MAKING WHITENESS VISIBLE

OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVES –

• Explore many of the facets of power, privilege and oppression related to race
• Explore racial identity
• Engage with others from their own racial identity groups in dialogues about race
• Engage with others from a racial identity group different from their own about race
• Practice aspects of authenticity, self-reflection, empathy (for self and others) and compassion (for self and others) related to race

SETTING:

• Presentation to large group
• Participant self-reflection and journaling
• Sharing in dyads in similar and different racial groupings
• Large group debriefing

MATERIALS:

• Name tents
• Newsprint and markers (various colors)
• PowerPoint slide #50

TIME:

• 30 minutes

PROCEDURE: [brief overview in bullets such as example below]

• Give short lecturette
• Ask participants to get out a piece of paper and pen to use for reflection exercise
• Provide prompt – To me, being white means… x3
• Instruct participants on first dialogue
• Instruct participants on second dialogue
• Facilitate full group debrief

PRIOR PREPARATION: [Explain any materials that require set-up prior to the session]
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INSTRUCTIONS

LECTURETTE:

It might sound something like this...

We have just spent time looking broadly at different aspects of our social identities and how these identities interact with systems of oppression to support some at the expense of others.

We are now going to focus in on one of our social identity characteristics – race. I would like for all of you to take out a piece of paper, journal or whatever you might have to write on.

Note to facilitator:
Let participants know that you have extra paper and pens for anyone that needs some.

Settle in, get comfortable, and share with them that this next exercise should be done in silence and there should be no talking among participants. I would like for you to write for the next 3 minutes on the prompt that I will provide to you shortly. Please allow yourself to write freely, write what first comes to mind and keep writing until you hear the chime, singling the end of the 3 minutes. Any questions?

Please take the next 3 minutes to write about:

To me, being white means...

Note to facilitator:
At this point, you may get some questions or puzzled looks. Allow participants (or even yourself) to be in that uncomfortableness and just ask them to write whatever comes to mind. If needed, please reinforce that this is an individual task and that for this time you would ask them to be silent and not talk to each other.

At the end of 3 minutes sound the chime and ask them to look up so that you know all of them have finished writing. After a slight pause, direct them to write for the next 3 minutes using the following prompt:

To me, being white means...

Note to facilitator:
At this point, you may get some questions or puzzled looks. Allow participants (or even yourself) to be in that uncomfortableness and just ask them to write whatever comes to mind. If needed, please reinforce that this is an individual task and that for this time you would ask them to be silent and not talk to each other.
At the end of 3 minutes sound the chime and ask them to look up so that you know all of them have finished writing. After a slight pause, again direct them to write for the next 3 minutes using the following prompt:

**To me, being white means...**

**Note to facilitator:**
At this point, you will most likely get some questions, puzzled looks or looks of irritation. Encourage participants to keep writing and if you see anyone who has stopped writing or looks as if they are not participating, just allow them to be, however, don’t let their behaviors interrupt others still writing. Allow participants (or even yourself) to be in that uncomfortableness and just ask them to write whatever comes to mind. If needed, please reinforce that this is an individual task and that for this time you would ask them to be silent and not talk to each other.

At the end of 3 minutes sound the chime and ask participants to put down their pens/pencils and take a deep breath and exhale. Thank them for their participation in this exercise.

Tell participants that you want them now to find one individual of their same race to have a conversation with and that they will need to bring along their self-reflection writings from the exercise.

**Note to facilitator:**
Based on the racial makeup of the group and numbers, you may need to have groups of 3 white people and/or one group of all people of color or racially mixed groups of people of color (i.e., an African American talking with a Hispanic/Latinx, etc.) Please note: In the first part of this debrief, you should only have white people talking with white people, not white people talking with people of color.

You will have the next 10 minutes total to have a conversation with your partner about one or more of the following questions:

- What was this exercise like for you?
- What feelings came up for you?
- What stood out for you as important or significant?
- What parts of this exercise felt difficult for you? What part was not so difficult?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Please do your best to allow both of you to share.
After 10 minutes ring the chime, and ask the participants to return to their chairs.

Now in the full group, ask anyone in the group to share their reactions to any of the same questions:

- What was this exercise like for you?
- What feelings came up for you?
- What stood out for you as important or significant?
- What parts of this exercise felt difficult for you? What part was not so difficult?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Try to get as many, diverse voices to share their experiences with this exercise. After 10-11 minutes of a full group dialogue, thank the participants for their engagement and tell them that we will continue to focus our attention on race and whiteness in the larger group.

Note to facilitator:
If you are TEAM B, you will ask the group to move back into the full group space with TEAM A. Please reinforce that this is not a time for a break, rather to move as quickly over to the full room to continue our conversation together. If you are in TEAM A, be looking for TEAM B members to show up at your door and invite them back into the full group space.

The lead facilitator for the next piece will transition them to the viewing of “The House We Live In.”
REFERENCES


Olsson, J. (1997). Detour Spotting for White Anti-Racists. (Pamphlet available through cultural bridges, HC 81 Box 7015, Questa, NM 87556, 505-586-2488)