

compassionate activism

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

Sandra Kim: Hi everybody. Today is December 1, and we are having our fifth practice session for the Healing from Toxic Whiteness program. We have covered most of the things that I wanted to train everybody on. Today's going to be a little bit more open form. Where we're going to focus a bit more on having people just move through some of the practices, especially to address some of the stuff that came up, particularly if things happened over the Thanksgiving break that people want to talk about. I also just want to start out, though, by sharing a bit of my own stories about what happened for me over the last week.

I was actually at Standing Rock supporting the work being done by, being lead by indigenous folks to protect the Missouri River against the Dakota Access pipeline which I'm sure many of you have been seeing in the news, or hopefully I'm really hopeful that you've been seeing this in the news. I know it's been something more in the independent media sites versus mainstream, but mainstream news has been picking it up at various times. Especially when it got particularly violent including using water canons in freezing temperatures at night.

When I talked about how whiteness was a social construct that was created back during the early colonial period of the Americas and that was created in order to keep people ... It was created to ensure that poor white folks who weren't part of the ruling elite did not band with native folks and black folks even though they actually had more shared interests at the time because they were all being exploited, controlled and abused by the ruling elite. Though, in different ways, obviously and to different degrees. That we must always remember that racism is a tool that is used to be able to get away with economic exploitation.

I remember there was a question from somebody wondering, they could see it from the past that this was true, but was this really true for right now? Could we say that there's a quote/unquote "Ruling elite" and were they actually using their power in such a way? I think if we look at what has been happening at Standing Rock it is in full force, right? What we're seeing at Standing Rock is a pipeline, an oil pipeline that has several billion

dollars investment for people. It was originally a pipeline that was going to go through a predominately white community who pushed back against it because of the environmental concerns, as there are many oil spills that happen as we have seen in our life time several times, including in the Gulf of Mexico, for instance [inaudible 00:03:09] and other areas of the world.

They pushed back on it because of the concern around it. Then, they said, "Okay, we'll put it through reservation land." Then they moved it and they got basically law enforcement with militarized equipment to go up against thousands of people who are not violent, who come in a prayerful, peaceful manner. They are operating, viewing this as actually a spiritual movement, too. It is as much about human rights and the right to practice their own spiritual traditions as it is about the environment.

The level of violence that they are, that law enforcement is willing to inflict upon nonviolent people who are just trying to protect the water and Missouri River that is flowing, that is one of the longest rivers in the United States and actually flows into the Mississippi River. If this water gets contaminated the impact is tremendous. The impact is tremendous in this country, and yet that is not the concern. Right? That's not really a concern because money could be gained. A whole, whole, whole, whole lot of money of profit is deemed as being the priority here, as opposed to the wellbeing of the people, including, especially if it's native folks nobody cares, right? That's the attitude in this country.

I was there. I won't go more into the situation because you can read a lot about it particularly written by indigenous leaders of this movement, but I wanted to share a bit about my own experience going there as a settler. My family comes from Korea and we, so many Koreans left back in the '70s and '80s because of the situation in our country after the Civil ... Going back to my grandmother's time, we were colonized by the Japanese who did a lot of atrocities to us.

Then, because of the Cold War after World War II Japan lost, they lost of their colonies, but then we were divided because of the Cold War. It's the USSR at that time, and the US decided to divide Korea which had been a country, a unified country for thousands of years. Yet, they decided to divide us because they didn't want to have one or the other have too much control over us. Which then lead to the Civil War which was one of the bloodiest wars, apparently.

We're still a country divided. It's lead to North Korea and South Korea existing the disparities that exist currently. Then we had military dictatorships and what not. Yeah, our country was really not treated very well, needless to say, so a lot of people left. It was in that context that my family left and came to the United States and were able to have a lot more opportunity here than was possible at that time in Korea. A time when

my family, my mother remembers that she herself did not grow up as poor as other people around her because she doesn't have lots of memories of being so hungry. Whereas most of her peers do. A lot of people don't realize this when they see Korea now and K-pop and dramas and what not, but that's what it was like for us not that long ago.

This was made possible, I'm made possible and being able to create Everyday Feminism, provide this platform for everybody, this was made possible because this is colonized lands. I'm a direct benefit of the colonization of the genocide of indigenous peoples in this country. Particularly living on the east coast where it's very easy to forget that it's colonized lands. A little harder to forget that when you're living in places like the south west, for example where there's many reservations there and it's much more visible.

A lot of folks just happen to think there's not really any more native folks around, or if there is there's so few it doesn't really count. Really grappling with that, with that upbringing, the way that I was trained to think about indigenous sovereignty and justice for native folks and what is my role here? What is my role here? Really sitting with the horror of colonization and seeing how it continues to play out within the camp at Standing Rock which obviously started out being predominately native folks. Now, because obviously it's getting a lot of support from non-native folks, a lot of non-native folks, particularly white folks are showing up there. Some of them wanting to be supportive, but then in various places around their understanding of decolonizing their own minds, decolonizing their own behaviors and what does that mean?

