

Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action

About

A learning circle experience dedicated to helping white people notice and challenge the ways white people are socialized to protect whiteness and hold racism in place. The generative discomfort that comes with being honest about where we really are in our comfort with race and understanding leads to fresh hope for, and commitment to, racial healing and racial justice. Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action offers a learning circle experience that creates space for the practice of noticing racial stress, conversation, and care. We connect the dots between our lived experience right now, the ways we hold racism in place, and the opportunity to do something different. The goal is to practice noticing and challenging the ways white people have been socialized to protect white-dominant norms and culture, to build stamina to *KEEP GOING* to do something different, and to strengthen the bonds of mutual-accountability to dismantle racism in our communities.

Our Approach: Practice and Learning Groups

- This short-term series is skill-building for White people, so most participants identify as White
- Six, co-facilitated, 90-minute sessions, for approximately 8-15 people via Zoom.
 - smaller circles create intimacy and allow for high interpersonal connection.
- We ask that people “show up” bringing the fullness of their experiences.
- Sessions include dialogue around concepts drawn from BIPOC voices and scholarship, including *So You Want to Talk about Race* (Ijeoma Oluo) and *How to Be Anti-Racist* (Ibram X. Kendi), *The Racial Healing Handbook* (Dr. Annelise Singh) and a weekly practice of listening to black voices. We also use concepts from Robin DiAngelo’s *White Fragility* as a basis for some of our conversations.
- In the space between sessions, “homework” is given in the form of podcasts, video, and articles intended to complement the practice of noticing racial stress and when being white matters; these are customized according to the group and current events.
- Given our years of experience and deep relationships in this work, we are also able to draw upon the expertise of the individuals from our larger national network of experts to support any process, or to make a referral for other needed resources.
- We acknowledge the value of the lived experiences, partnership, and expertise of Black and other Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) to ensure accountability and action to dismantle racism and to grow authentic relationships. To that end, Black people and people of color work with Seeing Whiteness facilitators as accountability partners to challenge inherent bias that may remain unnoticed.
- Following the six-sessions, participants join a larger community of people from all across the country doing this work that gather in monthly sessions to continue the practice. This reinforces the muscles building of anti-racism and the work of this as life-long practice.

Core Team

Seeing Whiteness has a circle of more than 20 facilitators able to draw upon the expertise of its broader circle of practitioners and its larger network. A sampling of our lead facilitators and co-founders of this work include:

Jill Morehouse Lum initiated Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action and serves as a guide for the practice, core facilitator, and convener of its Advisory Committee. Jill uses facilitation methods developed from 25 years in the fields of experiential learning and spiritual formation and work as a teacher, leader, and chaplain in interfaith, civic, and congregational settings, most recently in Atlanta with The New School, Fearless Dialogues and as clergy affiliate at Central Presbyterian Church. Honestly, hospitality, and humor are central to her work. She is a graduate of the University

of Virginia (B.A. and M.T.) and Union Theological Seminary, New York (M.Div.). Jill has partnered with Jewish and Muslim colleagues to develop interfaith curriculum, and has taught in international, public, and private schools.

[Lisa Flick Wilson](#) is one of the founders of the [Radical Optimist Collective](#), a circle of women originally formed to support and guide individuals and groups doing intentional racial awareness and racial healing work as prompted by experiences in Montgomery, AL at the Equal Justice Initiative's (EJI) [Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice](#). Lisa is also a lead facilitator with Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action and a member of its Advisory Committee. In her roles in racial healing and justice, Lisa has worked with more than 50 companies, organizations, faith groups and teams. In addition to her long-standing commitment to racial justice, Lisa has 20+ years experience working with nonprofits, philanthropy and companies to put people at the center of change. She does her best work when she gets to: inject optimism into problem-solving, support culture change by maximizing individual and team strengths, make the table larger to include more voices and keep people at the center, and arrange complex moving parts in ambiguous situations into a clear plan forward. Lisa does not shy away from putting race at the center of the conversation, understands her place as a white woman in racial equity work, and welcomes being in the struggle of interrupting racism.

Pam Sugarman is president of Sugarman Consulting, a firm that delivers strategy and governance consulting to nonprofits working to achieve the community she wants to see. Pam also is an early adopter and core facilitator with Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action and a member of its Advisory Committee. Pam's personal and professional growth in anti-racism and racial equity continues to fuel her passion for bringing more of these frameworks into the world. Pam approaches her organizational work in a way that is outcome-oriented, strength-based, participatory, and data-driven. She excels in helping individuals and organizations clarify their strategy or reinvent themselves given changing environments. These principles apply in her anti-racist work as well. Pam is also a highly engaged member of Atlanta's civic and Jewish communities. From working with established and grassroots groups to supporting political campaigns and candidates, Pam has a 25 year+ history in helping make Atlanta a place where all people can thrive.

