

compassionate activism

Healing from Toxic Whiteness Practice Session 6 Transcript - December 8, 2016

- Sandra: Hi everyone. This is the session eight, which is the last session of Healing From Toxic Whiteness. We will be wrapping things up today, but obviously, this is a lifelong journey. We will be continuing to do this work hopefully in community, with each other, either through a Facebook group or through another iteration of Healing From Toxic Whiteness.
- Today, I want to create some space in the latter half that has more sharing in pairs about what you've learned and gained and where you still struggle with. I wanted to spend a little bit of the time in the beginning going over about how to have conversations with other folks, particularly with other white folks.
- I know that the previous ... We obviously had a heavy emphasis on the first part of the model, which is how to be with yourself and hold space for yourself with the pain that is arising from the fact that systemic racism is occurring both in ourselves and around us. I really want to emphasize that all roads lead back to you. What we cannot hold space for other folks is when we cannot hold space for ourselves. When we wish to reject on somebody else is because it's also we're rejecting it within ourselves.
- When we are finding ourselves ... We are feeling like it's harmful for us to engage in these conversations and we feel like we just want to actually make the other person wrong. We want to erase their experience and not even interested in hearing about their experiences like engaging in what I've been calling "dehumanization." All that means is that there's something coming up for you that's getting in the way of you being able to see them in their humanity because you have a pain that needs your attention.
- So often times we jump to trying to stop the other person. Trying to make them agree with us. Trying to make them change their ways. That's coming off of this common place of coercion. We actually making somebody that is actually is coming from a place of where we're actually going to respect their autonomy. We're not actually going to respect them in their yes, no, and counter-offer, which would be an invitation and not a coercion.
- Always kind of remember when that comes up for you. Once again, it's neither right or wrong that you wish to do. I'm seeing chat boxes some sound distortion happening?
- Breeshia: You're clear on my end. I'm checking to see if anyone else is experiencing sound distortion.

Sandra:

It might be the internet connection that we're having. Let me know if it's something different than.

I just want to really focus in. It feels like it's a very difficult conversation we've had. There's a reason why. The good way of thinking about it is, for example, we often live in different realities and we have different ways of relating to stuff that's not actually problematic. For example, it's like Breeshia makes me some cake and I don't like the cake. She likes the cake. That's not a hard thing to acknowledge. For most people that doesn't cause any kind of pain. There's no resistance. Breeshia is not going to be like, "No. You can't not like my cake. You have to like my cake.

You should like my cake." Except there are sometimes when that may occur, especially if it's a loved one, it's like a parent, or if it's like our parents so making some food and we want to say that we don't want to eat it. That kind of actually feel like a rejection for some folks and that's oftentimes kind of a place where they've wrapped up their ... How lovable they are is wrapped up in terms of what they can do for somebody else and so they need to be making food, they need to provide, they need to be doing things for that person to feel like, "I deserve to be loved. I am worthy of being loved."

When we reject that in somebody else and we reject that food it can feel like a rejection of them as a human being. All that means when that comes off and you can't be with somebody and when they say, "I don't want to eat that cake," and that hurts and you don't ... You want to make them. You're like, "You have to eat that cake now. No, you should eat that cake. Why don't you not like that cake. You're silly. No, of course you like that cake." You basically engage in dehumanizing behavior then you know that just means that something is coming up for you.

That may seem like a very small little example because it's just about cake. It's not that big of a deal but then if we actually take that same dynamic and we bring it to talking about white privilege, talking about racism. Which is obviously a much more loaded conversation [inaudible 00:05:17] and we make it ... But if we are coming from a place of wholeness where we've embraced and worked with the pain and acknowledging the racism within ourselves, then we have a much greater ability to actually hold the space for somebody to actually get in touch with their own internalized racism.

This work always, at the end of the day, as I keep repeating, all roads lead back to you. All roads lead back to you. As we've been sharing, there's a lot of grief work that's really important to be done, particularly for white folks around systemic racism. Grief is not something that we talk a lot about in our society. We spend in our previous practice sessions, we spend pretty much the entire session talking about grief and holding space for the pain of having the pain of racism actually. If you feel like right now that you really want to have all these conversations but it's so emotionally charged for you, I recommend really focusing on doing grief work. Really focusing on letting the pain arise and taking breaks too. Taking breaks from it periodically and not like always doing it. Life is full of lots of stuff. It's not always filled with the pain of racism. It's also filled with a lot of joy and a lot of love and that's all real too. I think not engaging in the self-modulation.

I've been talking a lot about doing this work and instead really sitting with where you are and being gentle with it. Not in a way that coddles, but in a way that actually really brings up the deeper, emotional reality of the pain that you are feeling.

If you do this, then the conversation becomes very, very different with another person. If we come at the conversation not from the attempt to try to coerce them, you're coming

from a place of curiosity. Curiosity and wanting to help them better understand what's coming up for them that this is how they're feeling in the world. Because everybody has a reason why they're doing what they're doing. Everybody has a reason why they think the way they think. They didn't have access to this program. Imagine, you know how hard this program has been for you. You've been getting in touch with some stuff that is really deep and really painful and it's been easier to get in touch with that because you have this community, you have this framework, you have these practices and they don't have it. They do not have it.

I think keeping in mind the ways that you've had access to the things that they haven't had and what your role could be is to help them share, share with them your journey as I said in my other ... In the last practice session, one of the most important things you can do as a white person fighting against racism is to really stand as a model. To do the work yourself, to heal from systemic racism and to really acknowledge the existence and the impact of racism, first and foremost. So being able to just do that and then sharing your story of how hard that was. How hard that was but you still did it and you were able to do it with compassion toward yourself. Understanding that this is the world that we are all raised in.