Understanding that there is a different culture here at this camp that is intentionally is being centered and being focused on how we do things, or how they're doing things. That was difficult for many folks to wrap their heads around, especially as we've been talking about when you're white in this country that you tend to think that you're normal and that you don't really have a specific culture. You just do what's supposed to be done and other people have cultures, they're a bit odd and weird sometimes, or backwards.

Obviously I did not particularly come in with this perception and I could see it playing out. I could see the damage that was being done by the very people who came to help protect the waters at the same time was causing so much harm left and right. At the same time also hearing about other folks. Two-spirit indigenous person that I have a connection with, two-spirit meaning, is a word that many native folks use to describe being transgender. How this person actually left early from the camp because they were experiencing so much transphobia. Not just from non-native folks, but also from native folks.

It is incredibly important to understand the complexity that we live in. That no one is simply a good person, a bad person, a monster. This is all unconscious conditioning. We happen to be talking about racism right now and that's obviously one of the major, major forces at play with the distribution of power and resources in our country, in our society. At the same time there's so many other forms of systemic oppression happening and to always be vigilant of what we have been conditioned to think is normal and acceptable.

When I was driving through ... I drove from New Mexico all the way up to North Dakota. It was interesting because I was driving out through the expanse, I looked around, I was like, "Yo, this is scary." I'm in this car with food, water, heat and everything, I'm like, "This is really scary." I'm kind of getting anxious. There's just hours and hours and hours of open plains and I'm going 60 to 80 miles per hour. I was like, "What was so horrible on the east coast that this was a good idea for folks to come out west? Really? In wagons? Really? Is that what you're going to do?" I was thinking, you knew that there's a good chance that 50% of your family were going to die either on the way over there, or after you got there within the first five years. This was your best option. That doesn't make much sense to me.

Then I think about it again. I'm like, it was when you think about the ways they talk about Manifest Destiny about the rights that the, not just that you could go out west and get land for yourself for pennies sometimes, land that was stolen from the native folks. But, that you had, it was like you had to. It was like your right to, it was your destiny to. There's a level of entitlement that was talked about in order to rouse people up to do this really, really absurd thing of going across the country in a wagon.

I think about how entitlement shows up in all countries, in all places, but there's something particular I find about particularly the white male entitlement. I think there's something to the US about what, who you need to be in order to be able to do all these things in a land that wasn't your own, you didn't even know, you weren't connected to. You didn't know what the land was about, how the land could hurt you, how the land could support you, because it wasn't your land. This was still your best option. Once again, it gets me thinking about how white supremacy was really to keep you distracted from seeing how you were being exploited by the ruling elite. Instead of questioning why this was your best opportunity, you just went ahead and did it even though it was on the backs of indigenous folks.

The other thing I was thinking about was what is the impact on me as a displaced person in a country of displaced people? As we talk about as a white person obviously in your relationship to people of color, to communities of color there is a lot of work to be done. You can see how racism impacts that. The question of how does racism and white supremacy impact white people in and of themselves is something that we've been

exploring, obviously, but it's not often talked about. I was thinking, what is the impact of being a settler on me? What is the impact of being a displaced person on me? Independent of indigenous people.

What did we lose when we became displaced? What did we lose when we live on land that is not our land? Land that was taken from people who we could have shared it with, and learned from them. Instead, it was taken from them. I see the comparison between me and my family who have such built up knowledge, understanding about food, for example, herbs, medicines, home remedies. There's an understanding in my parents and grandparents about what is nourishing to them, what is harmful to them because they grew up in a country that was theirs. They had accumulated generation and generation and generations of knowledge and wisdom and relationship to a land that they took care of and that took care of them. There's this greater sense of responsibility both ways.

Here we do not have that, or as I do not have that and I think many of us do not. The ability to actually for us to exploit and take advantage of things we have no relationship to is tremendous, obviously. A simple thing was I bought a bunch of stuff from REI. I bought a bunch of stuff from REI to go to Standing Rock. They have a one year policy, you can use and return it. I bought some winter gear that I didn't have, and I was intending to return it. Except I had made relationships with the original store I had stayed in, I had bought it from, so I decided, actually, to return it at a different store that was on my route. It felt a little bit easier for me to have used, and returned it because I didn't know that store. I didn't know the people there. I had no connections to them. It struck me how much easier it was for me to take advantage of that system because I didn't know them. I had no connection to them.

I think this is something we see over, and over and over again is that when you do not have connection to something, the ability to exploit it and abuse and control it for your own personal benefit without much concern about the impact on the other people is pretty high. Yet, at the same time we have this intense sense of desire for belonging, to be connected.

They were having a decolonization conversation at Standing Rock. It was a very powerful, very strong, very healing and very difficult, emotional conversation that I think a lot of people moved through. At the end of it somebody shouted, "We are all indigenous to this land." Which you can imagine just broke it after two hours of talking about, and helping people move through decolonization work. To have somebody shout that out that we are all indigenous to this land. It was really painful. It was tremendously painful.