Corey Dobyms has extensive training and experience in the area's of self compassion, self care, community building, trauma models, and recovery. She has trained with and facilitates with Life University's Compassionate Integrity and Secular Ethics program, the National Coalition Building Institute's Social Justice model, and is continuing training within the nonviolent restorative justice model. Corey is also a member of Radical Optimist Collective and a lead facilitator for Seeing Whiteness for Anti-racist Action. Corey blends her knowledge of individual healing with a broader perspective rooted in community and reconciliation of our collective celebrations and wounds. And when she is not doing racial healing, Corey is a licensed and practicing Massage Therapist where she has provided direct care for thousands of clients over the years. Corey is brilliant at helping clients solve puzzling pain patterns that help resolve physical, emotional, and psychological manifestations of our injury, trauma, and blockages.

Guidance and Accountability with BIPOC Partners

This work is not done in isolation; facilitators are in a relationship with BIPOC partners throughout the work. Facilitators and BIPOC partners, usually someone with whom you seek or have an honest relationship, work together throughout the course of the six-weeks (and beyond) to share what they are learning about themselves, or they invite questions or perspectives that spur deeper inquiry, challenge or to help them return to a key concept or conversation at their next session with participants.

Session Modules

Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action engages participants in a series of learning, reflection and action practices to build skills and stamina on one's anti-racist journey. We hold the following **desired outcomes** front and center in our approach to the work:

- Choose to engage in this work for our whole lives long!
- Honesty. Honesty spurs racial healing, justice, and equity.
- Develop skills and stamina to work in and through moments of racial stress.
- Notice, name and disrupt the ways we protect white dominant norms and culture; stop holding racism in place. I choose anti-racist action more often.
- Seek discomfort. Without challenge there is no change.
- Develop authentic interpersonal relationships with Black people and people of color beyond my racially segregated life.
- Be emboldened. With courage and grace, I give feedback on racism, and I seek, accept, and act on feedback on my racism.

The Seeing Whiteness process is guided by a set of **conversation guidelines** which center the participant's focus inward towards their own patterns of thought and behavior. These guidelines were inspired and adapted from VISIONS Inc.

- Practice Self-Focus*
- Practice Slowing Down*
- Practice "Trying On"*
- Practice Both/And Thinking*
- It's not ok to shame, blame, or attack self or others
- Listen more than you talk
- No "fixing"
- The "we" in this work is white people
- White dominant culture is real. Racism is bigger than us and we are a part of it. Resist the temptation to distance ourselves from it.
- When you feel challenged or corrected take it as a gift
- When you feel defensive, take a position of curiosity instead
- Lean in when you need to. Lean out when you need to.

Using these guidelines, sessions open with an opportunity to offer and consider an experience of race in the past week, rather than long ago or beyond one's sphere of influence. This practice of self-focus is where change begins and then leads to systemic change. Thoughtful prompts engage the head and heart. For example, "Share a time this week when you noticed that being white mattered -- or a time you would have proceeded differently if you had not been white." "Identify a time when a desire to be good or appear "not-racist" got in the way of interrupting racism." These are followed by, "Am I actively seeking to interrupt racism [and white dominant norms] in this context? And perhaps even more important, how do I know?". Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable builds stamina for cross-racial engagement, and capacity to act on what is most important to us. This philosophy is at the core of Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action.

Session Design & Facilitation

The Seeing Whiteness team works to determine desired outcomes for the learning process, to design and deliver each session, and to remain connected to the leadership team as the learning is unfolding.

- Two core facilitators to partner on design and facilitation across the entirety of the program
- Advance communications to prepare for each session and the reflective work in between
- Access to all curriculum materials on Google platform
- Access to facilitators throughout the duration of the program not just during the sessions

- Access to the broader community of Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action. We are building a community of anti-racist practitioners and offering opportunities for connection and learning ongoing. All participants will have access to that community.

Contribution to local Black-led groups focused on liberation efforts

An embedded and held value in our work is investing and contributing to Black-led organizations. The expression of these values shows up in a variety of ways, from organizational cash contributions to equitable compensation for BIPOC partners and a variety of other efforts grounded in equity and repair.

Cost

The program includes a six-week session that will introduce you to life-long practices and provides access to monthly community meetings on repair and return for one year. The recommended contribution for the program is \$350 for individuals. There is a different rate for groups connected to an organization, i.e. co-workers. Your contribution is an investment in facilitation, content development, program infrastructure, and compensation for the Black-led organizations and individuals who are our partners in this work.

About Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action

Seeing Whiteness is guided by a multi-racial Advisory Committee that convenes regularly to guide this effort. Our approach is grounded in a belief that our own structures and methods must challenge [white dominant culture](#) at all times, with every action and choice, and especially in the choices we make about how we engage with others. Advisory Board Members include:

- Bonnie Hardage, Jesse Parker Williams Foundation
- Audrey Jacobs, The Sarafina Group
- Jill Morehouse Lum, co-founder, Seeing Whiteness for Anti-racist Action
- Paul Roberts, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary
- Staci Lynch, Independent Consultant, Radical Optimist Collective and Chrysalis Group
- Pam Sugarman, Sugarman Consulting
- Rob Smulian, The Imlay Foundation
- Lisa Flick Wilson, Radical Optimist Collective

For more information and to convene a group, contact Lisa Flick Wilson, flick.lisa@gmail.com