

Chapter 4

Common Humanity and Group Differences

Dear Facilitator(s),

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

1. The series design allows facilitators to use one or more activity sections as standalone events or in various combinations. There are approximately 5 hours of content available for each chapter. It is unlikely that any group will have enough time to work through all sections. Therefore, facilitators should select from the various options, perhaps following one or two thematic strands. (See the Workshop Series Overview for more details about thematic strands.)
2. Moving through these workshops without reading the corresponding *Living in the Tension* book chapter will markedly reduce workshop effectiveness. It will make the process more challenging and is not recommended.
3. A primary purpose of this series is for groups to enhance the leadership capacity within their community. Detailed facilitator notes are provided for each activity so that one or more group members can practice facilitation while leading the 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 workshop sections, and c) sufficient debrief opportunities should be created to discuss how each workshop went so that facilitators' skills can be developed.
4. The intended audience includes white people who recognize the need to support racial justice efforts and want to improve and solidify their anti-racism practice. The series has also been constructed with the understanding that some people of color might resonate with the tensions described in the book and find value in the exploration. For this reason, questions within the majority of sections are crafted to allow people of any racial background to participate. Sections designed specifically for white people's development are also noted. This series can be used in a racially caucused (affinity group) or mixed-race format. (See Facilitation Guide for more information.)
5. First-time facilitators are encouraged to use the language scripts provided in the openings, directions, and wrap-up portions of each agenda. Deviating from the language and tone may create confusion and undercut the purpose of the section.
6. Facilitators are encouraged to 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 a hallmark of both the book and the series is the need to validate some element of people's perspectives while seeking to add to their understanding.

Best wishes,
Shelly Tochluk

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Living in the Tension - Chapter 4

Common Humanity and Group Differences

4.0 – Warm-up – Who are you? (15 minutes)

Materials needed: One small nerf ball

Purpose of piece: To break the ice, get involved in sharing about themselves, and have fun with our identities. To make the point that we are all both similar and different from one another.

Say to group: We are going to start out with an activity to get us thinking about how we might be both similar and different from one another.

- While sitting in a circle, one at a time, a person throws a small nerf ball to another person in the circle. When you catch the ball you say “My name is _____ and I _____” and finish the sentence with a phrase that describes you. For example, I might say... “My name is _____, and I am a woman. Or, I am a teacher. Or, I am an only child. Or, I love to dance.”
- I will then pause while everyone else in the group who can say yes to that phrase either stands, raises a hand, or uses some other method of recognizing the similarity. We will take a moment to recognize who shares the same aspect of identity.
- Then, I would say, “Who are you?” and throw the ball to someone else. That person would then say “My name is _____ and I am _____” and finish the sentence and pause until those who also share that identity are recognized.
- Continue playing until everyone has had a chance to participate and/or it is clear that there are many points of both similarity and difference.

Say to group: As we get ready to transition, I invite you to take just a minute or two to reflect on any thoughts or feelings that were prompted by this ice breaker activity.

Wrap up: In this activity we notice how we are both similar and different from one another. It’s a chance to highlight that even as we discuss how being part of our racial group affects us, we also recognize that we each will bring both similar and different experiences to the table.

4.1 - Developing our Community - Exploring Tensions Together (30 minutes)

Materials needed: Tensions Sheet (if desired)

Facilitator’s Note: *Distribute the Tension Pairs handout so participants can read along, if desired. This might reduce the need to orally read the statements multiple times.*

Purpose of piece: To 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.

Say to group: This exercise is called a human barometer. It is a way for us to explore and share our beliefs about a set of ideas. There are no right answers and no right place to be. And just like any thought or feeling, it can change at any time. As we go through this exercise, please remember that you can move your position at any point. You might hear another person’s idea that changes your mind. Or, you might have a change of heart in the middle of the discussion.

To get started, I am going to read two statements. Consider to what degree you feel pulled to one statement or the other. If you feel strongly attracted to the first statement, place yourself on the right side of the room. If you feel strongly attracted to the second statement, place yourself on the left side of the room. If you feel equally attracted to both, place yourself in the center. This is a continuum, so you may place yourself in the room in any position that illustrates how you feel about the two statements.

