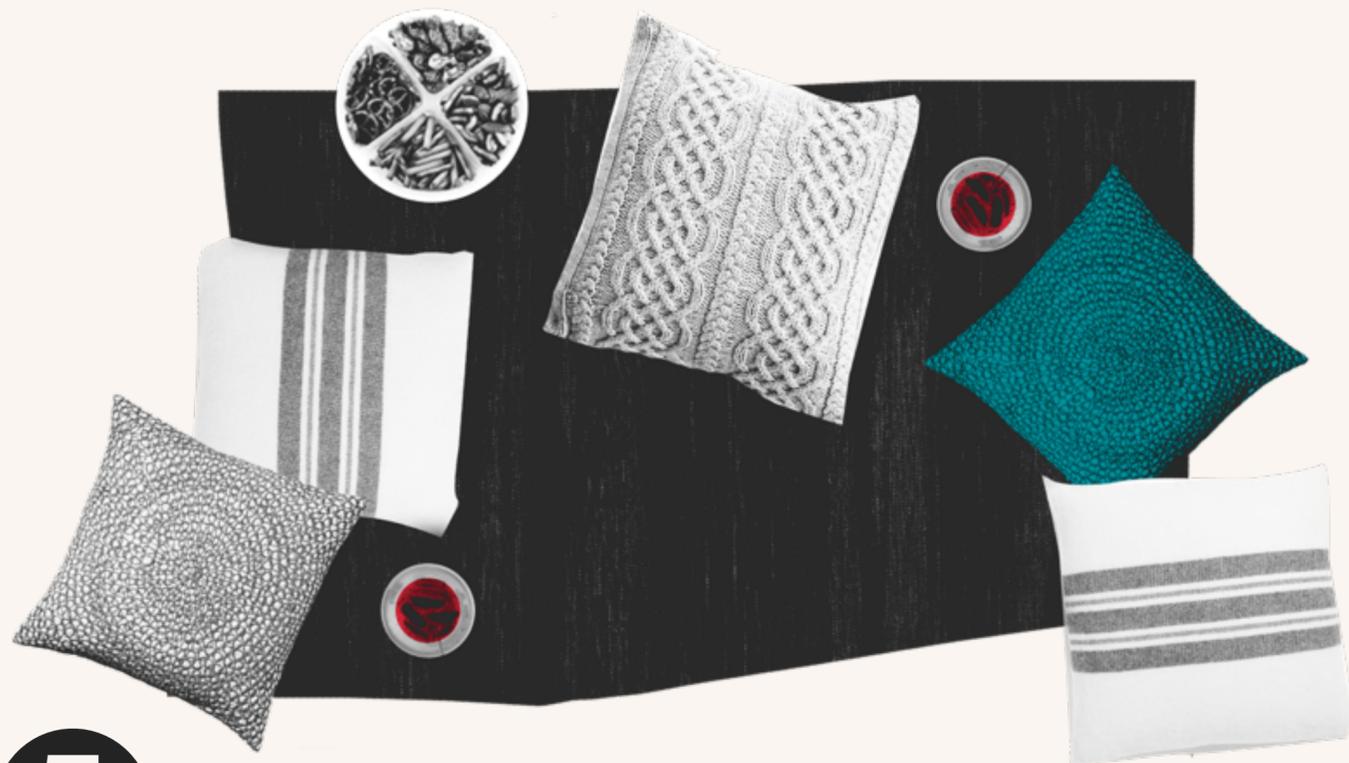
Create your own or use ours. We recommend Facebook or Splash. Have fun with it! A day or two before the Listening Party, send your guests a reminder that includes any key information about arriving to / parking at your home, etc.



