

# compassionate activism

## Healing from Toxic Whiteness

### Transcript for Training Session 2 - October 15, 2016

Sandra: Hey, everyone. Today is October 15<sup>th</sup> and we are having our second training session for the Healing From Toxic Whiteness program. Last time, we talked about the framework of: How does white supremacy emotionally harm white folks? Kind of an issue and topic that we don't really talk about and it's not really a part of our discourse still in our movements. Really wrapping our heads around: there's a reason why so many white folks who see the violence and harm in racism are emotionally flailing about including folks who believe that racism is wrong; and where is that coming from?

So today, we're going to be delving into, "Okay, now that we understand that that's what's happening so how can we work through it?" So that we're not just stopped by that harm, but actually can heal from it and get into action to address racial injustices.

Before we get started, though, I just want to introduce my support today. She is Breeshia Turner. Say hi!

Breeshia: Hi, everybody!

Sandra: So Josette who's normally with us is unavailable today. Breeshia's been gracious enough to step up and help me out. She will be supporting me and managing the conversation online, in the chat box answering questions. Since this is her first time, too, if it takes her a second to get to what you're saying or doesn't have an instant answer, please be patient.

Breeshia: Thank you for being patient.

Sandra: I also wanted to have Breeshia introduce a little bit about the people who are in here. I know a lot of folks are calling in from the telephone, or they may be watching this video later. But I know we have some folks who are on video, chatting, and share a little bit about where they're calling from and what stood out with them from the last session. Let's quickly talk a little bit about that, Breeshia.

Breeshia: Sure! Today we have Ariana from Los Angeles –

Sandra: Ooh, no names. Just not names.

Breeshia: Sorry. I apologize about that.

Sandra: It's okay.

Breeshia: Someone from Los Angeles. It's a disabled senior in an assisted living facility. Last week she was touched by the integration of a number of intersectional issues and that led to breakout session intimacy.

We have someone from Oregon thinking about how white folks can disconnect from their bodies to remain in denial of racism. Part of our healing work is to reconnect with emotions and bodies.

We also have someone from Southern Maryland who has found this very helpful and appreciates the ability to sit with and notice without judgment how these things feel when they come up.

Sandra: Great. Thanks for sharing that. And thank you for everyone who wrote in. I know we have more people; it's just we can't share with everybody, unfortunately. Just know that we see you. We appreciate your presence.

Just to get us started. I know not everybody was able to watch the first training session so I highly recommend that you do. It'll make a lot of sense because it sets the context for which we are having this conversation. To briefly summarize: what we discussed in the first session is we talked about how is white supremacy actually harmful to white folks? And like I said, this isn't something we've often talked about because we're still struggling as a society to really identify and really acknowledge the harm that's happened to people of color.

Understandably, we haven't really gotten to explore how this is harmful to white folks. And if we look at the feminist movement there's been more discussion about how patriarchy is harmful to men. And especially when it comes to cutting them off from their emotions, putting them in this very small box of what's permissible, and toxic masculinity. That's where I got the phrasing of toxic whiteness.

When looking at the reactions of many white people when they start being confronted with the reality of systemic racism and having these conversations on race. A lot of times there's a tremendous desire to run away from that reality, from the pain that is being

expressed by people of color. Looking deeper as to where it was coming from, you really get present to the deep disconnection that white folks have.

And I identified these three different types of disconnection. The first one is the disconnection from the reality of systemic racism and the impact that it has on people of color. It's this interesting thing where white supremacy both taught in our society that being a racist is a terrible, terrible thing – the KKK thing and we don't want to be identified with that – and at the same time white people have been taught all these ways of thinking, of behaving, are not racist and sometimes are even anti-racist.

Being colorblind I think is one of the biggest ones. Where the actions that we've been taught are racially benign or don't matter and then do end up actually very racist. It's so hard for a lot of white folks to really notice what's happening as being racist when it's really clear to people of color. Because there's a disconnect from how systemic racism is showing up in our world – and in people through their implicit biases as well – this creates a lot of separation between white folks and people of color.

Because our experience of the same thing is so vast.

And the denial of that pain that people of color are feeling makes that disconnection even stronger, even more painful. That's often why it's hard for people of color to have conversations about racism with white folks. It's not just the thing that happened; it's the denial that so many white people keep trying to impose on our experiences that make it really emotionally difficult for us.

The question comes in: What is happening that people are not noticing and acknowledging the pain that people of color have been talking about for an extremely long period of time? And now on the internet it's pretty much everywhere. You don't have to go searching very far to get access to it.

This is where we come to disconnection number two: the pain of not being connected to your own body. Not being connected to your own emotional system. Because compassion is a naturally rising human emotion, in response to seeing somebody in pain. When we hear a baby crying, we naturally feel compassion; we want to go take care of the baby. When we see someone we care about in pain, we want to go and help them out.

We don't necessarily need to know the whole story. We see someone in pain; we want to do something about it. That's an appropriate response. And yet that doesn't come into play – as we have seen unfortunately even with children being killed by police

officers, there are some white people who get engaged in these mental backflips trying to justify it somehow.

You have to wonder what is happening that, with the death of a child, there's some search for justification of that. There's a true disconnection happening there and we're going to be talking about how to restore that connection later today.

Then the third disconnection is really from people with different degrees of consciousness. When we have less consciousness and then some people are trying to talk to us about, "Hey, this is happening. Did you know about that? We want to go back," and we're "Oh wait... That's not real. I'm not unconsciously hurting anybody. What I said wasn't racist. It wasn't harmful."

And that's because unconsciously causing pain is painful for us, actually, but we don't want to be with that pain. When we hurt somebody and we didn't know, it hurts us to know that. So if we can't be with that pain then we try to deny that it happened. That further creates the disconnection between us and with a different type of social consciousness.

What happens is when we start developing more social consciousness we then don't know how to be with folks who are less socially conscious than us. It's almost like we become allergic to them. We don't want to be associated with them. We see a lot of white folks who struggle to be with other white folks who don't know how racist they're sounding, who don't know how ignorant they're being, or that their behavior is.

That's because we want to be – there's a pain there, of being like, "I was once you and I don't want to be where you are so I'm going to try to push you as far away from me as possible." But that just furthers the disconnection because we're not just disconnected from another person – who may be our family member, it may be our friend, a loved one, a coworker – also, it's disconnecting us from our own selves. Because if we don't want to be with them, we don't want to be with it ourselves.

This does mean that all roads – don't come back to Rome – come back to us. If you notice, the disconnection starts out with us and something else. But really, it's about how we're relating to the reality of systemic racism or another person's experience. It's about how we're relating to it. What we're going to be talking about today is how we're going to get grounded in ourselves so that we can name this disconnection between us and the other thing, and then restore that connection.

Once we restore that connection through naming the disconnection, then we have the possibility of co-creating something different.

If this feels like a lot of jargon and words, don't worry. We have three hours to break it all down for you. I wanted to give you a map of where we came from in our last session and how this is going to be moving into the next session.

I want to have us think about this Compassionate Activism model. And as we're talking about this model, I want you to be thinking about a situation that's real for you. Maybe a recent situation. It's basically where something happened that related to racism or it could be other forms of systemic oppression where you have privilege. Whether that's male privilege, class privilege, cisgender, straight privilege; whatever's really resonant for you.

Just have it be a situation where you had privilege and it was an emotionally charged situation related to that type of systemic oppression. Because the dynamic is very similar regardless what kind of systemic oppression you're talking about. The specific manifestations or specific histories of it are all different, of course. But the dynamic is similar.

These things don't really separate. All these different forms of systemic oppression actually interconnect constantly. So I want you to pick a situation and make it a specific one. A specific situation to keep in mind as we're going through the Compassionate Activism model and be applying what I'm saying to that model.

Compassionate Activism is actually composed of three parts: one is the model – which I'm going to talk about now. This is what we're moving toward our ability to do. In order to actually engage and heal from systemic oppression and respond to everyday oppression with love and justice.

Number two is the Five Practices, which support us in getting to carry out this model. Because I'll describe it and you'll go, "Well, this sounds wonderful but I can't do that." I'm like, "Yeah, you know. That's what the Five Practices are for. They'll help you out."

The Five Practices are – which we'll cover today – they'll give you good guideposts to understanding: how do we think about this differently so we can be affirming our humanity and the humanity of other people?

Then in the practice sessions, you'll be getting a step-by-step, detailed process for how to really take those Five Practices and do them concretely, baby step by baby step. Because I know this is new for folks. You've been taught the opposite of how to do this.

We provide these different layers so folks can really get immersed in it and really start to navigate what we're trying to create, generally how to do it, and then a step-by-step process.

People move in different ways and we're trying to create space for all of that. The Compassionate Activism model, this is what we're trying to be able to do in every moment with everybody, especially ourselves. What this means is 100% committed to a vision of social justice, a vision of love and compassion, of care, and then 100% committed to acknowledging current reality. We do this in every moment in all our relations.

Let me first talk about what we don't normally do.

Or let me talk about what we normally do and then you'll see how this is distinct. Take for example, it's raining. I can't remember if I used this in the last session so sorry if I did. Take for example, it's raining outside. We don't want it to be raining because we're getting wet so go into this whole, like, "oh, I can't believe it's raining. What's wrong with the weather? I can't believe you did this to me. Why is it raining? Why am I getting cold? Why is my body so weak?" and so forth. "I want to go out and have a picnic!"

This sounds silly. It sounds really silly to think about because it's physical. But if we think about the situation that you had in mind around where you have privilege, something happened and we resisted it. If we sum up the rain with the other situation –whether somebody said something racist, made a rape joke, didn't realize they misgendered somebody – we resist what happened like I resisted the rain, that's not acknowledging of our current reality.

It's insisting that reality be something different than what it is. Which is that it's raining, something was said, something was done and the impact of that was harm. The impact of that was I got wet. When we are staying in this place of resisting current reality, it actually makes it really hard for us to do anything with it. What we've actually done is that we've taken this vision of what we had – this vision of us having fun in the some with a picnic, or having a vision where racism doesn't occur, sexism doesn't occur, transphobia doesn't occur, where we get to just walk around and live our lives without being targeted and attacked. We take this vision of ours and we make it a coercive demand upon reality, as if reality hadn't happened.

But it happened.

This is why I call it the toxic swirl of make believe, because we're trying to make what happened in the past not true. Which is impossible. It's make believe, right? It's make believe. If instead we take this vision, this preference that we have of adjusting where we roam and fun in the sun and say, "Okay, we're 100% committed to this vision and this is what's going on right now. Okay. So, it's raining. I'm not going to resist the fact that it's raining. It's raining. I want to have a picnic and I don't want to be wet. Okay. What do I need to do to go from point A to point B? Is that cool?"

"Let me just go inside. Hey, maybe we can have an indoor picnic. Who knows?"

