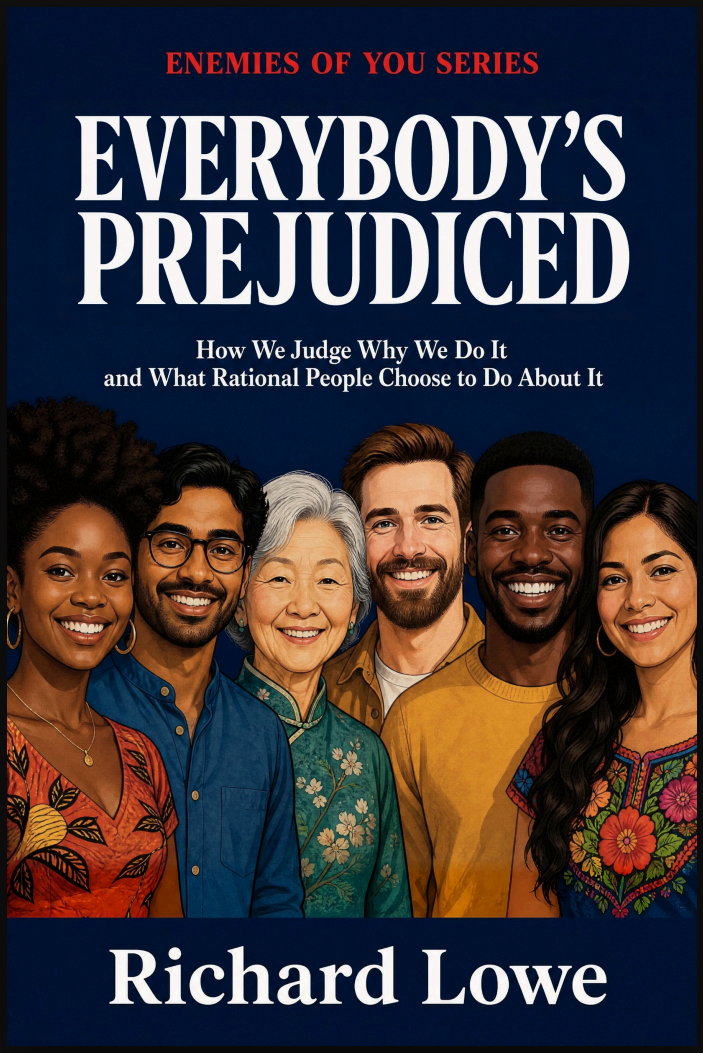
A FREE COMPANION TO EVERYBODY'S PREJUDICED

Taking the Open Seat

A workbook for finding the prejudices you were handed, testing them against real people, and deciding which ones still get to drive.



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How to Use This Workbook

Use a pencil. You will come back and change your answers, and that is the point.

Everybody's Prejudiced starts with one plain claim: everyone has prejudice, including the person who wrote the book. The brain puts a category where knowledge of a person should be, faster than conscious thought, in every human being. You can't switch that off. You can see it clearly enough to decide whether to let it drive.

This workbook turns the book into practice. It has six parts:

1. **Going first**, an honest inventory of what you were handed.
2. **Finding the deep ones**, a two-week log of who you hesitate around.
3. **The contact plan**, one step toward one person.
4. **Small cruelties and the bystander**, words to use when it happens in the room.
5. **Prejudice or judgment**, a test for the opinions you think you earned.
6. **Discussion questions**, for a book club, a class or a kitchen table.

> *You are not obligated to give every person infinite chances to demonstrate their good faith. You are obligated to give them the first chance. After that, you are allowed to pay attention to what they show you.*

The Mechanism in Five Steps

The same machine runs in every direction, whoever holds the bias and whoever it's aimed at.

1. **It gets installed early.** Family, religion, culture and the stories you were handed deliver categories before you have the tools to examine them. By the time you can question them, they sit where facts live.

2. **The wiring does the rest.** Rapid categorical judgment kept your ancestors alive. Imprecision is the price of speed, and most of what it sorts today is inherited noise.

3. **Small cruelties keep the categories in place.** The joke, the tone, the question that ranks people. Each one is deniable. The pattern is not.

