

Self-Evaluation and Action Planning

Witnessing Whiteness Chapter 8 Workshop 8

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

Self-Evaluation and Action Planning

Witnessing Whiteness Chapter 8 Workshop 8

Goal:

- Determine individual needs, goals, and next steps

Materials:

- How Segregated Is My Life? Survey (Handout 8.1)
- Knowledge Questions/Self-Evaluation (Handout 8.2)
- Knowledge Questions Resource Page (Handout 8.3)
- Knowledge Building Bibliography (Handout 8.4)
- Skills Building Resource Page (Handout 8.5)
- Role Play Guidelines Resource Page (Handout 8.6)
- Personal Action Plan Survey (Handout 8.7)
- Blank Paper
- Markers
- Pens

Book Anchor Quote:

Once we decide to include taking a stand against racial injustice as part of our practice, the question to ask is, how do we do that? What exactly can we do to effectively witness in our professional and social lives? One key is recognizing that witnessing is a verb, an action. We have to *do* something.

A second key is that we have to become responsible, or better yet, *response-able*. Moving from intellectually understanding racism and privilege toward developing a way of life that effectively deals with race requires us to have the *ability to respond* to what we see. This type of *response-ability* means engaging the journey toward becoming active in justice pursuits in both our social and work settings. This is required since developing knowledge without a shift in action simply reinforces our role as bystanders. Witnessing, therefore, requires movement, some action that brings us at least one step closer to ally work.

...we need to continue to *build knowledge* and make use of knowledge gained. We have to *build skills*, a set of tools we can use when witnessing either subtle or overt racism. Many of us also feel intense emotions when dealing with issues of race. We must *build capacity* to make use of our skills in the face of our emotions, a process that takes courage and practice. Finally, we need support to continue to practice these skills during moments when we feel confused, disappointed, or frustrated. For this reason, part of witnessing also includes *creating community*, consciously developing a community of people around us who understand our striving, inspire us when we fail, and celebrate our successful efforts.

SESSION 9 - Self-Evaluation and Action Plans 3 hrs

Section I

(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 one phrase to describe what they hope to get out of the workshop.*

- *Ask participants to read the discussion guidelines posted on the wall.*
- *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.*
 - *Ask participants to silently reread the guidelines and choose one of the guidelines that they want to work on today as they move through the workshop. (Participants may be asked to share their choice with a partner, or this can be a silent, internal process.)*

Section II

(20 min)

Segregation in our Lives

Materials: How Segregated Is My Life? Survey (Handout 8.1), pens

Purpose of piece:

To offer participants an opportunity to reflect on the level of diversity they experience in their lives and imagine how they would like to see this shift

Say to Group: The first few exercises of today's workshop will be focused on self-evaluation in multiple ways. To start, we are going to take some time to consider some questions posed within the book *Witnessing Whiteness*.

- The questions for consideration today are specifically asking us about how segregated our lives are and to what degree we'd like to see this change.
- As we get started, we do want to acknowledge that there are likely some really important differences in experience among participants. Particularly, we'd like to note that oftentimes, people of color may spend a lot of time navigating predominantly white spaces, and this may make a difference in how some people answer the questions.
- To get started, we will hand out the self-survey and give you each 5 minutes or so to complete it silently.
- Once you've finished, please wait quietly until everyone has finished the survey.

Distribute surveys

Once time is up, have participants divide into pairs and give them about 10 minutes to do the following:

1. Share the answers to their surveys with their partner
2. Ask each other – What does this mean for your life?

Facilitator's Note: *It is quite likely that one or more pairs might raise the question of how to intentionally build relationships with people of a different background without feeling like they are "using" the person. Also, people may need support distinguishing the fine line between seeking new experiences and treating a person or group as exotic.*

Post a sheet of butcher paper on the wall and invite participants to spend a few minutes (no more than 5) brainstorming some guiding principles that might be used to help know how to expand our experiences without undermining potential relationships or treating people like objects to be studied.

