

compassionate activism

Healing from Toxic Whiteness Practice Session 5 Chat Log — December 1, 2016

19:58:41 From Jennifer Vatza : Hi, Jennifer here from Philadelphia, PA. I feel stuck in conversations with other white people about racial and social justice. By appearance, I am just another "white feminist," but that takes a lot of assumptions and I feel challenged by other white people who either dismiss me or make me feel like my voice doesn't matter. I've learned so much and want to use my white privilege to promote good in a turbulent world. I get tired of being shot down in the process.

20:00:27 From phyllisstern : I wasn't here last week, and it's so good to be with you all again.

20:00:46 From janetgray1 : Hi everybody! Janet in New Jersey. Happy to be here.

20:01:08 From Jenny : Hi everyone! Jenny in St. Louis, MO. Good to be here with you all!

20:01:13 From Cameron Haramia : Hello! I've only attended two of these sessions so far :/

20:01:17 From byronm : Hi there, I'm Mary from Ridgewood, NJ and I haven't been able to join any of the session live until tonight so I am happy to be here. I keep getting stuck with my frustrations meeting people where they are when I am doing anti-racism work in my congregation and also I don't even know how to start a conversation with one of my good friends who can't recognize her privilege at all.

20:01:34 From J Zirbel : J Zirbel here in Raleigh NC I feel stuck with how to talk with white people who are excited about the president elect - I am doing my best and will continue to move on that

20:01:35 From Cameron Haramia : I've only attended two sessions but I have some thoughts.

20:02:11 From Katie Kuriyama : Katie from Evanston, IL

20:02:26 From Laura Humpf : Hello. I am Laura from Seattle.

20:02:28 From Cameron Haramia : I feel a lot of pressure to be sort of a “hard ass” with white people talking about racism. It’s hard for me to challenge, and inform, without coming across as aggressive or patronizing.

20:02:33 From paulahorowitz : Paula from Berkeley,CA

20:02:37 From Jenny : I keep getting stuck in a place where I am ready to do more activism, but most of the people around me are not, and it is difficult for me to get out on my own, so I have some Toxic Swirl that happens on occasion from that.

20:02:44 From michaelbrasher : michael from tucson az. i have felt so exhausted by the pain of becoming open to the white supremacy in my own life and choices, the pain of how i’ve hurt my friends and loved ones, that it’s caused me to just want to take a break from this whole thing and kind of try to recover bc the pain was so intense. and yet i know the only way out is through...

20:03:02 From janetgray1 : Not feeling stuck, but I haven’t faced any huge challenges yet...i’ve been able to pass on some of what I’ve learned here to the young feminist college students I teach.

20:03:13 From Elizabeth : for me not about trump supporters - about people who arent looking at themselves and their spheres of influence

20:03:34 From Ariana Manov : Hey There this is Ariana --and I'm soooo pleased -- and desperately needing--to be here with other people who openly identify as "compassionate activists"

20:03:53 From Jenny : Thank you, Sandra.

20:04:01 From janetgray1 : So happy to learn you were at Standing Rock.

20:04:18 From Laura Humpf : I have been stuck around continuing to dehumanize other white folks, and then shutting down because I don't know how to talk compassionately.

20:06:11 From Gabriela : something that’s been coming up for me is hesitancy — to talk with others, to engage more, etc. i think i have minor anxiety given that i burnt out a number of times in the past from having overly-engaged, in a way. so i’m hesitant to “dive in” again after retreating for a while and doing some rethinking / healing work. yet i am also feeling guilty for not engaging more / as much as i used to. in short: i am hoping to gain some insight as to how to balance engagement and conscious non-engagement for my own self care without masking fear of messing up with notions of self-care.

20:12:15 From janetgray1 : I hope Sandra will write about this experience—it’s so valuable to learn about. I want to share it.

20:16:09 From janetgray1 : Layering entitlement on desperation...

20:23:45 From janetgray1 : Write it! Publish the video!! Please!

20:24:25 From Bree Timber : Reminder: Breakout sessions are optional. Just let your partner know and come back to the main room. Folks using the phone, use *6 to unmute yourself. If you are in a breakout session alone, please wait a minute because someone may join you soon. If you end up without a partner, that's ok. Just do the activity on your own.

20:26:03 From naava smolash : i don't have a mic on this computer at work, so will just listen :)

20:34:46 From Sofia : I'm not hearing anything.

20:34:48 From Alavida : what happened? i hear nothing...

20:34:57 From Alavida : is sandra speaking?

20:34:58 From Emily Donaldson : Same...

20:35:02 From janetgray1 : Yup. No audio.

20:35:14 From naava smolash : think so!

20:35:17 From naava smolash : haha that explains it

20:35:26 From Bree Timber : **Reminder on how to use the Whiteboard:

Go into fullscreen mode. Once you are there you will see a green box that says you are viewing Sandra Kim's screen. To the right of that is a black box that says options. If you click on that the last option is annotate and that should bring up a whole bar with different options.