It would be pretty impossible for somebody to be raised in this world and not have some internalized racism within them. It's impossible. There's no way around it. There's really truly no way around this. When you have done the work with yourself, you're that much more skillful to just do the same thing with somebody else. I just kind of want to give that as the framing because I know a lot of folks came into the program being like, "Oh, I want to fix those racist white people out there," and the feedback we've been getting is people are realizing that they're learning how to embrace the racism within themselves so they can release it because we have to be conscious of what we're releasing. If we're not even conscious of it then we have nothing to release. It will continue to drive us.

It's pretty impossible to not have a lot of unconscious racism living within us. We all do. We all do. People of color, we have our own experiences to counter the lies of white supremacy and so we battle a lot of internalized racism, a lot of respectability politics, a lot of self-policing and white folks don't even have their own personal experiences to help counter the lies that you encounter. Just kind of acknowledging that there's a reason why people are where they are and a reason why you're where you are. The question is, what are those reasons and what can we provide [inaudible 00:10:52].

My former boss once said, "We're all doing our best and some of our best is really shitty. Sometimes our best is really harmful." I'm not into judging, and shaming, and blaming, and dehumanizing people for their best being nice, harmful. I'm into what do you need in order for your best to be better? What do you need for your best to actually be aligned with your values. That's my little spiel for tonight.

I wanted to, one, take questions before we start going into breakout rooms so people can share with themselves. I wanted to wrap up, make sure we cover a bit more about the restoring external justice since last time we talked about restoring internal justice. Breeshia, somebody asking questions. If you have any questions about what I've just shared or just generally, about the model, since this is our last session, I want to just create some space for people to ask questions about [inaudible 00:12:09]. I provided basically all the content training that I wanted to already and so now, it's just a matter of really applying it.

Breeshia: Did you want that on whiteboard in the chat or do you want people to be able to speak?

Sandra: I think if somebody wants to ask a question, they can do *6 if they're just on telephone. Otherwise, they can do it in chat box. Then, Breeshia, if you can just tell me what the questions are. There are no questions sometimes. I'd like to think that I'm very clear when I talk. I just think that I'm a good trainer. Sometimes that works out and sometimes it doesn't. No questions? [inaudible 00:12:54]. Just like telepathy almost.

Breeshia: Someone asked, "What do you mean by internal justice?"

Sandra: There are two step-by-step processes that I also taught in addition to the five processes. The step-by-step processes were designed to give you a crutch to lean on. It gave you directions that you could just follow and until you became ... You developed more skillfulness and you could be applying the 5 Practices in more nuance and more nimble ways. The first process was restoring internal justice with compassion. That was really looking at how you have been treating yourself in the situation. For example, I'll give you one from my personal life. The ways that I have power and privilege, one of the primary ways is through being an organizational leader. When I had a staff who told me that she's actually in this room. I'm going to tell a story about her.

She told me that the ways that I had actually ... She had been feeling like I was denying her stress like the stressful work that she was experiencing and essentially being a bad manager to her. That was, for a second, thankfully I had this practice. I don't last very long when I stay there, but, for a second, I felt really resistant to hearing that. I realized that where that was coming from was because I put this coercive demand on myself to be an excellent manager all of the time, to create this wonderful space for everybody to feel affirmed and feel like they can bring their full human selves to work. Which is, unfortunately, a fairly revolutionary thing and I wish it wasn't so uncommon, but it is. That's a great thing. That's a great desire. I think more often than not that actually does happen and it doesn't sometimes.

I have this coercive demand upon myself that I do to myself where I don't let myself be human. Where I sometimes I don't do that. Sometimes I am resistant to people's experiences and I don't want my staff to be stressed. Sometimes that energy comes out in a way that actually feels like a rejection and that they're stressed. I try to minimize it, ignore. Minimize it and be like, "Oh. It's not that big of deal. You don't have to really worry about it." I don't actually listen to what is going on. Instead I try to brush it aside. That's obviously not very affirming and that's not really acknowledging that other person's experience and it's because ... I do that because I really don't want them to be stressed. It hurts me to know that I've done something that has hurt them that is stressing them out.

Internal justice is really acknowledging what have I been doing that's harmful both to myself and to other people. Like I said, what you resist in somebody else is because you are resisting in yourself. I was resisting her experience of being stressed because I was resisting the fact that like people might have that there's a human experience that I'm having that demands that I always create a space where people feel affirmed and held and what not.

I sat with that feeling. I was like, "This is [inaudible 00:16:56] when I answer to myself." To be able to have to always do this and I do make mistakes at times. I acknowledge that and I took responsibility for my behavior, both myself and then later on with that other staff member. I leaned into what it would mean for me to not do that to myself again or I

leaned into was curious about what would it mean for me to not have this coercive demand that I be this like some sort of super excellent leader all the time. Which is I'm not a robot leader. I'm a human leader.

It's actually went down this path of me exploring what does it really mean to be human, a leader who is human, which is not something that is part of our leadership models for the most part. We expect our leaders to not be human. That's another conversation. That's what I mean by restoring internal justice within myself, which is this thing from restoring external justice with another person. Then I later came back to the staff and we had a conversation where I took responsibility for how I had been resisting her experience and stress and actually where it was coming from, which did not justify it but it did explain where I was coming from. We created a way for us to be in conversation with each other about her stress that wasn't erasing to her and I could help her try to shift, address issues at work so that it was not stressful.

That's a distinction between restoring internal justice and then external justice, which also map up to the 5 Practices. The first three practices about internal justice and the last two practices are about external justice.

