

Authentic Interactions

Witnessing Whiteness Chapter 2

Workshop 2

Dear Facilitator(s),

This workshop series was carefully crafted, reviewed (by a multiracial team), and revised with several important issues in mind.

The series is intended to...

1. **Offer an 11 part, sequential process that corresponds to the reading of the book, Witnessing Whiteness, 2nd Edition.** Understandably, facilitators, for various reasons, might decide to use one or more of the workshops as stand alone events without sufficient time for participants to a) read the corresponding book chapters or b) move through the entire series. Yet, please understand that **moving through these workshops without having read the corresponding book chapter will markedly reduce its effectiveness. It will make moving through the workshop more challenging and is NOT recommended.** Understandings gained from one workshop are also important for subsequent workshops.
2. **Respond to particular group needs.** Recognizing that some groups may not be able to implement each workshop for the entire time suggested, some approved modifications can be found at the end of each workshop agenda. Only modify these workshops when absolutely required.
3. **Create a welcoming, inviting space where participants feel free to speak the truth of their experience without fear of shaming or reprisal.** It is essential for facilitators to understand that even when participants hold views that are counter to the themes in the book/series, a hallmark of both the book and the series is that people should be gently led into a new way of seeing.
4. **Follow logical threads of understanding related to each theme.** The language provided in the “scripts” that both precede and follow each section of the workshops are very important. Deviating from the essential themes and tone in those statements may create confusion and undercut the building nature of each individual workshop.
5. **Enhance leadership capacity within the community.** Detailed facilitator notes are provided for each activity so that one or more members of the group can practice their facilitation while leading this workshop series. A few notes of caution: a) the same facilitation team should run the entire series, b) the team should read the entire book in advance of leading any of the workshops, and c) sufficient debrief opportunities should be created to discuss how each workshop went so that facilitators’ skills can be developed.
6. **Provide community building opportunities for either racially caucused white groups OR multiracial groups.** Although still focused on whiteness in general, the series seeks to frame activities and questions in ways that allow people of color to benefit from the experience.

Best wishes,
Shelly Tochluk

Authentic Interactions

Witnessing Whiteness Chapter 2

Workshop 2

Goals:

- Enhance awareness and skills regarding approaching dialogues in racially mixed, but predominantly white situations
- Explore the need for white people to be open to critical feedback while engaging in community service

Materials:

- Discussion Guidelines
- Butcher Paper and Markers
- Personal Self-Survey (Handout 2.1a)
- Personal Self-Survey (Facilitator's notes) (Sheet 2.1b)
- Keys to Remember (Handout 2.2)
- Scene Study (Handout 2.3a)
- Scene Study (Facilitator's notes) (Sheet 2.3b)
- List of Terms/Context (Handout 2.4) (*distribute at facilitator's discretion*)

Book Anchor Quote: (Can be read aloud or distributed to the group during opening if desired.)

When white people see that racism continues, we often dedicate ourselves to work toward improved race relations and increased social justice. We recognize that current social ills are rooted in an unjust past and present, and we offer ourselves—and the influence we can have in various communities—as part of corrective actions. Yet we often experience difficulty in multiracial situations. Two common challenges are our lack of confidence and our overconfidence.

When we enter multiracial spaces, we often take with us our own discomfort with our racial selves. Especially for those of us who have only recently begun to recognize the ways that the more subtle forms of racism emerge, our earlier lack of sensitivity can turn into an awkward oversensitivity. Where once we never noticed race (or at least claimed not to), increased awareness makes issues of race appear ever-present. Race consciousness is at its height and we can often feel paralyzed while trying to figure out how to behave in order to subvert the racism in the room while not appearing racist by concentrating on race in the room! What will the person of color think? What if I say the wrong thing? Our deep sense of guilt over our history and our current ineptness damages our ability to relate.

SESSION 3 - AUTHENTIC INTERACTIONS

2 hrs 45 min

Section 1

(15 min)

OPENING

Materials: Goals for day written out and communication guidelines posted ([download with discussion guide](#))
butcher paper and markers

Purpose of piece:

To discuss communication guidelines and review the goals for the workshop

Instructions: *Facilitators introduce themselves. Ask participants to say their name and two sentences. The first one is a sentence describing why they came to the workshop. The second sentence should speak to the person's curiosities or concerns.*

- *Example:*
 - *Sentence #1 - I am here today because a lot of anxiety that arises in me when I'm in cross-race situations.*
 - *Sentence #2 - I am really nervous because I'm a pretty new facilitator and I hope I can help lead this workshop well.*

Let participants know that you are starting out asking them to risk exposing their feelings because that is at the heart of what we're talking about today – the risk taking necessary in order to create authentic relationships across race.

