

# I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY

## Academic Guide

### ABOUT THE BOOK

We think we have the answers, but we need to be asking a lot more questions. Journalist Mónica Guzmán is the loving liberal daughter of Mexican immigrants who voted—twice—for Donald Trump. When the country could no longer see straight across the political divide, Mónica set out to find what was blinding us and discovered the most eye-opening tool we're not using: our own built-in curiosity.

Partisanship is up, trust is down, and our social media feeds make us sure we're right and everyone else is ignorant (or worse). But avoiding one another is hurting our relationships and our society. In this timely, personal guide, Mónica, the chief storyteller for the national cross-partisan depolarization organization Braver Angels, takes you to the real front lines of a crisis that threatens to grind America to a halt—broken conversations among confounded people.

She shows you how to overcome the fear and certainty that surround us to finally do what only seems impossible: understand and even learn from people in your life whose whole worldview is different from or even opposed to yours.

Drawing from cross-partisan conversations she's had, organized, or witnessed everywhere from the echo chambers on social media to the wheat fields in Oregon to raw, unfiltered fights with her own family on election night, Mónica shows how you can put your natural sense of wonder to work for you immediately, finding the answers you need by talking with people—rather than about them—and asking the questions you want, curiously.

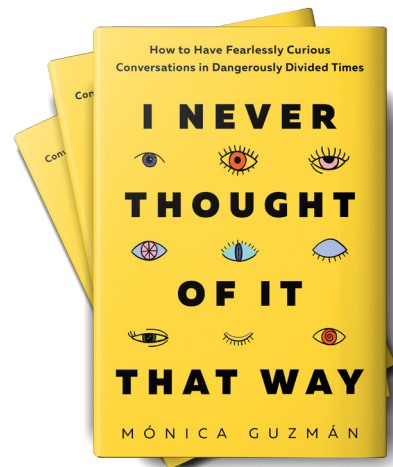
In these pages, you'll learn:

- \* How to ask what you really want to know (even if you're afraid to)
- \* How to grow smarter from even the most tense interactions, online or off
- \* How to cross boundaries and find common ground—with anyone

Whether you're left, right, center, or not a fan of labels: If you're ready to fight back against the confusion, heartbreak, and madness of our dangerously divided times—in your own life, at least—Mónica's got the tools and fresh, surprising insights to prove that seeing where people are coming from isn't just possible. It's easier than you think.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mónica Guzmán is a bridge builder, journalist, and entrepreneur who lives for great conversations sparked by curious questions. She's Senior Fellow for Public Practice at Braver Angels, the nation's largest cross-partisan grassroots organization working to depolarize America; host of live interview series at Crosscut; and cofounder of the award-winning Seattle newsletter The Evergrey. She was a 2019 fellow at the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, where she studied social and political division, and a 2016 fellow at the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University, where she researched how journalists can rethink their roles to better meet the needs of a participatory public. She was named one of the 50 most influential women in Seattle, served twice as a juror for the Pulitzer Prizes, and plays a barbarian named Shadrack in her besties' Dungeons & Dragons campaign. A Mexican immigrant, Latina, and dual US/Mexico citizen, she lives in Seattle with her husband and two kids and is the proud liberal daughter of conservative parents.





# I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY ON CAMPUS



## TALKS OF NOTE

- American Press Institute
- Bridge USA
- C-SPAN's BookTV
- California Institute of Integral Studies
- Citizen University
- Difficult Conversations
- Emma Willard School Commencement Ceremony
- FAIR Perspectives
- Family Action Network
- Greater Good Science Center
- Philosophical Insights
- Politics & Prose
- Stanford Social Innovation Review
- Teacher Tom's Play Summit
- The Purple Principle
- The TeachThought Podcast
- Tombolo Books
- USC Center for Political Future



## **INSTITUTIONS USING OR INVESTIGATING *I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY***

Arizona State University  
Bard College  
Boston College  
Bowdoin College  
California Institute of Integral Studies  
Calvin University  
Delta College  
Emma Willard School  
Georgia State University  
Northwestern University  
Quinnipiac University  
Rutgers University-Camden  
Stanford University  
Strive Arts and Academics

UCLA School of Law  
University of California, Berkeley  
University of Illinois  
University of Mississippi  
University of Oklahoma  
University of Virginia  
University of Washington  
USC Center for Political Future  
Washington University in St. Louis  
West Virginia University  
Western Washington University  
Wheaton College  
William & Mary  
Xavier University

## **WAYS YOUR UNIVERSITY CAN USE THE BOOK**

- Make the book required reading for incoming freshman or select the book for your First Year Experience program
- Gift the book to faculty, staff, and graduating class
- Add the book to your syllabus as required or recommended reading (see the next page for accompanying discussion guide)
- Invite Moni to speak to your students (contact [jessica@reclaimcuriosity.com](mailto:jessica@reclaimcuriosity.com) for more info!)