Possible brainstorm answers:

DO

Be humble
 Ask if it's ok to ask questions
 Admit your nervousness
 Admit your intentions and reasons
 Take your time to get to know people
 Commit to building a real relationship
 Find new avenues when one door shuts
 Join community groups

DON'T

Act like you're doing someone a favor
 Assume someone should be open to answering your question's
 Pretend that you are not consciously making this effort
 Approach people like they are part of a study
 Plan to swoop in somewhere to grab knowledge and retreat
 Be offended if you are rebuffed
 Give up after initially unsuccessful efforts
 Simply observe

If participants need an example, read the following scenario aloud:

Scenario: *A group of white folks from a segregated area of town decides to expand their experience by traveling together to another area of town populated primarily by people of color. They decide they will go to a local restaurant in that area and ask the other patrons questions about their lives.*

What about their idea is worthwhile?

- It's good to go to new areas.
- It's good to want to talk to new people

What about this idea is problematic?

- It's wrong to assume that restaurant patrons will want to answer personal questions without knowing you.
- It's a problem to go to the area as a drop-in tourist. It's better to try to join groups or organizations where you have an honest opportunity to build an authentic relationship and get to know one another over time.

Facilitator's note: *Be cautious to not allow this discussion to continue beyond the time allowable. Stop the group's process. Acknowledge that this is a really important issue, a lot of nuance exists, and paying attention to this issue is a big part of how we plan to move forward. Then, ask participants to hold their questions around this topic until the end of the workshop when we create our action plans.*

Wrap Up: One of the important aspects of creating an anti-racist practice is ensuring that our lives offer us sufficient opportunity to hear from people of different backgrounds about their experiences.

- This helps create a level of mutual understanding that is essential if we are going to be able to come together and work to eliminate racism in our lives and communities.
- But, we cannot expect our colleagues and friends to be our primary educators.
- There is too much we need to know about, and we need to take up our own responsibility for building our knowledge base.
- For that reason, we'll now shift into an exercise that can help us identify exactly which types of knowledge we need to learn more about.

Section III

(20 min)

Off the top of our heads

Materials: Knowledge questions/evaluation sheet (Handout 8.2), Knowledge questions RESOURCE PAGE and Knowledge Building Bibliography (Handouts 8.3 and 8.4, for distribution at end of workshop)

Purpose of piece:

To consider the categories of knowledge in which we need further study

Say to Group: Part of being a witness to injustice is being knowledgeable enough to help educate people when they are using stereotypes or racism as they talk about race related issues.

- Many times, race issues will get raised in a conversation at unexpected times and in unexpected ways.
- The degree to which we are knowledgeable about the issues is the degree to which we will be able to respond quickly enough to disrupt whatever racist or prejudicial view is being suggested in the moment.
- We're now going to do an exercise where we will explore how we would respond to certain issues and how confident we would feel doing it.
- The idea is to do a self-evaluation to determine which types of knowledge we need to learn more about.
- We recognize that this exercise might inspire you to want to talk more about the issues raised in the questions, and we have a resource sheet to offer you at the end of the workshop if anything piques your interest.
- BUT - For the sake of our agenda we need to concentrate on the goal of this section, which is for us to simply identify the topics we need to know more about.

KNOWLEDGE GAME: (10 minutes)

Divide the group into pairs, person A and person B. Each person has a copy of the knowledge question/evaluation sheet (Handout 8.2) and a pen/pencil.

Tell the participants that person A will be responsible for asking the odd numbered questions and person B will ask the even numbered questions.

This game will be timed (facilitator led) to keep it going quickly and all pairs will move through it together.

Start with Person A asking question #1. Give only 1 minute for person B to answer the question. Then switch, with Person B asking question #2 and Person A answering.

As soon as the 1 minute is completed, ask each person to write down how competent each of them thinks he or she would feel explaining the issue if a person approached them who held a racist or prejudiced view? Give just a few seconds for them to answer.

