# Understanding Our Stories:
## Facilitating Community Dialogue

# Preface

Welcome! We look forward to getting to know you. We value your wisdom and community-building expertise. We know that what you bring to the table will add significant value to our collective learning journey.

We begin this journey with a focus on 4 key elements: Place, People, Power, and Process. Each of these elements plays a key role in shaping how we do community work. The effectiveness of dialogue and facilitation processes is tied to how well we understand these important elements of collective life. Let's jump in and find out what these 4 elements are about.

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# Message from Generative Futures Consulting, LLC

**I see you**

The Zulu word sawubona literally means "I see you". The Native Alaskan Yup'ik word cama-i, means "good to see you". Both words emphasize the importance of acknowledgment. In the first section of this Toolkit, we focus on **Place** and how a first step to building community is acknowledging racial histories that have been erased. For community dialogues to be successful they must recognize the many ways that history is racialized, and how this acknowledgment helps us to truly "see" each other.

Seasoned trauma practitioners understand that history is often carried in people's psyches and bodies. Our bodies "keep score", imbibing the aftermaths of individual and collective experiences of trauma and oppression. **People** are at the center of the Toolkit's second section. In this segment we explore the ways trauma may show up both in facilitators themselves as well as in others. Here we take time to learn and practice trauma-sensitization protocols.

When he coined the term the Beloved Community, Martin Luther King Jr. highlighted a third important ingredient for building true community: justice. Living into Beloved Community requires that we truth-fully talk about power. The Toolkit's third section delves into the distribution of **Power** in dialogue spaces. In this section we wrestle with how race-based power and privilege emerge and learn strategies for transforming these dynamics.

The final segment of this Toolkit focuses on **Process**. Facilitating "difficult conversations" is a challenging and deliberate process. In light of this we allocate significant time in this training for opportunities to safely and courageously learn about and practice this skill set. We do this in "Beloved Community" in order to build capacity together. As the wise African proverb reminds us ...

If you go alone, you or may not get there. If we go together, we will surely arrive.

We look forward to journeying together as you explore, practice, and engage in community dialogue facilitation.

# Message from MACRO

Congratulations on being selected to help your community grow and heal through dialogue and sharing of stories.

We hope you use your new skills to help your community tackle challenging conversation in a way that fosters honest reflection and growth.

We are conducting eight trainings across the state. Please help us improve this training for others by providing feedback on the surveys and through conversations with the trainers and MACRO staff.

If you would like to talk with us about your experience, we can be reached at:

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# Acknowledgements

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# Who We Are

Pictures and Bios

Ram Bhagat, Ed.D is a longtime educator, arts innovator, peacemaker, and community healer who has been teaching and transforming communities for 35 years. Ram is an international conflict resolution trainer, specialist in arts integration, and is certified in restorative justice practice. He is a master teacher of culturally responsive peacemaking circles, racial healing, trauma awareness & resilience, yoga and mindfulness.

Sidney Morgan, M.A. is a nationally recognized facilitator, mediator, speaker, and consultant specializing in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work, Restorative Justice practices, and Conflict Transformation. She has over 18 years' experience as a Restorative Justice Practitioner and certified Conflict Mediation Facilitator. She has worked extensively with public and voluntary sector corporations, including educational institutions and nationally known nonprofits.

Melody Pannell, MSW, M.Div., MACE is a community organizer, social justice advocate, professor and ministry leader. She was appointed the Chairperson of the Religious Affairs Committee of the local NAACP branch. Melody is the recipient of Duke University's 2018 Summer Reconciliation Institute scholarship, as well as the annual Joe R. Engle Institute of Preaching at Princeton Theological Seminary. Melody utilizes a variety of avenues to address historical harms, dignity violations and structural discriminations that affect the positive development and holistic well-being of marginalized groups.

Carolyn Stauffer, Ph.D has taught at the graduate and undergraduate levels at 2 higher education institutions on the African continent and holds a doctorate in Sociology from the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. She lived and worked in Southern Africa (16 years) and the Middle East (17 years). Stauffer has conducted training in Asia, the South Pacific, North America, East and Central Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean. As a veteran in cross-cultural settings, Stauffer is an expert and agile facilitator who uses both left and right brain educational approaches to engage our postmodern and global world.

Lucie Martinot-Lagarde, M.A. is a French student at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University. After her studies in History, Humanities, Politics and Theology, she began her career as an International Relations officer at the French National Ombudsman Office. She has 10+ years of experience working and living in cross-cultural contexts, as a member of an international Christian intentional community.

Matt Tibbles, M.A. is an organizational development and conflict transformation professional with experience working in multi-ethnic for-profit businesses, higher education, and non-profit organizations in developing and implementing organizational development strategies with a specialization in trauma-informed and resilient-based strategies/practices. He has worked closely with indigenous tribes of southeast Alaska in co-facilitating the training of mentors to mentor young men/boys away from violence rooted in intergenerational trauma from colonization and oppression.

