

Historical Racism

This session brings us some of the stories, perspectives and dimensions on the construction of “whiteness” itself, revealing a complicated and painful history many of us were not taught in school.

Before your meeting

Please read/watch/listen to these before your meeting:

- Video documentary “Race: the Power of an Illusion” presents both history and contemporary forms of racial divide. The series is 3 hours long and costs \$5 to stream (over a 1-week period) on Vimeo [here](#). [vimeo video]
- TED talk [America’s Native Prisoners of War](#). Aaron Huey presents a brief history of the Lakota Sioux and their present condition on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota through his photographs. Approximately 15 minute [TED video].

Other Resources:

- A shorter video documentary (approximately 20 minutes), Unseen Tears: The Native American Boarding School Experience presents eye witness accounts of the experience of Native Americans in government sponsored boarding schools [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) [youtube video]
- [What Is Whiteness](#) by Nell Irvin Painter [pdf]
- [Love and Terror in the Black Church](#) by Michael Eric Dyson [pdf]
- [A Letter to My Nephew](#) by James Baldwin [pdf]
- [The Case for Reparations](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates [pdf]

- [Lynching in America](#) [pdf]
- [When Americans Lynched Mexicans](#) [pdf]
- [Prisons of Silence](#) by Janice Mirikatani [pdf]
- [Tim Wise: On White Privilege](#) [youtube video]

Facilitation

Your group should choose a facilitator for this meeting. The facilitator role will rotate each meeting.

The facilitator's role is to guide the group through the proposed agenda. The facilitator is not expected to have any special knowledge about the topic, and responds to each question as a participant. The facilitator's role incorporates three jobs:

1. Make sure all voices are heard. We suggest "going around" to have each person speak during most sections of the agenda, rather than open discussion.
2. Keep time and keep the group moving through the agenda.
3. Ensure that a date and facilitator is set for the next meeting

Proposed Agenda

- Sit (5 minutes)
- Review Communication Guidelines that will support your group (5 minutes)
 1. Read aloud your group's guidelines developed in the first session
 2. Discuss any revisions to the guidelines
 3. Confirm that all members can abide by the group's guidelines, or at least open to practicing with them

- Mindful Sharing (80 minutes)
 - Instruction: Mindful sharing involves each participant sharing from personal experience. There is no discussion or cross-talk during this time period, only personal sharing.
 - Each person in the group can share 3-5 minutes on each question (gauge the time depending on the number of people in your group). Speak to whatever questions are most salient.
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- Discussion Questions

1. In the first section of *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, we hear from scientists who show there is no basis for racial groupings in our biology. Is this new or surprising to you? What questions come up? How does the [First Principle](#) (The inherent worth and dignity of every person) support this understanding of race?

2. The second section covers the historical construction of race in the United States. What comes up for you when facing how race was constructed to justify slavery, genocide, and theft of land? Where do you see this racial ideology and conditioning still in today's world? How might you talk about a the [Seventh Principle](#) (respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part) in a way that acknowledges the impacts of racism?

3. The third section talks about the perpetuation of the idea of race through policy that affects us still today. What privileges or opportunities have you or your ancestors been afforded (or not) because of your race? (That could include immigration status, ability to assimilate as white, economic opportunity in jobs and housing.) How does the result of your ancestors' opportunities impact your life today?

4. Has your viewing of the Pine Ridge photos, history and current statistics

changed your understanding of how historical racism can influence present events? Has this video changed your perception of any current events?

- Sit (5 minutes)
- Group Reflection (10 minutes)
 - Instruction: Group Reflection is like Mindful Sharing in that there is no discussion or cross-talk, however the focus is on what kind of experience the participants had during the meeting rather than on the content covered.
 - Each person in the group can share 2-3 minutes about what it was like to participate in the group (gauge time based on number of people in the group)
 - PROMPT: What was it like to engage in Mindful Sharing today? How has this been for you so far?
- Plan the next meeting (10 minutes)
 - How did your technology or meeting logistics work? Any changes you would like to try for the next meeting?
 - When will you meet?
 - Who will facilitate?
- If there's time left, finish with a closing sit (5 minutes)