## **WAYS EDUCATORS ARE USING *I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY*:**

Arizona State University is using the book in their Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program. The course takes 10 criminal justice students (outside students) into a prison to learn with 10 incarcerated women (inside students).

Stanford University is using the book in a research seminar on how to reduce polarization in the classroom.

A professor at University of Wisconsin Madison is using the book in her communications class.

A USC professor is using it in her course on civic paths.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your attitude toward having hard conversations before reading *I Never Thought of It That Way*? What about after?
2. Was there a story from the book that made a particular impact on you?
3. Was there anything you felt challenged by? Or disagreed with? Discuss why.
4. What do you think are your biggest barriers to being more curious?
5. Mónica describes “I never thought of it that way” or INTOIT moments as signals that “a new insight has spanned the distance between someone else’s perspective and your own.” Talk about a recent time when you experienced an INTOIT moment. Have you ever changed your own mind because of an INTOIT moment?
6. What are some challenges with having a conversation with a person who holds a different belief than you? What are you most afraid of when having challenging conversations?
7. What is the most difficult part of rejecting an “us vs. them” or an “othering” mentality?
8. How can we see humanity in others, especially those who are different than us?
9. Talk about a time you made an incorrect assumption about someone else. How did your perception of that person change when you learned the truth?
10. Is there someone specific in your life who you disagree with and would like to get more curious with? What do you hope happens as a result? What would support you in having it?
11. Is there a time where you’ve considered ending a friendship or relationship because you had opposing political views? What did you do?
12. What are ways you can balance making yourself feel heard without arguing or skirting around issues that are important to you?
13. If you’re silo-ed and you don’t have many connections with “the other side,” why do you think that is?
14. Mónica talks about building traction using four specific conversation skills—Listen For, Observe, Offer, and Pull—in order to continue having fruitful conversations, which one would be the easiest for you? Which one would be the hardest?
15. When are times you would stop a conversation? Any time you’d “lean out,” instead of leaning in? Is there such a thing as a “bad” curious conversation?
16. The internet is sometimes very toxic. How can we have curious, productive conversations online specifically?
17. Mónica believes that curiosity can save us from our dangerous divides. Do you think that’s possible? Why or why not?
18. Mónica suggests that no politician, group, or institution can bridge us the way that 1-on-1 relationships will. What do you think?
19. Do you think people with more power and privilege have greater responsibility to take the initiative to have more curious conversations?
20. How do you see other people successfully bridging divides in their own lives? What can we all learn from them?



## WHAT OTHER EDUCATORS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE BOOK

"In clear and lively exposition Mónica Guzmán lays out how we have become unlikely and increasingly not interested in talking to people with whom we don't agree. It's hard to run a family, a school, or a democracy that way. Here we get no simple remedy, but a sensible, straight talk toolkit. It begins with what I consider to be the most important: curiosity. We need to return to our basic curiosity about what other people think and feel. That's our most human, most empathic, starting point."

**—SHERRY TURKLE, MIT PROFESSOR, NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR, RECLAIMING CONVERSATION AND THE EMPATHY DIARIES**

"A vivid account of polarization from the inside out by someone who has experienced the fracturing of our country more intimately than most, this beautifully crafted narrative takes you inside the most vexing political divisions and makes them not only seem understandable, but leaves you with even more empathy for the other side. Readers will appreciate the depth of connections Guzmán created with her subjects, and even moreso the book's many excellent recommendations about how to begin to repair our national divide."

**—DR. CHRISTOPHER BAIL, HEAD OF THE POLARIZATION LAB AT DUKE AND THE AUTHOR OF BREAKING THE SOCIAL MEDIA PRISM**

"This beautifully written book delivers a challenge wrapped in compassion for how hard it is to be curious and open-minded when we 'know' we are right! By being inspiring and intensely practical, Mónica Guzmán has written an essential guide for living in a pluralistic democracy."

**—WILLIAM DOHERTY, PH.D., PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA AND COFOUNDER OF BRAVER ANGELS**

"The question of how we can heal as a nation is the question of our time. In *I Never Thought of It That Way*, Mónica Guzmán has given us the tools for the only way I can see that happening: if we the people do it ourselves. I cannot imagine anyone who will not learn from and rejoice in this book."