4. **Good reasons cover it.** Every biased decision can be explained one at a time. Only the total shows what happened.

5. **Contact undoes it.** Sustained, personal relationship with one individual, long enough for the person to become more real than the category.

Part 1: Going First

The book earns the right to ask you by listing its author's prejudices first. Now it's your turn.

Richard Lowe starts with the most flattering one: he prefers women doctors, bankers and customer service staff. He calls it informed preference. The name it deserves is prejudice. Start with yours.

My flattering prejudice: _____

What I call it: _____ What it deserves to be called: _____

Now work down the list. Write what you were taught or what you catch yourself assuming, and where it came from. Be honest. Nobody else has to read this page.

GROUP	WHAT I WAS TAUGHT OR ASSUME	WHO TAUGHT ME	HAVE I KNOWN ONE WELL?
A race or ethnicity			
Women, or men			
A religion			
The rich, the poor, the working class			
Older people, younger people			
People with a disability, visible or invisible			
Sexual orientation or gender identity			
Body size			
An accent			
The other political side			
Cops, veterans, people with a conviction			
One I haven't named yet			

The book holds every group to one standard. If you skipped a row because the bias runs in a direction that feels acceptable right now, go back and fill it in.

Part 2: Finding the Deep Ones

The surface biases you can name at a desk. The deeper ones reveal themselves in motion.

For two weeks, notice who you hesitate around, who you avoid without realizing it, and who you move toward without friction. Whose calls do you return first? Write it down the same day, before you have time to explain it away.

DAY	WHO I HESITATED AROUND OR AVOIDED	WHO I MOVED TOWARD EASILY	WHAT THE CATEGORY SAID
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8 to 14			

The pattern I see: _____

Which row in Part 1 it matches: _____

Watch what you let in

The installation didn't stop when you left your parents' house. The news, your feeds and your entertainment keep doing it every day. Check each source you use most:

- ☐ Who benefits from my outrage when I read this?
- ☐ What is the revenue model? Advertising rewards engagement; a subscription rewards my satisfaction
- ☐ Is this picture of the world designed to inform me or to keep me coming back?
- ☐ Is the source transparent about its standards and honest about its perspective?
- ☐ Who gets to be the protagonist in what I watch, and who gets to be the threat?

Part 3: The Contact Plan

The automatic system revises its patterns through one thing: repeated experience that doesn't fit the category.

Being near someone can leave everything unchanged. So can reading about a group or watching a documentary. Contact, as the book uses the word, means direct, personal, sustained relationship with an individual from a group you have preconceptions about. Sam on the school bus. An hour in a parking lot outside a Family History Center, then a door, then the most patient researchers Richard Lowe had ever met.

Check the conditions

Contact works best when the situation has these. Check the ones your plan includes:

- ☐ Equal status: neither of you has authority over the other
- ☐ A shared goal or a shared task
- ☐ Real cooperation, with no winner and loser
- ☐ Support from the setting: a club, a class, a job, a congregation
- ☐ The possibility of an actual friendship
- ☐ You chose to be there

One step

One step is enough to begin: sit down, walk across the parking lot, say the opening sentence.

THE CATEGORY I WANT TO TEST	WHERE I COULD MEET ONE PERSON FROM IT	MY ONE STEP	BY WHEN

If it goes badly

Contact offers an update, never a guarantee. When it fails, one of these is usually missing. Check what was true:

- ☐ The encounter was competitive
- ☐ One of us had power over the other
- ☐ It was forced, and I was managing the situation instead of engaging with it
- ☐ I remembered the one hostile moment and forgot the neutral ones

The hostile encounters are remembered more vividly than the ordinary ones. One bad afternoon is a reason to change the conditions and try again.

Part 4: Small Cruelties and the Bystander

A small cruelty damages without leaving fingerprints. The deniability is the design.