You see how we take the current reality if we just say, "Hey, this is what's happening and we want to move from point A to point B, how do we dance from point A to point B?" That feels a little bit more obvious, perhaps creative, when dealing with a physical situation but it's actually the same thing when we have an emotional interaction with somebody.

If somebody says, for example, I was having dinner by myself at a restaurant and an older white man came up to me. Started talking to me and this is a common dynamic for me, as somebody who's perceived to be an Asian female. There are many racialized and sexualized dynamics between Asian women and white men for various reasons.

So the conversation went something like: he asked me a question about my meal and I gave some response but didn't really engage. He asked me a second question; I responded but gave no more energy. By the third question I was like, "He really wants to have this conversation." So I'm committed to living in a loving, caring world and having the energy that I put out be that. And I wasn't resisting what he was doing.

I was acknowledging. I could see that he was trying to connect. That he had, probably, some sort of entitled curiosity about me and that it was coming from a place of Othering me. Very likely this is what was going on. I was able to notice that, speculate that, and I didn't resist it. Where in the past, I would have very much been like, "This is happening again. This always happens. It shouldn't be. It's so racist!" A common reaction and one I've often had in the past.

But this time I just able to be like, "Okay. That's where he's probably coming from." So I turned to him and said, "I'm not interested in having a conversation with you and I really hope that you have a great night. I genuinely meant that. I really really meant that and my energy conveyed that as well. He obviously looked very surprised but went about his business, went back to his friend.

This is what I mean. This was a very small interaction. Oftentimes how racism and systemic oppression show up, they're in these small ways. Daily microaggressions that we experience walking around in the world. So this shows you what is possible in this very small example because if we're able to do this on a regular basis. Right now for most people, somebody coming up and they hear something racist, sexist, whatnot, it would just flare them for various reasons.

Their ability to actually see and approach the situation from a place of equanimity and connection and desire to be both loving and to mean what is harmful, this would be really difficult for folks. And that's okay. That's why we have the Five Practices. As you practice this, though, it isn't to do it for the entire – we often think of activism as, "Well, if the whole world's not changed then it's no good. It's still all terrible."

Well, if waited for the world to change 24/7/365 days a year, that's a really demoralizing, depressing place to be at. And the only thing that we have is this current moment. That's the only thing that we have, is this moment right here right now. So I say, let us try to be here in this moment with ourselves and with the other person, if there's another person involved. In this moment, who are we being? In this moment, how are we relating to ourselves and to our situation?

So, what we want to do is actually create more and more moments where we can come from this place, and have those moments be longer and longer. It's a practice. That's why we call it the Five Practices is because it takes time to build this as a skill. Understanding that you're going to suck at this, *really* going to suck at this in the beginning.

That's okay. That happens. It's going to be a little easier with me guiding you and then it's going to be harder when you do it on your own. Which means you just need to: keep coming to the practice sessions, watch the videos, get coaching calls, send those emails. We want to support you to get you more facility with this.

So I'm going to stop and pause to take questions on the content of this model. Note that it's the content of this model. If it doesn't make, if you don't know how to do it, that's perfectly normal. Because I haven't taught you how to do it yet! But if you have any questions about the content or the model itself, then I'll take some of those right now.

Do we have any questions coming up, Breeshia? Or any comments that people had while I was talking?



Breeshia: Someone mentioned – a moment while I scroll up to find it. How their biggest core pain has been the invisibilizing of their own complex heritage and identity, which I thought was an excellent point.

Sandra: Yes. So whiteness, we talked about in the last session how whiteness is a social construct created, inspired, and spread in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century in colonial Americas. And it really took white folks from different parts of Europe, and in exchange – who were being really oppressed and exploited by the elite white folks, mainly from the English/England areas, who owned most of the land in this country. And whiteness was used to actually pit poor white folks against people of color, who had much more in common with each other because they were being exploited and oppressed – in different ways – but by the same people.

By granting poor white folks white privilege so they gained access to better jobs, better housing, better education, better social standing – they in exchange gave up their cultural heritage. It erased their differences to become white and have social standing superior to people of color. This is something that we see continue to this day with the Southern strategy.

If you are familiar with US politics and the Republican party you have the Southern strategy, starting around the 1950s and 60s, which was an explicit way to use racially-coded language to get poor white folks riled up and blaming people of color for all the problems in this country. There's more to it; I won't go into all of it. But that's the general notion, so they would vote against their economic interests.

All of this happened to, and really did, make homogenous a diverse group of people just because they happened to be white. So they were cut off from their cultural heritage, cut off from the reasons they left Europe. Risking death, risking illness, and coming to these colonized lands, and the treatment they received here as well – it separated them from all of that. It also separated them from their experiences as marginalized folks within the community – due to class, sexual orientation, gender, geography – with the promise that you're white, at least you're better. You're white. You get white privilege.

And this was the Faustian bargain that was created. Part of the work is reconnecting yourself to that background, to your own history. Which is not something we'll talk about here, with this program, but it's definitely important work to do.

Breeshia: Someone also asked for an explanation on Othering.

Sandra: Part of what happens with people of various types of privilege is that you get to be normal. You get to be normal and good. So in this country – the United States – and throughout the world, there doesn't actually need to be white folks in a country for this to happen because of the way that the economy and the politics are so interdependent. My family's from Korea and I see white supremacy very much in our culture in Korea even though there are hardly any white folks there.

Because of the role the US has played in it, in terms of what is considered good. For example, in Korea, wealthier people have more Western furniture – sofas, beds. Poor folks have more Korean furniture, which are mats that we lay on the ground, we have tables that are low; we don't do chairs. What is considered "good" and "normal" is related in the racial sense with what we associate with whiteness. And then what is considered "other" and therefore "bad" as opposed to just different, is what's related to communities of color.

So at the same time cornrows can be edgy and cool on a white person but is unkempt and distracting on a Black person. These are things that still carry forward today in schools and the US military. The US military has actually banned hairstyles for Black folks. And then when they got pushback, I think two braids and that's it. In schools, you're not allowed to have natural hair.

This is what it means to other somebody. We don't just see other people as different; it can't just be this is from one culture, another culture, another culture and there's value in it. It impacts people in different ways and we just have to navigate those differences. It's just, "this is good. This is normal. And all this other stuff is other, is bad."

More questions?

Breeshia: Yeah, someone – I guess this is a two-part question about the same thing – when you switched to a direct compassionate approach with the older white man, what was it exactly that felt better to you about that approach? And to clarify, was it letting go of your frustration, humanizing the man, or something else?

Sandra: When I switched to it, what felt good to me was the fact that I was both affirming my experience and affirming his humanity, his experience. As opposed to me resisting my experience and resisting his experience. Before, in the past – and this was a pretty common reaction, not just for me – I would have...it caused a pain. Because I could just be having a pleasant conversation with somebody, but then racism got in the way of that. And it disconnected me from him. Because he was seeing me as other. He was seeing me as this exotic person who he had entitled curiosity around.

This is something that I've experienced pretty much my entire life. And then as I got older, starting from when I was 14 years old and it looked like I was 11 or 12, that got sexualized. I had older white men in their 20s, 30s, and 40s continuously nonstop approaching me asking for my number. When I looked like I was 11 or 12!

So I have this long history of this. Understandably, being viewed and treated in that kind of way, as an exoticized object, is painful for me. So I wanted to ignore that and repress that and move on. And I just wrote that other person off. Understandably, because they were causing me harm.

In doing the healing work to take care of myself in this way, what I got present to – in the ways that I'll teach you – is the fact that the pain was actually me feeling like I wasn't a part of addressing the situation. I wasn't a part of the larger conversation. I felt like I wasn't doing what I needed to do, what I'd been called forth to do, particularly around street harassment.

This is before I started Everyday Feminism; I'd been working in the non-profit sector in various areas but this particular area I wasn't working on. Interestingly enough, fast-forward to when I started Everyday Feminism and obviously we talk about harassment, rape culture, exoticization of women of color and male sexual entitlement; all that stuff. I found myself not feeling pain in this interaction. Part of that was because I had taken care of my need, which was to be involved in this fight. To do something. To change this culture.

There are other parts to it, too, but it was a very significant part of why it was no longer charged for me because I knew I was a part of changing this context. I was a part of changing these norms in our society. One, I knew I was doing what I had been called to do around this issue. Secondly, I could see the other person and what I could speculate as to where they're coming from.

That didn't break the connection for me. I still continued to feel a level of connection with him as just a human being. Seeing that he was suffering from his toxic whiteness. I could see that he wanted to connect and the only way he knew how to connect in that moment was through racializing me. He couldn't connect with me as an actual human being even though he actually probably wanted to. But he didn't know how to do that because of how society taught him to look at Asian women.

I could see that suffering in him. And so I was able to maintain my connection with him through that and I could see his humanity. That's why I was able to be caring. Not that I

was going to do all this stuff for him, but I acknowledged where he was coming from and wished him the best. And we don't need to interact anymore.

I also think that maybe I should create little cards that have some of the articles from the website: flirting with women of color in non-racist ways, or why it's racist to ask Asian folks where they're from. I'm thinking about having a card because oftentimes I don't want to engage in that full conversation. This is why Everyday Feminism already exists, so we can just be like, "Read this article. Bye bye now." I actually am thinking – because it happens – about printing out some cards when people want to talk to me and I don't want to talk to them.

I'm going to move on to the next section unless there's some burning question that you notice, Breeshia.

Breeshia: One more that I think is a good one: How do I know if I'm exhibiting entitled curiosity or curiosity to truly understand another's experience for the goal of being more compassionate?

Sandra: That's a very excellent question. I am glad that you raised that. I think that a lot of people don't know when they're having – this is part of it. You've been taught to behave in racist ways. You were taught to act in racist ways and we're taught that they aren't racist. This is a good question.

So entitled curiosity and respectful curiosity, the distinction is: Are you inviting somebody to engage in this conversation and you want to know more about them as a human being? Or do you feel like you can ask these questions regardless of how they feel about it? And then often, a telltale sign is: do you get upset about it when they don't reply? When they don't give you the answer that you want?

And, are you looking to them as a whole human being. Their race is one aspect of them but you notice other things about them as well. You notice their style: maybe they have some pins, maybe they have an air of confidence or whatever. You notice them as a whole, complex human being but one of the things is their race, their gender. That would really be the distinction between the two.

I'd say that 95% of the time when I'm asked the question, "Where are you from?" it's coming from a point of entitled curiosity place. Because most of the time these are folks I don't know, who don't have any relationship.

If you're a stranger, it can be rude to ask a lot of personal questions. Just saying, if you're a stranger.

They oftentimes will get mad when I don't respond the way they want. That's a telltale sign. One of the signs of entitled curiosity is around male sexual entitlement, with a male approaching a woman – though this happens with different genders to different genders, for sure – but oftentimes men have been taught that they can just –

I had a question asked of me: I know that many times when women are approached by men, it's in problematic or obnoxious ways, but I'm not. So am I never allowed to say anything? That feels really wrong to me.