Breeshia: Doesn't look like we have any more questions.

Sandra: That happens. Breeshia, I would like for you to set up to do breakout rooms so if you just increase. Do you know how to do that?

Breeshia: Yeah. We're moving away from questions now, right?

Sandra: Right.

Breeshia: Let me send out a reminder of how to use it.

Sandra: Yes, you can do that. In these breakout rooms, we are going to be putting you into two to three people in a room and if you find yourself being the only person there, do not worry about that. Just use your time to really reflect. I'm asking you to reflect upon and share basically what have you gained? What have you learned? What has helped you the most in doing this program in your understanding of your relationship to white supremacy and your role in the racial justice movement? Just kind of noticing what has come up for you, what have you learned, what has been most powerful for you. It's just a moment of reflection and sharing. You ready, Breeshia?

Breeshia: Yeah. About what time do you want me to end the session?

Sandra: If you can end it in 10 minutes.

Breeshia: Sounds good.

Sandra: Once again, if you're by yourself please don't worry about that. Somebody might pop up part way through. Just be reflecting and thinking about it yourself. We'll be coming back together to share as a group. If you are on telephone you can hit *6 to unmute yourself.

Breeshia: Here we go.

Sandra: Hopefully everyone got a chance to talk with somebody and at least reflect to tell them what has been coming up for you, what have you learned, what's been powerful for you in taking this course. Breeshia, if you can open up a whiteboard so people can share their thoughts. If it's shorter, you can put it there like what you've noticed. If it's longer, please share it in the chat box.

As people are putting ... As people are sharing what has been coming up for them, I also want to address a question that came up is about coaching. You have up to three one-on-one coaching to be done with either me or Darla who have been part of one of the first sessions where we talked about kind of the framework of how white people are emotionally harmed by white supremacy. Either me or her will provide the coaching depending on what you're needing. You have up until a year after to access it. Obviously, this work ... You can't rush this work though what we aim to do is not have it be longer than it needs to be. Obviously, a lot of folks have been coming in and out in terms of being able to watch and participate in the session. We provide coaching up until a year after the program.

Breeshia, if you want to start sharing what folks are writing.

Breeshia: On the whiteboard we have, "Are grateful for companionship on the journey. Hard to make time for this work. Got grounded on the pathway. Understanding that there are many realities. Reducing self-harm. Normalizing experiences." Let's see. I cannot see that, but someone else who wrote something.

Sandra: I read grief is integral to the work.

Breeshia: "Reducing shame and perfectionism. I feel a lot of grief and helplessness." From here with you, would you like me to switch to the chat?"

Sandra: Yeah, sure.

Breeshia: Someone's thankful for presenters and participant's candor. Someone mentioned that it's helped the realize huge emotional work, not jut head work, anti-racism requires. Let's see. "Two things I've learned. We don't get to dehumanize people no matter how wrong we think they are, no matter how much they hurt us to being an ally wasn't about adjusting the white supremacy I see in others as much as it is about becoming more connected to the ways that white supremacy exists and expresses itself in my life. Start with myself."

Someone said, "I have gained more compassion with myself and it has really helped me have more peace with others." Another mentioned that, "It's been so valuable to process my own emotions of shame and anger so I that I can focus on action." Someone said, "This has changed my perspective on everything. Excited about the number of colleagues who expressed interest after I shared info about the next course in all of our staff meeting today. Also excited to use the skills to engage in ongoing internal work and share the practice through conversation with others."

On the whiteboard, someone else has added, "Realizing that the difficulty in sitting with internalized whiteness and racism is part of the institution." Another mentioned "learning how to change ourselves and help others isn't always easy." "Letting go of anger and feeling my body through this process." Another mentioned, "high emotion has its own language and needs its own space." Lastly, someone said that "people seemed excited about the idea of this course. When I mention it, more than I would have thought."

Sandra: There's a person above that who [inaudible 00:26:53].

Breeshia: Sorry. I thought I read that one. "I realize I have so much anger to deal with. Anger at those who perpetuate injustice and hurt others. I'm scared of being burned up by the anger because I know that will just turn me into the kind of dehumanization that I'm

trying to fight against. I appreciate the meditation exercises or mediation exercises, but would love to hear more tools about dealing with the anger and not being overwhelmed or distorted by it.”

Then another that just came in, “Tools I’ve practiced in the past week asking what I’m bringing to charge conversations connected to whiteness, staying with the discomfort, and being curious about and attending to other’s reality instead of just getting pissed off and being righteous.” Someone mentioned that they were able to facilitate a conversation around racism two weeks ago with 14 others in a multi-race environment, first time. I was told after they felt very safe and really appreciate the space to talk. Also grateful.”

Sandra: That’s all really, really powerful. Can you save the ... More coming in?

Breeshia: “For the first time, I had a conversation with my brother that was not heavily emotionally laden for me.”

Sandra: Great.

Breeshia: Someone also said, “This is big and that’s okay.”

Sandra: [inaudible 00:28:37] it's big. It’s actually multi-generational work that we’re doing here. We’re healing the trauma of our ancestors who have committed so much harm, who have received a lot of harm in order to make sure that they also committed that violence, and we are also healing it for our descendants. This is not work that we’re just doing for our own lifetime. This is healing work that we’re doing for those who’ve come before us and for those who will come after us and, perhaps, here more importantly those who are around us right now. That’s what this is about.