When I look at that person who said that, what occurs to me is their tremendous desire to belong to a land. That despite all the evidence that this is not, that they are not

indigenous to this land, that they will insist upon that. Because their pain of not being connected to a land, not belonging somewhere is so tremendous they wish to erase the whole history of colonization on this country. While being at Standing Rock of all places.

Like I said, I'm less interested in the right or wrong of a comment, I'm more interested in the why and the pain behind it. Myself, I am just beginning to really unpack what it means to be in touch with that pain. What is that pain, even? There is much grief work that I think that is for me to do. It also begins in cultivating my own relationship to the land that I am on. To understand what is around me, what are the trees around me, what are the plants around, what are the animals around me? What is around me? What is needing help? What is in pain around me? What is the waters around me saying? What have we done to it? From there we can start to develop a connection. Yes, we are not coming from generations of belonging to this land, and we can start to work on, to change that by actually taking care of it, by looking around and noticing.

That is what is coming up for me now. I'm very grateful that I have the practices that I have to lean into this incredibly ... I don't even know the word to say it. Disruptive seems too small. Earth shattering sounds a little bit better, a little more appropriate. Earth shattering understanding, or glimpse. I won't say understanding, but glimpse of what it means to be a settler on colonized lands. I also say this as somebody who got to come back to a warm apartment and do paperwork. I was doing paperwork all day, finances. With that privilege that I can walk away and the local indigenous people at Standing Rock can't. Only if they wanted to be disconnected and run away, can they.

There are no easy answers to this. I do not claim to have easy answers. All I can claim is that I will keep sitting with it and I'll keep embracing it and not turn away from what is arising and that this work is both internal and external. We need to constantly be doing the internal work so that we can better do the external work.

I just wanted to share that one story, as many stories within one story. You can tell my mind goes woosh around these things. I imagine that people also have their own stories about what was coming up from them in the past week. We're going to go into a breakout room. What I want people to share, what do they notice as they have these conversations? Maybe you didn't have these conversations about racism or Trump. Then, okay. There's no right or wrong, not even the choice to not have a conversation, or feel like you can't have one, or having one and then it not going exactly the way you wanted. Maybe something else. Maybe it went wonderfully, exactly the way you wanted it to go. I don't know.

What did you notice coming up for you? Where did you get stuck? Did you sit with it or did you not want to sit with where you got stuck and find out what happened there? Did you have a conversation and then later on realize something? I don't know. I want

people just to have a conversation about what came up for you. What did you notice? We don't need to have a play by play, "He said, she said, they did." None of that. Kind of what was important about this conversation and what was emotionally important about this conversation that came up for you? Yeah, Bree, do you want to give the tech issue because I know some people are [new 00:22:12].

Breeshia: Yeah. I just posted in your group and for people on the phones, to unmute yourself just push star-six and to mute yourself again push star-six. Just a reminder that breakout sessions are optional just [inaudible 00:22:26] to know if you would like to return to the main room. If you end up without a partner, that's okay, just try doing the exercises on your own.

Sandra Kim: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. It's totally okay if no one shows up in your room, just do it on your own. We get lots of questions about that. I just want to repeat that. We're going to create the breakout rooms and I'm going to give you, I'll give you seven minutes. We'll come back at 32. You may have two or three people in your room depending. We'll come back in seven minutes. Was I on mute this entire time?

Breeshia: Yes.

Sandra Kim: That's hilarious. Okay, sorry, I just realized that. The good thing is that folks knew what to do anyway, they've been writing on the white board and not the group chat. What I was saying as people are typing out their answers about what came up for them while they were either engaged in conversations this past week, or thought about engaging in conversations and then for whatever reason didn't, is that when people get stuck they don't want to be where they are. That's pretty natural phenomenon. When you get stuck somewhere that simply means that it's somewhere that actually needs some more attention from you. That there's something that you're resisting in that conversation that you're having with yourself and the world is having with you. That there's no right or wrong that you're there, but it's just that you're there.

I was talking with a friend of mine who recently quit her job, actually because in large part due to the level of racism and the social justice organization she was working in and the refusal to acknowledge it. She's a black, queer woman. We were talking about her next steps. She spent a lot of time not knowing. She did know, she just was too tired. Then when she got clear on that I was like, "Maybe, then, if you feel too tired to do the things that you know you want to do, maybe that just means that right now is a time to rest."

It's not about whipping yourself, and making yourself do something, moving yourself through something but actually just letting yourself be where you are. She did that. She

took some time to rest and fairly quickly she was able to, she was motivated to start doing some other work, then rest.

Just putting out there that if we are stuck somewhere it simply means that there is something more for us to discover in that place. Once we discover it, we will often be called forth into action. If we keep resisting what's coming up for us, well, as they say in one of the programs that I've done with this, "What you resist persists." That comes from [Landmark 00:25:58], people are familiar with that. Let's share. If Breeshia could share some of the stuff that people are sharing. You might be on mute, Breeshia.