# Overview

This training and curriculum is centered on training facilitators to lead trauma-informed listening and dialogue circles focused on truth-telling, racial justice, and trauma transformation. The values of the curriculum are centered on dignity, respect, community, and connection. In connection to the trainings, the facilitators will experience and learn to co-create and hold safe and brave spaces for participants to risk vulnerability in sharing personal and ancestral stories of present day and historical harms. The facilitators will learn:

- how oppression and power influences every facilitation process

- the impact of historical harms on a facilitation process focused on truth telling and racial oppression

- to pay attention to signs of trauma present in themselves, the individuals and the collective group and how to process through the trauma response as a group

- about secondary trauma and the potential of the facilitators, individuals and the collective group to be trauma-exposed just by listening and hearing trauma-organized stories

- explore skills that help them navigate trauma responses by utilizing different facilitation processes for different intentions and goals

- new skill sets and tools to build their confidence as we do the hard work of deconstructing domination/oppression and co-creating new ways of being together that honors the dignity of all.

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# Objectives

Outcomes for this training include being able to:

**1** Identify, define, and apply common facilitation intervention strategies that are trauma-informed and can support both dialogue among participants as well as listening sessions designed to allow participants to share statements and stories without receiving direct responses from other participants,

**2** Successfully facilitate dialogue and listening sessions about historical and present-day racial violence and its impacts, up to and including acts of violence that may have caused injury or death,

**3** Respond appropriately and affirm the validity of strong emotional dialogue to support continued engagement from all attendees in a facilitated dialogue or listening session,

**4** Understand how to appropriately redirect conversation to the stated topic for the facilitated dialogue or listening session if the dialogue begins to veer too far away from the stated meeting topic,

**5** Design facilitated dialogues and listening sessions with an appropriate culturally relevant and trauma-informed lens.

## Facilitator Reflection

1. Describe your experiences with trauma-informed and resilient facilitation whether you were the facilitator or your participated in a facilitation.
2. Describe your experiences with facilitation processes centered on historical and present racial justice and historical harms.
3. Describe how you see yourself in relation to others.

# Section 1

# Place: The Stories We Tell

Every place holds a cache of human stories and lived experiences. As dialogue facilitators, our first job is to create a container for these stories to be held and shared. This container holds two very important roles. The first role is beginning to co-create a collective sense of safety.  The participants must feel safe physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually for them to be able to know that if they tell their story, they will be heard and not threatened in any way.  The second role is to co-create an environment where participants feel welcome to take purposeful risks.  Sharing lived experiences or the stories of ancestors is a big risk when these lived experiences originate in historical harms or when they are not part of publicly acknowledged events. The facilitation container must hold capacity for both safe and brave spaces for courageous conversations to occur.

The facilitator role takes practice because stories are often complex and messy. Our second facilitative role is to engage these complex stories and to acknowledge that they may represent very different perspectives and lived experiences. Complex stories carry high conflict potential. This is why facilitating community listening and dialogue spaces is a specially honed skill.

A third key facilitator role we will practice is creating space for less recognized stories and honoring their importance and community-based points of origin. In this training we will explore four specific types of stories: stock, concealed, resistance, and emerging/transforming stories as they relate to the legacy and aftermath of traumagenic events. We do this because some stories tend to get a lot of airtime while others get none.

## Facilitator Reflection

1.  What stories have you been told or have you read/seen which fit the "stock" story description? When you have facilitated group processes, which stock stories seem to emerge most quickly and be repeated most readily?

2.  What "concealed" stories may be present in the room? How and why have they been concealed? As a facilitator, what is your role in providing space for these stories to surface? How will you navigate the trauma responses that may show up when the "concealed" stories are shared?

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## Stock Stories, Concealed Stories, Resistance Stories, Emerging/Transforming Stories

In Storytelling for Social Justice, Bell (2019) describes four types of stories that either reinforce dominant narratives or work to transform the dominant narratives into antiracist and just narratives. These stories are:

**Stock Stories** - These include standard and familiar tales told by the dominant group to reinforce and keep the status quo; the tales are predictable and have a long shelf life; stock stories allow the dominant group to draw upon negative racial stereotypes to marginalize, discredit, and ignore other stories

**Concealed Stories** - are stories about racial experience eclipsed by stock stories that colonize the limelight (embody the teeming, unruly, and contradictory stories that leak out from the margins).

**Resistance Stories** - narrate the persistent and ingenious ways people, both ordinary and famous, resist racism and challenge stock stories that support it in order to fight for more equal and inclusive social arrangements

**Emerging/Transforming Stories** - new stories we construct to challenge stock stories, build on and amplify concealed and resistance stories, and take up the mantle of antiracism and social-justice work through generating new stories to catalyze contemporary action against racism

### Deep Dive

Stock stories allow the dominant group to normalize their way of life and reinforce their values and perspectives while attempting to control and oppress stories that do not align (e.g. everyone can achieve the American dream if you work hard enough, men are the natural leaders in society). Where else do you see the influence of stock stories?

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Concealed stories "offer different accounts of and explanations of social relations" (e.g. poetry of Leslé Honoré, exploring intergenerational economic mobility among racial groups). What concealed stories do you hear?

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Resistance stories are of people resisting the normalizing of stock stories (e.g. Harriet Tubman, MLK Jr., Maya Angelou, Stacey Abrams, John Lewis). What resistance stories do you encounter?