How we relate this ... The starting point is just noticing the toxicity. The starting point is noting [inaudible 00:29:28] desires to dehumanize. Somebody raised up the question of anger. Feelings are just feelings. We do not control our feelings. If we controlled our feelings we would make ourselves feel happy all the time. Clearly, we are not good at that. Anger is a feeling. Frustration is a feeling. Resentment. The desire to dehumanize. These are all feelings. Having the feeling and acknowledging that is entirely distinct from taking action based on those feelings. Oftentimes we get taught that they’re one and the same. We often don’t want to acknowledge the anger that we’re experiencing so that we don’t lash out in anger and harm somebody else.

Now, I’m with you that not trying to lash out on people and harm them, that’s probably a good instinct. At the same time, you can acknowledge the anger that you’re feeling and then use the practices that I’ve shown you to get in touch with what is underneath that initial reaction because it’s simply the tip of the iceberg. There’s always things that are happening underneath it. There’s a reason why you’re feeling angry. There’s no right or wrong to your anger. How are you going to relate to your anger? Are you going to try to repress it? Are you going to try to minimize it? Are you going to use it to justify lashing out, judging and blaming other people? Maybe yourself, right? It’s looking at we cannot help what is happening to us but we can help how we relate to it. But we can help how we relate to it and that is how we get access back to our power.

Most people don’t realize that they can actually choose how they relate to something. Usually it’s an unconscious reaction coming from a place of fear oftentimes. So with the practices that I’ve been showing provides for you is to create a little bit of spaciousness, a little bit of grieving space, a little bit of time for you to just pause and be like, “I feel

really angry. What is happening? What is coming up for me?" Because I think anger is incredibly important feeling. I'm actually not ... I'm really not down with this push to say that we should not feel anger. We should not ... We should just feel compassion. We should feel empathy. We should be understanding. I'm actually not ...

I get where that's coming from, of course. I get where that's coming from. I don't think that's really that's helpful because they're just feelings and as I said, they're like the weather. They come and go on their own at least in the short term. And when they arise, they arise. It's not helpful to try to force something to arise or try to deny that's come up for us. Even though compassion is in the name of this program, "Compassion Activism," I'm actually not here to teach you compassion. What I'm here for is to teach you how to acknowledge your pain, how to get in touch with your pain and acknowledge your pain because that is what is getting in the way of you feeling compassion in the face of pain, in the presence of violence, in the presence systemic oppression, in the presence of pain. You are not getting ... If compassion is not arising there is a reason for it and what is that reason? That is the work that you need to do to get emotionally honest about what is coming up for you.

That is really what ... I'll speak for myself though I know that this is more common than not. For activists of color who are doing racial justice work, if we cannot have an emotionally honest conversation with a white person who wants to be an ally, who wants to be an accomplice against white supremacy and really dismantle it with us, then how can we build trust? How can we build trust with somebody who's not willing to be emotionally honest about how they themselves are being impacted by racism? How can we have a conversation when something happens and they either did not do something or they did not acknowledge for themselves?

Without trust, how can we have a relationship? Without relationships, how can we dismantle white supremacy and create a different type of way of relating, a different type of community? It cannot happen. At the end of the day, all of this work is about love. This is all about love, being loving, being loved. That is all that we're striving for, but we are doing it in ways that we've been taught by systemic oppression, which is actually really, really truly counterproductive. Just kind of knowing that the feelings that we have, what happens when we don't deny them when including anger? I wish more people were actually angry. I wish more people were actually angry in the face of injustice. That would actually be the appropriate reaction to injustice happening. There is something not operating fully when you do not feel compassion in the face of violence and injustice, which makes sense because that's what systemic oppression did to us.

That's what it was designed to do. It was designed to break us away from our connection to our own humanity and to connection to other people's humanity. This is part that most people want to just skip over. People want to just focus on the other person, stop making them wrong and stopping them. They don't want to look at themselves because that means they have to get in touch with their own pain and I get that because we have only been taught how to dehumanize our own feelings ourselves and deny our feelings, and negate our needs.

This is why these practices that I have been teaching you about how to hold a space for yourself. Letting arise whatever comes up without judgment, without trying to change it, and just getting in touch with it that is powerful. That is ... We need to do more than that in order to dismantle white supremacy and systemic oppression, but this is the starting

place. This is a fundamental starting place for that work. We cannot dismantle something we do not even acknowledge is there.

Really I honor when there are feelings of anger. I honor when there are feelings of frustration, of fury, of stress and do not stay there. Do not stay there. Use that as a red flag to go deeper to understand what is coming up. Maybe it's like 90 percent about the situation in front of you. Maybe it's actually just 10 percent the situation in front of you and it's actually 90 percent stuff from your past. There's no right or wrong. It's not less real because it's from this past, because it's from this pattern, this habit, or this like historical pattern that you've been seeing of people denying, people ignoring, people justifying. That doesn't make it less real because it's not about right now, but it also means that you need to have a different response to the current situation.

If you act as if this current situation is 100 percent the cause of your reaction when it's really only 10 percent, that doesn't make ... That's not an appropriate response. Sometimes as you do this work, you kind of realize how much of this is actually from your past and not actually about the current situation. For you to actually even notice when it's about the current situation, you have to be able to recognize when it's about the past. It's just constant checking in. It's just constantly checking in and listening to ourselves. This is ... If I had to give you three words, it would be breathe, listen, invite.

If you don't remember the 5 Practices, you don't remember the step-by-step directions about restoring internal and external justice, just remember this. Breathe. Listen. Invite. Do that to yourself and you do that with somebody else. Just do that one.

Another question, Breeshia?

Breeshia: Someone asked is systemic oppression designed to break our capacity for our compassion?

