



Living in the Tension The Quest for a Spiritualized Racial Justice

Workshop Series Design and Overview

This series is intended as a companion to reading the book, *Living in the Tension: The Quest for a Spiritualized Racial Justice*.

- Facilitators should read the book in its entirety before attempting to lead a group through any of the exercises.
- Facilitators should read and consider the *Facilitator Guide*.
- Groups should be structured so participants read book chapters **prior** to experiencing corresponding exercises.
 - Without participants reading each chapter in advance of the exercises selected, the group will likely experience disruption due to a lack of a common foundation. In other words, reading the book chapters provides the group with a common focal point. The exercises then provide an opportunity for participants to agree, disagree, and otherwise deepen their personal relationship with the ideas presented in the book.
- Facilitators may select from the set of **thematic strands** to cultivate a program that is right for their particular audience. A group may decide to focus only on a single strand, or mix and match based on the specific topics. Thematic strands include the following:
 - **Introduction and Warm-ups**
 - Includes short introductory activities to get things started.
 - **Developing our Community – Exploring the Tensions Together**
 - Offers exercises that focus on providing groups with a chance to dialogue about the various tensions described in the corresponding book chapters. This strand is particularly useful for groups who want to build a shared understanding of each other and how they relate to their spiritual and racial justice ideals.
 - **Developing our Community – Exploring a Dilemma**
 - Includes scenario-driven dialogue. At the point of publication, two options are available for each chapter. The first is appropriate for progressive church groups. The second may be more relatable to yoga, meditation, or other spiritually-oriented groups.
 - **Developing our Analysis**
 - Offers a variety of exercises that deepen participants' understanding of concepts related to racial justice. This strand is particularly appropriate for groups who want to strengthen their ability to articulate their positions while recruiting others into racial justice.

- **Developing our Emotional Capacity**
 - Includes a variety of exercises intended to support people to navigate their emotional experience when engaging in racial justice. Some exercises within this strand are designed specifically for groups composed of white people, particularly those that deal with issues of shame and guilt.
 - **Developing our “Both/And” Skill Set**
 - Intended to support groups who want to build their capacity to influence those around them. The skill of “both/and” is, in part, an internal capacity that allows for more effective approaches to racial justice. It is also a conversational strategy that is an important part of bringing more white people into racial justice.
 - **Closing Ritual**
 - Optional poems and readings that may be used to close each session.
- See the **Table of Contents** at the end of this document for a chapter by chapter list of available exercises

What is the motivation that prompted the creation of this series?

- I previously published a workshop series to correspond with the book, *Witnessing Whiteness*. It has been widely used as an inexpensive way for communities to have a collective, guided process. I have received so much positive feedback about that series that I wanted to offer something similar for *Living in the Tension*.
- My experience has taught me that open-ended dialogues within an unstructured book groups often do not lead participants to stay focused on the most essential issues. In order for book groups on topics of race (particularly racial identity) to be effective, I believe a high level of structure and guidance is needed.

What underlying approach or set of assumptions guided the development of the series?

- **A dialogue-based, experiential approach is helpful when tackling issues of race and privilege.** Workshop agendas allow groups of 5 to 25 people to explore how issues discussed in *Living in the Tension* relate to personal lives and communities. Although the book information can prompt deep thinking about oneself, discussing and exploring those topics with others in a workshop setting enhances the experience and often leads to additional insights.
- **Community, organizational, and institutional change can be enhanced by a grassroots philosophy that supports leadership rising from within a group.** This series is based upon the assumption that people can learn by doing, and groups need to organize themselves to develop skills and capacities that bring needed change to their organizations, institutions, and communities.

- **Programs and activities intended to disrupt racism and dismantle privilege should be accessible and sustainable.** The reason the workshop agendas and facilitator's notes offer detailed instructions is so that groups can avoid hiring an expensive consultant. Consulting with mentors will remain an important component of a group's growth. However, the model of hiring an "expert" to drop in for a large fee, impart some knowledge, and then leave town does not offer sufficient opportunity for a group to develop the capacity to make use of whatever knowledge is conveyed.
- **It is essential that we approach this work with a supportive intention.** The facilitation guidelines support the creation of a welcoming, inviting space where participants feel free to speak the truth of their experience without fear of shame or reprisal.

How was the workshop series developed?

- **Multiracial review team.** Many thanks go to the colleagues who made up the multiracial review team that offered critical feedback on drafts. Special acknowledgments go to Samantha Lynne Gupta, Salina Gray, Laura Humpf, and Stephanie Goodman.
- **Feedback requested.** This workshop series is a living set of documents that may be modified and improved by the author over time. Feedback regarding the usefulness of the workshops will be appreciated. Email stochluk@msmu.edu with comments.

How have concerns regarding accountability been part of the process?