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Emerging/Transforming stories are stories challenging the values of stock stories so that new stories are generated to inform antiracist social action (e.g. Equal Justice Initiative). What emerging stories do you hear?
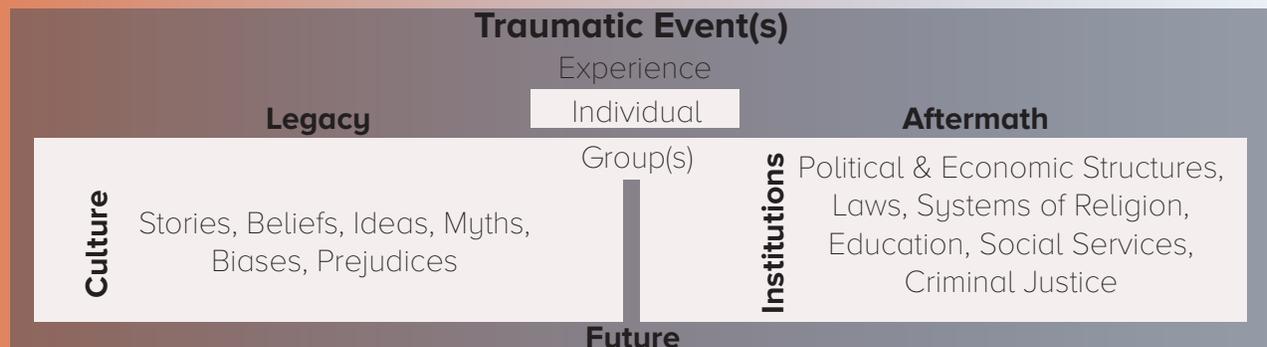
# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

Many of the four types of stories are rooted in current and historical (multi-generational) trauma. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1998) defines historical trauma as the "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from a massive group trauma." This wounding creates historical harms and trauma that can be passed from generation to generation.

## Historical Harms

Trauma and historical harms show up in multiple ways in group and facilitation contexts. Because of this, it is crucial for the facilitators to be aware of historical harms, to acknowledge their presence, and to engage them constructively within the group context.

David Anderson Hooker's Legacy and Aftermath Framework (n.d.) allows us to explore how historical (multi-generational) trauma is culturally and structurally reinforced.  He defines legacy as "the collection of beliefs, ideas, myths, prejudices, biases and behaviors that are disseminated and then inherited by and/or about differing groups."  Aftermath is defined as "the institutions, laws, political and economic structures and the official narrative conveyed and enforced by a society's supporting system (education, religion, social services, criminal justice, etc.) that were formed to enforce or reinforce particular aspects of a legacy." (See diagram below.)

**Traumatic Event(s)**

Experience

Individual

Group(s)

**Legacy**

**Aftermath**

Culture

Institutions

Stories, Beliefs, Ideas, Myths, Biases, Prejudices

Political & Economic Structures, Laws, Systems of Religion, Education, Social Services, Criminal Justice

**Future**

## Facilitator Reflection

1.  As you review the above diagram, think about a recent group facilitation experience you have been a part of.  How did the legacies and aftermaths of traumagenic events show up in the group process?
2.  What is your experience of how prejudicial cultural "legacies" (stories/beliefs) have become codified into the "aftermaths" of racist laws and policies?
3.  How might these legacies and aftermaths be experienced very differently based on a group member's racial identity?

# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

As the cycle continues, the transmission of legacies and aftermaths creates new historical harms and traumagenic effects. A first step to addressing these historical harms is for facilitators to openly acknowledge their power and presence within group contexts.

## Deep Dive

If we overlay Bell's 4 different types of stories with Anderson Hooker's historical harms model, we find that Stock stories are told in both legacy and aftermath. These stories reinforce the dominant story and simultaneously attempt to erase the lived experiences of those experiencing historical (multi-generational) trauma. The Concealed stories are still subject to meaning-making and trauma exposure of the dominant story. The Resistance and Emerging/Transforming stories allow for the possibility to break free from the dominant story and begin to co-create a different more dignity honoring narrative that helps transform the legacy and aftermath of historical trauma.

What stock stories are told about the experience of racialized trauma?

What resistance stories are told about the experience of racialized trauma?

What concealed stories are told about the experience of racialized trauma?

What emerging/transforming stories are told about the experience of racialized trauma?

# Maryland's Legacy of Slavery and Racial Terror Lynching: "He died at the hands of persons unknown"
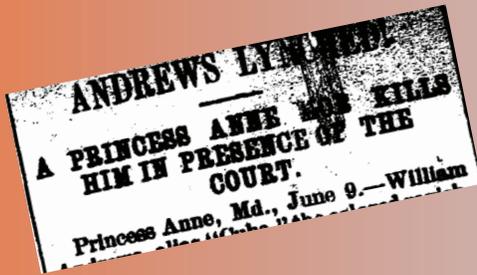


"Andrews Lynched!" The Cambridge Democrat and News, 12 June 1897

According to the Maryland State Archives, the phrase "He died at the hands of persons unknown" became a common expression of law enforcement and court personnel to describe lynchings. The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission defines racial terror lynching as "the unlawful killing of an African American by white mob violence, often with the apparent complicity of state and local officials, intended to incite racial terror and subservience to white supremacy."

Racial terror lynching is a tool for the maintenance of white supremacy to reinforce the stock stories of white dominance and control. "The lynched represented some threat to the established order of white supremacy, or a potential threat thereto" (Maryland State Archives). Terror lynching often times interrupted and usurped due process. Thirteen terror lynchings occurred before any conclusive investigation occurred; two terror lynchings occurred while the trial proceedings were occurring; 6 terror lynchings occurred after the sentencing had been handed down (Maryland State Archives).