Reminder: Only put short answers in the whiteboard and any answer longer than 4 words needs to go in chat, otherwise there's not enough space for everyone's answers

20:35:43 From Jennifer Vatza : The thing that came up for me was how to respond to people who are not hearing or listening to you because they are so caught up in the emotion of the situation.

20:35:55 From Bree Timber : **Reminder on how to use the Whiteboard:

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20:36:18 From PS : shut down, so overwhelmed by the anger and emotion

20:36:47 From Jenny : I got stuck when I had a cousin come to me with the same thing twice--I didn't know what to do when pretty much the exact same words were used again. I wasn't angry, just...I felt shut down, a little, even though her words were loving.

20:37:00 From Gabriela : as mentioned above, i have been hesitant to engage due to fear of burning out again and messing up. my breakout partner helped me realize that i often view opportunities for engagement from the “what might i lose in this conversation?” perspective rather than a “what might be gained?” perspective, which was really helpful / insightful for me

20:37:04 From michaelbrasher : i've been blocked up by how my liberal, progressive, anti-racist community is willing to dehumanize racist people, and how unsafe it is to suggest we don't dehumanize those people and how privileged and problematic that suggestion seems. also simultaneously seeing myself still have an impulse to try to be better than my racist family members

20:38:26 From carmina : I had to take a step back several times realizing that even though my family had similar perspectives as me I still wasn't really listening. Just because their perspective is similar doesn't mean that its exactly the same.

20:38:39 From Sandy Robinson : The concept of "humble curiosity" is a touchpoint for me during conversations - if I'm feeling it, great. If not, that's a cue me to take a step away for a time.

20:38:56 From Cara Baltimore : What we resist persists! yessss.

20:39:01 From eoder : I had some conversations with close Asian American friends where I felt like I should be prioritizing them, talked more than I felt like I should, got apologetic. felt like I wound up being separating by being apologetic

20:39:06 From Bethany : asked questions in one conversation, it was interrupted so not finished, so felt unsettling

20:39:08 From Emily Donaldson : I struggle a bit with figuring out the line between self care and willful ignorance. With the part of my family who is “typical white liberals,” we had some great conversations about how they can learn more and engage with anti-racist work, which was awesome...but then we went off to watch television and play cards and “forget the world” for awhile. When is it okay to “disengage” with the world, especially with family who you don’t often see? I found myself feeling guilty for that.

20:39:30 From Lila : surprising and intimidating to learn what is actually coming out of people

20:40:37 From Lori : Hard to see a brother's racism who would think he is not, he really can't see it. I felt sad

20:41:07 From janetgray1 : Emily—more and more I’m following up. After a great conversation about how to walk the walk—after playing cards and watching TV—follow up.

20:41:11 From Lila : Lori, YES, I am experiencing that often here and not sure how to respond to people then

20:41:47 From Emily Donaldson : Thank you, Janet! A follow-up email to my family might be in order...

20:51:03 From Lori : Thank you Lila, it was sad for me and I felt sad for him because he wouldn't want that. however, in the context I couldn't say anything this time. However, I will use it to develop more compassion and curiosity so I might be able to another time.

20:54:09 From Alavida : I lost my partner in the last few seconds, I’m sorry because we were in the middle of something important :(

20:54:27 From Jennifer Vatza : it can be exhausting and we need to do self-care and sometimes that means putting things aside to deal with and analyze later.

20:54:41 From Lila : <3

20:54:46 From eoder : A lot keeps coming back to wanting the clear formula

20:54:48 From rachelmesser : I’ve feel scattered and overwhelmed with where to put my time/energy and I feel tired, anxious and judgmental of myself.

20:55:07 From michaelbrasher : just noticing that i'm tired around it, sad, fatigued, not enthusiastic to be with it, sluggish

20:55:16 From Aiyana Stern : I wanted to belong, be part of — in speaking out, I felt other, and felt people weren't listening. Maybe I was trying to be coercive.

20:56:05 From Lori : I had a visitor for the Thanksgiving who was a activist and ally for many years. She was so good at this humble curiosity. I was would challenge me by asking questions very kindly like, "Can you tell me more about what that means to you/" "What you just said is uncomfortable for me can you help me understand what it means to you?" This was often an area I was stuck in an old paradiagn. I felt very respected and yet i had to become more aware. It was very helpful.

20:56:29 From Jenny : It depends on who I am talking with--someone I expect to deal with racism better, I might get stuck on anger. And someone I don't, I might get stuck on overwhelm. But it isn't always--it's usually when I am feeling a lack of energy, and so I maybe need to pay better attention to myself.

20:56:45 From carmina : I am probably being the hardest on myself. I am putting all of my expectations for change onto myself and not giving myself any breaks.