Breeshia: Sorry. On the whiteboard we have, "There might be a chance with some people." Someone feels fear of isolation, confusion, sadness, bad, frustrated. Be it, some people are learning to present with other's pain and are learning that self care is key and rage is true. In the chat the thing that came up for one person is how to respond to people who are not hearing, or listening to you because they are so caught up in the emotions situation. Someone else mentioned feeling shut down, so overwhelmed by the anger and emotion. Someone else mentioned being shut down. Someone mentioned being hesitant to engage due to fear of burning out again and messing up.

With their breakout partner they discussed realizing that they often view opportunities for engagement from the "What might I lose in this conversation?" perspective. Rather than a "What might be gained?" perspective. Another has been blocked up by how their liberal, progressive, anti-racist community is willing to dehumanize racist people, and how unsafe it is to [inaudible 00:27:38] dehumanize those people and how privileged and problematic that suggestion seems. Also, simultaneously seeing themselves still having an impulse to try to be better than their racist family members.

The concept of humble curiosity is a touch point in conversations. That feels great. One person realized they still weren't listening to their family member's perspectives. Let's see. Someone is still struggling to figure out the line between self care and willful ignorance with part of their family who is, quote/unquote, "Typical white liberals." "I had some great conversations on how they can learn and engage with anti-racist work which is awesome, but they went off to watch television and play cards for a while." They found themselves feeling guilty for not knowing when to disengage. Yeah.

Sandra Kim: Great. Thank you for everybody for sharing. One of the hard things about doing this work is that there are no clear cut answers that will always be true every single time, in every single opportunity. Yet, that is desperately what we want to have. That is desperately what we want to know. We want to know how to fix things. We want to know how to make things better. We want to know how to be right. We want to know how to not cause harm. I hope that was a bit illustrated in the story that I shared about

my own journey in this in just the last few days from Standing Rock to coming back home around my relationship to indigenous sovereignty and justice.

There are no easy answers. We have simply incidences in front of us that we can choose what to do with. Moving between the single incident and what is happening and then the larger context, the system or the history that we live in. Understanding that we're constantly operating at those two different levels, as an individual and somebody who belongs to a greater community, a greater group identity.

While we did not cause this to happen, we're not responsible for it having happened, we are responsible for what we do about it because we do, still, personally benefit from it, as I personally benefit from colonization. The question is just what do we do about it? Do we actually acknowledge what is happening? There is no easy answer. There is no, "Should I say something now? Should I not say something now? Should I take a break?" Is it I need this time to restore, to reground, or I'm doing this to run away? There's no single answer to any of that. The question is just to be curious. No, there's no question. The question is what is coming up for you that this is your best response?

My former supervisor Inca Mohamed, she once said to me that people are always doing their best and their best is oftentimes not good. Is oftentimes harmful. It's still the best that they can do at that time. The point is not to make somebody right or wrong, good or bad for their best being what it is, but to think how is it that their best is this? Is it their best option, the best response they've got going for them? What can we do as a society to help them have a better response that is better in the sense that it is more affirming and less dehumanizing?

Once again, that work starts with ourselves. I want people to take a moment to think about how are you relating to where you're getting stuck? If you actually believe me when I say these things and I say that there's no right or wrong to it, that you are, I wouldn't say you are where you need to be, to be quite honest. I don't like using those type of language. I do say you are where you are and it is where you are and that's just where you are. Let's just be here because that's where you are. Like, there's no way ... You're here, right?

I want people to think about where are you in relationship to where you're getting stuck? Are you resisting where you're being stuck? Are you embracing where you're getting stuck? Are you sitting with it or are you beating yourself up for being there? We're going to go into another breakout room and we're going to just do, it's going to be a quick one. Well, let's do another seven minute one. I want folks just to listen. How are you relating to it? Just share that between everybody. Once again, if you are on telephone you can do star-six. Come back in seven minutes.

All right, now. We are back. Per usual I would like folks to just share what came up for them, like what did they realize about how they're relating to where they're getting stuck? People can share in the chat box, as well as in the white board. What did you notice about how you're relating to the way you're being stuck?

As people are writing this down I wanted to also, I wanted to mention something. I keep talking about how where you are there's no right or wrong to it, it's just where you are. The same is true for the other person. Now, obviously is it somewhere we'd like for them to be? Is it somewhere where they are not causing harm? That's a different question. What I'm really saying is that they are where they are. If you try to push, coerce, force someone else to change from where they are, then that's us being coercive, aka, dehumanizing and that's not what we're trying to be. When we're in a place where we can't feel anything but have a desire to be dehumanizing, to force somebody, to coerce somebody, then that just means that we have something coming up for us that needs our attention.