Ask participants to read the discussion guidelines posted on the wall aloud (one after the other). Ask participants what questions they have. Invite participants to add to the list any additional discussion guidelines they think would be helpful. Write them on the piece of butcher paper. Use this modified list for all future workshops.

*Section II**(60 min)***Questioning Ourselves**

Materials: Personal Self-Survey (Handout 2.1a), Facilitator's notes (Sheet 2.1b)

Purpose of piece: To explore feelings that arise when we are in racially mixed, but predominantly white situations

Say to Group: Our first exercise today will start with each of us taking a self-survey to get a sense of how we feel when we enter racially mixed, but predominantly white situations and how we navigate conversations in those contexts. You will have about 5-10 minutes to silently consider the questions on the handout. Please write down your answers and remain silent until everyone has finished.

Distribute Personal Self-Surveys – Give up to 10 minutes for participants to complete the surveys

We'd now like you to get into small groups to discuss each of the following questions posted on the wall. You'll have 30 minutes. Please take notes on a sheet of butcher paper for later large group share-outs. Determine small group membership (4-5 per group) by counting off numbers from 1 to the number of groups you'd like to have. (Example: If you have 12 participants, you'd want participants to count off 1 to 3. This will create 3 groups of 4 people.)

Small Group Questions: (30 minutes)

1. What struck you most as you answered the questions on the survey?
2. Where are there similarities and differences in how you answered the questions?
3. What concerns are raised through this survey?

Large Group Debrief (20 minutes)

Each group will have about 5 minutes to share what was discussed in their group.

Facilitators can ask...

- What were the main points of your discussion?
- What were some things that surprised you that you or someone else said?
- What questions are you sitting with after this discussion?

Wrap Up: We recognize that we may not be able to fully work through all the issues that are raised today in this discussion. But, something for us to walk away with is that in order for us to interact authentically, we need to check to see what motivations underlie our actions. Are we trying to take care of people in a way that could be offensive? Do our feelings change depending upon the person we're talking to? It is really helpful if we have considered these types of situations well enough to know to what degree we're experiencing emotions that limit us in developing our practice and voice regarding race issues.

Section III

(20 min)

Keys to Remember

Materials: Keys to Remember handout

Purpose of piece: Introduce a few general guidelines that can help reduce anxiety and increase our skills for navigating conversations.

Say to group: We'd like to move forward with some general ideas to consider how we can feel more confident in our cross-racial conversations with people we've just met.

Distribute the "Keys to Remember" (Handout 2.2)

Keys to Remember

1. **Admit feelings of nervousness:** It's helpful if we admit that we are anxious or unsure about how to engage the conversation. It's okay to say that we have recently been exposed to some new ideas and are trying to make use of this information. In this way, we allow ourselves to become vulnerable in the situation and are more likely to receive support and understanding.
2. **Ask permission prior to getting personal:** Lots of people are told that expressing interest is a great way to initiate conversation across race. And that may be true. But, it's also important to recognize that many people won't be interested in delving into a conversation about race. And, even fewer might be interested in readily opening up regarding their feelings. Remember to ask if the person is willing to talk with you about his/her personal feelings before you ask about them.
3. **Treat everyone as an individual:** The worst thing we can do is only focus on a person's racial background. This can translate into questions such as, "How does it feel as a _____ person when _____?" Instead, we should ask "how does it feel for YOU when _____?"
4. **Prepare for rejection:** There will be plenty of people who will NOT appreciate your approach. No matter what you do and how sincere your motivations, since people have widely varying expectations, you are likely to offend or annoy someone at some point. Be prepared to hear that you've made a misstep in that person's mind. It's okay to ask what that person would have preferred...or to simply apologize. Listen to the critique. Accept that person's truth. Consider how you may change your approach based on that person's critique. And then continue to do your best as you move forward.

Instructions: *Invite participants to read each key aloud and invite questions or comments regarding how they are understood and how useful they appear. Allow participants to offer additional suggestions based on experiences where their approach proved helpful. Also, invite participants to discuss moments where they tried some other approach that didn't go well and what they learned from the situation.*

Then, use a piece of butcher paper to extend this discussion into a brainstorm for what other "keys" participants have found useful. (Be aware that not all ideas offered will necessarily be good ones. Be prepared to ask other participants to share understandings that might prompt us to not add some of the offered additions on the paper.)