I was like, "I get that that's your preference, that you want to be able to have a conversation with this person. But your preference does not trump someone's safety. Someone's safety is more important. And there are other ways to engage in conversation if you want to have a conversation that are about inviting them. Seeing if it's something they want to do as opposed to imposing it on them.

Those are just some ways to think about the distinction between entitled curiosity and respectful curiosity. The general rule would be: if you don't have a relationship with this person, don't ask personal questions until you develop a little bit more of a rapport and ask if you can ask them a question. If they say no, respect that.

If you do have a relationship with this person, still ask them. Don't ever assume just because of the relationship that you can ask these questions. Because you're not asking from an individual perspective; you're asking as both an individual and from your collective identities. For the marginalized person, there's a history of this question. You may think that you're asking me just where I'm from and that's not a big deal. I've been asked that, when I was growing up, by every single person who I've met for the first time.

So if you imagine every single time, I was born and raised in this country, and constantly being treated like a foreigner. And people are arguing with me about whether or not I'm a US citizen. They will argue with me about that. So you're asking, not from a place of vacuum, you're asking in the context of systemic oppression.

That's something to be mindful about. And that's why sometimes it's just best not to go there. And wait until you can build more of a relationship and you can ask in a respectful way and you really know what the distinction is.

Alright. So moving along.

There are Five Practices of Compassionate Activism. This is the main component of today. I just want to note that I have basically two and a half hours to give you five

practices and each practice is pretty chock full of stuff. We're going, and I want to make sure that we have time to engage and do the breakout rooms because I think reflecting and talking with other people is a rich part of this work. We're doing this in community, as part of the Compassionate Activism model.

Know that that's what the practice sessions are really going to help deepen your understanding of these five practices and how to actually do them on a day-to-day basis. Today it's going to be more: Here's the general concept. We're going to have you reflect on how you relate to it, how you understand it, and then we're going to move on to the next one.

So keep that in mind.

The first one we're going to talk about is the practice of noticing toxicity and acknowledging multiple realities. Now, there's going to be some repetition, which is good because this is new for y'all. There's going to be some repetition throughout the practices because these are all interconnected. With that older white man in that restaurant, I didn't go through all five practices because I have more fluidity. I have more ease with them. It all happened in one single moment; natural and spontaneous response was there.

It's going to take some time to get there, so what I did was more to break it out more for y'all to start to grapple and start to play around with it. That's why there's going to be some repetition. First thing is just even noticing when toxicity shows up in our initial reactions. What happens, as I said before, in the presence of racism, there is pain. There is pain and there's no getting around that fact. To be in the presence of systemic oppression, to truly be in touch with it is a painful experience because there's something violent happening.

In response to that we can feel powerless, helpless, voiceless; even as people of privilege. Because we've been taught that this is just the way it is and we don't know what else to do. In order to deal with that pain and that overwhelming sense of "I don't know what to do" we mainly do two different things: one is demand that reality be different than what it is and secondly, making the other person wrong as a human being. Or make ourselves wrong, actually. Just make somebody wrong as a human being.

What this means, like I talked about with the rain, "I want to have a fun day in the sun with a picnic," demanding that things be different, that they should have known better. Or "Oh, you're making too big of a deal out of it. It wasn't that bad. You're playing the

race card” or “you’re blowing it out of proportion. If you had just done this, it wouldn’t have happened.”

This is all make believe. This is all still make believe because what happened happened. All of the shooting in the world is not going to change that. To expand upon what I mean by making another person wrong as a human being: it means we take something that happened and we make it mean a lot more about them as a person. We judge them, we shame them, we police them, we punish them.

Basically kick them off the island. And what happens is that actually ends up dehumanizing them. We feel like we’re justified if there’s somebody that’s causing us pain, somebody with less consciousness. And yes, if somebody has a repeated pattern of causing harm and a refusal to take responsibility for that, we have the right to protect ourselves and disengage from that person. At the same time, there’s a reason why we think the way that we do. There’s a reason why we act the way that we do.

The question is: What is that reason? Why is this happening?

If we move from a place of curiosity as opposed to taking and making these global labels to dismiss them, then there’s an opening to work with them. And work with ourselves. If we come from a place of just writing them off, then the conversation is shut down. And it’s understandable why we do that, because this person has caused us pain. We don’t want to deal with them.

That’s fine. There’s no right or wrong to this. All it means is that if there’s something happening within ourselves that needs our attention. If we cannot be with the other person, if we cannot hold space for the other person and their experiences and their humanity; it really means just “Don’t try and do that.” That’s all it means. That means that we have some pain that we need to take care of. It’s a red flag for some self-reflection.

Because what happens is, when we try to go after the person who hurt us or who we see has hurt other folks, then we’re coming at them when we’re wounded. And if we’re wounded, our ability to assess a situation is not there. We’re being triggered from the past, from our current pain, from our fears about the future; all these things. It’s hard to distinguish what’s actually going on until we’ve taken care of ourselves and then we can be like, “Okay, this is what’s happening. Let me go engage with the other person.”

Usually, if you think about it: If I have set you on fire, yes, you obviously want to have me stop setting you on fire, but you also might want to focus on the fact that you've been set on fire. Put yourself out and take care of your wounds. Then come for me.

There's just a sequence to this. That's all. A way to start getting out of this toxicity – as I said, the toxic swirl of make-believe – is to start understanding there are actually multiple realities going on. There are multiple realities going on. We're getting a little existential here so bear with me. You and I are having an experience of this current conversation. They are entirely different experiences.

So what I'm experiencing versus what you are experiencing versus what this recording will show is all different. You get that? It's all different. There's no right or wrong to the fact that it's different; it's just different.

What does this mean?

It means that I didn't have the intention of harming you and my actions caused you harm. Obviously, we've been talking a lot in activist spaces and feminist spaces about how someone's good intentions don't cancel out the fact that they've been harmful to somebody else. And it doesn't cancel out the fact that there was no intent to harm. All it means is that there was a disconnect between the intention and the impact.

If we can actually hold space for the fact that my reality is different from your reality, and I guess that we usually are not ready to engage in that other person's reality until we've taken care of our own. And that's okay! At least just start noticing that they're different. That they can be different and that's okay!

That there's no right or wrong to that, then we start to have an opening. Because where we come into problems is when we say our internal reality, how I'm experiencing something, should be the same as the other persons. That what we're experiencing is precisely what actually happened in external reality. You have to understand that what you are experiencing is – Where this is coming from, if we want to talk about scientific, objective truth and there's one absolute reality, external reality happens and we don't have access to it.

I'll make it really clear that you don't have access to external reality – if someone is recording this, the words are being said, actions that are being done – you don't have access to it directly. Everything is filtered through your senses, through your personality, through your past, through your trauma, through your baggage. Everything is filtered. You don't have direct access to external reality.



You also don't have access to another person's internal reality. Because you're not a mind reader. You don't know what's going on with them precisely. You can speculate and check in, be curious and ask, but you don't know for sure. And because of the status quo and systemic oppression, you can probably make some good guesses as to what's going on because we've all been taught the same lies.

At the same time, it's never complete.

Even if that is true, who knows what else is happening. So with that older white man, I would bet money that he was coming from the place that I suspected. Would I be surprised if there was more going on than that? No. What I speculated I know to be incomplete. It's probable but it's not absolutely true. There could be something different happening. And holding space for that.

At the moment I wasn't curious about it. But that's okay. So really understanding that when we take our internal reality and we say that it should be the reality that other people around us are experiencing, and so we start to push our reality onto other folks: well, other folks are doing the same thing, "My experience should be your experience." And we try pushing that on other folks. All we do is keep hitting each other, just knocking heads.

That's the situation that we're in right now between socially conscious folks and less socially conscious folks, people with privilege and marginalized folks, white folks and people of color, men and women; however you want to break down the systemic oppression identities. There is this dominant narrative of what is actually happening and is trying to knock out and erase the experiences of marginalized folks and suppress the experiences of people with privilege.

So we don't actually get in touch with each other's realities. That's why the first step is really just identifying, "Okay, this is what's going on. All these are different. These are just different and that's okay."

When I talk about acknowledging external reality – that something happened, that something was said, some energy was exchanged between people – to clarify, when I say acknowledging and accepting I'm not talking about saying okay, that it's acceptable. When I say something, "That's okay," or "that's reality" I'm not saying that's acceptable. That this is preferable. That this isn't causing harm.

What I am saying is that it happened. I'm acknowledging that it happened; that's it! I'm not resisting that it happened because it happened. It's not going to serve me to resist it,

even though I want to resist the fact that it happened and I want to engage in the blaming, shaming, judging, should-ing, insisting that it should be different in the past.

But we can create something different for the future and that's what this work is all about. But we're not denying that what happened happened. It just: it happened. And that's what I mean by accepting, by saying something is okay.

I want to go into breakouts and I want people to consider: What are the ways toxicity shows up in your initial reaction to the situation that had selected at the beginning of today's session? What ways did your desire to resist the fact that it happened or in your desire to make someone else or yourself wrong as a human being? How did that show up? And then, is there anything that shifts? Or maybe nothing shifts.

That's okay. That happens.

Did something shift as you considered that we all have different experiences of the same thing and it's happening?

I'm going to put this into the chat box so you have it to refer to in the future as you're doing the breakout rooms. The breakout rooms, for people who haven't done that before, I'm going to be putting people in groups of two or three and you're going to be answering these questions. If you find yourself by yourself, that's okay, just answer the questions by yourself. It's not a problem.

If you don't want to enter a breakout room, if you don't want to talk to anybody, you can just ignore the invitation. Everything is always invitation here; we don't coerce anybody to do anything. It's a general rule that we have. You can do that as well. If you find yourself still in the main room with me, that's fine, too. Just do the questions by yourself. That's all.

So let me do the breakout rooms. Okay...

All right. Everyone's being sent across to the breakout rooms. Oh, you have ten minutes! You have ten minutes. You have ten minutes. Sorry. Forgot to tell you...

Oh, hey! Thank you...

People, start coming and trickling back now. And as folks are coming in, I'm going to open up a white board, which is everyone's fun time. We are back now and hopefully people, either in conversation with somebody else or by themselves, were able to reflect around the question I asked around: how does toxicity show up in the reaction to the

situation you thought up, or generally – if you have a more general focus. And also what shifts for you as you think about the different realities that are playing at the same time.

What I would like for folks to do is talk about what was that like to have that conversation with people. What did you reflect on? What did you notice coming up for you as you reflected on that? Both share it, please, on the white board as well as in the chat box.

So what came up for you? What are you noticing as you were exploring those questions?

For folks who are using the white board for the first time, you can just kind of write in it. If you have something short, you can do it in the white board. If you have something longer, I suggest you write in the group chat just to conserve space.

Breeshia: Can you briefly explain how to use the white board?