Facilitator Note: *Once the participants locate themselves along the continuum, share in some discussion regarding why they chose that place to stand. You can do this as a sequence of pair shares or small group discussions with share outs (a few minutes each). Extend the conversation as long as desired to allow the group to learn about each other’s orientations to the positions.*

Set 1	Our similarities tie us to each other.	and	Failing to recognize our different experiences creates distance between us.
Set 2	Relating across race is eased when we focus on our similarities.	and	Relating across race is more difficult when we ignore the effects of historic and contemporary racism.
Set 3	My physical body is a vehicle and is not meaningful in and of itself.	and	My physical body is an essential part of who I am and how I experience the world.
Set 4	I appreciate learning from stories told by community members who are of a different racial background than myself.	and	Stories told by community members from marginalized groups often involve those individuals reliving painful life events to support the growth of dominant group members.
Set 5 <i>Optional</i>	<i>Add something specific to your community, as desired.</i>	and	<i>Add something specific to your community, if desired.</i>

Ask large group follow up questions, as desired or relevant:

1. How do our positions affect how we each approach actions intended to further racial justice and healing?
2. How might our individual perspectives influence our decision-making process?

Wrap-up: The purpose of this activity is to learn more about how we internally process these questions. The hope is that the more we know about each other, the more we will understand each other's responses to future challenges and be able to work together to find resolution.

4.2 - Developing our Community - Exploring a Dilemma (55 minutes)

Materials needed: Copies of Scenario Response Worksheet (4.2a or 4.2b), pencils or pens.

Purpose of piece: To 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.

Facilitator's Note: *Two scenarios are provided so that you might select the one that is most appropriate for your group. Each has its own handout version. Skilled facilitators who are aware of a particularly relevant issue that the community is facing may want to write out an alternative scenario and use that in place of those printed below. Keep in mind the degree to which it aligns with the specific tensions highlighted in this chapter, and modify the exercise accordingly.*

Facilitator's Note: *To prepare for implementation of this section, reflect on the first question yourself and develop possible answers regarding what tensions exist in this scenario that relate to the book content. Share these with the participants as prompts as you begin the exercise.*

Say to group: Read this scenario silently to yourself. Then answer the first set of prompts on the worksheet: 1) what are the tensions in this scenario, 2) to what degree do the themes in this scenario play out in communities of which you are a part, 3) how is privilege and/or racism manifesting, 4) how would you feel if you were in this situation, and 5) what would you say in response? (*Silent reading/reflection – 10 minutes*)

Scenario 1 (Handout 4.2a):

A group of white friends are having lunch together after church. A couple of the friends begin to talk about how the social justice committee has been so successful in making changes that they don't recognize the service anymore. They complain about the new musical director, how they don't know the songs, and that the sermons seem to be more story-telling than informative. One person says things are changing too much, and that it's only trying to cater to the folks of color. A lament is that they don't seem to be making connections between people as much as focusing on the differences between groups. The person then suggests that if the church is dedicated to this way of doing things, then the 10AM service should remain more traditional, and this new contemporary service should

occur at 8AM. Another couple of the friends try to provide a different perspective, arguing that the new music has helped them experience the church in a new way, and they appreciate that change might be necessary if they want a truly multi-racial congregation.

Scenario 2 (Handout 4.2b):

At a conference workshop focused on healing practices, a white, male teacher, who uses yoga, meditation, and other spiritual practices to support people suffering from PTSD, speaks of the need to move beyond seeing the “other.” He shares with the audience that he has done enough meditation that he no longer sees “other,” and that it allows him to see beyond the suffering to the innate divinity of the person. He says that with that comes a responsibility to everyone, that because another person’s suffering is his suffering that he has a responsibility to alleviate suffering the world. A white participant interrupts to ask him if this means that he believes we all need to pay attention to racism and other “-isms” that impact people in today’s world. He responds that he is not political. The white woman presses the point, saying she is not trying to be political, and that she’s trying to understand if a responsibility to everyone, to reduce everyone’s suffering, includes a requirement to work against racism. The teacher responds to her by saying, “You need to stay in your garden. My garden is working on PTSD and helping people wake up spiritually. Your garden may be activism. But, I’m going to stay over here and do my work.”

Say to group: Now that we’ve finished with the silent reflection, let’s get into groups of 4 or 5 to share our responses, each person taking two minutes to share what they wrote down. (*Small group sharing - 10 minutes*)

Staying in the same small group, discuss the next set of questions on the worksheet: 6) How would you hope people would respond to this situation, and 7) How could the use of “both/and” thinking inform the response? (*Small group discussion - 15 minutes*)

Facilitator’s Note: *Prior to beginning this workshop, try to answer the large group discussion question #3 for yourself. Be prepared to offer an example for the group.*

Say to group: Let’s come back together and talk as a whole group about this scenario and what we can take from it. (*Large group discussion – 20 minutes*)

1. In what ways do the communities you are a part of deal with the issues raised in this scenario?
2. How do people tend to respond? Where do we learn these ideas?
3. How would a “both/and” approach be helpful, and what might that look like?
4. *For faith-based and spiritual communities:* Where in the principles, scriptures, philosophy, and/or theology is support for these ways of thinking found?