Facilitator's Note: *Even though only half of the participants had the opportunity to try to answer each of the questions, ALL participants should evaluate themselves on ALL of the topics. Reiterate that the person is rating his or her perceived competence level, NOT the partner's.*

This is intended to be a quick exercise, just to get their immediate, gut reactions. Continue until you complete question #8.

Remind participants that the point of this exercise is simply to evaluate the depth of our knowledge base and comfort level discussing these topics. A resource sheet will be available for those who are interested in knowing more about the particular issues raised in the questions.

Partner Share: Give 5 minutes for pairs to discuss their most essential areas for future knowledge building.

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Wrap Up: Although we know that there is always more to learn, it is really helpful when we can create some priorities for our own knowledge development.

- Creating a list of topics that we need to explore and keeping it visible and handy can be a helpful motivator.
- We should also keep these in mind as we create our personal action plans.
- We may each have different needs, but we can figure out ways to encourage and learn from each other.

Section IV

(25 min)

Run, Hide, or Engage?

Materials: Paper and pens

Purpose of piece:

To explore the emotional tendencies of participants and what kind of work might need to be done to more effectively use practiced skills.

Say to Group: So far we've spent time looking at how much knowledge we might need to confidently respond to racism.

- However all the knowledge in the world isn't going to help us build an effective anti-racist practice if our emotions shape our responses in unhelpful ways.
- In this section we are trying to go beyond surface emotions, such as nervousness about having the required skills or fears around saying the wrong thing. These emotions tend to lessen over time with experience and practice.
- The interest here is to talk about deep issues that arise when we confront racism and enactments of privilege:
- For example:
 - How do I experience anger when racism and privilege are present? Does this make me want to punish or shame people acting prejudicially?
 - Am I afraid of being associated with people acting in racist ways? How will my response reflect my desire to be seen as "different" than them?
 - In what ways does frustration arise? Can I muster the patience I need to convey my knowledge effectively?
 - How does my tendency to avoid conflict cause me to silence myself, fearing that I will become the focus of a disagreement?
- Each of these questions speaks to the issue of emotional health. How well do we know our emotional tendencies? How able are we to manage our emotions in order to choose effective responses?
- This is important because unchecked emotions can negatively affect the way we respond and undercut our efforts.
- Only by exploring this aspect of ourselves will we be able to start to control our responses and make better choices.
- To explore this a bit, we are going to do a guided meditation that will allow us to consider our emotional habits and what we might need to work on in order to respond effectively when confronting racism.
- Before we get started, though, I'd like each of you to take a few moments to consider a time when racism was present around you and you struggled to respond effectively

Give a few moments for people to think, and then proceed toward the meditation.

Read the meditation slowly, giving sufficient pause between statements for participants to respond internally:

- Take a moment to get comfortable.
 - Sit with your feet in front of you on the floor, hands relaxed in your lap.
 - Take a deep breath.
 - Close your eyes.
 - Feel yourself relax into your chair.
 - Feel your leg muscles relax.
 - Let your back press into the chair as it supports you.
 - Breathe deeply.
 - Become heavy as you let your shoulders release their tension.
 - Let your arms fall more heavily into your body.
 - Let the small muscles in your face relax.
 - Take another deep breath.
 - Focus on the space behind your eyes.
 - Allow your mind to create a blank canvas....a space where images can arise.
- Now think about the time you already identified when racism was present around you and you struggled to respond effectively.
 - Take a moment to consider...
 - What was going on in that situation? Who was there?
 - What was the mood? How did it feel to be there?
 - Did you stay silent? Did you yell or lash out? Did you try to leave the situation as soon as you could?
 - What prompted you to say or do what you did?
 - Was there something that you were afraid of in that moment?
 - How did you feel about the people involved in the situation?
 - What emotion was strongest?
 - What happened in your body during that moment? Was there a surge of energy? Tension?
 - What did you want to accomplish in that moment?
 - Why was that goal so important to you?
 - In what ways did your emotion in the moment affect your response?
 - If you could return to that situation and do it over again, what would you do differently?
 - To what degree would your success depend upon you managing your emotions?
- Now start to return from this past experience and move back into your present reality.
 - How does your body feel at this moment?
 - Are you still relaxed, or has your body become tense in some areas?
 - Feel your body sitting in your chair.
 - Feel the temperature of the room, its coolness or warmth.
 - Take a moment to take one last deep breath before opening your eyes again and returning to the circle.
- Open your eyes and take a few moments to draw an image or write some words that reflect the way you experience emotion in challenging situations like this one. (5 minutes)

