

My Racial Identity

Witnessing Whiteness Chapter 4

Workshop 4

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

My Racial Identity

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Workshop 4

Goals:

- Explore and share important moments in our personal racial identity development
- Identify people and situations that facilitated our personal growth
- Examine the effects our racial identity has on our lives and relationships

Materials:

- Storyboard – Guiding questions and brainstorm list (Handout 4.1)
- Storyboard – Template (Handout 4.2)
- Markers, pens
- Butcher paper

Book Anchor Quote:

After a couple of years working with the violence prevention program, I began to teach at the school. Those years teaching also forced me to develop a more in-depth and complex understanding of race, class, and community. So, by the time I left my fifth grade classroom to pursue another degree, the experiences I had within the community group and my teaching practice had intertwined. They left me with a desire to learn how to inform my home (white) community of the brilliance and potential residing within people of color living in violence-ridden cities throughout the United States. Projects I designed for my new academic program focused on the struggles of inner city youth of color and the need for people to stay open and observant in order to see and support the gifts lying within these strong, vibrant individuals.

What became clear to me, however, was that the ability to truly see people and the search for life inherent in their pursuits has a lot to do with our ability to witness how our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors are informed by our racial experiences. After years of receiving important mentorship from people of color, I felt the need to find other white people who had looked deeply within to identify how being white affected them, white people who could be my guides as well.

SESSION 5 - My Racial Identity

2 hrs 30 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

Facilitators introduce themselves. Ask participants to say their name and finish this sentence. “When I think about being part of my racial group, I think about _____.”

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

(40 min)

My Story

Materials: Guiding questions and brainstorm sheet (Handout 4.1), storyboard template (Handout 4.2), markers, pens

Purpose of piece:

To explore important moments in our personal racial identity development and identify people and situations that facilitated our personal growth

Say to Group: All of us have very unique stories and we may have very different understandings about ourselves in terms of race. Today will give us an opportunity to spend some time exploring the significance of our own experiences as well as learning about other people’s.

- To start off today’s workshop, we’d like to spend some time reflecting on the personal journey we’ve taken so far in terms of race.
- Essentially, what we’d like to create is a visual storyboard that illustrates the significant moments in your life that have shaped your understanding of race.
- This is sort of like a personal timeline of important transformative experiences.
- To do this, we’d like you to spend a few minutes thinking about the guiding questions on the sheet we’re about to hand out.
- *Distribute the guiding questions (Handout 4.1) and read each question aloud.*
- Once some of your memories have been accessed, make a list of some of the important moments on the bottom half of the sheet.
- Eventually we’ll want this list to be put in time sequence, but you can start out with just a brainstormed list if you’d prefer.

Guiding questions:

1. When did you first realize you were a member of your race? What did it mean to you at that time?
2. How did race play a role in your childhood and/or adolescence?
3. What important events changed your relationship to race? What happened?
4. What significant people/relationships shaped the way you experience being a member of your race?
5. How do you understand what it means to be a member of your race at this time in your life?

Brainstorm a list of important events/transition moments in racial identity development (15 minutes)

Now that you’ve had some time to develop your list, please create an illustration and caption to portray what happened at that point in your life. Please feel free to draw, create symbols, make a collage, or use words or phrases to express your experience on the storyboard.

In about 25 minutes we’ll have a chance to share our stories in small groups.

Distribute the Storyboard (Handout 4.2)

Illustrate these moments and write a caption for each (25 minutes)

Facilitator’s Note: This is an area where you can cut time if you feel you need to shorten a section by a few minutes or if you got off to a late start.

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Wrap Up: One thing to acknowledge as we move ahead is that the experiences that shape our understanding of race are often filled with emotion. It's normal if emotion arises as we sit and reflect on our story here today. Feel free to allow this to come through as we move forward into our sharing process.

Section III

(30 min)

Telling our Stories

Materials: Questions posted on butcher paper.

Purpose of piece:

To share important moments in our personal racial identity development

Instructions: *Divide the group into triads. Determine how many groups of three you will need, and then have participants count off by that amount. For example, if you have 12 people, you will need 4 groups, so participants will count off from 1 to 4.)*

Say to group: We're going to have about 30 minutes now to share our stories within our small groups. Each person will have about 10 minutes to walk their group through their storyboard to share how we've come to understand ourselves as a racial being. After each person finishes his/her storytelling, the two questions we'd like you to ask the speaker are posted on the wall. We will give you time checks throughout so that you know when to switch speakers

30 minutes

Sharing with small group of 3

10 minutes per person – share the storyboard and captions

Give time checks at 8 minutes so listeners will have time to ask the follow up questions.

Follow up questions:

1. Which one of these events brings up the most emotion?
2. How does it feel to talk about this part of your life today?

Wrap Up: At this point we're going to take a break. Feel free to continue sharing if you haven't quite finished talking about these significant life moments. In about 15 minutes we'll gather back together as a large group to debrief.

