

White Supremacy Teach-in Circles

Guiding Thoughts- from the Teach-In Creators:

Our main advice here is to present as co-explorers (for those leaders who are white), instead of as experts. “Join me on an uncomfortable adventure” is a far more enticing invitation than “here’s what’s wrong with y’all!”

Over 600 UU congregations in 49 states have joined this movement. Don’t be afraid to share with your UU community your excitement, and your hesitations. Honesty goes a long way here. Authenticity is everything. Don’t be someone you’re not. Do be brave, whatever that means for you. Do be clear. Do invite people to join your community for the teach-in. Do be proud that, however imperfectly, you’ll be joining thousands of Unitarian Universalists in being courageous enough to look within.

Don’t get stuck trying to fix that one person who just.does.not.get.it. Do focus on the dozens of folks in the pews or chairs struggling, yet hanging in there with you. Do focus on the people who are so thrilled that finally, y’all’s community is *going there*.

Don’t let anyone tell you this is about guilt or shame. This work is powerful and essential. May we be, as the saying goes, a people so bold, and keep on going.

In faith and love,

Kenny Wiley, on behalf of Aisha Hauser, Christina Rivera, and the rest of the #UUWhiteSupremacyTeachIn team

[Please note: everything in italics below will be printed in the order of service. All of the other pieces are intended for you to share with your group, unless they are in brackets. Feel free to find your own, authentic words for this as well.]

I. WELCOME:

[Please read the welcome in the order of service together.]

Welcome to this Circle!

We are holding sharing circles today as our form of religious services to answer the call put forth by the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism organizing collective to confront white supremacy. We are proud that in doing so, our church joins with thousands of Unitarian Universalists in over 600 churches in 49 states and several countries around the world. I thank each of you for coming today and appreciate your willingness to participate.

If you are wondering why are we talking about white supremacy instead of racism, the following perspective shared with me by Rev. Dr. Jen Harvey may provide an entry point for understanding. When we talk about racism our minds tend to imagine people of color, as if racism is a problem for people of color. White supremacy tends to conjure the image of white people instead and allows us to see what the problem truly is and who it belongs to.

In participating today, we each affirm our willingness to sit with the messiness and imperfection of our understandings in order to learn and grow. May we be curious about what we uncover and humble enough to listen in a way that we may be changed.– Rev. Erin Gingrich

II. CHALICE LIGHTING

Leader: Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

Group: We gather in community to celebrate the glories and the mysteries of this great gift.

Leader: So let us kindle now the flame of our liberal religious heritage.

Group: In its glow, may our reason and our passion lead us to be true to ourselves, true to each other and true to what we can together become.

III. PURPOSE OF TEACH-IN:

The request to look at white supremacy emerged after a recent staffing hire at the Unitarian Universalist Association. The woman who spoke out about the decision chose to do so not just because of the particulars of this situation, but also because of the historic, systemic, and embedded nature of white supremacy within our society and our religious movement. Black Lives of UU called for this teach-in that we might learn and find new ways to live out our UU values *within* our own institutions.

You might be wondering why they called for a white supremacy teach-in instead of an anti-racism teach-in. Let's read what the organizers wrote in the order of service, *"White supremacy" is a provocative phrase, as it conjures up images of hoods and mobs. Yet in 2017, actual "white supremacists" are not required in order to uphold white supremacist culture. Building a faith full of people who understand that key distinction is essential as we work toward a more just society in difficult political times.*"

IV. PROCESS: Sharing Circle & Talking Piece

We will use a sharing circle with a talking piece to give ourselves a simple structure so that each person's voice can be heard.

Talking Piece:

Please give the one who holds the talking piece your full attention.

When you are holding it, give full attention to your truth.

Please speak to the center of the Circle.

It is traditional to speak into the center. The idea is that everyone's voice is added to the center, and it is from the center that the wisdom of the group will begin to emerge. Once someone has spoken into the center, their contribution becomes part of the Circle. It becomes part of a shifting story, a pathway toward an understanding that comes clearer little by little.

V. GUIDELINES:

Let's read through the guidelines together.

Guidelines:

Speak from the heart: your truth, your experiences, your perspectives.

Listen from the heart: let go of stories that make it hard to hear each other.

Trust that you will know what to say: no need to rehearse.

Know that you can pass at any time.

Say just enough: without feeling rushed, be concise and considerate of the time of others.

We welcome what people say without trying to influence them. We don't correct, counsel, heal or fix anyone's experience in any way. We simply listen.

VI. INTRODUCTION ROUND:

Let's introduce ourselves.

*Please say **your name** and 1 or 2 qualities that describe you when you're at your best that you'll bring to this circle today. (in a word or two or a phrase)*

VII. GUIDELINES ROUND:

Can we agree that we will honor these guidelines and do our best to bring our qualities when we're at our best to this Circle? If not, please let us know what you would need to be different.

IX. READING

We will begin by first seeking to define and recognize what is white supremacy culture. Let's read aloud the piece in the order of service. Please note, the author requests that we recognize that she was reflecting on her own life compared to that of her African American co-workers. She is one white woman writing about her life, not yours.

Peggy McIntosh – *“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”* (adapted)

“I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group.”

I decided to try to work on myself at least by identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life. I have chosen those conditions that I think in my case attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographic location, though of course all these other factors are intricately intertwined. As far as I can tell, my African American coworkers, friends, and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place and time of work cannot count on most of these conditions.

- 1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.*
- 2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.*
- 3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.*
- 4. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.*
- 5. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.*
- 6. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.*
- 7. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.*
- 8. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.*
- 9. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.*
- 10. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.*

X. ROUNDS

- 1. Which one or two of these examples stands out to you and why?*
- 2. Do you have a story about a time when you have been conscious of your race?*
- 3. What conditions or privileges might we add to the list if we think about what a white citizen can expect compared to an undocumented immigrant?*

4. *What have you heard in our circle that has helped you to understand what white supremacist culture means?*
5. *As we close, you are invited to think your possible next steps. What one thing you will start, stop or change as a result of this conversation.*

XI. CLOSING: Gratitude

For our final round, please share in one word something you are grateful for for our time together.

XII. OFFERING:

If you would like to give an offering today, please feel free to put something in the basket. Half of the money will support our outreach partner for May and June - the Young Women's Resource Center, and half will support the social justice activities of this church in the wider community.

In May/June, we are partnering with the Young Women's Resource Center, whose mission is to embrace and inspire girls and young women to become strong, self-confident and successful through empowerment and supporting young moms.

[please take the offering to the Ellen Taylor.]

XIII. EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE

Leader: I extinguish the symbolic flame of this gathering. May we carry its light into the world.

People: Let us go from this place, open to life, expecting to love, and prepared to serve.

XIV. THANK YOU for coming and engaging! Go in Peace, go making Peace.