Sometimes we can come to a person, we don't want to dehumanize them, but we don't know so what to say. You can say that. You can say that you don't know. I once had to let somebody go who I had recently brought on to write for us because some allegations in the community against this person. In that conversation I didn't really know what to say beyond being like, "This is what's coming up for me. This is the situation that was brought to me. This is what's coming up for me. I'm not quite sure how to proceed, actually. What do you think?" It was a very odd way to have a firing conversation, but I also wanted to be very humanizing throughout it. I was very clear that we couldn't just let this person continue to write for us without addressing the allegations. I was also really clear that I didn't know what was behind these allegations. This was not something that I was a part of.

I didn't try to have the perfect words. I think oftentimes we feel like we have to say things in the most perfect way to be the most convincing, to get them to agree with us. We're at a loss of ... We don't know how to say it and we all get tripped up on it, or we just feel like a lot of times when people say things to us to deny the racism is happening when we see it so clearly, it's just a shock. You're just left flabbergasted. You're just like, "I don't ... Ahh!" Right?

That's also something you can share. You can be like, "I don't even know how to respond to that. I have no words because it is very clear to me and I can see that it's not very clear for you. That is just really unsettling to me." Right? You don't have to figure out what to say to folks, you can just say where you are which can be like, "I don't know what to say right now." You can just be where you are in that conversation.

By you being where you are, including in the not knowing, that can actually open up and make it more inviting for the other person to also be like, "Huh, you don't really know how to respond to what I said. Why is that? I don't really know you're having that reaction either? I don't know why you're having a reaction to where you don't know why I'm having this reaction." It creates this space, actually, where we can become curious if we don't feel like we have to say the most perfect thing or else we're going to get it wrong. We can just let go of that and just be like, "This is where I am. You said some stuff and this is what's coming up for me." We make really sure that we stay in our own lane.

This is super, super, super important folks. You've probably heard this in other places, but stay in your own lane. Don't try to control somebody else's lane. Stay in your own lane which just means what is coming up for you? Any attempt that you make to assume that you know what's happening for the other person or to assume that you know everything that's going on in the situation or you know how to quote/unquote, "Fix everything." That is all make believe. That's all make believe. Okay? What you know is what's coming up for you. Even that you need to sit with it a bit to really arise, really acknowledge that so you have something to articulate which in the beginning could just could be that you're flabbergasted and you have no words.

That is how you can have these conversations when you don't know how to respond. You can just say that. Or you could say, "It's really hard for me to know what to do right now because I really want to listen to you and hear where you're coming from, and that's really hard for me because all I keep thinking about is just the horrible impact that Trump's policy is going to have on people I care about. It's really painful for me to see that you don't see that." You can just be where you are. Not that it's going to be easy, or not that the other person is necessarily going to be receptive to it, but it's the only thing you have that's true. It's the only thing you have that's true, so why not go with that? That's what I say. Even if you don't, if it's not a situation where you feel comfortable sharing it, at least you can acknowledge it for yourself, which is incredibly valuable. Incredibly, incredibly valuable. Breeshia, do you want to start sharing what people have been ... Reading some of the stuff that people have been sharing?

Breeshia: Yes. I am scrolling through it now. On the white board we have mutual support, feeling anger and overwhelmed, guilty, withdrawal, fear, loss, shock, more anger, frustration, manipulated and defensive. One person's wondering what to say to disinformation. One person mentioned feeling really self critical, unsafe. Another mentioned recognizing that they need to be kinder to themselves, but they're not good at doing so, yet.

In the chat we have someone who feels scattered and overwhelmed with where to put their time and energy. They feel tired, anxious and judgmental of themselves. Another person is noticing that they are tired, sad, fatigue, not enthusiastic to [be with 00:41:26]

what they're feeling, and sluggish. Another wants to belong, be a part of speaking out, yet they feel othered, and feel like maybe people aren't listening. They aren't sure if they are trying to be coercive. Another mentioned that what they feel depends on who they're speaking with. If it's someone they expect to deal with racism better they get stuck on anger. If it's someone they don't expect to deal with it that well they get stuck on feeling overwhelmed. That isn't always the case, it's usually that they lack energy and they need to pay attention to where they are emotionally.

We have a couple of people who mentioned being hard on themselves. Another mentioned resistance comes in waves, powerful waves full of judgment and prickly feelings. Those moments are reminders of how much they can say and do harmful things. With time it can bring a mixture of compassion/shame. Another mentioned thinking that they have it all figured out and then being hit with reality in a moment of 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. Someone mentioned feeling self judgement of emotional disconnectedness, confusion over intersecting privilege and oppression in relationships. Yeah.

Sandra Kim: Do you want to share, also the one about the Thanksgiving visitor that Laurie shared?

Breeshia: Yes.

Sandra Kim: If you scroll it.

Breeshia: Scrolling up. "I had a visitor for Thanksgiving who was an activist and ally for many years. She was so good at this humble curiosity. She would challenge me by asking 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 paradigm. I felt very respected, and yet I had become more aware. It was very helpful."