In pairs, discuss the following questions: (5 minutes)

- How might your emotions get in the way of your anti-racist practice?
- Who could you turn to for conversation that might help you respond differently?

Large group debrief: (10 minutes)

- How can emotions get in the way of our ability to use our knowledge and skills?
- Why is it important to have a place where our emotional responses to racism can be discussed?

Wrap Up: Building our knowledge base is essential, but so is working on our capacity to stay emotionally balanced in the situation so that we can respond effectively.

- The point is not that releasing raw emotion is wrong.
- Instead, what we'd like to do is become better able to choose how to respond and not respond out of an emotion that undermines our intent.
- This is really hard work. But, what can make it easier is if we are conscious of some strategies and skills we can use to navigate difficult situations.

BREAK 10 minutes

BREAK 10 minutes

BREAK 10 minutes

BREAK 10 min

Section V

(35 min)

Got skills?

Materials: Posters with Feeling Words, Skills Building Resource Page (Handout 8.5), Role Play Guidelines Resource Page (Handout 8.6)

Purpose of piece:

To consider what types of skills we have and might need in order to respond to racism

Say to Group: Now that we have a sense of what we bring to the situation in terms of our emotions, we also need to acknowledge that if we don't know what to do when faced with racism, we will likely do nothing.

- This next exercise is intended to 1) prompt our thinking regarding how skilled we feel and 2) allow us to name some skills we've learned already.
- This activity asks us to reflect on how skilled we are at navigating challenging situations and how this offers a certain degree of confidence.
- This confidence then makes us more likely to interrupt racism in action.
- For example, do we know what type of approach might be effective or appropriate in a particular circumstance?
- What we are going to do now is a four corners exercise where we will read some scenarios and you will decide which word best describes how you would feel in the situation.
- From the previous exercise, we understand that what might lie at the heart of our feeling response may be different. But, we are concentrating here on confidence levels as they relate to awareness of strategies and/or skills that can help us in the situation.

Ask the group to stand together in the middle of the circle.

Four Feeling Descriptors posted on wall:

1. Confident
2. Somewhat confident
3. Uncomfortable
4. Highly Anxious

Read the following situations one at a time. For each one, give participants a few moments to decide which corner best represents their feelings.

1. You are in at a dinner party where some of the guests who you know as acquaintances begin to say things that you find offensive, prejudicial, or perhaps downright racist. When you consider what to do in order to interrupt the tone of the conversation, how do you feel?

2. You are in a large formal setting (like a class or professional meeting) that is largely white, and the person leading the discussion is asking a question about what factors might have contributed to the particular problem being discussed. Many people are offering ideas and they are being written down on a board in front. When one of the very few people of color in the room mentions that race may be a factor, the person facilitating the discussion ignores the offering. It's the only time someone's statement hasn't been written on the board the entire time. When you consider what you should do, how do you feel?
3. You are riding in a car with someone very close to you, a family member or very close friend who is of the same racial background as yourself. The person surprises you by making a statement that is really prejudicial regarding another racial group. When you consider how to respond, how do you feel?

Once participants have moved toward one of the corners, give them 3 minutes to discuss one of the following questions:

Corner group questions:

- What strategies, skills, or knowledge would help make you more comfortable or less anxious in this situation?
- What strategies, skills, or knowledge would you use to respond in this type of situation?