The majority of participants in terror lynching mobs were never pursued by authorities.

## Facilitator Reflection

1. Thinking about a recent group facilitation, what is your experience of how Maryland's history of racial oppression influenced group dynamics?
2. Thinking about the historical context of Maryland, what are the "legacies" of racial oppression that could influence a facilitation process? What are the "aftermaths"?

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## Iterative and Nonlinear Processes

When facilitating listening or dialogue processes focused on lived experiences of systemic racial oppression, it requires the facilitator to view the process as non-linear and iterative. Facilitation must be approached with the utmost sensitivity and care. More harm can be done and trauma responses be reinforced if the facilitator does not consider the following:

**Prepare the agenda together with those who will be participating:** Preparing the agenda together allows for the participants to be included from the very beginning and allows their input to seen as central to the facilitation process.

A facilitator's brave space is especially needed when we are facilitating justice-driven work. When we are facilitating to the agenda and not facilitating to the room of people in front of us and the current moment we are all experiencing, we miss the chance to reframe the collective's relative relationship to time and investment in each person's present humanity.

SAGE CRUMP

**Going back is part of the process of going forward:** Harms can occur even when a group creates value agreements; when new harms are created, revisiting the value agreements (created in the first rounds of a circle or facilitation process) will help the group address the new harms and renegotiate how the group interacts with each other moving forward; this going back to go forward helps reinforce the safe and brave space journey.

**Facilitate to the room:** Invest in each person's present humanity; when facilitating justice work, there will be moments of deep complexity and emotional tension, trust the wisdom in the room and ask participants how to move forward that honors the dignity of all.

## Facilitator Reflection

1. What is your understanding of the phrase "facilitate to the room"?
2. What is the difference between rigidly following an agenda and facilitating to the room?

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## Activity 1: Life Story

Stories are powerful and great ways to help people make meaning in their lives. Whether stories are told orally or written down, they shape where we have come from and where we are going. Stories always have conflict, characters, imagery, foreshadowing, and underlying assumptions. In this activity, you will be encouraged to create three storyboards about your life. As you create three different storyboards, reflect on how these stories are influenced by stock stories, concealed stories, resistance stories, and emerging/transforming stories.

**Storyboard 1:** This story is about a past experience. Draw and describe how you have overcome challenges, either as a kid, teenager, or adult. What barriers did you overcome? Who helped you and walked with you in the challenges? Where did your strength originate? What stock stories have you been told that create barriers and challenges in your life?

**Storyboard 2:** This story is about your present life. How is your current self different from your past self? Who is in your life that wasn't in your life in the previous story? What conflict is present? How do you interact with your family, friends, neighbors, community, and world differently? What new barriers and challenges are you facing ? What resistance stories are giving you strength to create a different future?

**Storyboard 3:** What is your ideal future? Acknowledging that we are constantly changing, what emerging/transforming stories have you tapped into that allow you to live into a different future?
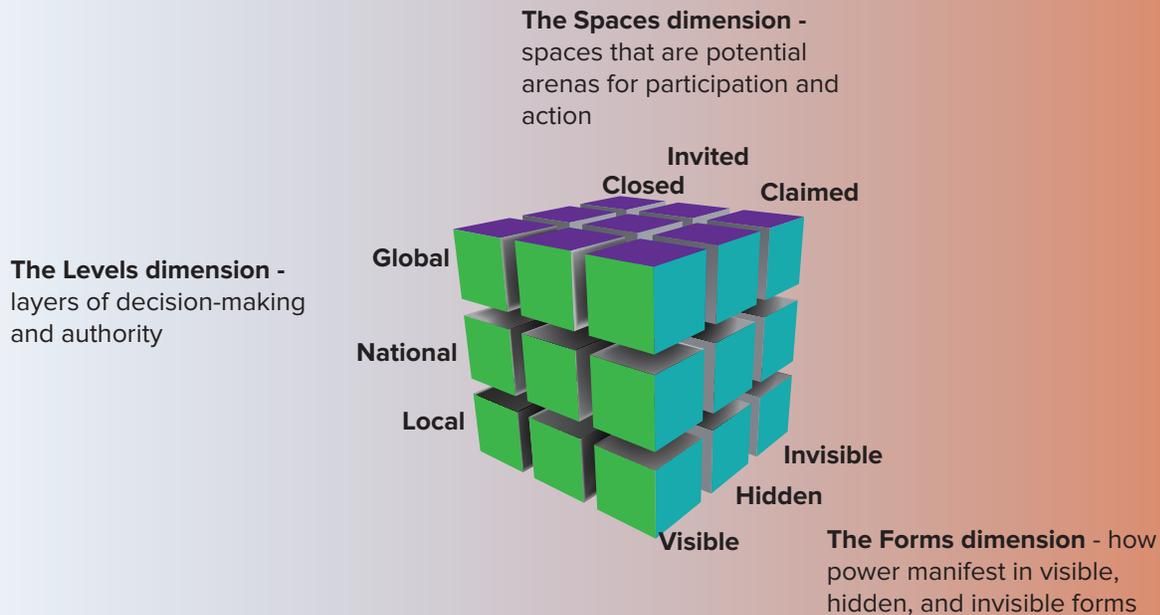
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## Activity 2: Powercube

In this activity, we will explore the powercube framework for analyzing the levels, spaces, and forms of power in relation to stock, concealed, resistant, and emerging/transforming stories. This activity is designed to help individuals, communities, and organizations analyze power through the stories being told, lived into, and created.