Sandra Kim: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Great. The first thing as we notice, the first practice is to notice when we're being, when there's toxicity happening, right? The first practice noticing toxicity. When I asked you the question how are you relating to what is coming up for you? That's an opportunity to really notice the toxicity of where ... Which is another term for being dehumanizing to yourself, usually, though, sometimes to other folks. Of which is where you're making yourself wrong as a person for what's coming up. You are denying, erasing, trying to change what's coming up for you so it doesn't exist, even though it does exist. You're trying to coerce yourself. You're trying to coerce yourself into something, being something or doing something.

When we're dehumanizing to ourselves it doesn't go very well. It doesn't go when we dehumanizes other people, it doesn't do well when it goes to us. It's what we've been taught to do so we do it. I want to take a moment now, now that we've noticed that, and I want us to think about the other half of the first practice which is acknowledging the multiple realities.

We acknowledge the multiple realities, what this means is that we all ... There are many things happening at the same time. There's your experience in a situation, there's the other person's experience of the situation. There's also the larger context. Historical, systemic reality also at play. That what is occurring right now is just one current incidence. It's one current manifestation of this larger dynamic that has not shifted. The way we can eventually shift them is if we create more and more incidences where we have a humanizing dynamic versus a dehumanizing dynamic and we keep making more and more humanizing moments until that starts to shift the greater context that we're operating in.

Just know they're constantly ... That both are happening. We have this desire to think that we know everything or we got it right or we are good, and then something happens that reminds us, "Oh no, that's not true. It's never going to be true. You're never going to know everything. There's actually something, I think, freeing in that, at least for me. To know that I can never know everything, so I just give it up. I just give up trying to know everything. Instead, I just try to understand where I am knowing that I need to take space for that, so you can do that work, and then I also just focus on inviting, asking as in that Thanksgiving story about how the friend was like, "What you said made me uncomfortable. Can you tell me more about what that means for you?" It's a perfect example of compassion activism. Stay grounded, acknowledge what coming up for you and inquire, invite, be curious about the other person.

Just acknowledging that all these things are happening and we don't know. That desire to know is actually desire to control in many times. Perhaps not always, but oftentimes the desire to know is really is a way of being controlling which is how we've been taught to be right by systemic oppression. Just noticing when that comes up for you.

Now that we have sat with that toxicity and hopefully now you can start to see that what you think about somebody else or a situation is merely that. It's just what you think. I want us to start focusing on what's coming up for you, what is underneath all of that? I would like folks to just get settled a bit. You know what we're going to do? A little exercise. A little breathing mindfulness exercise to get re-grounded and then into looking at why we're getting stuck there.

Just get settled and start taking deep breaths breathing in and out. In and out. Breathing in and out and just noticing where the breath is going in your body. Just notice how it's

flowing through. Remember the situation you were just talking about where you're being stuck. As you're thinking about it, where are you noticing it coming up in your body? Are you feeling it in your chest, in your shoulders, in your stomach? Where are you feeling it strongest, that stuck feeling? Put your hand on it. I want you to just continue breathing in and out and breathe into that stuck feeling in your body. Remember we're not trying to change it, make it go away. We're just sitting with it letting it arise.

Keeping your hand on where you feel it the strongest, just notice what sensations are arising. Is it strong? Is it tingly? How big is it? Is it moving? Does it have a color? Just notice what the sensations are like. Notice any images that are coming up. Continue to breathe slowly and deeply into it. I want you to notice how you're relating to it. Repeat after me, breathing in, "I see you." Breathe out, "This hurts." Breathing in, "I see you." Breathe out, "This hurts." Breathing in, "I see you." Breathing out, "This is hard." Breathe in, "I see you." Breathe out, "I don't know what to do." Breathe in, "I don't know." Breathe out, "I'm scared." Breathe in, "I don't know." Breathe out, "I'm scared." Breathe in, "I don't know." Breathe out, "And that's happening." Breathe in, "I don't know." Breathe out, "And that's happening."

Just notice what's coming up for you now. Maybe those words resonated with you, maybe they didn't. That's okay. Realize how strongly you're feeling those feelings of being stuck. Has it shifted? Stayed the same? Maybe you want to shift away from it. Breathing in, "I see you." Breathe out, "I'm here." Breathe in, "I see you." Breathe out, "I'm here." Breathe in, "I see you." Breathe out, "I'm here." Breathe in, "I'm here." Breathe out, "This is hard." Breathe in, "I'm here." Breathe out, "This is hard." Breathe in, "I don't know what to do." Breathe out, "And that's okay." Breathe in, "I don't know what to do." Breathe out, "And that's okay." Breathe in, "This is happening." Breathe out, "And that's okay." Breathe in, "That's okay." Breathe out, "That's okay."

I want you just to notice now, notice what's coming up for you. Maybe it was really hard to say those words. Maybe it felt really good to say those words. Keeping your hand on where you feel it the strongest, though, I want you to ask it what it needs from you? What can you give it? Maybe it shares something, maybe it doesn't. If it doesn't you can let it know that you'd like to hear when it's ready to tell you. If it told you something you can thank it. You can thank it anyways and say you'll be back to talk some more later. Just breathe in, breathe out. Feel the breaths go into your body, come out. Breathing in, breathing out.