Facilitator’s Note: *Prior to beginning this workshop, try to answer question #3 for yourself. Be prepared to offer an example for the group.*

Wrap up: The purpose of this activity was to provide us with a chance to dig into an issue that faces many communities in order to learn more about each other and our tendencies so that we can be more prepared to respond to issues that arise in our own community.

4.3a - Developing our Analysis – The Meaning of our Skin (35 minutes)

Materials needed: Butcher paper (or white boards) and markers

Purpose of piece: To 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.

Say to group: For the next 10 minutes, you are invited to go around the room and finish the four statements written on four different posters. Once you are finished writing your responses, take some time to read all the responses offered by the group. (10 minutes)

Four butcher paper posters (or white board areas)

- I first realized I was a member of my racial group when...
- When I was young, for me to be part of my racial group meant...
- When I was young, in my community my racial group was treated...
- When I was young, I saw society treating my racial group...

Group discussion (25 minutes):

1. What themes do you notice?
2. What similarities and differences are present?
3. What did it feel like when you were writing on and/or reading the posters?
4. In U.S. society today, to what degree are white bodies treated differently than bodies of color, regardless of dress, cultural attributes, manner, etc.?
5. How might you respond to someone who says that “spiritually, we are all one body”?
6. How can “both/and” language validate our common humanity while also acknowledging our differential racial experiences?

Facilitator’s Note: A wonderful resource to use as follow-up reading is the slim and highly-accessible book, *Learning to be White: Money, Race, and God in America*, by Thandeka.

Wrap up: Developing a sense of self as a racial being is a process. Most people of color are pushed into the process early. The majority of white people don’t pay attention to the meaning of being white until much later, if at all. Inquiring into a white person’s racial story can be a good way to begin talking about race with that person. Although they may not have much practice giving voice to the topic, listening to their story might inspire them to listen to you tell your story. When this happens, you can describe experiences that led to your investment in racial justice.

4.3b - Developing our Analysis – Examining Familial and Cultural Stories (1 hr 20 minutes)

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Materials needed: Familial and Cultural Stories handout, Expanding our Worldview resource handout, pencils or pens.

Note: If desired, you may want to locate, copy, and distribute copies of Parker’s original essay as a take-home resource. It was published in *Soul Work: Anti-racist Theologies in Dialogue*, edited by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley and Nancy Palmer Jones, pp. 171-185. *Essay not provided due to copyright restrictions.*

Purpose of piece: For group members to reflect on the power of stories to shape a worldview that uplifts white norms and recognize the need to interrogate familial and cultural mythology.

Facilitator’s Note: *Distribute Familial and Cultural Stories handout and allow for silent reading of the paragraph highlighting Rebecca Parker’s analysis.*

Say to group: To start, let’s take a moment and read a short passage from *Living in the Tension* that highlights what Rebecca Parker says about the story of the Garden of Eden. This is an example of the kind of re-considering we each need to do of the stories we have heard over and over again since we were young. With the Garden of Eden story as just one possible example, what stories were you told when you were a child that acculturated you into cultural norms? They could be family stories, fairy tales, stories from books, scriptural texts, or anything from movies to TV to radio, etc. (5 minutes)

- Which stories from your childhood stand out as your favorites? Jot down your top 5 on the worksheet. (Give a minute or two for reflection.)
- Now, pick one and circle it. This is the one you will focus on for the rest of this exercise.

Facilitator’s Note: *It may be useful to have thought of an example from your childhood you can share, one that allows you to make an overall statement about how it was part of an acculturating process. For example, I might say, “For me, I’m thinking of how much I loved to watch the Brady Bunch and read Nancy Drew books when I was young. I’m sure it conveyed messages about what was expected of me as a white girl in this society.” The point is to prompt participants to orient toward their favorite stories that were likely to have reinforced cultural stereotypes.*

Say to group: We’re now going to do a guided meditation to delve into our childhood experience with the story we picked as our favorite. (10 minutes)

Facilitator’s Note: *Be sure to provide sufficient pauses between statements in the guided meditation. If you’re facilitating a meditation for the first time, you may want to practice a segment with a partner prior to the workshop to get feedback on your pacing.*

Guided Meditation Script: *(Read slowly, pausing between sentences so participants can integrate the statements and questions)*

I invite you to sit comfortably, with your hands and feet in a relaxed position. Feel free to allow your arms and legs to relax into whatever surface is supporting you. If you’re comfortable doing so, close your eyes or allow them to lose focus as you gaze toward a

neutral spot in front of you. I invite you to notice your breathing, whether your breath is deep or shallow.