Sandra: Exactly. As human beings we naturally care for each other. We want to belong. As social creatures, we want to belong. We want to be part of the community. We want to be held. Compassion is in the presence of pain the desire to alleviate that pain and suffering and so it's incredibly human response to people being in pain. You cannot have people feeling compassionate toward those who are being marginalized oppressed in society and not do something about it, by its very nature. So it has [inaudible 00:39:15].

The reason why patriarchy has been so focused on making sure that men aren't in touch with their feelings. Saying boys don't cry. Man up, right? The only feelings they've been allowed to have to be seen as "men" is anger and then they wonder why there is an issue of male violence and suicide. It's not an accident. Really understanding that there is ... What is at stake in this conversation is actually your own humanity as a white person. It's not something we talk about so much in the racial justice movement because we're still trying to acknowledge the humanity of people of color and the pain of people of color. I understand why it's hard to even hold space for the conversation about the humanity and the emotional harm to white people.

I was actually a part of this conversation talking about liberation and we separated into different groups and when the facilitator for the white folks came back and shared what came up for them, there was some pushback from some of the white folks there about can we even talk about liberation for themselves as white people. Can they even be happy as white people? Is that even something we should even inquire into? That was really saddening for me. That was really painful for me to hear because we all ... Like

what is at stake is not ... This isn't a charity model work where white folks are being asked to come and save communities of color. What this really is about is we all have ... We have all been impacted by it and we all need to do the healing work. All of our fight for liberation is interdependent with each other actually. That you will be a certain place to do anti-racism work as you yourself deal with emotional harm that is caused to you.

Like I said, all roads lead back to you. All you have is your own experiences. You literally don't have access to other experiences out there. The most we can do is invite somebody to share their experiences with you. Everything is filtered through your senses, through your personality, through your past, through your traumas, through your fears, pain, all of that. Everything is filtered through that. You literally only have your own experiences. The minute you think you can know about other people, about the future, that's all make believe. That's all imaginary. It's not really that helpful to go there. If you don't know, ask. The future you can't control. Just FYI, you can't control. I know we really want to. It's not going to happen by the way.

The most that you have and the only thing that you have is actually just your own experiences. This practice is really about getting deep within your own experiences and understanding why you're doing what you're doing so that you can do something different if it's not aligned with your intentions. If your impact is not aligned to your intentions, you get that. You understand the disconnect. You make amends. You do something different.

I also wanted to just acknowledge how a number of people were talking about that we've been sharing this with other folks and that is super, super, and super important. This is a paradigm. The way that I've been talking about even in saying "healing from toxic whiteness" like that in and of itself is a pretty new concept. Oftentimes, when people think, "Oh, I'm privileged," like I won the lottery not realizing all the harm that's been happening to folks [inaudible 00:43:20] privilege. Who do you need to be to like let this happen and not care and not just care, but also perpetuate? It's really incredibly important for folks, especially post elections, as more and more white folks are becoming conscious about the level of pervasiveness of racism in our society and like how ignorant people are.

I think a lot of Trump supporters voted in their own interest for anti-establishment policies, promises of economic development and did not acknowledge or take seriously the racism that was in the campaign as well. They don't think they're racist and they think that racism is wrong, but this is how racism works. White privilege means that you don't notice when racism is happening. You don't take it ... It's not really real to you. The pain past, present, and future is not really real to you because it's so far from your experience as a white person. Really kind of understanding that this is an incredible opportunity that you have where there is an opening in people's consciousness and that you have a framework now that actually is affirming of their own humanity and can hold this space for them to explore this further.

Please continue having conversations. Where you're learning? What is working for you? Where are you getting stuck? Being really human about this past is so important is what will invite them to be human. If you want somebody to do something, do it yourself first. Try it out yourself first and that's how you create an energy that really is going to invite them to come in and share and join you in it. If you come up there with a dehumanizing energy, you probably only going to get more dehumanization back. That's not really

going to work, is it? Other questions, Breeshia, before we go into the next break out room?

Breeshia: Yes. We have two. There's one earlier. The most recent, "Who do you need to be to let this happen and not care? And how do you grieve what was done to you in childhood so you can return to the capacity to care for yourself and others?"

Sandra: That is one of the things that has really stood out in this program to me because I've done a couple of programs around healing from marginalization. Working with you all around healing from toxic whiteness, the level of grief work that is necessary, I think, when folks have been harmed who have been marginalized come into this program, usually they have some sense of that's not their fault. It was something that was done to them and it's been more conversation about that, particularly as we talk about in Everyday Feminism's website and other places. It is much easier for them to get in touch with the pain of what happened to them and take care of that so then it becomes released.

When working with you all in this program, it became very clear that many folks were ... There is so much pain around the pain existing. It's like there's the pain of racism, which we all feel if we're actually in touch with our emotionality, but then there's like this energy ball of pain and hurt around having this pain even be here. Then also anger at not having recognized it before, anger at having internalized racism to whatever degree within yourself. These are layers upon layers upon layers and you can't access the pain of the racism until you've actually held the anger that you have toward yourself for having internalized racism or the pain of growing up in a racist society where you've internalized it. You need to do a lot of grief work essentially.

Really acknowledge, like, racism was something that was done to you. Of course, we don't talk about this a lot in our conversations. That's something obviously that we're trying to shift and expand upon, but white supremacy does not define people of color. Also, because we were people. We were people before racism, and during racism, and after racism. We are people. I think there's a big ... One of the big struggles for white folks is that white supremacy it's hard to acknowledge and notice that white supremacy was something that was done to white people. That does not define you as a white person. That you were people before racism happened, except you do not realize that. You do not know what it was like before racism. You have not been allowed to know what it's like to be a person who is white before white supremacy happened.