Sandra: To use the white board: you should see a bar that says “select text, draw, spotlight”. If you don’t, you can go up to the top where that black bar will drop down. It says mute and video and I think if you hit “more” it shows up.

Usually Josette explains this. I don’t quite remember.

But if you don’t see it – I’m afraid I’m going to have to wait for Josette to tell me – but Breeshia, do you want to share a little bit about what folks are saying. If you can’t write in the white board you can write in the chat box, too. That’s always an option.

Breeshia: Yeah. People are really engaging, so thanks.

Let’s see: Someone mentioned that they feel embarrassment and shame for everything they’ve said or done in the past or questions that they’ve asked people. Let’s see.

Someone mentioned the sorrow that they’ve felt since privilege is a mental loss of connection. I mean, a loss of connection.

Let’s see. Someone mentioned that thinking about how all of these systems work really causes them to question themselves and their motives. Then someone also mentioned that they feel conflicted between how others see them as a white person and how they feel as a person of color.

Sandra: So I think there seems to be – let me remind you, whatever came up for you as you’re exploring this and listening to this conversation, there’s no right or wrong for you. It feels like for a lot of folks, but not necessarily everybody, there’s a realization that

perhaps things have been harmful. They have been causing harm by not giving everybody space to have their different realities.

The toxicity may be something new for some folks. But for other folks who've been through this before or other similar programs, maybe this is not as new for you. There are always places that are new that we haven't considered growing in.

The nature of what I asked of you – I asked you to pick an emotionally charged situation – and I believe that for the most part, our emotional charge comes from resistance to what happened. By definition, you were engaged in the toxic swirl of make-believe and you weren't holding space for other people's humanities and experiences. So this makes sense. The point is that when you notice that, it's to use this to shift into focusing on what is actually going on.

That is the point. The point is not to sit in here and just swirl some more, making yourself wrong for the fact that you had been engaging in toxic swirl, that you had been resisting, that you had been judgmental. The point here is not to keep swirling, because that's just more toxic swirl upon toxic swirl. You make yourself feel guilty about feeling guilty. We're not trying to do that.

We're using it as a red flag. We're using it as a red flag to know, okay, now we want to shift our focus away from resisting and into embracing. Let me pause now with the white board.

Is there anything else you want to comment, anything you want to share about what other folks were saying while I was talking, Breeshia? Before I move on.

Breeshia: People are saying a lot of good things. I'm still sifting through it.

Sandra: You can just read it. Just read randomly.

Breeshia; My discussion partner used the term "white panic" to describe our responses when racism is called out in discussion. I think when we're called face...

Sandra: Hold on... I muted them.

Breeshia: Okay. When we are called to face our own racism, I found that really useful.

Good to share my experience in discussions that often left me feeling awful, misunderstood, and not welcome to exchange our respective realities; that leaves me feeling grief.

Sandra: I think that's actually really useful, to feel the pain. Because there was a disconnection that got created, remember. This all comes back to disconnection. So noticing that is actually tremendously important because it tells us that there's something that needs to be taken care of. I say that pain is a wonderful opportunity – not because I enjoy feeling pain or anything – but pain is a wonderful opportunity because we have a choice to make.

We can choose to either respond by rejecting it, by fearing it, denying it, or we can respond with care and compassion and move toward it. It's actually that we can respond with care and compassion when we need it the most. When we are in pain. This is why I say pain is a wonderful opportunity. It gives us the opportunity to be the loving beings that we want to be.

We always are; it's just a matter of getting rid of the stuff that gets in our way of us being loving. The first thing – now that you've gotten present to the toxicity (it wasn't a happy place; people don't want to stay there. Don't worry; we're not going to keep you there) – we're going to move into the practice of humble curiosity and gentle mindfulness.

I just want to make a comment about the term mindfulness because it's a phrase, a term, from Buddhism – and I am deeply Buddhist. The way I interact with the world actually comes from a very strong Buddhist background, and so what I've done is taken a lot of the practices and philosophies and applied them to a context of social justice work and then white supremacy. I tried to make it as accessible as possible to people who have no background in Buddhism.

If you have a Buddhist practice or you have a mindfulness and meditation practice, you will often see the things that I'm talking about are similar to what you learn in those types of spaces. That's great! And there are many paths to being grounded in reality and it being a choice so that we can align our intentions with our actions. Buddhism is one of them. There are many other paths as well.

This is the language that I use. It's the one I'm familiar with. And I'll explain what mindfulness means in a second. Because people use it in all sorts of weird ways so we're going to talk about that.

Once again, being curious about what is the disconnection happening. What is the core pain underneath our initial reaction. And as we've talked about, we can usually trace it back to one of these three: The disconnection from the reality of systemic racism and its impact on people of color. The disconnection from you and yourself. And the disconnection from other people.

Much of the time, in the beginning, you're probably in the first two. And as you develop your consciousness, the third one will probably become more apparent to you.

Having humble curiosity: the practice is grounded first and foremost in having humble curiosity. This builds off of the first practice of holding space, acknowledging that people have different realities. Once we can acknowledge that that's happening, then we can be like, "Okay. What is underneath that," and understand that our initial reaction to the situation is simply that; it's an initial reaction. It's a red flag.

And that curiosity is super important because if we come in assuming that we know what is going on, that what our filters are telling us initially, then we don't actually know. Because there are so many layers of experience happening at the same time. There is, as we talked about, my internal experience, somebody else's internal experience, there is external experience – which is, if we are recording, what we saw being said, things are being done, and then more vaguely, the energies being exchanged.

If we assume that our internal reality, at least the initial reaction, is what's true for everything, then we get into problems. We have to just be like, "Hm, maybe something else is happening," or "maybe something more is happening". it's not really a questioning that initial flare of resistance, of anger and frustration, anxiety. It's not saying that that's not real.

It's just saying that initial reaction is leading, that it's coming from a much deeper place. It's coming from something else more, usually beyond what is happening. And we don't know how much of it is happening because of the situation at hand versus the history, the trauma, the baggage that we bring into it. Sometimes, it's an 80/20 relationship. Sometimes this is 80, this is 20. Sometimes this is 100%. I don't know.

We don't know.

What having humble curiosity opens up for is having the possibility that something could be different, something could be created there. If we don't have curiosity, we assume that we know exactly what it's about right now. We assume we know exactly what it's going to be like in the future. There's no opening, because usually what we're assuming and treating like it's the truth is not what we want to create and it's also denying the past. Is denying others' experiences. There's no opening there.

When I talk about bringing gentle mindfulness – I know it's a little redundant but mindfulness is a gentle attention that we bring to what is happening that is not based in judging, shaming, blaming. It's not trying to resist it, it's not trying to change what we're

experiencing, and this is how we normally deal with emotional pain. So saying, “no, let me just.. Whatever arrives, let it arrive. There is no right or wrong to it; it just is what it is. Let me explore. Let me be curious.”

That’s actually all that we’re talking about. Well, that’s like the action of being mindful. A lot of people have experienced mindfulness in their yoga practice, for example, and meditation. I want to put a caveat here – and I don’t want to spend too much time on it but I just want to say that – the ways that mindfulness is often taught in the United States is limited. It is taught in a way to reduce stress, to calm down, to relieve anxiety.

Which is great. It’s great to do that. I think that’s why yoga and meditation has become so popular in the Western world because we are seeking some sort of process to help us navigate this world that is so turbulent and harmful. And oftentimes people will stop there. People will stop with the stress reduction because they’ll feel calmer. They’ll breathe. They’ll be in their body. They’ll notice a bit more. And they’ll be calmer; they stop there.

What I’m asking – what we’ve done in the past and what we’ll continue to throughout this program – is I’ll have you do what you’re probably more used to: physical mindfulness, of getting back in touch with your body. Doing a body scan, getting into breathing, and creating spaciousness. We’re not going to stop there; we’re going to go deeper. We’re going to use that spaciousness to uncover, get in touch with, the deeper emotional pain that caused the physical upset in the first place.

That’s the key difference here, is that we’re going to use our physical spaciousness – which, as I stated, you’re probably more used to if you had some yoga or meditation practice – and we’re going to dig deeper and really let arise whatever arise that is the source of it. Then if we get in touch with the source of that pain, what created that pain in the first place? What happened in the world to us that that pain exists?

Mindfulness, when taken to its full extent, actually becomes quite a radicalizing practice. It’s not how it’s often used. So that’s why I’m saying that in a different way. There are various reasons why it happens the way it happens but I won’t get into that. I just want to note that since various people here may have a mindfulness practice of sorts.

How do we do this? How do we shift from the toxic swirl of make believe to gentle mindfulness? As I said, you first do it by noticing the toxicity and you notice that you’re trying to change it, make it go away, better, making somebody wrong; and you use that as a red flag. Then you shift to acknowledging your feelings, whatever is arising. Then as

we do this, you'll become aware of a need and you'll be called forth to take care of that need.

It may take some time. Especially, the deeper the trauma is, the longer you held it for, the younger you were when it happened, all this kind of impacts how much acknowledgement you need. There's no right or wrong to that. And as you acknowledge it and be with it, it will get released in time. Sometimes you can move within a ten-minute session with me and sometimes it'll take some months. Sometimes it'll take some years.

There's no right or wrong to that. Just means that whatever is coming up from you just needs some care. It needs your attention; that's why it's flaring. We covered some of this in the past training session. These are some affirmations to help you engage with your feelings in a gentle, mindful, caring way.

"I feel X and that's okay/that matters."

If that feels like something. I had somebody tell me about how he was afraid to raise his hand in class – he was a college student – because he was afraid he might make a mistake. He might say something "wrong". So I just had him say, "I can say something not great and that's okay." He couldn't say that. I was like, "Okay. Well, it's possible to say something not great and that be okay"?

He was like, "I don't know. Maybe."

I was like, 'Well, is it possible to say it's possible to say something not great in class and that be okay?' and he was like, "Okay. I can say that."

Be with wherever you are. "Right now, I feel anxiety about talking about race and that happens. That's okay". If that feels like, "No, that's wrong. Let me speak up. I need to say something".

You can say, "It's possible to feel anxiety about talking about race and that matters. That's okay."

If it's a pain that you're in connection with, you can say, "I see your pain and I care". That's what we did last time.

If it's about the past and you're beating yourself up about something that you did or did not do, you can say "I did/said something that was racist and that happened" as



opposed to “I said something that was racist. How could I have done that? I can’t believe it. I’m a terrible ally.” Blah blah.

It happens. It happened.

Mind you, this is just the second of Five Practices. We’re not stopping here, but we’re entering our own internal realities through here. If you feel like, “Oh, we need to do some other stuff” we’re going to get there. We’re just here for now. Step by step, right?

So, we’re going to practice this. We’re going to practice this now. And this is always optional as well. Everything is by invitation. You can go in as deep as you want. You can pull out whenever you want to and all of that is okay. You can also just listen, if you feel more comfortable there. We were going to have more opportunities for you to practice and this won’t be the last one.