**—TOM ROSENSTIEL, ELEANOR MERRILL VISITING PROFESSOR ON THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND**

"Your book was instrumental in helping me figure out some in-class listening exercises that I've been trying out in my college classes and am hoping to try out further in both college and high school classrooms."

**—HILARY G. CONKLIN, PH.D., PROFESSOR, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY**



## WHAT OTHER EDUCATORS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE BOOK

**Todd Eberly** @ToddEberly

1/ For years I've made the collapse in trust a key part of my American Politics & Public Policy classes. After reading *I Never Thought of It That Way* by @moniguzman I've realized that I've been failing to make the logical connection - the loss of trust has killed conversation.

3:39 PM · Aug 12, 2022 · Twitter Web App

1 Retweet 1 Quote Tweet 6 Likes

Tweet your reply

**Todd Eberly** @ToddEberly · Aug 12

Replying to @ToddEberly

2/ There is no greater way to know & understand someone than through conversation. In an age of collapsed trust there's little desire to converse w/ folks w/ whom we disagree or have "othered." Conversation, as it exists, is limited to affirmation in our sorted silos.

**Todd Eberly** @ToddEberly · Aug 12

3/ Conversation isn't about converting. It's about understanding. It's a lot harder to reflexively hate, distrust, or other folks if you engage in genuine conversation. The book is great read. Lot of food for thought.

amazon.com

*I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times*

"If you sense something 'wrong' in the way we've come to interact, Mónica Guzmán shows that you're right—and offers actionable guidance on creating change. With clarity and balance she points to a new path: one where we respond rather than react, that diverts outrage and invites empathy and resolution. This book guides more than new ways of bridging divides. It sparks a curious, higher-level way of thinking that supports healthier thoughts, emotions, relationships, and decisions. Highly recommended."

**—ELLEN PETRY LEANSE, STANFORD UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTOR, LEADERSHIP COACH, AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLER *THE HAPPINESS HACK***

"This is exactly what we need in this time when our country is so polarized. But, it's also a fantastic tool for setting the stage for difficult conversations among our faculty and administrators and even with our students tackling diversity topics in the classroom. I appreciate you suggesting this resource. This is the kind of book that we could use for a faculty or staff read or campus read."

**—JOURNALISM PROFESSOR**



## MORE REVIEWS OF I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY

"Mónica Guzmán's latest book is unashamedly and fearlessly personal. It is also socially responsible, widely relevant, and a glimpse of what is possible when listening takes the place of dismissing people and positions where the ideological gap is too wide and the distance too far to see each other. Presenting authentic experiences, interviews, and data, Guzmán builds the case for using available tools of the mind that are within reach, and that almost anyone could offer in divided times and circumstances."

**—KLINGBRIEF**

"The book's greatest offering, I think, is permission to reclaim people we might have dumped for ideological reasons; such connections won't sully us but may in fact enrich us. I can see this book helping estranged parties who are equally invested in bridging a gap — it could be assigned reading for fractured families aspiring to a harmonious Thanksgiving dinner."

**—THE NEW YORK TIMES**

"*I Never Thought of It That Way* is a necessary book coming at a critical time...a sophisticated yet entertaining discussion of social science research."

**—NEW YORK JOURNAL OF BOOKS**

"Like all skills, these techniques take practice. But anyone who sincerely wants to bridge the gaps in understanding will appreciate this book. Guzmán is emphatic about making an effort to work on difficult conversations."

**—MANHATTAN BOOK REVIEW**

"Mónica Guzmán invites wonder into the gulfs that divide us—a revolutionary kind of wonder that beckons us to listen beyond soundbites and slogans to the stories that carry our shared humanity. *I Never Thought of It That Way* is an accessible and practical guide for how to imagine a future that leaves no one behind."

**—VALARIE KAUR, AUTHOR OF SEE NO STRANGER AND FOUNDER OF THE  
REVOLUTIONARY LOVE PROJECT**

"Lots of books explain how to have hard conversations about politics, but this is the one you need to read—right now. It's honest, funny, surprising and actionable. Take it to the beach, bring it on the bus. Hand it out at family reunions; leave it in your office cafeteria.

There's no time to waste."

**—AMANDA RIPLEY, AUTHOR OF HIGH CONFLICT**

"In this perceptive, wise, accessible book, Guzmán shows us how to ask more humane questions of our fellow Americans. She shows us that by seeking truly to understand rather than judge, every one of us can improve our country's civic culture. Curiosity cures."

**—ERIC LIU, CEO, CITIZEN UNIVERSITY AND AUTHOR OF YOU'RE MORE POWERFUL THAN  
YOU THINK**