The powercube allows us to see aspects of power and how they are intersectional.

**The Spaces dimension -** spaces that are potential arenas for participation and action

**The Levels dimension -** layers of decision-making and authority

**The Forms dimension -** how power manifest in visible, hidden, and invisible forms

Definition of Terms:

**Global -** formal institutions associated with global agreements/treaties
**National -** governments that represent citizens in global arenas
**Local -** state and/or community organizations/actors

**Closed -** a set of actors makes decisions behind closed doors
**Invited -** space where a set of actors has invited others to participate
**Claimed -** spaces created for participation by those who are excluded or appear powerless

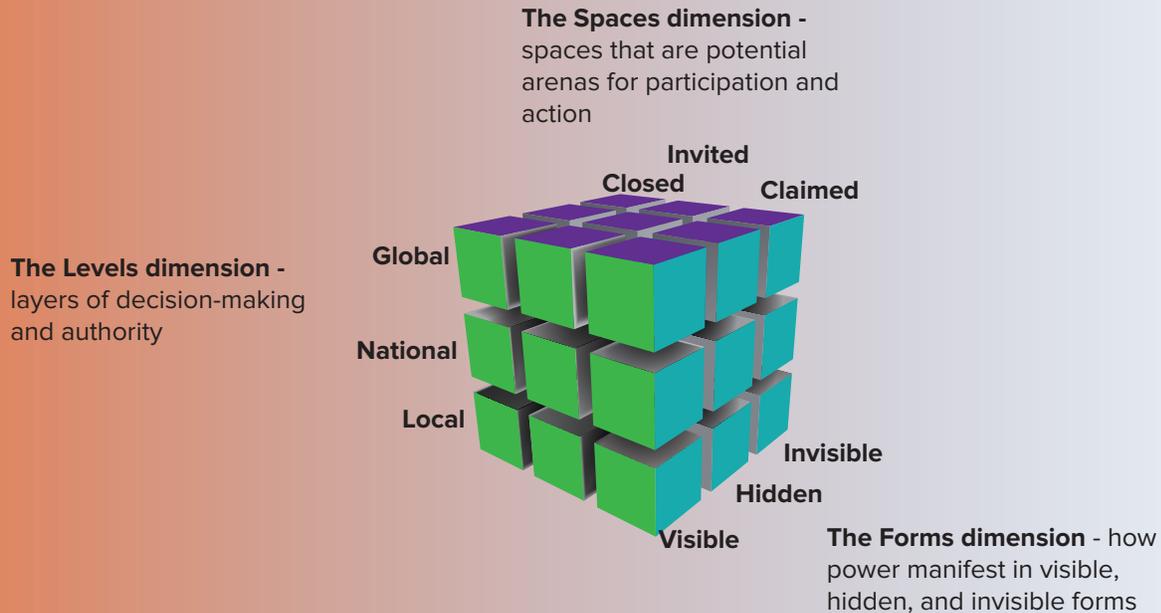**Visible -** contests over interests are visible in public spaces
**Hidden -** used by people to maintain their power and privilege
**Invisible -** awareness of one's rights/interests are hidden due to dominate ideologies, values, and behavior

## Activity 2: Powercube

Using the powercube framework, identify a stock, concealed, resistance, and emergent/transform-ing story and work through the different dimensions. Are the people in power located at a local, national, or global level? Do they navigate closed, invited, or claimed spaces? Is their manifested power visible, hidden, invisible? Fill in the cubes with actors, organizations, ideologies, examples of where/how power is being accessed.

**The Spaces dimension -** spaces that are potential arenas for participation and action

**Invited**
**Closed**
**Claimed**

**The Levels dimension -** layers of decision-making and authority

**Global**
**National**
**Local**

**Invisible**
**Hidden**
**Visible**

**The Forms dimension** - how power manifest in visible, hidden, and invisible forms

Compare who holds the power in each story and where those in power exercise their power. How is power used to maintain the different stories? Who are the central actors? Is power routed in indi-viduals or groups of people? Who benefits from how power is used in each story?

How can this analysis help you facilitate dialogues centered on racial violence, historical harms, and intergenerational trauma?

## References

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The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission - https://msa.maryland.gov/lynching-truth-reconciliation/resources.html

The Maryland State Archives - http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/html/casestudies/lynch_overview.html

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## Additional Resources

The Storytelling Project Curriculum: Learning About Race and Racism through Storytelling and the Arts  http://www.columbia.edu/itc/barnard/education/stp/stp_curriculum.pdf

Transforming Historical Harms  http://www.columbia.edu/itc/barnard/education/stp/stp_curriculum.pdf

Emergent Strategy: Organizing for Social Justice  https://fortelabs.co/blog/emergent-strategy-organizing-for-social-justice/

# Section 2
# People: The Messages We Carry

Skilled facilitators take time to self-reflect on how they experience and perceive their own voices in relation to others' stories. Implicit bias affects how facilitators engage with the stories they hear. Biases are often a product of identity and/or unexamined life assumptions. For facilitators, these biases can inadvertently spill out into the facilitation space. In this training we will explore how bias and inference functions within ourselves, others, and the groups we work with.