Wrap Up: Unfortunately, there are no absolute keys that are guaranteed to make interactions successful. But, continuing to keep our eyes and ears open for moments when we can become more honest about our feelings and intentions in a way that demonstrates respect for our acquaintances is a step in the right direction. We can then regroup, reflect on our experiences, and decide how we can learn from moments when things haven't gone as well as we would have liked.

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 min.

Section IV

(50 min)

Making a Scene

Materials: Scene study (Handout 2.3a), facilitator's note page (Sheet 2.3b)

Purpose of piece: Explore the need for white people to be open to critical feedback while engaging in community service

Instructions: *Distribute the Scene Study handout to the group. Invite them to read the entire scene silently to themselves, taking note of areas where they see difficulty arising.*

Say to Group: We're now going to spend some time discussing what can happen when white people walk into racially diverse situations with positive intentions, but also a lack of awareness regarding their impact.

- This can also include the impact of someone not listening to someone else in a discussion.
- In this scene, we are not dealing with a sense of anxiety and nervousness, as in our earlier exercise.
- Instead, what we encounter are people who are really confident about their ability to contribute to community service efforts.
- What we'd like to do with this scene study is identify where some challenges arise, imagine what might lie underneath the problematic behaviors, and talk about how we might help stop these types of things from occurring as we move forward.

10 minutes to introduce and read Scene Study

Facilitator's Notes: *Some personal reflection questions that participants can silently consider include:*

- *How might you respond if you were in this meeting?*
- *In what ways does this scene resonate for you personally?*
- *Have you ever been part of or witnessed a similar dynamic play out?*
- *What did you notice about the exchange?*

(Post these on a piece of butcher paper, or write them on a sheet of paper to distribute.)

Now that we've all had a chance to read the scene and think about it for a few minutes, let's consider: (40 minutes)

1. What stands out from this scene?
2. Where do you see defensiveness arising?
3. How might some of the exchanges betray a sense of superiority or a savior complex?
4. What did see in this scene that could have a negative impact?
5. What could be done to help stop this scene from playing out as it does?

Facilitator's Notes: *To help guide the discussion, begin by asking participants to focus on statements (1-6). Try to draw out the issues discussed in the facilitator's notes. Offer some hints yourself (based on the notes) if the participants cannot name them on their own. Try to get a sense of whether or not participants understand. If participants feel that someone in the scene is being attacked unfairly at some point in the discussion, ask the participant to identify which statements spark that belief.*

Then, ask participants to focus on statements (7-12). Continue prompting discussion.
Then, ask participants to focus on statements (13-18). Continue prompting discussion.

Wrap Up: Hopefully what we can see from this dialogue is that even when we think we are engaging in positive efforts with our best intentions, we might be participating in unproductive ways that have destructive impacts.

- It is really important that we stay open to hearing critical feedback from people we interact with in order to reduce the detrimental effects that defensiveness and a sense of superiority or savior mentality can have on community service efforts.
- Important messages can come from people of color and white people, if only we're open enough to hear them.

Section V

(5 min)

Closing

Purpose of piece:

To acknowledge what we did today, bridge to next workshop, and allow people to check out of the space

Say to Group: Please take a moment to reflect on the exercises we did today.

- There have been a lot of challenging questions raised and it's likely that there are many lingering questions and points of confusion.
- Please think for a moment, whom in your life do you have that you can turn to for help in continuing to discuss how to navigate racially diverse situations in ways that supports authentic communication?
- If you can't think of someone, what might you be willing to do to find support?

Wrap Up: Thank you for your participation today. Let's now go around and just say one phrase that captures how you feel as you leave the space and either one person you can turn to for further support or one thing you can do to generate support.

WORKSHOP 2 MODIFICATIONS

Suggested

If you are unable to complete the entire 2hr 45minute workshop, here are some alterations that could satisfy some goals:

- **2 hour option**
 - Eliminate Section III, Keys to Remember (reduces by 20 minutes)
 - Eliminate the break (reduces by 15 minutes)
 - Shorten the discussion portion of Section IV by 5 minutes
- **1 hour option (A)**
 - **Use only if the sole purpose is for participants to explore their feelings when in mixed race, predominantly white settings. This section alone will offer participants no new skills.**
 - Opening with no discussion guidelines except agreement around confidentiality, complete Section II, and close
 - Reduce small and large group discussions by 5 minutes each
- **1 hour option (B)**
 - **Use only if the sole purpose is to show the negative impacts that can arise when white people do not listen to critical feedback. Use only with groups who already have experience with these concepts.**
 - Opening with no discussion guidelines except agreement around confidentiality, move directly to Section IV, and close