That is something that we need to be creating. That is something that we need to be exploring and grounding yourself in a racial identity that is anti-racist and that is authentic and real to you and your history and to where you are from. Both here and if you happen to know your country of origin, which a lot of people don't know.

If we really understand that white supremacy ... toxic whiteness is not inherent to white people. It is not inherent to you, but you have been fed it your entire lives and you were born with it because of generational trauma from your ancestors, but it is not who you are. You too can purge yourself. You too can heal and release it and define who you are intentionally in way that's aligned with your values and also with history, not denying history. But, like, this is the history of what has happened. That's a conversation can only start to happen once you start freeing yourself from the identity that was provided your toxic whiteness.

Are there any other questions before we go to another breakout room?

Breeshia: We have a couple more. Would you like to address them or would you like me to pick one or how would you like to do it?

Sandra: I'll quickly go through them. We are going to do the healing for marginalization soon, in December actually. We're going to be offering registration for both classes that will be happening. These are the questions. Do you have any guidelines for helping [inaudible 00:51:33] not dehumanizing, otherwise harmful. That's really the restoring external justice with compassion as well as the last two practices. The first practice of consciousness, compassionate truth telling and consciousness raising inquiry and then the fifth practice is shared envisioning and compassion and non-cooperation.

I'm not going to go too much into that because I have many other sessions where I talk about that in great lengths. The idea is that when ... That we hold space for another person to explore. That initial reaction is just the tip of the iceberg and so they need to explore like why. There's a reason why people think they do. There's a reason why people think Trump's not racist.

It's baffling to us and it's very clear to us why his campaign is incredibly racist and it's not clear to many folks. What is the reason for that? Why is there this disconnection between your reality and the other person's reality. As opposed to not being interested, not coming from a place of curiosity, wanting to make them wrong, judge, blame, feel superior to them. You just be curious and ask questions and let your questions be guided by your understanding of racism and also sharing your own truth. Your deep truth about doing this work as a white person and what it's been like for you to start to notice more and more racism that you haven't acknowledged before.

Like I said, you being able to do this work and then model it and share that with other white folks that is ... We need so much of that right now. There's such an opportunity right now because so many white folks are really wondering, "What is going on? Why does everyone keep saying this is racism because I don't think it is? Because I'm not a racist and I agree with this." Really helping people realize that we all have internalized racism and that actually this idea that like to be racist is to be this horrible monster has actually been used to prevent us from acknowledging the racism that does exist within us. It's actually this tool of racism to say that ... To be racist is like the worst thing you can be in the whole wide world. That's actually a tool of racism to perpetuate it.

Helping people understand why do they feel the way they do. You can offer some ideas based upon your understanding of white supremacy and then share your experience. Then that gives them the opening to start doing their own thinking in a way that is invitational and not coercive. You're creating a space that because you are who's bringing it, they feel like, "Oh, I can do it too." You're being an aspirational model to them. Somebody mentioned showing up for racial justice first has also a lot of great resources and you can connect with other white folks who are organizing around racial justice in your local communities.

Did somebody also share that they're scared that all of our white people are taught about centering whiteness, but that there is a risk that we will prioritize doing our own healing in very self indulgent narcissist ways and not also be putting time and effort into dismantling racism. Do you have any suggestions on how to commit to doing this necessary and difficult work and also not get sucked into a vortex of narcissism.

This is really important because we also ... The way systemic oppression has worked against us is to tell us to focus on ourselves is to be selfish and narcissist. That's actually

quite distinct. What that's about is that we focus on ourselves and the tip of the iceberg so not the deeper self. Not the deeper, larger icebergs that really unpacked why we are where we are. It says like this tip of the iceberg initial reaction, which is coming from a place of fear and pain usually we let that push out everything else, everybody else's realities, everybody's else's boundaries, everybody else's needs and all we care about is like getting what we want from that initial reaction, from that tip of the iceberg.

That's not what we're talking about. That's not what we were talking about at all. What we're talking about is actually getting to the root of our emotional experience of when we're resisting acknowledging that racism is happening. When we were resisting how we feel called forth to do something about racism. How we're scared and we remain silent. When we're actually looking at the root of something that allows us to take care of it and then release it so that we can actually take action but until we acknowledge and take care of what is keeping us stuck, how are we going to move forward? We can't move forward by definition. We're [inaudible 00:57:15] we've been stuck by.

It's actually to do otherwise, we could whip ourselves and coerce ourselves in tacking action. That's what a lot of white folks are doing around this work. There's a silencing themselves or beating themselves up. They're not.. we don't know what they're feeling, which we don't trust our own ideas because they're not actually going deep inside. If you just live in the initial reaction place that's not a good place to live in. That's not a good place to operate in. It's really about going deeper. I also want to note that this is also relating to somebody else.

Talk a lot about being compassionate and being understanding and empathizing with the other side, with the people who are hurting us. I don't think that's so helpful when we're still just operating at that initial reaction and tip of the iceberg because what are you going to be understanding of. We don't actually have something to be understanding of so why ... It doesn't make sense to actually tell somebody be understanding, be compassionate, be empathetic.

Of what though? They haven't actually unpacked their experience. They don't actually know what their own experience is. All they have is their initial reaction. The tip of the iceberg. That's not something to work with. Other folks is the same deal. We got to get to the root of their experiences. What is actually happening with them? What is actually coming up? Why do they actually think the way they think. Why are they reacting the way they are reacting? There's a reason. What's that reason? Why is that their reason?

There's all this historical, cultural contexts for why people behave they do. The system is always perfect, my friend. The system is always perfect. If you have people statistically doing and engaging in certain type of thinking behavior, it's because the system was designed for you to do that. What that means is you've just got to look at the system and see what we've got to change about the system. It's not that this is judging, and blaming, and throwing people off the island. They're just pawns of the system too.