I also encourage you to just play with me. See how it goes! Who knows? Who knows how it’ll turn out? I don’t know. You don’t know.

I want folks to get settled, get comfortable, close your eyes; it’s a little bit easier if your eyes are closed. And just take a couple of deep breaths. Breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in and breathe out. And I want you to bring your attention to your feet at first. Just notice how it’s feeling; if it’s tingling or gone to sleep.

Not trying to change it or make it go away. Raise your attention up to your legs and just notice. Not trying to change it. Is it feeling comfortable? Is it tense? Then bring your attention to your torso and just notice what sensations are coming up for you. Is there tightness? Is there relaxation?

Just exploring. And then come up to your arms. Notice how they’re feeling; what sensations are arising. There’s no right or wrong. Come up to your neck and your head and notice how it’s feeling. I want you to think about the situation you identified earlier today. I want you to remember what that situation was like. Probably the emotional charge is coming up, or maybe something else is happening.

I want you to just notice what’s coming up for you as you think about that situation again. If there’s some toxicity; that happens. Just notice that. If there’s anger, frustration, pain, rejection. I want you to put your hand on your body where you feel the sensations the most. Just notice what’s coming up for you there, what the sensation is like, how big is it?

Is it moving? Does it have a shape? Just notice. Not trying to change it or make it go away. Just letting it arise. Knowing that you can come in and out of this as much as you want. And I want you to breathe in and repeat "I see you". Breathe out "I see you". Breathe in "I see you". Breathe out "I see you".

Keep noticing. Noticing what's coming up for you. if it's shifted or if it's the same; just notice that.

I want you to repeat, breathing in "I see you," breathe out, "You matter". Breathe in "I see you". Breathe out "You matter". Breathe in "I see you". Breathe out "You matter".

Keep noticing. If you're feeling like that phrase doesn't resonate with you, you can go back to "I see you".

Just notice if it's moved. Maybe it's different. Maybe it's the same. Just keep noticing and acknowledge. Breathe in "I see you". Breathe out "I care". Breathe in "I see you". Breathe out "I care". Breathe in "I see you". Breathe out "I care". Keep noticing.

I want you to, if you feel ready to, ask it if there's anything it need from you. If there's something you can give it. If it says something or doesn't say anything, that's okay. If it does say something, you can say you acknowledge that you haven't been doing that and you're going to, if you want to. If you haven't been told anything you can go back to saying "I see you. I care".

Just keep noticing and breathing into it. Keep breathing into it. Letting whatever arises arise. I want you to say thank you to it for sharing with you, for being with you. I want you to take a deep breath in and out, in and out. Get back into your body. I guess you're always in your body. Just open your eyes and wiggle your feet. Move around a little bit. Come back to here. Come back to this external reality.

Just kind of relax. Sigh if you feel like it, coming back to this moment. And I'm going to create a new white board so that folks can write. What was it like for you? What came up for you? What did you notice? And also share in the chat box if you have something longer. As people are typing, I want to comment that this is a group process so I need to kind of move people along a certain path. Wherever you ended up you ended up.

If you got as far as the affirmation of "I see you" and the other ones didn't feel right for you, that's cool. That happens. There's no right or wrong to it. If you didn't hear something, that happens. Just keep acknowledging it. If you heard all these things, felt all these things, that happens. If you felt nothing and feeling it escaping you and you

kind of felt like you were trying to figure out where the sensation was happening – it kept moving around, slipping away – that’s okay, too.

Just keep noticing there’s no right or wrong to wherever you are. Just be with wherever you are with that gentleness, that gentle attention.

So, Breeshia, people are sharing. You can also type in the group chat, too. If you want to share a little bit about what folks are writing so people on the phone can hear?

Breeshia: Yeah, absolutely. There’s not much coming up in the group chat but it seems like on the white board a lot of people are sharing feelings of shame. That’s coming up a lot. Someone mentioned a yell stifled in the throat. Anger. Not wanting to feel bad. Deep sadness.

In the group chat someone mentioned that the affirmations were comforting and they also found solace in visualizing the people they care about and sending the affirmations to them as well. Again, shame and white fragility is coming up quite a bit.

Sandra: Needing to forgive myself for messing up in the past. My voice asking to be left out. confusion. Longing. Guilt. Thankfulness for acknowledging myself. Felt acceptance and self-love. Love. Something. Creating humanity.

A wide range. It’s a wide range wherever you are and you can do this practice. Take this exercise and just continue being with it. Let yourself be moved in the process. If more and more sadness and guilt is coming up, being like, “I feel guilt and that’s happening. I feel sadness and that’s happening. I feel anger and that’s happening”.

Wherever you are, there’s no right or wrong to it. It’s true for you. So be with it. On that note, I want to give us a ten-minute break. Coming back at 2:50 and please be prompt because we’re behind schedule – as if often the case.

With this exercise and what came up for you, know this is a lifelong journey that you’re trying to undo. Not just your lifetime of indoctrination by white supremacy but also centuries of our countries and what’s been embedded and passed on to us. It’s not just going to go away in two seconds. It’s going to take some time and that’s okay. That happens. So come back at the 50-minute mark...

Breeshia, are you here? Trying to find you...

Breeshia, where are you?

Breeshia: I’m here!

Sandra: There you are! Hard to find you in the videos sometimes. Okay.

It is 2:50; I'm behind schedule. So I'm going to say we might not have as much breakout rooms. Sorry. But mind you we have lots of practice sessions where we get to interact with each other. That way we have enough time to cover what we need to get to. Were you going to say something, Breeshia?

Breeshia: No. I was just reading comments.

Sandra: Alrighty then. This is the third Practice. It is the Practice of Self-Accountability and Radical Education. Now for folks who've been with me in the other Compassionate Activism programs that I've provided, this will be different. When I was doing the other Compassionate Activism programs, it was focused on healing from systemic oppression as marginalized people. And I suspected that things would have to shift when talking specifically about people with privilege and how this model would be different.

This is one of the primary changes is that once you get in touch with what is going on and you're feeling the sense of shame and guilt and frustration about how you've been playing out racism unconsciously, then we talk about what's needed at this moment, what can we do to make amends. And also understand: where is that coming from? Understanding that we need to unlearn white supremacy.

What we have to realize is that white supremacy has taught us that the pain of people of color just isn't real. We see this constant denial in the media, unfortunately. We can have this come up in conversation with people that we care about. We ourselves may have wondered "Are they making it up? Are they exaggerating?" There's a reason why we think this. I say that the system is always perfect. So whatever outcome we're seeing it, that's because the system designed it that way.

It's interesting to live in a society that says that racism is terrible. It's awful and horrible to be a racist. And then be constantly ignoring the racism that's manifesting. This exists because of that disconnect I was talking about earlier: disconnect from the reality of systemic racism. It lives, it is allowed, and it continues to exist because we've all been taught to deny, minimize, blame, shame, police, and silence people of color around it.

As I mentioned before, compassion is a naturally arising feeling in response to pain. When you're in the presence of pain, you want to do something to alleviate that pain and suffering. This naturally occurs amongst us all the time. If somebody's upset, if someone's hurt, we want to go and comfort them, particularly if we know them. But even somebody we don't know. We get concerned and care.

So what gets in the way of having naturally arising care and compassion occur? That's where white supremacy comes in. In order to justify the situation that people of color find themselves in. We keep saying, "It didn't really happen. It wasn't that bad. It's your fault anyways. You were asking for it. You should've behaved differently. You just need to stop talking about it; you're making it worse". This happens for all people with marginalized identities and then when you as a person with privilege start to raise it up, you also get pulled into that.

People want to deny you, cut you off, sentence you, and engage in the whole "whoever smelt it dealt it" type racism. Where if you point out racism, they go "You're the real racist!" It does its best to really mess with your understanding of reality. To use the term gaslighting – if people are unfamiliar with that, gaslighting has you question your own experiences. What you experience isn't real because you keep getting these messages that tell you it's not real.

As people of color, we hear those messages and we have our own experiences and our families and our collective communities' histories that counter those lies. But we still struggle with it, too, because we got bombarded, so we have our own process for unlearning internalized racism as well. White folks don't have that counter narrative, don't have that counter data to question it. They're not people of color so they don't have it.

What you do have is your own emotional system that says: somebody's in pain. Why is this happening? What can I do to stop it?

That's why this work is really about reconnecting with that pain as opposed to running away from it. I just want to clarify some stuff because I think empathy and compassion get used in ways that are problematic sometimes. People often say, "Just be more compassionate. Be more compassionate toward folks".

And I say you can't force anybody to be compassionate because it's a feeling. And like any other feeling, we can't force ourselves to feel it. If we could, we'd be happy all the time. Clearly, we are unhappy most of the time because we can't control our feelings like that.

I think there are some long-term strategies about being with our feelings that can shape it but in this immediate moment, whatever arises arises. Compassion is actually just a response in the presence of pain so the goal is to shift our focus and be in touch with that pain as we've done with the previous practices.

Now empathy is something that can deepen our compassion because we can really see ourselves in that situation. But I want to clarify that empathy is not necessary in order to be called into action around it. The compassion is necessary for us to do something by definition. Empathy is when we have a similar experience and so we can really relate to them. It's a deeper level of insight and understanding.

That can be problematic because I come from a country that has a history of colonization. That lives in my body in very visceral ways. Somebody who doesn't have that history wouldn't be able to really understand what it means. That's just with the intergenerational trauma that's been passed down to me, much less my lived experience.

I've never experienced, for instance, what it's like to fully belong to a community. To fully, fully belong to a community as somebody who lives at the intersection of many worlds. Somebody who grew up as a white person in the Midwest and people had a general shared collective history, I cannot conceive of what that is like. I do not need to have lived that life in order to have compassion for the struggle they are facing as people who are finding themselves and their understanding of the country that they understood is not the country that actually exists.

Only parts of the country look like the Midwest. Other parts of the country look extremely different, and they're all a part of it. It also requires folks to explain all of their pain and trauma and to call upon people of color and marginalized folks to explain in great detail in order to generate empathy and understanding. Yeah, you can see where that's a little problematic.

I just want to make that distinction for folks. It's really about acknowledging, getting in touch with that pain. When we do that, part of that self-accountability is to understand "Okay, I have accidentally set somebody on fire because I didn't realize that this would lead to that. Okay. What happened that I thought that that was okay? That I didn't realize the harm that was being caused when I did that."

It's a way of understanding the ways that you act and why you think the way you do. Everybody has reasons. As my former boss – Inga Mohammed – said to me "We all are doing our best and sometimes our best is not very good. And sometimes our best is harmful." I always think that and that's true.

We're doing the best that we can at this moment. The point is not to beat ourselves up and make ourselves wrong as a human being for just being where we are. But what it calls for us to do is to notice the impact of what we were doing and what we were

thinking. What was the impact on other people? And when we get in touch with that pain, we're motivated to have our best be different. We are motivated to learn. To develop ourselves to be more aligned with our values and our actions.

