

Understanding White Fragility

Cover Quotes:

The term white supremacist once referred exclusively to individuals and organizations that openly espoused the superiority of white people. In recent years the term has come to refer to a culture, or a social narrative that places the needs, desires, stories, well-being, and the very lives of white people over and above those of people of color. It is the water we swim in.

~ *Jim Key, Former UUA Moderator*

If it's not about you, don't make it about you. If it is about you, do better. ~ *Saroful*

It's the people who don't recognize the racism within themselves that can be the most damaging because they don't see it. ~ *Sterling K. Brown*

We have begun to come out of the shadows, we have begun to break with routines and oppressive customs and to discard taboos; we have commenced to carry with pride the task of thawing hearts and changing consciousness.

~*Gloria Anzaldua*

After all the resources spent and goodwill extended, many white people, in exasperation, ask me why we haven't gotten further in racial understanding or increasing the diversity in our workplaces and lives...I tell them what I have come to believe. Not enough white people have done their work: the work of seeing the barriers to true meritocracy, the work of putting themselves in the shoes of black (and Brown) people to learn more about their experiences and perceptions, the work of understanding how being white has shaped their worldview and self-perceptions, and the work of gaining the skills of deciphering and managing cross-racial and

cultural dynamics. That's a lot of work, but without it you cannot create fundamental change in your sphere of influence.

~ Verna Meyers

Preliminaries

Announce upcoming church events; get a volunteer to light the chalice and two readers to read the long readings.

Centering

See leader notes.

Opening / Chalice Lighting

~ Rev. Theresa Soto

(repeat at least 3 times)

All of us need all of us to make it.

Check-in

Take a minute or two to share briefly the high and low points in your life since we last met.

Readings (*Choose 3 readers*)

The Offensiveness of My Pain By Shane Paul Neil

I'm on my way to a job where I am the only black person in my office. I work with people who either don't know or don't care about Alton Sterling or Philando Castile. They are going to ask me "How are you this morning?" and the simple truth is that I can't be honest. I can't say that I'm scared and angry and that I want to take a mental health day. I can't say that I and people like me subconsciously fear for our lives on a daily basis.

I can't say how I am this morning because it will make them uncomfortable and offended. The offensiveness of my pain is why we have to remind America over and over again that Black Lives Matter: because if you lack empathy for our tears it's likely that you lack respect for our lives.

From Tim Tyson's address at the Granville County's Human Relations Commission Annual Banquet, September 2004

..lean into it. I am talking about racial discomfort. I have certainly felt my share of it, through the course of my work, and I recommend racial discomfort to you. Lean into it. That is, doing exactly the opposite of your first instinct, which is to retreat as fast as possible, and is also perfectly logical. None of us wants to feel uncomfortable. But there is no way we can have a fruitful and candid conversation about race in an interracial setting and always feel comfortable. But it won't kill you to feel a little uncomfortable. Just go ahead, lean into it, and listen. Listen to other people, of course, but listen to your discomfort. It will teach you a lot. You'll be okay. And we'll all get better at this.

The Invisibility of Whiteness By john a. powell

The invisibility of whiteness means that one doesn't have to notice that one is white. So there are people, and then there are black people. There are people and there are Latino people. And people—just people, just folks—turn out to be white, but we don't notice it.

White people have the luxury of not having to think about race. That is a benefit of being white, of being part of the dominant group. Just like men don't have to think about gender. The system works for you, and you don't have to think about it.

So they live in white space and then they don't have to think about it. First of all, they think about race as something that belongs to somebody else. The blacks have race; maybe Latinos have race; maybe Asians have race. But they're just white. They're just people. That's part of being white.

Sitting in Silence

Sharing/ Deep Listening

Deeply listening, without response or thought of response at this time, is the gift we give and receive as we share our thoughts on the preparation for this session. Sharing should be about five minute per person

Discussion

This is a time to supportively respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

Singing

Hymn by Dr. Vincent Harding. Sung to the tune of “We Are Climbing Jacobs Ladder”

We are building up a new world

We are building up a new world
We are building up a new world
Builders must be strong.

Courage, sisters, don't get weary
Courage, brothers, don't get weary
Courage, people, don't get weary
Though the way be long.

Closing ~ *adapted from Rev. Anne Mason*

Join hands or link arms and read or sing aloud together:

To seek the truth in love means that even when we stumble, we continue to love. Even when we flail, we stay in relationship. To seek the truth in love means that we talk about the hard things rather than denying that things can be hard. This is a very difficult task. It is not something that easy to do, but it is something that we continue to try to be brave enough to do.