

Seeing Whiteness for Anti-Racist Action

Overview

Seeing Whiteness is six sessions for white-bodied people. We introduce a lifelong noticing practice that builds skills and stamina to bring racial healing, equity, and liberation. We circle in small groups in person or via Zoom, creating brave space and mutual accountability.

About the six sessions, participants have said,

- “In previous antiracist work, I have felt heavy and overwhelmed. This was different, I felt something shift in the first session -- freedom to move beyond the paralyzing shame and fear that I have had previously.”
- “I like the framing of this as a practice with the specific prompts to keep bringing it back to my own sphere of influence for anti-racist action.”
- “I feel the practice I am getting with the group is building my capacity to act on what is most important to me.”

Desired Outcomes for Participants, thus also Shifting the Community

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

The Program

Seeing Whiteness 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.

- Seeing whiteness is a critical, but often missing, element of working toward racial justice, healing, and equity.
- This short-term series is skill-building for white people, so most participants identify as white or white-passing.
- There are six, co-facilitated, 90-minute sessions for small groups, in person or via Zoom. Smaller circles create intimacy, allow for the honesty that spurs change, and establish mutual accountability.
- We ask that people “show up” bringing the fullness of their experiences.
- Based in a set of agreed-upon 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. Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable builds stamina for cross-racial engagement and capacity to act on what is most important to us.
- Sessions also include dialogue around concepts drawn from authors and scholars, for example from *I’m Still Here* (Austin Channing Brown), *Do Better* (Rachael Ricketts), *How to Be An Anti-Racist* (Ibram X. Kendi), *My Grandmother’s Hands* (Resma Menakem), *The Racial Healing Handbook* (Annelise Singh), *So You Want to Talk about Race* (Ijeoma Oluo), *White Fragility* (Robin DiAngelo), and others, plus a weekly practice of listening to Black voices and experiencing Black spaces.
- You have heard, “White people need to do their own work when it comes to dismantling racism.” Yes, white affinity groups are necessary, *and* white work cannot be done in a vacuum. Authentic relationships among white facilitators and Black partners are necessary for wholeness, joy, and liberation. These relationships often involve seeking and receiving feedback, offering lived w(experience, challenging inherent bias, offering gratitude, engaging in acts of repair, and investing in initiatives and organizations at the direction of BIPOC partners.

The Team

Seeing Whiteness is guided by an Advisory Committee with Black members and white members that convenes regularly and operates as a learning community. 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. Members include:

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

Seeing Whiteness is able to draw upon the expertise of 20 facilitators and partners, our broader circle of practitioners, and our larger network. A sampling of biographies is below:

Audrey Jacobs is the founder and principal of The Sarafina Group, Inc., a bespoke organization providing consultation services to philanthropic and nonprofit organizations. She also is a member of the Seeing Whiteness Advisory Committee and a Black partner to Seeing Whiteness' white facilitators. For more than a decade, Audrey was the Director of the Center for Family Philanthropy at the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. There she worked with a team to engage individual philanthropists and families in philanthropy. With more than twenty years of experience in the non-profit sector, Audrey helps non-profits fulfill their mission by helping with fund development, strategic planning and Board development. Audrey is a graduate of Leadership Atlanta and immediate past president of the Emory University Board of Visitors. Currently, she is a member of the Advisory Board of The Tahirih Justice Center, the Board of Directors of the African SOUP, and 21/64's Certified Advisors of Color Advisory Board. Audrey received her undergraduate degree from Barnard College, Columbia University; and a juris doctorate degree from New York University School of Law.

Corey Dobyns has extensive training and experience in the areas 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 core facilitator for Seeing Whiteness, a program that works with white people to dismantle their own racism and then act in anti-racist ways more often. 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.

Jill Morehouse Lum initiated Seeing Whiteness 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 core facilitator with Seeing Whiteness 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 of 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 delivering strategy and governance consulting to nonprofits working to achieve the community she wants to see. For more than 25 years, she has excelled in helping individuals and organizations clarify their focus and reinvent themselves given changing environments. Pam also is an early adopter and core facilitator with Seeing Whiteness and a member of its Advisory Committee. Her personal and professional growth in anti-racism and racial equity continues to fuel her passion for bringing these frameworks into the world. She approaches both her organizational and anti-racist work in a

way that is outcome-oriented, strength-based, participatory, and data-driven. From working with established and grassroots groups, to engaging as an active member of Atlanta's civic and Jewish communities, to supporting political campaigns and candidates, Pam has a long history in helping make Atlanta a place where people can thrive

Contact Us

To join a Circle or for more information, contact Lisa Flick Wilson at flick.lisa@gmail.com.