

Investigating Racism in Our Own Organizations

For our next study session, we invite our groups exploring White Awareness and Racism to turn our careful, loving attention toward the practice of investigating and uprooting racism within our own fellowships and other organizations.

Like with racism at the individual level, the question is not “Are these organizations racist or not?” As we see in the supplemental readings, leadership from various organizations affirm that they are not immune from replicating racist dynamics, and take responsibility for creating change.

What does it take for organizations to change racist dynamics? We will explore our own responses and begin to apply knowledge of how change has worked in other organizations. We know the easy tendency among white people is to judge other white people as worse than us (so we can validate ourselves as “good white allies”) or better than us (so we can shame ourselves as “bad white people” who need to be better). Do we recognize those tendencies among ourselves? Can we be present with the diversity of responses that are arising in each of us, shaped by by our own unique history? Can we be honest about our own responses, even those we feel confused by or ashamed of? Transformation can happen through this intimacy with our own experience, not only in ourselves, but in our fellowships and organizations.

We are in a time of increasing awareness around the reality of racism, the harm it causes and our personal contribution to its perpetuation. This learning is at the very core of our spirituality, as we learn to loosen our attachment to unconscious attitudes, to privilege. We invite you to engage with this material as honestly and openly as you can, stretching outside of what feels comfortable and easy. Curiosity, compassion for self and others, and even laughter are great supports. May our work bring us into Beloved Community.

Before your meeting

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

- [White Supremacy Culture](#) by Tema Okun [pdf]
- [Anti-Racist Organizational Development \(pp 57-67\)](#) Western States Center [pdf]

Please do this before your Session 7 meeting:

Select 1-2 institutions that you participate in — as a fellowship member, leader, participant, teacher, donor. If there's an institution you share in common with your study group (like Unitarian Universalism), be sure to include that one in your investigation. We have included a few examples below from diverse traditions.

Investigate: What conversation is your community having about diversity, equity, and inclusion? Do they have any written materials for you to review? Contact a leader or fellow community member, to inquire about other conversations that might be happening, but not be written down.

- [Unitarian Universalist Association — Multiculturalism](#) [webpage] No particular reading; just take a look around.
- [Change Must Come if Unitarian Universalism is to Thrive...](#) [webpage] UU World article
- [Black Lives of UU - The Eighth Principle](#) [webpage]
- Spirit Rock's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan ([Intro](#) and [Plan](#)) [pdf's]
- [Brooklyn Zen Center's Commitment to Inclusivity](#) [pdf]

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 (65 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)

- **Discussion Questions**

1. Tell us what you learned in your homework. Share from your heart about how you felt as you investigated the inclusion practices (or lack thereof) in your fellowship or other institutions.

2. How might you support your fellowship or other institutions to engage in facing institutional racism? Notice how you feel even being asked this question. Do you have any confusion, aversion, or desire to be recognized as good arising? What is the story arising? If you feel stuck, disempowered, proud, or defensive, what feels threatened? How do these potentially get in the way of change?

3. Do you see the characteristics listed in the reading on White Supremacy Culture showing up in organizations you are part of? If so, how? What particular characteristics do you find yourself participating in (perfectionism, fear of conflict, power hoarding, individualism, etc)?

- **Group Investigation (15 minutes)**

- Instruction: Group investigation will allow more space for discussion than mindful sharing. The goal is to investigate how an analytical framework applies or does not apply to a situation. There is no requirement for groups to reach agreement; diversity of opinion can be very helpful to fully investigate the framework. The facilitator can invite people to speak up if there are long pauses, and can invite quieter people to speak up if 1 or 2 voices are dominating the conversation.

1. The Western States Center's Resource Guide for Dismantling Racism supports

organizations to move from being an “all white club” to an “anti-racist/inclusive” organization. Using this framework, how would you describe organizations you are part of in terms of their stage of anti-racist organizational development?

- 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 (5 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)