After the corner group discussions, invite the corner groups to share out (8 minutes for each share/out discussion, 1 for each scenario)

- What do they know, or what skills do they have, that would help them in this situation?
- What skills or knowledge do they wish they had when thinking about the situation?

Wrap Up: The only way we become consistently active dealing with racism around us is by practicing responding. Practicing helps us develop the skills we need to feel confident. Without a sense of confidence, we're likely to be too anxious to do anything effectively.

- Waiting until we are confronted by a situation is kind of like being on a sports team or in a music group and only showing up for a game or gig but avoiding all of the practices.
- If we know that we need support in certain areas, then we can get together to practice responding to situations where privilege or racism needs to be disrupted.
- At the end of the workshop, we will hand out some resource sheets with guidelines for how to do this type of practice in preparation for real situations. (*Handouts 8.5 and 8.6 – Skills Building and Role Play Guidelines*)

Section VI

(15 min)

Building among friends

Materials: Butcher paper or half sheets for small group questions, Skills Resource Page (Handout 8.5, distribute at facilitator's discretion)

Purpose of piece:

To discuss how we feel about building community around our anti-racism work

Say to Group: If there's any single theme running through the activities today, it is that we need people with whom we can develop our knowledge, practice our skills, and explore areas where we need to work on our emotional responses.

- Because of that, we need to take some time to talk about building community around our anti-racism work.
- To do this we are going to break into small groups.

Small group questions (posted on butcher paper or distributed on a half sheet of paper): (15 minutes)

1. To what degree do you feel that you have a community where racism and anti-racism can be discussed regularly and openly?
2. How open are you to creating community with new people to extend your anti-racist support system?
3. In what ways would it be helpful to set goals for yourself in terms of anti-racism and have a community hold you accountable for following through on those goals?

If time allows, ask people if there is anything they'd like to share aloud to the whole group.

Wrap Up: Thank you for your honesty as we did this exercise. We know that some of these questions asked us to take risks to admit how we feel about moving forward.

- Although it would be great if everyone had plenty of time to really dedicate to a committed process around this work, the truth is that we all have different life responsibilities, and sometimes we simply have trouble imagining that we could commit to any additional work.
- What is important, though, is to take care that however we choose to move forward, it should be done with an eye toward sustainability.

Section VII

(30 min)

Personal Action Plans

Materials: Personal Action Plan (Handout 8.7)

Purpose of piece:

To determine each person's individual goals and next steps

Say to Group: Now that we've spent some time exploring the areas we need to pay attention to and how community supports can be an important part of our movement forward, it's time to reflect on what this means for our life and practice. To do this, each of us is going to complete a personal action plan survey so that we can figure out what our next steps might be. We'll then share our ideas with a partner.

Distribute surveys and give participants 10 minutes to fill them out.

Triad share for 15 minutes

Wrap Up: Each of us has our own needs, our own hopes for our progress. Although we didn't have time to share our ideas with everyone, these are great conversation starters. As we move forward it would be great to check in with others in our groups around what we wrote for ourselves to see if others feel the need to work on the same things we'd like to work on individually.

Section VIII

(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

Instructions: Ask participants to say one word that describes how they are feeling as they leave the workshop today and one part of their personal action plan they intend to implement. Thank them for their participation and let them know what comes next in your program plan.

WORKSHOP 8 MODIFICATIONS

Suggested

If you are unable to complete the entire 3 hr workshop, here are some alterations that could satisfy some goals:

- **Split into two, 1 hour 30 minute workshops**
 - **Focus – Personal reflection**
 - Complete sections I, II, III, and IV
 - Abbreviated closing
 - Eliminate break
 - **Focus – Supporting the development of an anti-racist practice, personal goals**
 - Complete sections I, V, VI, and VII
 - Eliminate break

NOTE: As this workshop is meant to build toward a comprehensive action plan, it is highly recommended that if this splitting of the workshop into two pieces occurs that both shortened workshops be completed.