If you're comfortable, think about the story you circled earlier. What do you remember about how this story entered your life? Did your parents tell you this story? Was it on TV or featured in a movie? Did a teacher introduce it to you? Were there dolls, toys, parks, or other places that encouraged you to play with the ideas from the story? Was this a story that you could act out with friends?

I invite you to consider what this story meant to you as a young child. What did you like about it? How did it make you feel? Why did you like it so much?

Making a shift, I invite you to think about the story through the lens of your current awareness. What was the primary message of the story? Is this a message you currently value? What other messages are contained within the story? How does race play a role? What about gender? What does the story say about who should be attracted to whom, what a family should look like, who is valuable in a society? What does it say about class?

Did the characters in the story represent your racial group? If the characters were a member of a different racial group, would it have made a difference to the story? To your experience of the story? Why or why not?

When you think of the various messages contained in the story, are there any you would like to complicate, trouble, or otherwise challenge?

If you could return and speak to your childhood self, what would you say to your young self about how to understand the story?

As we complete this process, I invite you to take a few moments to notice how your body feels. Are there some areas where you feel tension, or where you are at ease? Is your breathing deep or shallow? Feel free to take another breath or two before opening your eyes and returning to the group.

Say to group: For the next five to eight minutes, answer the cultural mythology questions on the worksheet. Focus on the following: (*Individual reflection/writing - 8 minutes*)

1. What was the primary message you took from the story when you were young?
2. How did it feel to hear this story and receive its message? What did it mean for you?
3. What additional messages does the story contain, messages you may not have noticed while you were young?
4. How does this story relate to issues of privilege, whiteness, or other aspects of race?
5. What does it feel like to return to this story and analyze it with a critical eye?

Say to group: At this time, let's move into small groups of 4 or 5 to share our experiences. Use the answers you completed on the worksheet to guide the discussion. (*Small group discussion - 20 minutes*)

Say to group: Let's extend our thinking to other stories we heard about our families, our community, our country's history, or any other story that involves real people. This may not be a

story we heard directly from family or friends. It could be stories told through any type of media, television, movie, magazine, etc., anything that had an influence on you as you grew up. Jot down a few examples that you recall as having shaped your worldview as a young person. Select one to use for the final writing exercise and complete the four prompts on the page. (*Individual reflection/writing – 5 minutes*)

A story I heard when growing up was...

- When I first learned about this story, I felt...
- It taught me....
- At some point later, I found out...
- Now, I feel....

Facilitator’s Note: *After people finish writing, invite each person to take a turn reading the answers to the prompts aloud. The participants all remain silent while all answers are read in full. Participants can say “pass” if they don’t want to share. (Large group share – 10 minutes – depending on group size)*

Large group discussion: (20 minutes)

1. What can we learn about our racial group experiences by reviewing our familial and cultural stories?
2. How did stories we grew up with include characters portrayed as exhibiting racialized or stereotypical behaviors?
3. How have the racialized behaviors or racial composition of story characters shaped our worldview?
4. What can we do to expand and challenge our worldview? (*Distribute the Expanding our Worldview resource handout if desired.*)

Wrap up: People tend to develop a set of assumptions about the world (and how it should work) through ingrained messages received during our formative years. Without consciously analyzing the resulting beliefs and values, they remain locked in the psyche as expected norms. A significant problem is that far too often, they are based on white cultural norms. For this reason, reconsideration of our basic ideas about our family, community, and country’s histories is necessary.

4.4 - Developing our Emotional Capacity – Whiteness and the Body (1 hr 15 minutes)

--- DESIGNED FOR GROUPS COMPOSED OF WHITE PARTICIPANTS ---

--- This section includes two exercises---

--- You may elect to use only one if time does not allow for full implementation---

Materials needed: face mask (cut out in the shape of a face with eye holes cut so participants can see out when holding the mask up to their faces), markers or pens.

Purpose of piece: 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.

Room set up: If possible, arrange room with chairs in a circle. On a small table outside the circle (for the first half of this exercise), you might place items that have been utilized in the workshop series thus far, candles, flowers, stones, etc. Once the first half is completed, you might want to bring the table into the center of the room. You may also wish to include background music that has resonance to your community when moving to the second half, the contemplative practice segment. Other options might include instrumental music that is played softly in the background.