In addition to bias, story content can also leave impacts on peoples' psyches, bodies, and spirits. When stories recount dignity-violating events, these effects can be experienced as re-traumatization. A key task for facilitators is understanding how trauma can affect themselves and others. This is particularly important in gauging the potential for secondary trauma and in crafting trauma-sensitive protocols and environments. These considerations are key facilitator concerns when engaging potentially triggering story content.

## Skills Explored in this Section

- Understanding how people make inferences as they process information and interactions
- Using Curiosity to Overcome Bias and Assumptions
- Using Participants Identities to Strengthen the Facilitation
- Trauma Awareness

## Facilitator Reflection

1. Reflecting on your experience, how can a facilitator's bias influence the facilitation process?

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## Inferences

Merriam-Webster defines inference as "a conclusion or opinion that is formed because of known facts or evidence." Inferences are formed by our worldviews. Docherty (2001) defines worldview as "a concept that attempts to articulate the consequences of human activities that are individual as well as collective, psychological as well as social."

Worldviews answer the following five questions:

**How do we know about what is real?** (Epistemology - beliefs about how and to what extent it is possible to know about what exists)

**What is real or True?** (Ontology - a theory about the nature of what exists in the universe)

**How is "the real" organized?** (Logic - beliefs about how what exists relate to each other)

**How should I or we act?** (Ethic - a system of moral principles )

**What is valuable or important?** (Axiology - value theory about which parts of the universe are more important than other parts)

In answering these five questions, we are attempting to make meaning of the world around us. Depending on how we answer these questions, our biases are formed and reinforced as we attempt meaning-making throughout our lives. Brian McLaren defines bias as "unconscious internal obstacles" (n.d.). Biases can be both unconscious and conscious

## Facilitator Reflection

1. In what ways do my worldviews spill out in the facilitation setting?
2. What practices can I employ to intentionally name the inferences that I carry so that I model a welcoming presence for self reflection and honest disclosure?
3. Bias is conscious and unconscious and shows up most when we are under stress, duress, and pressure. In a recent facilitation or meeting, describe how you have seen your bias and the bias of others influence the process.

## Bias

Biases directly influence the information and evidence we take in and attempt to make meaning of. Some information becomes invisible due to our biases. Peter Senge (2006) developed the ladder of inference. Senge suggests people work through a process when attempting to make meaning of information or experiences. At the base of the ladder is observable data and experiences (imagine a video recording). The next rung on the ladder is data I select (what I observe). The third rung on the ladder attaching meaning through cultural and personal lenses (worldviews). The fourth rung is making assumptions based on the meanings I added. The fifth rung is the act of drawing conclusions. The six rung is the process of adopting or confirming beliefs about the world. And the last run is taking action based on my beliefs.

This process happens, for the most part, unconsciously. As we take in data from the bottom rung, Some data is used while other data is tossed aside and forgotten. Once the observable data is run through our values and assumptions, we draw conclusions and determine actions. These actions reinforce our values and assumptions and we begin the loop again.

A potential problem is raised when the observable data is important but has become invisible due to our values, assumptions, and worldviews. Senge suggests curiosity is a way to interrupt this dangerous feedback loop that solely reinforces how we see the world and the stories we tell about how the world works.

## Facilitator Reflection

1. As facilitators, we must practice suspending our own judgments by practicing curiosity in our facilitation processes. Practicing curiosity allows us and the participants to hear stories and lived experiences that are not part of the dominant story and see the truth of other lived experiences. As a facilitator how can you practice curiosity when facilitating listening and dialogue circles about racialized violence, intergenerational trauma, and/or truth-telling?

By practicing curiosity, we are not only able to provide a space to hear new stories but we are also able to see people as complex and having multiple identities. A possible way for facilitators to explore curiosity in relation to your own worldviews and biases is to work through the Ethnography of Difference activity.

## Identity

We all carry multiple identities. Naming and reflecting on our identities is one way to make our inferences and worldview assumptions more visible. Using the identity wheel, identify the most salient aspects of your identities as a facilitator. Once you have made a mental note of your identities, consider which identities you carry can become targets of dominant culture prejudices? Which identities that you carry can become agents of racialized privileges?

**Identities are Dynamic** - Identities are not fixed and change throughout culture and time. Where a person is physically located influences their identities.

**Identities are Intersectional** - Intersectionality can be defined as "a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by

Johns Hopkins University

## Facilitator Reflection

1. What identities do you bring to a facilitation process?

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many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves" (Collins & Bilge).

**Identities reveal power structures** - Some identities in a dominant culture or stock story have access to recognized power while other identities encounter barriers when attempting to access recognized power.

**Identities are foundational in building a collective "we"** (Collins & Bilge) - When identities are shared, a collective "we" can form and individuals relate to society in solidarity with others strengthening advocacy and social justice transformation.