## 4 Choose a story or podcast.

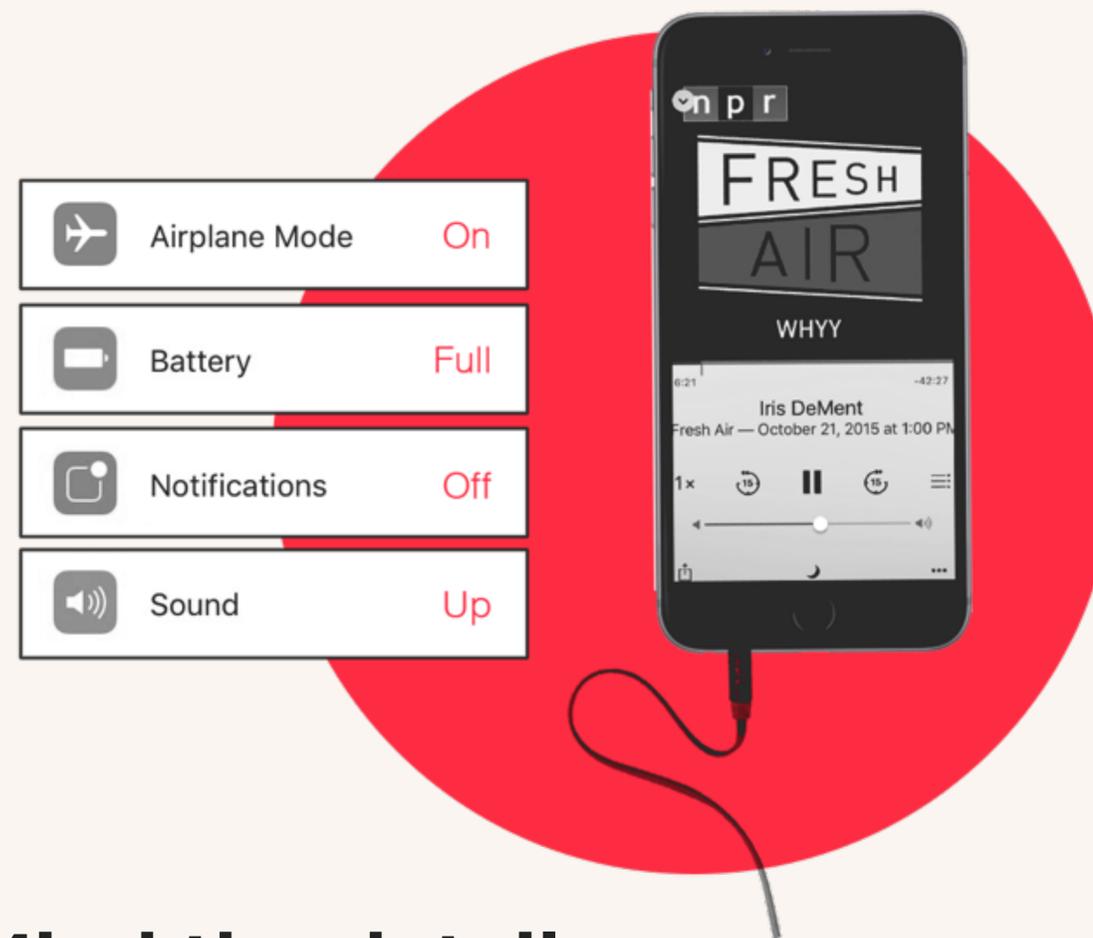
Choose one longer piece or pair a couple of shorter segments. Aim for no longer than 45 minutes. Consider which topics will connect with your group and spark discussion. Listen ahead of time and prepare some conversation starters to kick off your discussion.

# HOW TO GET STARTED



## 5 Prep the space.

Coziness is key. Help people settle in by providing pillows and blankets. Keep the lighting soft. Arrange seating into a circle to help conversation flow. Offer a focal point for folks to settle their gaze on (it may feel strange at first to not be looking at a screen). Set out paper and pens so people can take notes and/ or doodle while they listen.



## 6 Mind the details.

Make sure whatever device you're using to play the story is fully charged and notifications are off. Download the piece ahead of time if your Internet is spotty. Make sure volume is set so that everyone can hear. Offer some light snacks and drinks - or ask your guests to bring something, potluck style.

# QUICK CHECKLIST

- Send Invite (include day & time)
- Listen to story ahead of time
- Consider discussion-starting questions (or use ours)
- Create a cozy feel:
  - Arrange seats in a circle
  - Use pillows, blankets, comfy chairs
  - Soften the lighting
- Download story or make sure you have solid Internet connection if you plan to stream
- Turn off notifications your device
- Set out some notepads and pens / markers
- Stock up on light snacks & beverages
- Know the room: are there some subject matter experts you can pass the ball to during the discussion?
- Snap some pictures for social media and use #NPRListeningParty
- Be creative and have fun!

**TELL YOUR FRIENDS TO  
SAVE YOUR DATE!**

**SEND AN INVITE**

*Use one of our graphics to create your invite*

**#NPRLISTENINGPARTY**



visit our website for more information

[generationlisten.npr.org/listening-party](https://www.generationlisten.npr.org/listening-party)

**@NPRGenListen** | **#NPRListeningParty** | **#HostYourOwn**