Say to group: In *Living in the Tension*, Shelly Tochluk shares some of the feelings she experienced living in her white skin during a time period when she was just becoming conscious of how deeply embedded racism is in our dominant U.S. culture. She writes:

“The depth of racism’s residency within white bodies is profound as well. This is something I know intimately. I recall feeling so disgusted by all that I learned about historic and contemporary racism and my unconscious complicity with it, that at one point I felt revulsion about my own skin and everything associated with it. This resulted in me pushing away from my white family, friends, and community for some time.” – Shelly Tochluk, (p. 113)

For those of us who are white, our response to understanding racism may leave us feeling a range of emotions, from mild discomfort, to revulsion, to embarrassment, to many others. We might want to push away what feels bad about being associated with whiteness. We might feel embarrassed in multi-racial spaces when we are associated with racist ideas and/or behavior. We might feel ashamed of our own family and friends when they do or say things we believe are racist.

As we think about how we relate to our bodies, we also need to consider that genuinely utilizing “both/and” as a skillset requires us to be psychologically grounded, appreciative, curious, and personal. These qualities require that we draw closer to our bodies and emotions if we want to truly be with another person. It may also require that we have the groundedness to draw closer to what might initially cause us discomfort or pain. This including ourselves, another person in the room, or our own families or ancestry.

In order to build the skillset that allows us to stay grounded, appreciative, curious, and personal, this activity includes two contemplative practices that invite us to be fully in our own skin or body. For some of us, this may feel awkward, uncomfortable, or provoke anxiety. For others, this may feel like a welcome opportunity to move out of our heads and into a more body-focused place. In any case, we hope this process allows us to open our imaginations and draw closer to our own body and ancestry.

And as we move through these exercises, if you notice yourself feeling anxious or uncomfortable, I invite you to focus on your breathing. (5 minutes)

EXERCISE A

Say to group: We’re going to start by focusing on our emotional connection to how it feels to be in our white bodies. What you’re being handed is a blank mask in the shape of a face. Please take

about 5 minutes to write or draw the feelings you have when you think about being white, the color of your skin and the meanings you attach to it. Words, images, lines, anything you'd like to write or draw is invited. We will be allowing others in the room to see our masks a bit later. (8 minutes)

Say to group: At this time, I'd like to invite you to turn the mask over, and on the other side jot down short answers to the following questions. You won't need to share these answers with anyone unless you want to, so feel free to be as honest as you can. (8 minutes)

In order, read each question aloud. Give 2 minutes per question for writing:

1. What are you most afraid of about being in the skin you're in?
2. What hurts that isn't healed about being in the skin you're in?
3. What do you really want and hope for about being in the skin you're in?
4. What is the gift hidden in being in the skin you're in?"

Say to group: Now, I am going to invite you to stand up and place the mask in front of you. The drawing/image side should face outward. The answers you just wrote down should face inward. You'll now wander around the circle, looking at each other's masks. This is a silent activity. (5-8 minutes, depending on group size)

Pair share: Now that we've had a chance to see what others are carrying in terms of their feelings about whiteness and their bodies, we'll move into a pair share. Feel free to talk about the following to the degree that you're willing to share: (8 minutes)

1. Why you wrote/drew what you did.
2. What it was like to see other people's masks. What stood out?
3. Your answers to the four questions you wrote on the inside.

Large group discussion: (15 minutes)

1. What are some themes that you noticed during this activity?
2. What can we do to feel tenderness toward our bodies when in the midst of uncomfortable feelings?

EXERCISE B

Say to group: For the second part of this section, we're going to do a contemplative practice meditation. (If you've created an altar space in the room, this would be a fine time to move that table into the center of the circle.)

Facilitator's Note: Read this script in advance and find ways to say the following in your own voice. The only suggestion in shifting this script to your own language/voice is to continue to use language of invitation—"I invite you to..." "When it feels good to do so," "As you are ready, you might..." or follow an instruction every so often with, "...if needed, just return to your breathing."

Meditation Script: (10 minutes)

- I invite you to get comfortable where you are—this might be staying in the chair, it might be seated on the floor, or laying down. Wherever your body wants to go.

[Once people have moved, continue...]

- From wherever you are seated, begin by noticing your breathing. No right or wrong way to breathe, just breathe yourself.
- As we breathe, we will begin noticing different parts of our bodies—just paying gentle attention to each part we name, and breathing with each noticing.

[The following in pace with breath, pausing between each...]