## Facilitator Reflection

1. How can your identities influence the facilitation process?

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## Trauma's Impact on Facilitation

As we explored in the previous section, some identities have experienced more traumagenic events than other identities. Participants who are trauma-exposed profoundly influence the facilitation process. In Decolonizing Trauma Work, Linklater (2014) defines trauma as "a person's reaction or response to an injury". As a facilitator, what indicators might help you know if participants are possibly trauma-exposed? First and foremost unless you have a counseling degree, you can never be certain a person is traumatized or trauma-exposed. Second, facilitators can look for specific trauma response indicators to help inform whether or not there is a possibility of trauma-responses in participants. In Trauma Stewardship, Lipsky identifies sixteen trauma indicators that might suggest if trauma-exposure is present.

**Potential Indicators of a Trauma Response**

Feeling Helpless and Hopeless
A Sense that One can Never do Enough
Hypervigilance (or Hypovigilance)
Diminished Creativity
Minimizing
Chronic Exhaustion/Physical Ailments
Inability to LIsten/Deliberate Avoidance
Dissociative Moments
Sense of Persecution
Guilt
Fear
Anger and Cynicism
Inability to Empathize/Numbing
Addictions
Grandiosity

## Facilitator Reflection

1. How will the potential indicators of a trauma response better equip you, as a facilitator, to facilitate processes centered on truth-telling, racial justice, and trauma transformation?

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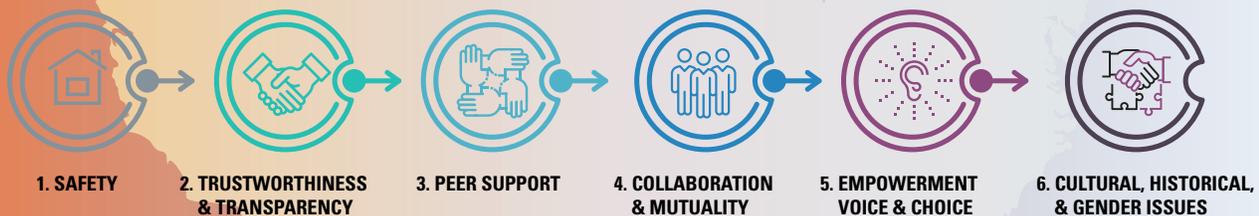# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

Another indicator is if the way we process reality is associated with danger. Resmaa Menakem suggests that traumatized people conflate comfort and safety. Everything might feel unsafe and dangerous when it may just be uncomfortable (Cultural Somatics Institute). In his free ecourse on racialized trauma, he suggests an embodied experience of trauma manifests differently in black bodies, white bodies, and police bodies.

In designing facilitation processes where participants will be sharing stories of traumagenic events (e.g. public hearings hosted by Truth and Reconciliation Commissions), it is important to prepare a trauma response protocol. Most likely, traumagenic stories will be recounted and retold in a public space. Talking with participants about physiological signs of a trauma response before the story-telling begins and creating grounding spaces for people to go to if they feel a trauma response arise is helpful in limiting retraumatization and empowering participants to tap into individual and community resilience.

The Center for Disease Control suggests six guiding principles to adopt a trauma-informed approach.  These principles are: Safety; Trustworthiness & transparency; Peer Support; Collaboration & Mutuality; Empowerment & Choice; Cultural, historical & gender issues. Each of these guiding principles create a web of support for participants to enter bravely into the facilitation.

## 6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR), in collaboration with SAMHSA's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC), developed and led a new training for OPHPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work. Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



**1. SAFETY**   **2. TRUSTWORTHINESS & TRANSPARENCY**   **3. PEER SUPPORT**   **4. COLLABORATION & MUTUALITY**   **5. EMPOWERMENT VOICE & CHOICE**   **6. CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, & GENDER ISSUES**

Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organizational development and practice improvement. The training provided by OPHPR and NCTIC was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.

https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm

# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

**Safety -** As we have mentioned previously, safety is a journey. The facilitator(s) and participants are constantly negotiating the safety of the space. Questions like "am I welcome here?" and "will I be seen and heard?" and "can I risk being vulnerable?" are continually being asked, especially when facilitation involves truth telling, historical/current harms, and trauma-organized stories.

**Trustworthiness & Transparency -** Trust and transparency are crucial when facilitating. A facilitator must be building a trusting environment and relationship with the participants. In facilitations involving trauma-organized stories, a participant most likely won't tell their story if that person doesn't trust the facilitator, the environment, the process, and other participants. Being transparent about the process and how trauma-organized stories are going to be listened to and used is foundational to building a trusting relationship.

**Peer Support -** Trauma-informed facilitation allows participants to connect with each other for emotional, physical, and spiritual support. Historical/current harms experienced by a community are best transformed and healed by the community. Providing opportunities or spaces for participants to be supported and connect to their community is crucial when truth telling and trauma-organized stories are told.

**Collaboration & Mutuality -** Working with the community to develop the facilitation process allows for mutual ownership of the process. When included in the design process, participants or the organizing group can help create a process that is best suited for their context and needs. This collaboration reinforces the principle that those closest to the issue are best placed to find a way forward.

**Empowerment & Choice -** The experience of a trauma-response takes away the ability to choose and can leave individuals or communities feeling helplessness. Providing a process where participants have a choice on how trauma-organized stories are told and discussed allows for the participants to regain power and choice.

**Cultural, Historical & Gender Issues -** the experience of trauma-responses is intersectional. Due to a person having multiple identities, their trauma responses might be compounded by their identities. Facilitation must be informed by local or group culture, historical traumagenic responses to past/present events, and gender oppression and awareness.