Understanding that white supremacy and systemic oppression in general is based on the miseducation of us. Getting to learn the history of something and asking: Who is most harmed by this? Who most benefits from this. How am I unconsciously implicit in this? How do I personally benefit from this?

Kind of unpacking all of these things. The first two questions are about remembering who is most harmed and who most benefits from this. It's remembering that racism does not occur simply because we have people of different races and backgrounds hanging about. That's not why this happened. The reason that racism is prevalent and institutionalized the way it is in our country is because it is a tool for the elite to continue to economically exploit us.

Because racism keeps us distracted. Racism keeps the majority of people in our society distracted from how the elite are actually running this country. And if you don't know what I'm talking about, there's a lot of history in books. There are a lot of books that you can read; we're actually creating a list right now. If you're in the US and want to learn more about politics, there's a book *called Dog Whistle Politics*. I'm actually going to share an article that breaks that down a little bit.

As an example, let's just say that government – I don't want to go too deep into it because of the time limit – but everything has a history behind it. So we had talked previously about Asian women being fetishized and exotified, particularly by white men. There's a history behind that of the US and Western countries going into Asian countries during times of war and primarily their interactions with Asian women and having sex with them was in the commercial sex industry.

So that created a certain idea of what Asian women were like that was then brought back to the West through different plays and books. That's the first exposure that many, many white folks had. And that continues to this day in how people perceive us.

We have to understand that there's a history behind everything and that it's a justification to go to war with a people, you have to dehumanize them. That's how you can commit these acts of violence against them. Understanding that there's a history behind everything puts you into context. You can better understand how do you want to navigate this. How do you want to navigate this?

A lot of things aren't necessarily linear in nature. When you're starting out in this process, it is super important to do this in sequence. Then as you get more facility with this, it'll become quicker and quicker. But really take care of your pain first and foremost. Then learn how you came to be where you are. Before you actually move into action.

The reason why I say this is because a lot of times I see folks – people of privilege, white folks – know something's happening and they want to do something. Understandable. They want to make it different. Totally reasonable. If you haven't done the deeper unpacking work yourself – to see what are you coming up with, how are you reacting to it, what are you agreeing with unconsciously, what parts do you not agree with because it's not aligned with your values.

Otherwise when you do this work, it's going to show up when you interact with people of color. And we can tell. We can tell when that's happening oftentimes. We need to be having an emotionally honest conversation – at the individual level, at the organizational level, in the movement level, in our friend circle. It's really about having emotionally honest conversations.

When we can name the disconnection that's happened, we can own our own realities, and also create space for other people's realities. So that we can become reconnected. It's really understanding that the disconnection happened because of racism. And we can't just pretend that we were connected, we have to practice to restore the connection and from there you can be called forth into action.

I use the word called forth really intentionally because oftentimes I see people spinning. Not knowing what to do, they're trying to force it and because they're not really grounded in their own body, in their own experiences, the work is very hard to know what to do.

If you're trying to figure it out and it's not happening, that's probably because there's something else going on and you need to get in touch with it. Then the answer will naturally arise. Whether that's to go and talk to somebody. Whether it's to go learn something. Whether it's not to join a certain action. Whether it's not to sign up for something.

You will be called forth.

You don't have to force yourself. Understand that all of this is constant process that is happening. In the beginning it may be hard to grow through all of this. For some it's



going to be very short and you can move into action. The point is that when you have something that needs taking care of, you're taking care of first and foremost yourself.

I want to pause and take some questions and people are writing their questions in the chat box. I want to comment that: because this is a sequence, depending on where you are will take different lengths of time to get through. It may not feel like it makes a lot of sense or that's doable for you. Right now it feels like just a lot of nice words. I totally get that.

That's very much how it was in the past. Just know, this is why there are practice sessions so we can help you move through the process, with it being new for some folks. We can experiment. And we'll be doing that experimentation more in the practice sessions.

Right now it's more about getting the concepts down.

So were there questions that people are asking?

Breeshia: There's one logistical question that's come up twice as far as the books. One person wants to know if there's any way to know with the books the most important chapters. Like a Cliffnotes version for the book that you're listing.

Sandra: There may be. I don't know. Everyday Feminism is designed to give you bite-sized information to help you notice how this shows up. Really, the short answer is go to Everyday Feminism, read our stuff. I don't know if there are other Cliffnotes versions of the other books. Because I don't know; there's a list of many different books that we're compiling right now for folks.

Breeshia: Someone asked how do we know when we're ready to move into action?

Sandra: You will be called forth. You won't have to force it. You'll be called forth. Whenever you're trying to force or make yourself do something, notice that language. It's controlling language. It's violent language. If you're not there, you're not there. There's a reason you got stuck wherever you got stuck. It just means that there's something that you have to take care of and dig deeper. That's all.

If you try to engage with the rest of the world when you're not feeling called forth – you have to whip yourself into doing it, you have to drag yourself or beat yourself into doing it – what is that? What is that reason?

Breeshia: Someone said: This process relies on us being able to trust our perceptions. But the delusions of racism make white people so confused and separated from reality. How do we trust that if we hear a call – and this goes back to the last question – to do something from a genuine place of insight and not from a confused place?

Sandra: This is going to be part of the next practice where I talk about how to engage in conversations with folks when you're holding people who are having different experiences. Because this is where you cocreate. Whatever we do, we're always cocreating situations and our own experiences. The thing is that we're often unconsciously engaging in it. We're not inviting people; we're not getting consent or engaging with other folks.

That's where we come in and take our truth, what we think is a good idea, and we impose it on other people. That's not what I'm going to do; I'm going to teach you the opposite of that in the next practice.

I'm going to leave that question there because I'm going to go deeper in a minute.

Breeshia: I thought this was a good question. I tried to answer it a little bit but I think it'd be great if you would go further. Someone mentioned that if you stand up for people of color, they act like you're a traitor. If you're straight and stand up for gay people, they ask if you're gay.

I think what this person's getting at is how can you stand up for or be a support without taking up space?

Sandra: Is it about taking up space or about the pain of being called a traitor?

Breeshia: I don't think it's about the pain of being a traitor. I think what they're asking is how do you speak up or say something without seeming as if you are speaking for the other person or whitesplaining?

Sandra: Okay. This is a tricky thing. One thing to know is that we are experimenting; we're making the road by walking. Listen to your values and what they are calling upon you to share. And also check in with people. So if you are white and in a room with some people of color and the white people are saying something racist and you want to say something, try noticing. Noticing of the people of color in the room, noticing what's coming up for you, and then working with it.

You may say something or you may firsts – if you notice people of color in the room looking uncomfortable and not feeling like they're in place (speculation) but noticing

what the energies are. Or you may wait until the person of color seems like they're going to say something, you can wait until they do it and then you can affirm what they said. When you say something first, you can say, "From my experience, blah blah blah." You're still grounding it in your experiences by using "I" statements. And then you can say, "Would anybody else like to share their thoughts?"

Open up the space for people of color to share as well. Knowing that people are always in different places, you don't know quite where folks are. You speak from your own experience and then invite folks if they want to share. You can support and uplift and affirm when marginalized folks are sharing their experiences as well.

Breeshia: A comment: Earlier it seemed someone compared white supremacy to an abusive partner. To me abuse is patriarchy.

I just thought that was brilliant.

Sandra: Exactly. Right. It is. White supremacy is abusive. Patriarchy is abusive. All systemic oppression is abusive to us. They're messing with our reality, telling us it's our fault; it's all there.

I want to move on to the next one. The Fourth Practice. This Fourth Practice is about engaging with other people and it's based on compassionate truth-telling and consciousness-raising inquiry. What this conversation is about is really inviting people. And once again, we're not trying to replicate this dynamic of controlling, being abusive, being entitled, demanding of folks including talking about racism.

We want to be coming from a place of curiosity. A place of invitation. That way we can affirm people's humanity and hold space for different experiences. What that allows for us to do is hold space for different experiences and explore why we are experiencing things so differently. How can it be so clear to me that this is really racist and you think it's not? What's going on? What is happening?

It's not about engaging in toxic swirl of making them wrong as a human being. It's not about "winning". You only have your experiences to share. That's the only thing you have access to. Remember that. You don't have access to their internal reality. You only have access to your reality. It's about sharing your own truth, your own situation.

I think what often happens that's problematic when people with privilege, like white people, want to talk about people of color's experiences as opposed to just uplifting the voices and perspectives of people of color. That's when it starts to feel like you're talking over marginalized folks. As opposed to, "I've heard this thing. I realized in conversation

by listening to people of color that this thing that I thought was okay was actually racist.” Sit with that.

Sit with that and unpack that for yourself. Where did you learn this? How is this harmful? Who’s benefitting? Those questions that I had from the other practice. This isn’t “I feel guilty about that. I feel pain around this.” When you share your truth, you’ve got to know your truth. That’s what the other practices are for, which is why it’s important to go through this before you have this conversation.

When you have done that level of unpacking and you share your truth from that place of deep knowing and being in touch with the different levels at play, then you can really help guide somebody else. You are actually modeling for that person so that they, too, can unpack for themselves what’s going on. Get in touch with natural compassion. If you haven’t done it yourself, how are you going to help somebody else do it?

It’s about understanding that you’re here to invite them to understand your perspective and also to understand their perspective. Invite them into that conversation. You’re not trying to move over, you’re not trying to get them somewhere, you’re not trying to do that. What you’re doing is “What’s happening here? What’s going on right now?” and have them go deeper into it right now.

Once you start going into “I’m going to make you change your mind. I’m going to make you agree with me. I’m going to make you stop” that becomes violent language. That’s coming from a violent place; one of control. Understandable, because you see them harming folks, true. But two wrongs don’t make a right.

The harmful, toxic ways that we often relate to folks in is the same type of toxicity that we do to ourselves. Do we punish them, shame them, blame them, dismiss them? Thus making them wrong as a person. Do we resist their experience of a situation? Do we not care about where they’re coming from? Do we want to deny what they’re feeling?

Do we want to focus on what they “should” be feeling?

Do we want to make them agree with us, regardless?

These are all understandable feelings because they’re causing pain. Causing pain for us and if we find ourselves in a place where we cannot hold the space for their feelings and experiences to be what they are, that just means that you have to do some work with yourself. But if you’re coming from a place where you can hold some space for others because you’ve held space for yourself, then you can have a conversation.

When we do this we just ask. We just ask. And we tell them we want to meet them in their internal reality and we want to help them unpack their internal reality. The way we navigate that conversation is from a place of humble curiosity. The ways that we ask is through inquiry using our anti-oppression analysis; knowing that they, too, have been brainwashed and indoctrinated by white supremacy.

They often don't know lots of stuff.