- During the spring of 2017, an online focus group was convened to explore how a workshop series based on the book could support white people becoming more accountable racial justice partners in their communities. The primary theme that emerged was that there is still a great need for basic skills building among white people.
- The strands of exercises within this workshop series are intended to support predominantly white communities to better understand themselves in relation to their racial identity, to help them move toward more effective racial justice action, and to help them to become sufficiently competent to participate in multiracial coalitions while also encouraging other white people to get involved.
- Recognizing that many communities have multiracial groups who wish to build and grow together, the majority of exercises available in this series can serve either a white affinity group or a multiracial group. That said, the people of color who reviewed this series also offer a caution that some people of color who are exhausted from supporting white people may wish to decline an invitation to participate in certain strands of this series, as some exercises may appear to focus too much on caretaking for white people's emotions or psychological experience.

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Chapter 1		
Transcendence and Race Consciousness		
1.0	Introductions and Discussion Guidelines Discuss communication guidelines, review the goals for the workshop, and allow participants to begin to get to know one another.	20 minutes
1.1	Developing our Community - Exploring the Tensions Together Explore and share participants' personal experiences with the various tensions described in Chapter 1 in order to create a shared understanding among group members.	30 to 60 minutes
1.2	Developing our Community - Exploring a Dilemma Use a scenario to reveal participants' thoughts about how various tensions manifest, provide an opportunity to create a common understanding of the issues, and strategize future responses.	55 minutes
1.3	Developing our Analysis - Navigating Deflection Explore our readiness to engage in conversations with people who purport to care about racial justice, and yet continue to deflect conversations about race.	40 minutes
1.4	Developing our Emotional Capacity - Valuing and Tolerating Discomfort Experience mild discomfort in order to reflect on how we can value and tolerate the discomfort that comes with engaging in race and racial justice work.	50 minutes
1.5	Developing our "Both/And" Skill Set – Both/And Thinking as a Tool Begin noticing our use of "but," "yet," and "however," and to shift toward the use of "and."	1 hour 10 minutes
1.6	Closing/Ritual Check out Multiple options to close the session.	10 minutes
Chapter 2		
Self-Acceptance and Self-Improvement		
2.0	Warm up – Getting Vulnerable Begin sharing feelings and emotions related to personal imperfection and its relationship to racism	30 minutes
2.1	Developing our Community - Exploring the Tensions Together Explore and share participants' personal experiences with the various tensions described in Chapter 2 in order to create a shared understanding among group members.	30 minutes
2.2	Developing our Community - Exploring a Dilemma Use a scenario to reveal participants' thoughts about how various tensions manifest, provide an opportunity to create a common understanding of the issues, and strategize future responses.	55 minutes
2.3	Developing our Analysis - Unpacking Shame and Guilt <i>--- DESIGNED FOR GROUPS COMPOSED OF WHITE PARTICIPANTS ---</i>	55 minutes

	Consider how responses to feelings of shame and guilt affect relationships with people of color, white people, and racial justice efforts.	
2.4	Developing our Emotional Capacity – Resilience against Shame <i>--- DESIGNED FOR GROUPS COMPOSED OF WHITE PARTICIPANTS ---</i> Explore our values, how those values are connected to both racial equity and our personal growth, and how we feel challenged by critique. Develop language that can help us avoid going into shame, and instead, develop empathy for ourselves.	60 minutes
2.5	Creating our “Both/And” Skill Set – Constructing a Solid Anti-racist Self Consider the use of both/and thinking and its relationship to shame, emotional reactivity, and one’s personal stake in racial justice.	55 minutes
2.6	Closing/Ritual Check out Multiple options to close the session.	10 minutes
Chapter 3		
Personal Healing and Political Action		
3.0	Warm-up – Scattered Numbers Demonstrate that it is much harder to navigate a system when you don’t know the rules. Make the point that being able to recognize a system in operation is valuable.	10 minutes
3.1	Developing our Community - Exploring Tensions Together Provide a group with the opportunity to evaluate the costs and benefits of each side of the core tensions described in Chapter 3 through the lens of polarity management in order to create a shared understanding among group members.	60 minutes
3.2	Developing our Community - Exploring a Dilemma Use a scenario to reveal participants’ thoughts about how various tensions manifest, provide an opportunity to create a common understanding of the issues, and strategize future responses.	55 minutes
3.3	Developing Our Analysis - Consciousness Raising and Taking Action Clarify our understanding of what constitutes racial justice, consciousness-raising, and action. Explore our personal beliefs and set personal goals.	60 minutes
3.4	Developing our Emotional Capacity – Cultivating our Capacity to Receive Critique Expand our capacity to listen and experience gratitude when receiving critical feedback.	1 hour 10 minutes
3.5	Developing our “Both/And” Skill Set – Learning to Use a Systemic Lens <i>--- DESIGNED FOR GROUPS COMPOSED OF WHITE PARTICIPANTS ---</i> Reflect on the use of the terms “allyship” and “solidarity,” investigate how the Skill Sets of Agents theoretical model, by Leticia Nieto, might help us more effectively engage people while offering a systemic lens, and reflect on our own stories of how we became aware of systemic injustice.	1 hour 15 minutes
3.6	Closing/Ritual Check out Multiple options to close the session.	10 minutes