- Noticing the tops of our head, and breathing...
 - ... our forehead, cheeks, jaw, and breathing.
 - ... neck, shoulders, arms, and breathing.
 - ... chest and belly, and breathing.
 - ... our spine, down our back, to our seat, breathing.
 - ... our thighs, calves, and ankles, breathing.
 - ... our feet, to the very tips of our toes, breathing.
- From this place, we will notice our bodies again, while breathing...
 - ... notice the top of your head, your mouth. In your life, what kindness in the form of words or ideas have come from your mind, your speech?
 - ... notice your neck, shoulders, and arms. In your life, what care in the form of love shared or received has come from your arms outreached, or your willingness to shoulder heaviness with others?
 - ... notice your chest and belly. In your life, what creativity and new life has come at a time when you tuned in to the passion of your heart, a sense of inspiration or creative ability to bring new life to the world—whether by a child, a project, an idea, or way of being?
 - ... notice your spine, your back. In your life, what strength and resolve for justice or fairness has come at a time when the tingling of your back or spine told you a difficult or powerful truth?
 - ... notice your thighs, calves, and ankles. In your life, what courage has come at a time when you were willing to be changed, to be moved to a new position or understanding?
 - ... notice your feet. In your life, what new learning and deepened understanding has come when you carefully balanced multiple truths?
- Notice the collective wisdom, power, and potential for care and transformation that is housed in your body.
- Now, I invite you to notice the skin that holds all of it: your blood, your bones, and all of the incredible capacities for power, transformation, creativity, love, and justice that you have already directly experienced in your life. I invite you to feel your skin. *(Pause and linger here.)*
- I invite you to notice the way that your skin holds you together. Notice the way that your skin protects you from harm. Notice the way that your skin feels when it touches someone you love, tingles at insight or truth. Notice the marks that are left on the skin from the story of your own

embodied life: perhaps scars, piercings, freckles, tattoos. Breathe and notice your skin holding you together.

- What does your skin want from you to continue the sacred/important task of holding you together at this time in your life and our history?
- Breathe and notice if a word or phrase emerges when you ask your skin: “What do you need from me as we continue this journey together?”
- I invite you to imagine all of the people who made it possible that you are alive today, specifically those who are your ancestors. These may be people you do not know, or these may be people you have never heard of, or these may be people you were told stories about. Feel behind you all of the people who made it possible that you are alive today—I invite you to feel in the skin of your back all of the people for whom you were just a dream.
- I invite you to imagine all of the people around you now: the people in this room, the people beyond this room. I invite you to feel into the skin of your arms the people of this present moment for whom you are a co-creator of the world we now live in.
- I invite you to imagine all of the people who are not yet born. Imagine, first, those who are closest to you—perhaps they are your own biological family, or the children of your chosen family. Imagine the great, great, grandchildren that you will not know—the children of your community and of communities in places you will never see. I invite you to imagine the ones whose skin looks like your skin. I invite you to feel into the skin of your chest and belly the aliveness of the future beings who are counting on you, counting on us, to co-create a just world that they may live in.
- With people behind you, around you, and in front of you, feel your own skin. Notice the ways your skin has held you, protected you, made it possible for you to be alive. What does your skin ask of you in our racial justice work today? Allow a word or phrase to resonate with what is asked of you by your skin today.
- As you prepare yourself to return to our room, you might give “thanks” to your skin for the wisdom it carries from the past, the present, and its longings for a more alive future.
- I now invite you to notice your body
 - Your feet, your legs, your back, your arms, your neck, your face, the top of your head
 - You may want to gently move your arms or legs slowly, allowing the joints to bend, as you return focus to the room

Say to group: I invite you to turn to a person sitting next to you and share the word or phrase or image that came to you. (1 minute)

Large group discussion: (10 minutes)

1. What was it like to experience this meditation?
2. Were there any insights or surprises?

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3. What can help us hold onto the feelings of strength and resilience that our bodies provide?

Wrap up: As we close this exercise, I invite each of you to share a word or phrase out loud. It can be what you just shared with your partner, or any other word or phrase that captures how you're feeling as we end this exercise. (5 minutes)

4.5 – Developing our “Both/And” Skill Set – Eliciting Personal Stories (1 hour 5 minutes)

Materials needed: Strategic Engagement handout, pens and pencils.

Purpose of piece: To practice using “both/and” thinking and conversational techniques that encourage consideration of how racial differences impact people's lives.

Say to group: Today we'll be focusing on how to navigate conversations in which people are solidly on one side or the other of the *common humanity* and *racial group differences* tension.

Say to group: This exercise is meant to give us practice in strategically engaging people who demonstrate a particular one-sidedness to their thinking. The goal is to influence the conversation in a direction that allows for a “both/and” appreciation. (This is neither the only way, nor the best way, to approach all conversations about race. We are simply working on this as a strategy so it can become a tool in our toolbox.)