I was talking to somebody who thinks that when folks don't have jobs, it's just because they're lazy. I was telling them that studies have shown that people with names that sound non-white often don't get the callback even though they have the same qualifications. People with a female name will often not get the callback compared to male candidate with the same qualifications. And she did not know all of this. She drives around, she sees "Help Wanted" signs everywhere, she thinks "If you don't have a job it's because you're lazy". That's what she's been taught by systemic oppression.

A lot of people don't truly know and if they're unwilling to know more about it, then where is that coming from? There's a reason that's showing up. What is the reason? I find that oftentimes the shock of someone's refusal to even engage in that conversation shocks us and we don't know what to do. If we can be with that we can ask questions. What's coming up for you that makes that make sense?

What's happening for you that that's actually the most logical stance for you to take?

That's the inquiry part.

What happens is that when you've held some space for the other person to unpack their reality, they're oftentimes more inclined to be curious about your reality. You can invite them to stay and listen to you. If they don't want to, if they don't care, you can get curious about that. "I'm telling you that something you do is really harmful and painful for me and you say you don't want to know why. I'm curious. I care about this relationship. This really has impacted me and I want to understand where you're coming from. What's going on that you don't want to have this conversation?"

Wherever people are, don't try to force people over. That's forceful. Just be with where they are. And if you find yourself not in a place where you can engage in that conversation, where you can hold space for them and their experiences to be different from your own, because it's painful for you, that just means you have some pain to take care of on your own. That's all.

So go and take care of that pain. You can always circle back like, “Hey, you remember last week when that thing happened? I want to talk about it again because it’s been coming up for me. Can we talk?”

Come from a place of curiosity, of invitation, that’s what this work is about. If we can really acknowledge that there are these different realities happening, then we can come at people fiercely, loudly. We can express anger and fear and resentment. We can actually express all of these things as long as we’re not using that to deny other people’s realities.

We’re not pushing our reality onto theirs and we get this hitting each other business. What most people are actually reacting to: they’re actually pushing back against the fact that you made them wrong as a human being. You’re just dismissing them as stupid, as ignorant. They logically push back on that. That’s actually a healthy response to somebody dehumanizing them. We have to distinguish between the two: of coming to have a conversation with somebody and expressing really strong feelings, and dehumanizing them.

They don’t go hand in hand together. They don’t have to. They often do. And they don’t have to go hand in hand together. Generally speaking, whoever’s more stuck in the toxic swirl of make believe, I recommend they go first. Because they’re less able to be grounded in their own experiences and this conversation so they go first. And if both of you are really stuck, you’ve got to take care of yourself. That’s all.

I want to disabuse people of this notion that we always have to be calm and gentle and be really sweet in the way we talk with folks. That’s not what I’m saying. What I’m saying is don’t dehumanize people. Don’t resist their reality, their experiences. That’s what I’m asking you to not do. I come at people real loud, real harsh, real angry. I did it in service of them realizing the harm they are causing, unknowingly. I did it in service of them living according to their values. I did it in service of them being the loving person I know them to be.

Systemic oppression, racism, has taught them to not care. It’s actually kept them from being who they truly are. That is the distinction in this conversation. Like I said, I’m going to give you a step by step process over the course of the practice sessions so you can have it and follow that checklist. But this is the general concept.

I wanted to take some time for folks to think about that situation that was raised for you.

Actually, let me take questions. I feel like there are lots of questions.

Breeshia, let me know, are there questions before I have people go into our breakout rooms?

Breeshia: Yeah, this is a good one. Someone said: I'm curious about how not making other people do things relates to how movements work towards policy change? Movements often try to make the policy. Makers make the policies that are needed for equity, safety, and dignity, etc. How does that relate to these ideas?

Sandra: That's an interesting question. Systemic oppression happens at multiple layers. There's an individual level, an organizational level, a group of organizations, a group of individuals, policies, institutions; there are multiple layers at which systemic oppression is happening and we need to have different strategies addressing it at multiple levels.

Policy without organization, without different levels and aligning our values with our actions – and we see how things have shifted in the last 50 years, for example. It's always shifting. Culture's always changing – having policy top-down without having that grassroots bottom up is going to be insufficient. So policies that are made set the legal boundaries of what is possible. Then it's up to us to fill that in.

The degree to which these policies are divorced and not supported by on the ground support, people are going to be fighting it. People are going to be fighting the policies and laws that got passed. That's why it's important to bring people into these conversations, to get that ground, to get that support from the base, so that we have both top-up and bottom down operating in tandem together. Versus conflicting.

We have lots of laws that make a lot of sense but we're not actually doing them on the ground level. We haven't done the cultural work. We are doing some things we haven't done but they have not been happening at the same time together as much as it needs to be. That's been shifting the last few years, particularly with Black Lives Matter and with the LGBTQ movement. That cultural work is prominent in our movements. We can see that it makes a huge difference in what policies can be passed and how much we can take advantage of these new laws to actually support us on the ground.

Breeshia: Someone asked: What's the difference between making someone do something and challenging their beliefs?

Sandra: Making somebody do something: To get somebody to do something, you're not honoring their response. An invitation is when you ask somebody to do something and you truly are going to honor their yes, no, counteroffer. Counteroffer being: something

else. “Can you do Friday?” and you’re like, “No, but I can do Tuesday”; that’s a counteroffer.

When we don’t care about their response, this is where it’s coming from a place of either a coercive demand, a place of entitlement – remember when I said people ask me where I’m from, if I don’t give them the answer they want (if I say I’m American), sometimes they get really angry with me – that’s not honoring my response. To not answer them the way they want to. It’s not actually invitation and there’s an energetic difference.

There’s an energetic difference when we approach someone with a true invitation and when we’re trying to force them to do what we want. It’s that energy difference that people are often pushing back on us. As I said before, it’s not so much that we’re asking. They could completely agree with us, but if they feel like we’re forcing them, they don’t want to do it. That’s psychologically healthy.

The difference between that and – what was the second part of the question?

Breeshia: Challenging versus...yeah.

Sandra: Yeah. When you challenge somebody, you’re asking them to – you could inquire. You could invite them into a conversation to unpack what is coming up for them. Why do they believe what they believe? Why does this feel right for them? What’s happening that they don’t feel other people are noticing?

That’s different because you’re not trying to make them do anything. You’re inviting them in to unpack where they are right now. You can make that invitation to have that conversation a coercive demand. You can do that. That happens a lot. Where you’re trying to make them have a conversation that they don’t want to have, and you don’t really care that they don’t want to have it – you’re trying to force them by blaming, shaming them into doing it – that’s distinct from truly inviting them and respecting their response.

Oftentimes, as a person with organizational power, when I ask the staff to do something, I’ll say, “I’d like you to do X. And if something’s happening and you feel like you can’t, you can say no, too.” I remember in a meeting I asked someone to do something and they said no. We all spontaneously clapped for that person, because we feel it’s really important to be able to say no. We’re not a coercive work environment.

That’s the difference.



Breeshia: There's another question that a lot of people would like the answer to: How could it be up to the ones experiencing the harms of white supremacy to do all this emotional work? How can it be okay that people can be where they are, if where they are is literally, actively harming someone? If it's explicitly mentioned and the one causing the harm doesn't care?

Sandra: We have to understand that we have all been conditioned to unconsciously cause harm to one another. We don't want to most of the time and we walk around flailing, hitting ourselves and hitting other people along the way. We are no different. If we have greater social consciousness, there are specific areas that we're more mindful of and more vigilant around, it's easier for us to not engage in that harm. There are other places that we do cause harm.

Understand that we're all living in society and we're all in different places around it in different ways. It's about why are we where we are? What's the impact of being where we are on people? There's emotional labor because there's pain. There's pain because there's systemic oppression. Folks who are marginalized have pain. Folks with privilege have pain that they're not aware of. That's why this program exists, so that we can be conscious of that.

Everybody's actually having pain; it's about the level of consciousness and awareness around it. There are people of color moving around actively denying the pain that they experience as well. I had a conversation with somebody who, when I was talking about white supremacy, she later came up to me. She was a young Latino woman who said, "The reason why I was so quiet when you were explaining white supremacy to that white man is that I realized how much I try to run away from it. I don't want it to exist because it's so painful to me."

Pain is difficult for everybody because we've been taught to run away from our pain or been taught that our pain is not real. There is healing work to be done all around for every single person, regardless if you're privileged or marginalized. It's just about how much of that pain are you conscious of. Do you have the skills and support to process it? I will say the emotional charge of a situation comes from that toxic swirl of make believe. It's how we resist. It's how we make people wrong, including ourselves.

As people have been experiencing, as we've been doing some of the breathing mindfulness exercises, it's something. It is a thing that we're doing and it's a lot easier than the toxic swirl of make believe. Not that it's easy; but there's something we can be with if we just allow things to arise. And sit and acknowledge it.

As I said, we'll have practice sessions where we'll get to go deeper into this. But a lot of what makes this emotional labor is because we don't have the skills, capacity, or support to do it in that moment. I myself, at times, find myself "hard to hold space, hard to get in touch with myself". Then I turn to my friends – I have supports that help me through it. I have practices to help me through it. Then I can move through it.

People often wonder how much emotional labor I'm doing to hold the space for other people, but I'm coming to you as a whole person. It's actually not that laborious for me because I'm just being with you wherever you are. Not trying to make you go anywhere. When I try to make you go somewhere, that's when it gets hard because then I drag you somewhere.

That is not...

There is healing work to be done for all people and I'd question the difficulty in doing that because that's more related to how we're doing it than the fact that it needs to be done.

Which is why I'm doing this program so I can help you out and we can get through it a lot faster and build community.

Okay. So it is...

I want to move on to the next one.

Like I said, this is really something that needs to be done in real time. I'm not asking you to believe me wholeheartedly. What I'm asking is for you to hold the space, the possibility that what I'm saying might be true for you. And, as we continue practicing it – specifically as we get to the step-by-step process, because that'll be when it really becomes more alive and you can integrate it more – just keep trying. Experience it. Keep trying.

If you get stuck, that just means that there's something there for you to look at. If you want some more support, I'm here.

The Fifth Practice is around Shared Envisioning and Non-Cooperation. This comes about after you've gone through the whole process beforehand, where you've been in touch with and noticed the toxicity. You've shifted away from it. You've started to look at "what's going on inside of myself". You got really grounded in where you are coming from and why you are there in the first place.

You engage with other folks to talk about it, whether that's with a person of color or with a white person. Just share your experience and having that always be an invitation. I'd say particularly emphasize that when you talking to marginalized folks – just because you know you're coming from a place like that we're not sure. This conversation is often done poorly. Really name that as an invitation. Explain what your intentions are, where you're coming from. That's really critical to this practice.

Now that you've gotten clear and they've shared their experience about where they're coming from and you've shared your experience about where you're coming from, you can now come together. And figure out where you want to cocreate from there. I cannot emphasize enough the fact that we cannot jump over the processes that I've just mentioned.