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 min

Section IV

(15 min)

My Story and Your Story

Materials: None

Purpose of piece:

To discuss the important moments in our personal racial identity development and explore the emotion that lingers

Say to Group: Thank you for taking the risk to share your stories today. At this point we'd like to talk together about what came up for you during your reflections and sharing. Specifically, we'd like to start getting a sense of how our stories might have had some similarities or differences.

Large group debrief: (15 minutes)

1. What insights did you gain from hearing the stories of those in your group?
2. Were you surprised by any unexpected similarities?
3. In what ways did this storytelling process inspire new understandings about your life?
4. What was easy and what was hard about this process for you?

Wrap Up: Although it is often true that with reflection, we begin to see our experiences in a new light, the point of this process is not about critiquing our life experience.

- Our larger purpose is to recognize that we come to race issues with a very definite history and unless we recognize how our histories vary, we are likely to misunderstand one another.
- And yet, simply reflecting on how we've come to see things as we do is only half of our job. We also need to know how this affects our daily lives and relationships.

Section V

(30 min)

Race in my Life Today

Materials: None

Purpose of piece:

To examine the effects our racial identity has on our lives and relationships

Say to Group: We would now like to take some time to explore how our lives today are impacted by race and our relationship to it. To do so, we'd like to do a "wagon wheel" activity. This requires us to count off by 2's, 1,2,1,2, etc. Then we'll have the 1's stand in a circle facing outward. The 2's will stand in a circle facing inward. Each 2 should be standing in front of a 1. So, the 1's are the inside circle (facing outward) and the 2's are the outer circle (facing inward).

(16 minutes)

I am going to read a question in just a moment. The 1's will be the first ones to respond to the question and they will have 2 minutes. When I call time, the 2's will then have 2 minutes to respond to the question.

Read question 1. Invite participants to switch speakers after 2 minutes.

We are now going to switch partners by having all of the 2's move one person to the left. All 2's thank your previous partner and move one person to the left.

Read question 2. Invite participants to switch speakers after 2 minutes.

Continue until all four questions have been asked and answered.

1. How does being a member of your race affect your life today?
2. How do you feel about being a member of your race?
3. Does your understanding of what it means to be a member of your race inspire the desire to develop skills to interrupt racism? If so, how? If not, who do you think is responsible for addressing racism?
4. What kind of support do you need in order to take the next step on your racial identity journey?

Everyone can now return to our seats in the circle. We'd like to take some time now to hear what this process was like for you?

Group debrief (10 minutes)

1. What feelings arise as you think about and share your racial identity story?
2. What are the challenges you face as you consider developing skills to interrupt racism?
3. What do you think might be the next step on your racial identity journey?
4. What are some of the ideas you heard about the need for support and ideas you thought would be helpful when we think about our next steps?

Facilitator's Note: *During this discussion we'd like to get people to be able to speak about the challenges they face, whether it is emotional or a lack of person support, that might make it difficult for them to stay open and motivated to continue or move into active antiracism work. This is a good opportunity to help people build a sense of community among one another, whether it's in the full group or small groups of people who are meeting in the space. If people feel less alone in their struggle, they are far more likely to want to participate in future activities and actions.*

Wrap Up: Thank the participants for their risk taking. Reinforce the idea that we recognize that there are many challenges that people face when dealing with issues of race, racism, and racial identity. Try to wrap up the discussion by naming some of the important ideas that surfaced...particularly what additional supports people need, the ways that people's racial identity really do impact their lives, and how many of us continue to struggle with emotional wounds that have not yet healed around how race affects us.

Section VI

(5 min)

Closing

Materials: None

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: To check out today we'd like to take a few moments to have each person say one phrase that can convey what they found meaningful about today's workshop.

Wrap Up: Our hope is that you've had an opportunity to develop a deeper sense of yourselves and the other people in this room today through these exercises. Thank you for your participation.

WORKSHOP 4 MODIFICATIONS

Suggested

If you are unable to complete the entire 2hr 30-minute workshop, here are some alterations that could satisfy some goals:

- **2 hour option**
 - Opening without thorough processing of discussion guidelines except agreement around confidentiality (reduces by 5 minutes)
 - Eliminate use of storyboard in section II and use answers to the guiding questions (Handout 4.1) as the material for triad sharing (reduces by 25 minutes)
- **1 hour 30 min option**
 - Opening without thorough processing of discussion guidelines except agreement around confidentiality (reduces by 5 minutes)
 - Eliminate use of storyboard in section II and use answers to the guiding questions (Handout 4.1) as the material for triad sharing (reduces by 25 minutes)
 - Eliminate break (reduces by 15 minutes)
 - Eliminate section IV (reduces by 15 minutes)
- **1 hour 15 min option**
 - Open with no discussion guidelines except agreement around confidentiality (10 min)
 - Complete individual reflection using guiding questions in section II (15 minutes)
 - Convert section III into a pair share, each person has 7 minutes (15 minutes)
 - Complete section V (30 minutes)
 - Close (5 minutes)