Review handout section on strategic engagement with group. Discuss as needed. If desired, take a few minutes to discuss which steps may come more easily or might be more challenging. (10 minutes)

Strategic Engagement to Inspire “Both/And” Thinking

- ❖ *Step 1* – Ask questions that derive from a place of curiosity. Try to ask questions for which you'd don't already think you know the answers. What makes you feel like you do? When did you first start to believe that? Get a sense of that person's story and perspective. Listen for something that you can relate to, something that generates empathy. It may help to try and uncover emotion underlying the story.
- ❖ *Step 2* – Validate at least something that person says. Relate personally and share a story of your own of when you felt a similar emotion or came to a conclusion about something based on an experience that has some similarity.
- ❖ *Step 3* – Check to see if there is more to that person's story that impacts how that person experiences the world today.
- ❖ *Step 4* – Offer more of your personal story. Begin to add information that explains why your perspective on the issue is different. Use additive language. Focus on sharing, not convincing.
- ❖ *Step 5* – With humility and self-questioning, pose questions about what it might mean if everyone is basically interpreting the world based on their individual experiences. Note how useful it is to hear other people's stories and how incomplete our worldview might be when

we only consider our own experiences or those whose lives have been like our own. The point is to try and name the value of the “both/and” as well as the value of multiple people’s perspectives on any issue.

Say to group: We will now split into triads to practice some role plays. Each person will play a role, either yourself as the agent, a focus person, or a witness. When it is your turn, you will play yourself and select a situation to practice. One of your partners will be your focus person. This is the person you will engage with directly. The focus person will take on the persona of the person in the situation. The third partner will be a witness and will observe the interaction, paying attention to what it feels like to experience the exchange, the points when the witness feels pushed away, anxious, pulled in, emotionally softened, etc.

We know how easy it is to talk about the situation and never play it out. Please push yourself to do the role play. Many facilitators of this structure report dramatic learning that comes from playing out the situation, practicing in the moment. The real insight often comes from the focus person and witness providing feedback regarding what it felt like to experience the conversation at different points, what statements drew them in as well as which statements pushed them farther away. Please take the risk to try this and see if you can reap the same benefits. (*Introduction and group formation – 8 minutes*)

It is not required that you use the sample prompts provided on the handout. If there is a situation you are facing, a conversation you know you need to have with someone in your family or community, feel free to use that instead. Also, as you are acting as the agent, feel free to use the sample sentence starters offered on the handout. They are there as a resource. If they don’t fit, don’t use them. (*Review sample prompts and sample sentence starters – 2 minutes*)

Sample Prompts:

1. You are speaking with a white person you know fairly well. You mention being dismayed at how people have responded to Black Lives Matter protestors, stating that people who say “All Lives Matter” or “Blue Lives Matter” are missing the point. The person you’re talking with says, “I understand that the point is about police violence. But, I don’t think they need to make it about race. I don’t see them protesting when a Mexican or White kid gets shot. I mean, when you really look at it, it’s being racist to only talk about Black people, as though they’re the only ones who experience violence. I’d be supportive if they were really for all people.”
2. During a conversation in which national politics are being discussed, you invite a fellow community member to a multi-racial dialogue that will take place the following week. You say that you plan to attend and think it will be an important community-building event. This individual tells you that dialogues focused on race are a waste of time because they push people to see themselves in terms of their differences. This person says what is needed are more celebratory events that bring people together and heal the past.
3. While talking with a white friend, you share that you have been reading a book about systemic inequities that have faced people of color in the U.S. throughout the country’s history. You lament that the racism that has stifled people of color’s economic success is

ongoing and wish we had the political will to address the issue directly. Your friend says that this would be misguided, as there are plenty of people of color of all backgrounds who are able to make it economically. Your friend then begins to talk about a specific person who exemplifies the individual success story.

Trial role plays (30 minutes)

Large group debrief: (15 minutes)

1. How was the process for you?
2. What was challenging? Why? What worked well? Why?
3. How did your areas of strength show up? What areas for growth emerged?

Wrap Up: When it comes to conversations with friends and colleagues who have an entrenched worldview characterized by either/or thinking, trying to convince the person that their way of seeing the world is wrong is not likely to be effective. Instead, we can attempt to first learn more about the experiences underlying their worldview. We are then more likely to have our story listened to and taken seriously after having first listened to theirs. The goal is to influence the expansion from a one-sided, narrow worldview toward one that accepts multiple realities.