When it happens to you

1. **Name it without escalating.** Small enough that it can't be built into a scene, large enough to register: “I didn't appreciate that.” “That wasn't cool.” “Knock that off.”
2. **Expect the brush-off.** “I was joking. You're too sensitive.” That response is part of the mechanism. You have still declined the terms.
3. **Read the residue.** When you leave a room with unease you can't account for, treat the feeling as data about the room. Ask what was said that you absorbed before you could name it.
4. **Increase the distance if it continues.** Ending contact is a serious step with serious costs. So is absorbing the pattern for years.

When you see it happen to someone else

You are outside the mechanism, so you can say what the target couldn't. Keep it small and clear:

- [ ] “That landed a little rough.”
- [ ] “I don't think that came across the way you meant it.”
- [ ] Afterward, in private: “I noticed that. I'm sorry it happened. That was not okay.”

What your standing allows

The bystander's obligation scales with standing. Check what you can do where you work:

- [ ] Intervene in the moment
- [ ] Follow up with the target so they can decide what, if anything, to do
- [ ] Keep a record of what I witnessed
- [ ] Use my results and standing to hold a line the target can't hold alone
- [ ] Be the person someone can come to (always available, at any level)

> *Be the person someone can come to. That is always within reach. Start there.*

Part 5: Prejudice or Judgment?

Prejudice is assessment before the evidence. Judgment is assessment of evidence already in hand.

Pick one person you have written off. Run the test honestly.

Person (initials are fine): _____

- ☐ Every reason I hold against them came from something they did, over time
- ☐ The opinion did not arrive before they did
- ☐ I gave them the first chance
- ☐ If they changed, through sustained behavior, I would update
- ☐ When they do something ambiguous, I judge that act on its own terms

Five checks: that's earned judgment, and you are allowed to know what you know. Fewer than five: reopen the file and make sure the judgment still tracks what the person has actually shown you.

Discussion Questions

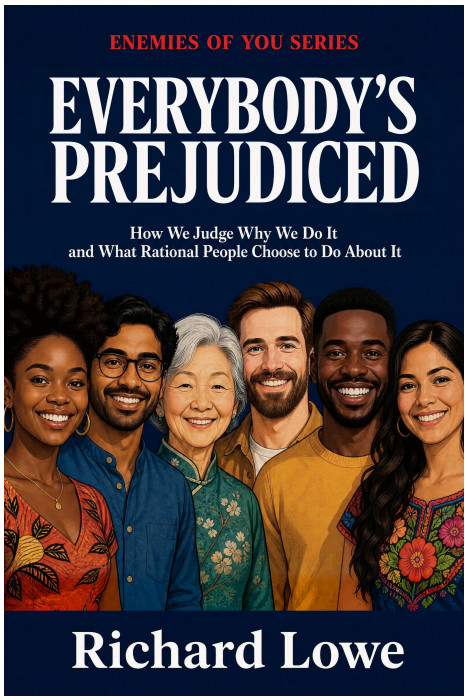
For book clubs, classes and anyone reading Everybody's Prejudiced with someone else.

1. The author lists his own prejudices before asking you to examine yours. Did that change how you read the rest? Would you be willing to go first in your group?
2. Which prejudice in your own inventory was hardest to write down, and why?
3. The book argues prejudice costs the person holding it: friendships, perspectives and people who never get met. Name one thing a category may have cost you.
4. Sam, Lola, the Family History Center, a two-hour talk on a Hollywood corner. What do these encounters have in common?
5. Why does the book say information and mandatory training don't change behavior, while contact does?
6. The standard “applies in every direction or it is not a standard.” Where is that hardest for you to apply?
7. What does a small cruelty look like in your workplace or family, and what would you say next time?
8. The author defends one prejudice: against people who have personally shown they cause harm. Is that prejudice at all?
9. Which door will you walk through this month?

> *Go find out if the assumption is right before you let it make the decision for you. Take the open seat. Walk through the door. Start the conversation.*

The Whole Story

This workbook gives you the exercises. Everybody's Prejudiced gives you the whole accounting: how prejudice gets installed, what it looks like across race, gender, religion, class, age, disability and the body, how it survives behind good reasons, and what rational people choose to do about it.



Everybody's Prejudiced:
How We Judge, Why We Do It, and What Rational People Choose to Do About It
Enemies of You

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