We can only do that if we actually help them notice how they're being used in the system. When they actually have ... When they can actually share their actual deeper experience, then you have something to be understanding of. Then you have something to be compassionate and empathetic about until then you've got nothing to work with. I should write an article about that because it's very nuanced and I feel like people are not ... Getting confused.

Is there another question before I move on?

Breeshia: Not necessarily a question, but more feedback and comments here. Can I read some or would you like to read from someone?

Sandra: No, you can share. I haven't read this stuff so if you want to share what you think or you want to highlight what people are sharing, that would be great.

Breeshia: Someone said in response to the question about becoming self indulgent, "I think it's about simultaneous work. If we engage in anti-oppression work without engaging in our own grieving, our outward work is likely to be harmful. If we solely process grief without ever engaging in the external work of anti-oppression we are limiting our growth and learning and remaining complicit with systems of oppression. I think it is possible and necessary to engage in both kinds of work at the same time, which means it's always going to be incredibly messy, imperfect humbling work."

Sandra: Right. This is a lifelong journey and obviously I'm hoping you can see how these practices are relevant to think outside of racism. It's basically anytime you become emotionally stuck. It's really a life skill. It's through actually experiencing the ways that we get stuck that we actually heal. You do not heal unless there is pain. You do not get liberated in a place unless you are trapped somewhere. You do not get empowered unless it's a place where you don't have power. Actually looking at these moment where you become emotionally stuck as you do the external work, as you take action in the external world, things are going to come up. You're going to get stuck. I get stuck because things move quickly too. Things happen too fast for me to react in the way that I wanted too, but I still think about it and what I would do differently. If it comes up, later I'll go back and I'll say something.

These are actually opportunities for you to act in a way that's aligned with your values and to come from a place of love, which once again is the whole point of this. If we actually take these moments of conflict and we don't see them as inevitably being destructive. Instead we see them as opportunities for us to actually affirm each other's humanity, care for each other and the pain that is arising and move through it together in way that we come out together, that's what is going to build the trust. That's what's going to build the relationship.

That's what's going to build the beloved community that we want to live in and so it is a continuous interaction between things happening externally and how we are responding to it. I'm not asking people to go off into the woods and never see anybody, never do anything, and [inaudible 01:04:02] peaceful and happy. That's not what I'm saying. It's about this continuous work. Each time life gives you something that you can't be with that's an opportunity for you to get free, which is a very different framing of it. I'm not saying it's tons of fun. Another fucking growth edge, really? But it is a place. You can only get free in places where you're trapped. There's no short of work. There's no short of actions that you can take behind racial justice [inaudible 01:04:42] systemic oppression.

I want to take just a couple of minutes now for us to do another breakout room. In this breakout room, I want you to think about what is the next action that you want to take after finishing this course in order to continue on with racial justice work? Remembering, racial justice work is both the internal work and the external work. It's both. I want to focus on next steps because who knows what will happen after that next step. We don't know the future and we know this next thing that you want to do, you know. Just really focus on a thing that you can do tomorrow.

If you want to do something and you're like, "I can't do it tomorrow. I need to get X, Y, and Z first," well that becomes your next action, getting X, Y, and Z in place first. I really just want you to think about what's the next step that you want to take. Breeshia, if you can do maybe a shorter one. Maybe like a 7-minute, 6-minute breakout room.

Breeshia: Putting up a whiteboard for us to write on.

Sandra: What's some next steps that you want to be taking once this course is over, which is in a few minutes? While people are sharing on the whiteboard and in a chat box, I just want to remind folks that the content. All these videos are going to be available for you. You have lifetime access. They will not be going away as long as that website is up and running, which maybe as long as the Internet shall live. You will be able to access the videos and be coaching. As I said before, you will be able to get coaching up to three sessions for another year and that's just to give you some support as we do this work.

We also are going to be offering, healing from toxic whiteness in on-demand version. It's not going to be live. It will be recorded videos, as well as some readings, exercises, and some audio visualization. It's going to be building off of this is our first ... It's the first time that we offered it before and so I'm taking these things that we've learned in the conversations and through both here in the group sessions as well as the individual coaching and providing something I think will be more fleshed out and have more ways of accessing information. I know video is great for some things and I know people want [inaudible 01:07:37] forms and what not.

We're going to be doing that so I highly recommend that you take this opportunity to really enroll for free. You get pretty much access to all future versions of "Healing from Toxic Whiteness" because we want to make sure that you have the most up-to-date information. I'm always incorporating the insights that are being shared with me into the programs to help it meet the needs as much as possible of our participants. Then, of course, tell all your people, your family and friends and co-workers about this program so they can take it. In order to be financially sustainable we do charge a fee and to make sure it's financially accessible we also provide scholarships so that money is never a reason for somebody to not take the course.

Right now, Breeshia, is the whiteboard happening? It's not happening for me. Is it happening for you? Hello?

Breeshia: It's happening for me. Can anyone else see the whiteboard? I can just ... Apparently not. Stop share. Let me try it again.

Sandra: We are not ... Some people are asking in chat about the lives. This next version we will not be having live sessions, which also include the breakout rooms. We will still have the Facebook program. My intention is to bring back practice sessions though in some form and fashion so that people do get to engage in virtual real-time, being able to connect with each other. I think it really is important and I also understand that most people are not able to show up for it. It's just kind of trying to balance out our capacity and what people are really using because I know actually a lot of folks want to take the course but because they couldn't make the live sessions, they felt like they shouldn't enroll in the program even though there are recordings. It's another way of trying to make this feel more accessible to people, which is actually to remove the live sessions so they feel like they can take it at their own pace when they do have time.