4.6 – Closing Ritual/Checkout – (10 minutes)

A closing reflection to read before participants offer one word or sentence to capture their feeling.

Option 1.

A poem by Hope Johnson, from the book *Voices from the Margins*

One Love

*We are one,
A diverse group
Of proudly kindred spirits
Here, not by coincidence –
But because we choose to journey – together.*

*We are active and proactive
We care, deeply
We live our love as best we can.*

*We ARE one
Working, Eating, Laughing,
Playing, Singing, Storytelling, Sharing and Rejoicing.
Getting to know each other.
Taking risks
Opening up.
Questioning, Seeking, Searching,...*

Trying to understand...
Struggling...
Making Mistakes
Paying attention...
Asking Questions...
Listening...
Living our Answers
Learning to love our neighbors.
Learning to love ourselves.

Apologizing and forgiving with humility
Being forgiven, through Grace.

Creating the Beloved Community – Together
We are ONE.

Book Reference:

Jacqui James and Mark D. Morrison-Reed (2012). *Voices from the Margins*. Skinner House.

Option 2.

A prayer by Peter Morales, from the book *Voices from the Margins*

Our Work Is Not Yet Done

O, Spirit of Life and Love that lives within us and among us, be with us now. Help us take our history into our hearts as well as our minds. Open us, so that we can feel our past live in us – the joy, the disappointment, the passion, the pain, the hope. Let the past, all of it, live in the core of our being.

Let us be humble. Let us be honest. Help us to take instruction from our past. And let us also be inspired. But more than anything, let us feel your spirit, the spirit of deep compassion, here among us this very moment.

O, Spirit of Love and Life, help us know, truly know, that we are your people, bound together by our collective memory and, more importantly, by our shared aspirations. We are not perfect. We mess up. Sometimes we talk too much. Yet we are drawn together by what we love, by what we hold sacred and by a vision of what we may yet create together.

Finally, tender and gentle Spirit, guide us. Inspire us. Embolden us. For our work, your work, O spirit, is not yet done.

Book Reference:

Jacqui James and Mark D. Morrison-Reed (2012). *Voices from the Margins*. Skinner House.

Option 3.

Notice (or say)...

...One thing you notice in your body.

...One thing you notice in your breath.

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...One thing you notice in your mind.

...One thing you notice in the group you're with right now.

Option 4.

Read this poem by Cherrie Moraga, published in the book *A Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, and the explanation from the website Radical Notions:

<http://ourradicalnotions.tumblr.com/post/55441737049/the-welder-by-cherrie-moraga-found-in-this>

"We plead to each other,
we all come from the same rock
we all come from the same rock
ignoring the fact that we bend at different temperatures
that each of us is malleable up to a point."

- Cherrie Moraga, "The Welder"

In Cherrie Moraga's poem "The Welder", she writes about how she believes it is possible for women of all colors to work together, to become one cohesive unit. She describes herself as a welder, joining together different kinds of people the same way a welder joins together different kinds of metal in order to form a new structure that is solid and steady. She understands that it is not an easy task and that people are different, and that, in order to do this, women must bring together their different passions, ideas, and experiences to create one strong, multifaceted unit.

The second line of this quote "we all come from the same rock" is repeated twice. Moraga is emphasizing this idea. She does believe that all women come from the same starting point. However, rocks are not uniform. A rock is usually a composite of various minerals molding together. Just as the rock is an aggregate of different elements, women are a collection of different colors. They are different, but they are united by a common thread. Alone, they are just minerals, strong in their own way, but susceptible to the same thing. Together, however, they are more resistant to damage. If a rock consists of both quartz and feldspar, one may be able to try and weaken the quartz, but the feldspar will stabilize the rock. If women are able to come together, work as one unit instead of their separate entities, they will be better protected against attack. Moraga is trying to explain how women are not the same, but they can still come together to form something strong and solid. Also, rocks are quite sturdy. It is hard to destroy a rock. Women are stronger together than they are apart.

The last two lines, however, bring up a new idea. Since women are different, every woman has different motivations, goals, and fears. Just because they are all women does not mean they must share the same properties. Women must learn not only to see the differences between them, but to understand them. White women must learn to understand the needs of African American women, African American women must discern the fears of Asian American women, and Asian American women must recognize the goals of Native American women. In order to fully support each other, women must understand that there are differences.

As the welder, Moraga is saying that she will bring these women together, fuse these parts into a new entity to create something stronger. In order to become one unit, women must unite over their shared passions and desires, the ideas that keep them fighting and enflame their anger. Together, they will be more powerful, more indestructible, than they would be alone.