20:57:38 From amyhollings : my resistance comes in waves. powerful ones. full of judgement and prickly feelings. those moments are reminders of how much I can say and do harmful things... but with time they (can) bring a mix of compassion and shame.

20:58:25 From Cara Baltimore : thinkin i got it all figured out and always being hit with a reality moment and being like oh shit i have a lot of work to do and I might not be ready for all of it. Finding balance is key.

20:59:31 From naava smolash : what about when there has been real gaslighting tho- what about if you don't understand what is coming up for you because you're deeply neurologically injured by gaslighting andhave lost the ability to speak... sometimes brains don't work properly even when you really do know what you're seeing

20:59:54 From naava smolash : how to know one's truth when everything denies it

21:01:36 From Bethany : self judgement of emotional disconnectedness, confusion over intersecting privilege and oppression in relationships

21:01:44 From PS : switching between acceptance and frustration at myself for shutting down, for not having the energy to do more. I havent been giving myself/asking for what I need. When I named that it would be helpful to have people around me more who I could easily speak about this work with it turned out one of my group lives in my city and we'll have a toxic swirl coffee :)

21:03:02 From janetgray1 : Lori—thanks for the story about your Thanksgiving visitor. Love the quotes—so useful.

21:04:00 From naava smolash : often feel embarassed about things i've done before that i've learned from

21:04:02 From michaelbrasher : that's awesome, thank you for sharing

21:04:06 From Adele's Laptop : I feel off balance and surprised that someone who is part of another marginalized group than I has agreed with me. They said I was right when I pushed back against a demand against tokenizing nondominant culture folk. Now I am afraid I will be overconfident. I don't trust myself to be right!

21:04:08 From naava smolash : but also know that it's good that i'm continuously learning :)

21:04:09 From michaelbrasher : @lori

21:05:51 From Lori : Welcome all, it was really helpful to experience it and see how respectful she was toward me, didn't try and change me and yet because I was safe and respected it did change me.

21:07:11 From Bree Timber : Thank you for your question Naava Smolash! I apologize for not getting to it during the discussion—I wanted to address questions separately. Sandra is currently speaking about multiple realities—many things happening at the same time. You are absolutely right—abuse and past/current dehumanization impacts what we are experiencing in the moment. If there is time for Q/A I will bring your concern up with Sandra. Everyday Feminism also has great resources on addressing the impact of gaslighting

21:15:50 From Sofia : I'm too dissociative to be able to do these exercises remotely like this.

21:17:52 From Cara Baltimore : this was very helpful for the heartache that comes when I experience loneliness. I had an intense visualization that was very powerful.

21:17:54 From Jennifer Vatza : I love these exercises, it gives time to think and feel what is going on. I feel a sense of calm in that it is okay to not know or for things to not be okay

21:18:01 From byronm : it felt so good to say those words. I felt like I was letting go of the need to be right and forgiving myself. My pain told me it needed attention.

21:18:11 From michaelbrasher : grey, shelter, protective: it asked me not to be mad at it but to love it.

21:18:22 From Gabriela : my fear of the difficult feeling(s) decreased and i felt myself embrace it more (and my feeling welcomed that embrace)

21:18:51 From eoder : halfway through I realized that I was thinking of something last week and not what I have been obsessed about all week related to this

21:19:20 From Jenny : Being able to recognize the hurt--that is a hard thing for me, because I wall myself off so much. It needed to be heard and felt.

21:24:28 From amyhollings : my bulky khaki-coloured thoracic density asked me for patience.

21:25:35 From janetgray1 : I didn't have one spot—just a lot of moving spots. In the exercise, the spots translated as an awareness of so many locations of suffering, so many bodies struck randomly, and my desire for connection...my own aging body has come up with a whole series of bizarre superficial injuries since the election, while I've been acting cool. The spots first felt like my sense of urgency to go off in all directions as a helper...then like vicarious blows...then like marks of my own desire to be in solidarity... even if without hope.

21:26:06 From PS : This practice is helping me have empathy and compassion for people (myself included) who have had so many difficulties that layered on top of each other that they couldn't act sometimes, even if that lack of action caused more damage

21:27:06 From Adele's Laptop : After being so stuck for so long, I am starting to feel the shift, just a little bit. It's amazing.

21:33:38 From naava smolash : hi bree thanks! i'm learning slowly, i understand slowly how this approach is good, fitting it in with other experiences

21:34:50 From naava smolash : definitely! :)

21:34:59 From naava smolash : re sharing this with others

21:35:08 From Bree Timber : of course--anytime

21:35:14 From Jenny : Thank you!

21:35:16 From Bree Timber : Thank you all for coming!

21:35:19 From PS : thank you

21:35:20 From J Zirbel : thank you

21:35:24 From naava smolash : thank you both of you and everyone

21:35:25 From Emily Donaldson : Thank you for modeling this compassionate practice and sharing your own experiences with it, Sandra. It's really powerful and instructive.

21:35:28 From amyhollings : thank you.