Like I said, we are working to create capacity in the future where we could have live practice sessions again. Just right now it's feeling like there are other places where I really need to be putting my intentions in order to get this message out as possible. There's a time and place for everything.

Breeshia, do you want to share what are some next steps that people have?

Breeshia: Next steps. "Proceed with greater compassion. Revisit folks who I have lots of practice and need conversation with. Schedule a coaching session. Weekly, 10-minute free" ... I guess this is free form. "Writing what is something I haven't been able to be with." Another person said, "Practice." Little hearts on the board. This is ... I like this. "Plan to encourage others to take this class and incorporate this work into already doing with other people who are white." Engage with others more openly and enjoy the love and life around me."

Let's see. Someone mentioned, "Connect with my local SURJ Chapter and bring what I've learned here, the emotional work primarily into that space." Someone mentioned, "To see if SURJ is willing to consider expanding to Canada. Talk with the other white indigenous solidarity activists who I work with locally about the next on-demand course together and talk with my Zen teacher about whether [inaudible 01:12:18] is white dominated could take this together." "Meet with others in a group for a local and start a practice group."

Sandra: For folks who are part of SURJ local chapters, I've had some initial conversations with SURJ national about making this work available for people and their chapters. If you happen to be a part of SURJ local chapter, I highly recommend that you do share with them about your experiences in this program and have bigger local chapter contact the national SURJ network just so they know who's already been doing some of this work and what impact it's been having on your ability to engage in anti-racism work. Just so you know that we're actually in conversation. It would be really helpful for SURJ national to know what the experiences of SURJ members have been in this program. Anything else? Sorry I cut you off.

Breeshia: No problem. "Continue observing my awareness, growing, and practice where I can." Let's see. "Love all the pieces of my broken heart." "Get down and dirty with my anger." Let's see. "Meet with other people in a group pro-local and maybe start a practice group." Someone is teaching a heart and math workshop for a local SURJ. They will incorporate application around toxic whiteness. Someone took this to begin something of a discussion group in their local library as well as integrate techniques into the LGBTQ work that they are doing. They feel like they've been working it in slowly and after repeating the course and maybe some private meetings and some more inner understanding of the surprises of this course, they'll be more ready. Someone mentioned that they want to have a monthly meet-up where they can just talk in their city.

Sandra: I want to pause there. [inaudible 01:15:11].

Breeshia: I'm sorry. Yeah.

Sandra: Save the whiteboard and switch back. I love what people are sharing in terms of getting together with other people. The Facebook group is a great way just to be like, "Hey, I'm here. I'm in Seattle. I'm in DC. I'm in whatever and who else is here and wants to get together?" Just starting, even having one other person that you can meet in person can

make a real big difference. This is about love at the end of the day. Isn't everything about love, really? This happens, obviously, in relationships. The violence and trauma happens in relationships and community and we heal. We heal and we're loving in community. So getting together is a great idea. Like I said, it's also with SURJ local chapters. If you don't have one, they can help you also meet with other folks. There are thankfully more and more groups coming together who want to do this work.

If you're somebody who lives in the area that does not have a lot of folks, especially in our more rural areas that's why we provide things online. [inaudible 01:16:30]. Finding where you can be connected, where you can be supported it's important as we do this work that we are held. This is emotionally difficult work. By its nature, it's emotionally painful. I can't stop you from having pain around it, but I can hold you. We can hold each other and have some practices that can help us work with the pain. Healing happens at its own pace, but it doesn't have to take longer than necessary.

I want to thank everybody for showing up. I see kind of the same faces show up every single time and that's a real commitment to come every single week for 10 weeks. I really want to thank everybody for the level of vulnerability, the level of courage, the level of generosity you've been feeling, you've been sharing with us. That is not a light thing. The system was not designed for you to actually do this work. The system was designed for you to never engage in this work. It takes something.

If there's anything that you've gotten from this program, it's hopefully that you understand that you're not the only one going through this. You aren't the only one who is conscious and aware and struggling. That's natural. That makes sense. Knowing that there are many other people around you who are probably feeling very similarly so share. Share the ... We're going to be producing more writing and more videos around this. That's part of the work that I'm going to be doing since I'm not doing live sessions.

I really encourage you to share that and have conversations. Use that as a catalyst. It's going to cause feelings. It's going to create feelings, comments with people that you care about. These are opportunities to be curious. "What is coming up for you when I share that? What's behind that reaction? I shared it because of this reason. It pointed to me because of this. Can we talk about that?"

Using these opportunities to really be affirming everyone's humanity starting with yourself and then you can be affirming of somebody else's humanity. Don't worry. There's plenty of opportunity to practice. As you get more and more skillful around this, it will ... Life really shifts. I am somebody who the first two decades of my lifetime because of what happened to me, the way I decided to survive in this world was to not have access, turning my feelings to be really dissociative, to be really emotionally oppressive.

I remember that was like for the first two-thirds of my life and now I live in this like techno-colored and multilayered emotional reality where now I am helping other people get in touch with their feelings and heal, and heal themselves, and heal the world. I know it might feel like it's a long slog and I'm not saying it's not work. It is. It's perhaps the only thing that is truly deeply calling us is to become back to the loving energy that we are. To be back in touch with the natural wholeness and to be connected in original oneness with each other.

Thank you again for being with me. Letting me be with you in this journey. Opening your hearts and minds to what I've been offering and really just keep trying. Keep experimenting and see what happens. Thank you again.