Chapter 4 Common Humanity and Group Differences		
4.0	Warm-up – Who are you? Break the ice, get everyone get involved in sharing about themselves and having fun with their identities. Make the point that we are all both similar and different from one another.	15 minutes
4.1	Developing our Community - Exploring Tensions Together Provide a group with the opportunity to explore and share their personal experiences with the various tensions described in Chapter 4 in order to create a shared understanding among group members.	30 minutes
4.2	Developing our Community - Exploring a Dilemma Use a scenario to reveal different group members’ feelings about how various tensions manifest, provide an opportunity to create a common understanding of the issues, and begin to strategize future responses.	55 minutes
4.3a	Developing our Analysis – The Meaning of our Skin Explore and share how participants came to understand themselves in terms of race. Reveal some similarities and differences of experience both within and between groups.	35minutes
4.3b	Developing our Analysis – Examining Familial and Cultural Stories Reflect on the power of stories to shape a worldview that uplifts white norms. Recognize the need to interrogate our familial and cultural mythology.	1 hour 20 minutes
4.4	Developing our Emotional Capacity – Whiteness and the Body <i>--- DESIGNED FOR GROUPS COMPOSED OF WHITE PARTICIPANTS ---</i> To reflect on our felt experience living in our white bodies. To acknowledge the variety of feelings we experience, develop appreciation for the skin we’re in, and to honor our ancestral lineage.	1 hour 15 minutes
4.5	Developing our “Both/And” Skill Set – Eliciting Personal Stories Practice using “both/and” thinking and conversational techniques that encourage consideration of how racial differences impact people’s lives.	1 hour 5 minutes
4.6	Closing/Ritual Check out Multiple options to close the session.	10 minutes
Chapter 5 Belonging and Appropriation		
5.0	Warm up – A Little Revelation Begin sharing information about one another related to our personal decision-making and its relationship to individual and collective needs.	15 minutes
5.1	Developing our Community - Exploring the Tensions Together Explore and share participants’ personal experiences with tensions related to Chapter 5 in order to create a shared understanding among group members.	35 minutes
5.2	Developing our Community - Exploring a Dilemma Use a scenario to reveal participants’ thoughts about how various tensions manifest, provide an opportunity to create a common understanding of the issues, and strategize future responses.	55 minutes

5.3	Developing our Analysis – Appropriation in the Community Deepen understanding regarding types of appropriation, how they manifest in one’s life and community, and the underlying motivating forces.	1 hour 10 minutes
5.4	Developing our Emotional Capacity – Mindfulness Practices Explore how a spiritual practice appropriated by the U.S. has become commercial, linked with western medicine, and made accessible to those with socioeconomic privilege. Consider our contemporary responsibility.	55 minutes
5.5	Developing our “Both/And” Skill Set – Conversations about Appropriation Develop strategies for conversations related to appropriation and practice using scenarios via role plays.	1 hour 15 minutes
5.6	Closing/Ritual Check out Multiple options to close the session.	10 minutes
Chapter 6 Inner Truth and Accountability		
6.0	Warm up – Easing the Tension Relax the tension we carry in our bodies.	10 minutes
6.1	Developing our Community – Shifting Perceptual Positions Consider how each of four different perspectives might provide different insight into how to respond to a challenging situation.	35 minutes
6.2	Developing our Community - Exploring a Dilemma Use a scenario to reveal participants’ thoughts about how various tensions manifest, provide an opportunity to create a common understanding of the issues, and strategize future responses.	55 minutes
6.3	Developing our Analysis – Honing our Voice on Fundamental Concepts Deepen our understanding of issues fundamental to racial justice in order to better explain them to others. Topics to be considered include: equity/equality, intent/impact, and intersectionality as an analysis of power/oppression.	65 minutes
6.4	Developing our Emotional Capacity – Reducing Ego, Listening to the Radical Practice listening in the face of challenging material. Recognize the value in radical proposals intended to serve racial justice.	60 minutes
6.5	Developing our “Both/And” Skill Set – Accountability in Relationship Consider how a single individual can use “both/and” thinking in an attempt to remain accountably engaged with multiple groups with varying points of view. Explore the degree to which various uses of voice are accountable within the context of relationship.	50 minutes
6.6	Closing/Ritual Check out Optional reading to close the session.	10 minutes