I'm going to repeat myself. You cannot jump to this cocreating a shared vision place before you've gone through the rest of it. That is oftentimes what we want to do. But like I said, racism, systemic oppression has disconnected us from each other and so we really need to name that disconnection before we can restore it. Without naming that disconnection, without doing that deeper work with ourselves, we cannot engage in an emotionally honest conversation, especially when we don't even know what our emotions are.

When we can do that as opposed to me trying to push my reality on somebody else and them trying to push their reality onto me, instead we can go "Okay. My intention was X, which was to not be racist or to not have that bias. And your desire is to also not be targeted by that bias. What can we do differently? How did that power play out?"

What it comes down to is what is shared: values – that's kind of easy. In this situation, we're not trying to be racist; we're trying to be anti-racist. But it could be something more specific. We're trying to do this project together. We have this goal. And there's racism at play. Now that we've acknowledged how that's showing up and we want the project's goal to be reached, what are some different ways we can distribute work loads? We can talk about how we make decisions that actually honor our shared values.

The way to get there, I use this simple little pact, saying, "Yes, and". Oftentimes when we have different experiences, we engage in "yes, but".

"Yes, I believe in X, but you don't want to do X."

It's like, "Yes, I want to do something..."

Sorry.

Instead of saying, “Yes, this is harmful but you don’t realize it’s harmful” it becomes “Yes, this is harmful and you don’t realize that it’s harmful”.

When you come from a place where you can hold them, it becomes what can you do together. “What kind of learning do you need, then, to understand that it is harmful? There’s history to that.” It moves from being, “I’m your boss but you don’t want me to tell you what to do” becomes “I’m your boss and you don’t want me to tell you what to do. So how can we be in a relationship where I’m your boss and we’re having a consensual relationship about the work that you do?”

It starts having an opening about what we can cocreate together as opposed to “my reality is oppositional to your reality. My desires are oppositional to your desires”. When you’re holding space for both, it’s like “Okay, let’s brainstorm”.

This is really important because we’re creating the road by walking. We’re creating a new way in the world, a new way of being with people. We need to experiment and not think that we have to get it perfect but that we’re going to try. And keep listening to each other. And keep validating and affirming what people’s experiences are. And tweak – also called a feedback loop.

The main difference between a feedback loop and what we’re doing is that we have an anti-oppression analysis and different identities show up in how we interact with each other. If we find ourselves stuck and unable to move into a place where we can hold space for each other or brainstorm together, there’s it’s usually a veer from the path coming up.

That just means you’re stuck. “Let’s explore what’s going on there.”

Or if they’re stuck. “Let’s explore what’s going on there.”

It just means rinse and repeat. Rinse and repeat a little bit. What happens when we can’t cocreate with that person? We wanted to, we both wanted to, but we’re not there. That happens sometimes. Remember, we can’t control people. We’re not going to make anyone do anything because that would be us perpetuating abusive behavior, controlling behavior.

You can’t control their behavior but you can choose your own. You can choose to disengage, and disengage in a way that doesn’t make them wrong as human being, disengage not in a way that is resisting where that’s coming from. But disengage and acknowledge where that’s coming from and grieving. Usually, there’s some grief work

that needs to happen because we were not able to be together in this way that you wanted.

We can hope for the best, hope that they get whatever support, healing, or shifts necessary so that you can cocreate in the future. Whether your family, your friends, your coworkers. This is going to happen often when engaging with other white folks around racism. Knowing that you're planting a seed with them in that conversation – I know someone who put their organization through an entire unpacking white supremacy program for a full year. It resulted in a couple people leaving at the end of it.

There was some pain there, obviously, because it wasn't going to work for everybody. For some people it wasn't good match. They didn't want to be in that type of organization for various reasons. Then, fast forward a few months, they came back.

They came back! Like, "Now I see. Now I understand what you were trying to help us see and why you had the organization go through all of that unlearning and unpacking work."

Just know that you were planting seeds. This work takes time.

I'm going to pause there. And take some questions. Because we are 12 minutes to the hour.

Breeshia: This question's come up a couple of times: people want to know if they'll get access to the materials and to the webinar after the session is over.

Sandra: You have unlimited access to the video and the transcriptions, PowerPoints, everything will be in the online portal. You can log in. If you don't know how to log in we will send you the emails with the video and you'll have a link there. It's on the website under menu, course log in. You just click there.

Breeshia: And someone wanted to know if the five-point strategies for white people are to use with other white people or to use with both white people and people of color?

Sandra: It's really about human interaction. You have to be cognizant of the difference of where they're probably coming from and the levels of consciousness that may be at play. But you don't know for sure. You never know for sure. I've had pretty awkward conversations with other Black folks about how they have anti-Blackness manifesting, where I had be like, "Ooh, okay."

Just because someone's a person of color doesn't mean that they're incredibly radical in their consciousness. That's not true, too. I talk to white folks who have amazing levels of anti-oppression analysis that's incredibly intersectional. Sometimes more than mine! That happens sometimes.

It's more about understanding that people have different levels of consciousness. You have to check in and see where they're coming from. And people have a different history as a person of color, as a white person. And among people of color, there are so many different experiences within it. My experience is nothing like the experience of a Native person, for example. But we have some shared dynamics.

It's knowing that people are coming from different places, different experiences, different collective identities and understanding of their own histories. And that's happening. That's why you can speculate some probable things but you can't assume them to be true and so that's why you're not. You're not projecting your assumptions onto them. You're checking in with them. You're inquiring. You're sharing space for them to be where they're coming from.

Then you're asking them if they want to hear where you're coming from.

Breeshia: This is coming up a lot in the chat. It's still coming up: It sounds like a massive amount of work and I don't know how we can expect to do or act without promoting harm. It sounds like there's a risk of it being used to silence people. It's powerful and I'm slowly understanding how powerful. Yet I've also seen this be used to silence people. Curious if there are ways to stop that from happening.

There's a choice for an oppressed person to do this work for people. We can't say, "no, you have to be compassionate towards me!"

Yeah.

Sandra: We can try to force people to do this work. That's just going to be being controlling, though.

If that's what you want to do and you like the results that you're getting, that's what you're going to do. My question is, is it having the impact that you want to be having and both upon yourself and other folks?

It's most likely not. It's most likely not the result or impact that you want to be having. I question the effectiveness of that method as well as "is that aligned with our values?"

To question whether or not this is a tremendous amount of work: is this a front-ended – Breeshia, can you?

Is this front-ended a lot of work? Yes, it's a new skill. It's a new habit. It's a new practice for many folks. If it's not, if it's something you've been developing already then there's more to develop if it doesn't feel like it's coming to you with ease.

Anything that is new, anything that we haven't developed – not only do we often not know how to do this, we also have been taught to do the opposite of it. Is there a lot of work in the front end? Yeah. Is it worth it to heal ourselves? Yes. I think we are worth it. I think, to remember that all roads lead back to us, because we all have different experiences. And when we can really sit with our own experiences then we can share our truth and then we can hold space for other people's truth and then we can go from there.

The compassion is first and foremost for ourselves. You are here, presumably, as white people wanting to do anti-racist work and struggling in doing it. Probably because you're coming from a place of toxic swirl. You can continue doing that if you like. That's always an option. You have been doing that.

I'm providing a different option.

I'm inviting you experiment and play with it. Is it going to take time? I have ten years of practice. Ten years of a healing journey and spiritual practice that I put into ten weeks. So you don't have to do this for ten years to get where I am. Understand that? I will do my best to support you in teaching this and in getting real time practice and it's going to be up to you.

And I think you're worth it. I think you're worth getting back in touch with yourself and your emotions and your needs. That you are worth being compassionate towards. And that you are the only one who's responsible for taking care of yourself. It's nice when people with other realities care for us. But we're the ones who have the ultimate responsibility to care for ourselves.

If everybody could just do that, if everybody could just take care of their own house, what a different world we'd live in. If we could come and be our whole selves, all of our selves – the values, the implicit biases, the past, our dream for the future – if we could bring all of ourselves and hold space for other people to be their whole selves, too. And not make them wrong for it, not resist it – just be like, "This is where I'm coming from.

This is where you're coming from. How can we fix it? How can we make our dreams come true? How can we be the loving people that we are designed to be?"

That is the difference.

Maybe that's a good place to end on, though.

Because we have five minutes left. So I am going to open up the white board again and I want folks to write down: What's your takeaway? What is your key takeaway? If you can only remember one thing from this entire section, what would it be?

If you have something longer, please share it in chat. If you have something short, you can place it in the white board...

Breeshia, if you want to just read or share?

Breeshia: We are making the road by walking.

Holding space for their reality.

Compassion.

Being in our bodies.

Compassion for self.

Start with me.

Intent and empathy. Do your own work first.

Hope and skills' based practice that I can learn.

Honor others.

Be with where you are.

Fierce compassion.

You will be called forth.

Apparently that's from Matthew.

I think that's a Biblical reference. The person drew an arrow that says "Matthew".

Non-cooperation can be compassionate.



Sandra: Let's look to the chat box.

Breeshia: Sometimes doing our best means disengaging.

I can learn this; Sandra will guide us.

There is a process: gratitude and hope.

That was not a Biblical reference, my bad!

Put yourself out first if you are on fire and that is from a chat reference.

Be open to the truth of another person's reality. Seek understanding and resist judgment and abide them to see a different reality but never coerce.

Inviting people without forcing your opinion because you feel you are right.

Sandra: I would like to offer an easy way of remembering this. Let me move this white board first. Held you in suspense.

The easy way to remember this for now would be: Breathe, Listen, Invite.

That's: Breathe. Listen. Invite. That could be this model in a nutshell. Breathe. Come out of the toxic swirl. Come back to your body. Come back to reality. Come back to the experiences. Take that pause. Listen. Listen to yourself. Let arise whatever arises. Acknowledge whatever's coming up. Just listen without judgment, without shame. Just listen. Invite. Invite yourself to take care of yourself. To learn.

Rinse and repeat for somebody else. If you're having a conversation with somebody else: Breathe. Be grounded in your own body and your own experiences. Share your truth. Listen. Listen to the other person. What is their truth? Where are they coming from? Invite them to unpack what that means. Is this aligned with their values? Is this aligned with their world?

Then invite each other to cocreate something different. Listen to what's being called forth for both of you. You don't need to figure it out; just listen. Keep listening to each other. You'll cocreate from there.

I leave you with that and I thank you so, so much for showing up and being with me for these three hours. We kind of sped through the Five Practices. So you can watch this again if you'd like to and we'll be going through. The next practice session will show us how to restore internal justice. That will be looking at that first section because, as I said, all roads lead back to us.

So we've got to get good with ourselves first and foremost.

Then after practicing that for three sessions we're going to be practicing how to restore external justice with someone else. That will be a different process; looking at how to have that conversation and cocreating from there.

So please make sure to come and if you can't come, watch the videos. Come to some.

Take care, everybody! I'll see you later.