Open up your eyes and wiggle your toes. Come back here and we're going to share what came up for folks. Once again, as you know there is no right or wrong to what came up for you. Maybe you just actually checked out during that conversation. Maybe you went somewhere new. There's no right or wrong to any of this. If you did feel like this wasn't

an exercise that you could do right now, or maybe you felt that some of the things I was saying wasn't a good fit for where you are, that happens. The question is, what was coming up for you? Why is where you were where you were? That's all.

As people are sharing I also wanted to share another story that happened to me recently. As you can tell because I've been doing this for a while I do manage to practice compassion activism most of the time in my life. Not always, though. I still get stuck at times. I was getting stuck in and around this one area where there was somebody who I really wanted to see expressing more, really being the captain of their own ship and feeling like they could really create what they want in their lives. Be who they wanted to be. Create what they wanted to create in their lives.

It was very frustrating to me to see this person struggle with that and not want to do that, be scared of doing that. They intellectually wanted to do it, and they did want to do it, but it was very anxiety producing and scary and stressful for them to think about actually doing these things. As they were realizing how scary it was for them, they're becoming aware of the fact that they hadn't been the captains of their own ships. They'd actually been more conforming and doing what they had been told to do when they thought they were pretty radical, and what not. There was a lot of pain coming up along with the fear and anxiety.

I was just in a place where I was very frustrated and I kept being like, "I don't know what to do." Like, "Ahh!" I was in that space. So, because I wanted to just get them to do it I backed off, not trying to be coercive. When instead I sat with what was coming up for me and what came up for me ... I actually woke up in the middle of the night. I woke up in the middle of the night deeply, in deep pain, actually. I started to cry because what I was experiencing was this sense of how much they had not been allowed to just be themselves. Even the thought of, "Who do you want to be in the world? What do you want to create?" That was something that was so distant for them and they didn't realize how distant it was for them and that was really painful for me to witness, and still is.

To know just how not free people, even if you can take the cage apart, that it is a process for them to free themselves internally so they can actually move freely as they wish to because they have been living in a cage for so long. And because that pain was so difficult for me I wasn't fully aware of that pain existing in me so I was running away from it. I was just being frustrated, looking at the other person instead of looking at myself. Once I got in touch with that pain, I mean it forced it's way up. It woke me up in the middle of the night, had me crying, I was able to embrace it which allowed me to really look at them with great compassion. If I'm feeling that, what are they feeling?

Not making them right or wrong for being where they are, but being understanding that there's a reason why this is their best option right now. If I can bear witness to that and

hold the space for that pain within them, and then help them develop the skill to do something different, to be more free, to exercise more agency in their lives in a way that's meeting them where they're at. Not where I want them to be, but where they're actually at. That's actually the humanizing the approach. To just be with them with where they're at. If you want to share, Breeshia, to see what came up for folks as they were doing this exercise with me.

Breeshia: On the white board we have a feeling of speaking with curiosity, another mentioned deep sadness turned to action. Random injuries and another mentioned re-groundedness. In the chat we have someone who mentioned that they are too dissociative to be able to do these exercises remotely.

Sandra Kim: I want to pause and just speak to that because I think that is important. That depending on where we are in our ability to relate to pain and what might be brought up as we do this, mindfulness is not something ... We talk about it as if it's always positive. It is not a positive or negative thing. It's just something we do to get in touch with our reality of what we're experiencing. Sometimes just to crack that all open and get all in touch with it is not actually the best thing for us. It can become too much. Really listen to yourself when you feel like it's ... I mean, if you're feeling like it's, that you actually want to disassociate particularly because we're doing these things remotely or by yourself, listen to yourself. That is powerful. Listen to yourself and think about, "Okay, what is it I do need in order to start opening up just a little bit? How can I feel safe to know that I can close it, I can pull back?"

People had also mentioned about "Taking a break" quote/unquote, from what's going on in the world and going off and playing cards and what not. Breaks are important. Pausing is important. If we're always taking hits all the time do you think we'd be in any shape to actually deal with what's going on in the world? FYI, I'm a social hermit. I take a lot of space for myself. I do a lot of alone time. I don't think I would be able to do this work in the way that I have been if I had to not take that time for myself.

Play is actually really important. It's something that I'm going to be really focusing on in 2017 because I need to have more play in my life because that's what helps create the energy that I need, also. I mean, I deserve it as well, but it's also what I need to have the energy to do this work. That's all a part of life. This work is about being really, truly attuned to yourself and what you need and giving yourself what you need.

The question is what is it that you actually need? The first initial reaction to those situations is usually just that it's not much, it doesn't give us much information other than just being a red flag. Just sit with it if you feel like you need to disconnect, if you feel like you need to take a break, sit with it. What's underneath it? Is it because you want to run away, you don't want to hear more about it? Then sit with the pain that's coming up

from behind that. Or, is it because you've heard so much pain and you just, you need to sit in silence, you need to restore, you need to remember the goodness that exists in the world? Then do that. There's no right or wrong. You just need to know actually what's actually coming up for you so you can do and take an appropriate action. Breeshia, want to continue?

Breeshia: Yeah. Another person mentioned that this was very helpful for the heartache that comes when they experience loneliness. They had an intense visualization that was very powerful. Another mentioned that they love these exercises. It gives them time to think and feel what is going on. They feel a sense of calm and that it is okay to not know or for things to not be okay. Another said, "It felt so good to say those words." It felt like they were letting go of a need to be right and forgiving themselves, and they forgave themselves. Their pain told them that it needed attention.

Another imagined a gray shelter that was protective. It asked them not to be mad at it, but love it. Another experienced fear of difficult feelings decreased and they felt themselves embracing more. Another was halfway through when they realized that they were not thinking, that they were thinking of something last week and not what they have been obsessed about all week related to this. Another mentioned being able to recognize the hurt that is a hard thing because they wall themselves off so much and there's a feeling that needed to be heard and felt.

Another said their bulky, khaki colored, thoracic density asked them for patience. Another 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 01:07:59] randomly and a desire for connection. Their own aging body has come up with a whole series of bizarre, superficial injuries since the election while they've been acting cool. The spots first felt like a sense of urgency to go off in all directions as a helper, then like vicarious blows, then like marks of their own desire to be in solidarity even without hope.

Another mentioned that this practice is helping them to have empathy, compassion for people, themselves included who have had so many difficulties, that layered on top of each other they couldn't act sometimes, even if that lack of action caused more damage. Lastly, someone mentioned after being so stuck for so long they are starting to feel the shift just a little bit. It's amazing.

Sandra Kim: All right. This is what's possible if we actually are just connected to our own reality. It doesn't always happen instantaneously. Sometimes it takes a while and sometimes it happens in a couple minutes, only. Right? The exercise that I guide people through took just a few minutes. It's not very long. You can do it by yourself. Sometimes it's going to take months to work through stuff. Depends on how deeply it goes.

The important thing to do is that it's the importance of taking time and space and energy for yourself. One of the things that I noticed when I was at Standing Rock was that because there was a lot of activity ... It was interesting because we actually, I went with a group of Buddhist activists, so we had raised funds and donated a very large tent, a very large dome for people to go to sit in silence and meditate and be contemplative. Take some time for contemplation.

In this quite, as you can imagine, quite a lot happening, I actually found myself having far less space for contemplation and for sitting with where I am than as usually because there's just a lot happening every single day, every single moment. I started feeling my body, my emotions, my spirit get sludgier so that by the end it felt like this ... I had been taking in all this data and all these things were arising in me and I felt like I was getting all sludgy at the end. I was moving slowly. My mental state, my emotional state, everything was moving far slower than usual. I had very little emotional capacity, actually.

We had a group check-in before, on the last day. I just actually didn't go to the group check-in. I was like, "I don't have the emotional space to hear how everyone's doing." I needed space for myself and I can't really do that for anybody else right now. Me and my other friend who's also an introvert, we ended up just talking in the car and processing with each other for about two hours. Then we joined the other group and said our piece at the very end.

Then I spent the next three days processing deeply. There was lots of crying. Lots of sitting, lots of grieving. I'm still grieving. I'm still processing. I'm still sitting with it and I came back a few days ago. That's okay. The important thing was that I was able to give myself the space. I realized that in those moments just how much space we don't give ourselves normally to process.

You can think of this as emotional death by indigestion. You don't want emotional indigestion, people. If that's a helpful little metaphor. I read that somewhere. Emotional indigestion will just make everything far worse. Keep processing. Keep creating the space for you to process. It's actually the only thing that will liberate us because it's the only thing that actually gets us in touch with our reality to take care of it.

On that note I will end today's session. There is much happening in the world. There is much that is being asked of us and I believe that together we can actually do it. This space is just one space. There are other spaces that you can either become a part of or create and to bring compassion activism into those spaces. You don't need to use those words, you can just talk about being humanizing versus dehumanizing.

Know that when people find it hard to hear that is because they are now in pain. They don't know how to not dehumanize other people. That's neither right nor wrong, it's just where they are. That just means that they have a pain that needs to be acknowledged and you can help them do that. The best way that you can help them do that is for you to be with your own pain, to get in touch with it and to take care of it. When you share that story with other folks, particularly when you share the other story of how you've been with the pain of white supremacy on you as a white person, that is one of the most powerful gifts that you can give to another white person.

I invite you, I really, really invite you to listen to the calling that you are feeling now, and to understand that it starts with your own healing, with your own liberation. It's the only thing you have. It's the best gift you can offer the world. Also, we're going to be offering another version of this. We're going to be promoting it in the next couple weeks, so just FYI your friends, your family members. Send them our way. The more people who have these practices to help them move through the earth shattering consciousness raising that is happening in our country, the better equipped we are to create something different, something loving instead. Thank you, buh-bye.