Each of these principles work together in creating a trauma-informed process and space. A facilitator will always be negotiating the principles as the participants engage in the process.

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## Activity 1: Identity Wheel

Using an identity wheel located in the center of the circle/room, have participants identify 5 salient identities they are bringing into the facilitation space. Have them write these identities on a post it note and place the post it note on the identity wheel.

Once everyone has placed their post it note on the wheel, have the whole group observe and reflect on the identities present in the room.

Using a feelings wheel, begin a conversation about how it feels when our identities (those written down) are respected and honored and how it feels when our identites are not respected or honored?

How can the participant in the room, co-create a space where all identities are welcomed and honored?

What is a restorative process to work through when identities are not respected or honored?
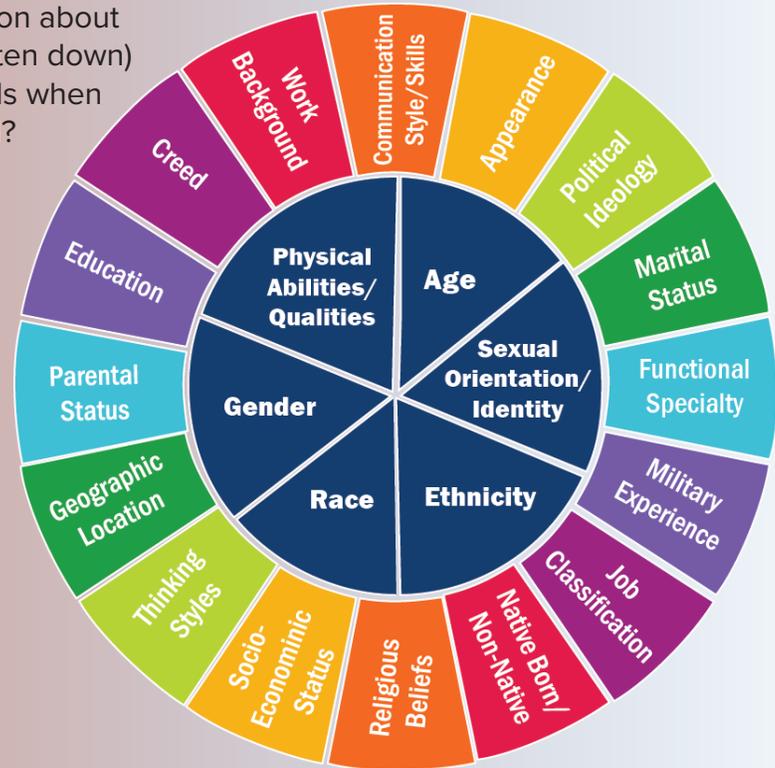
## Activity 2: Dignity Gallery Walk

The purpose of this activity is to help participants begin explore the ten essential elements of dignity (Donna Hicks).

Using flip chart paper, write the elements of dignity on each paper (one per page). Place the pieces of paper throughout the room. Hand each person a marker and divide them up into groups of 3 or 4. Have them write/draw examples in their lives of when each element of dignity was honored. Once they are done with one element, every group rotates clockwise to go to the next element. Once all the groups have written/drawn something on all the elements, gather everyone together and walk through the gallery of experiences.

Questions to consider asking as the whole group is walking through the gallery:

What do you observe in the stories that is a common or shared experience?
What resonates with you in each of the stories?
Using your senses, how is each element experienced?
What themes emerge from each element of dignity?
What part of each of the stories reveals the worth of each person?

## 10 Essential Elements of Dignity  Donna Hicks

Acceptance of Identity - approach people as neither inferior nor superior to you

Recognition - Validate others for their talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help

Acknowledgment - give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating and responding to their concerns

Inclusion - Make others feel that they belong at all levels of relationship (family, community, organization, nation)

Safety - Put people at ease at two levels: physically and psychologically

Fairness - Treat people justly, with equality, and in an evenhanded way, according to agreed upon laws and rules

Independence - empower people to act on their own behalf so they feel in control of their lives and experience a sense of hope

Understanding - Believe that what others think matters; give them a chance to explain their perspectives

Benefit of the Doubt - treat people as trustworthy

Accountability - take responsibility for your actions

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## References

CDC. (n.d.) . Infographic: 6 guiding principles to a trauma-informed approach. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm

Docherty, J. S. (2001). Learning lessons from waco when the parties bring their gods to the nego-tiation table. Syracuse Press University.

Hicks, D. (2013). Dignity: Its essential role in resolving conflict. Yale University Press.

Linklater, R (2014). Decolonizing trauma work indigenous stories and strategies. Fernwood Pub-lishing.

Lipsky, L. D. (2009). Trauma stewardship: an everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Senge, P. M. (2006). The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization. Double-day.

## Additional Resources

Americans for the Arts: The Privilege Wheel https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/-files/pdf/2019/cultural_equity/Identity%20and%20Social%20Location%20Wheel.pdf

Cultural Somatics Institute https://courses.culturalsomaticsinstitute.com/

Stages of Trauma Healing Reflections for Your Journey http://www.jour-ney-through-grief.com/stages-of-trauma-healing.html

The Ladder of Inference https://www.foresightde-sign.org/blog/2017/12/21/what-does-the-ladder-of-inference-even-mean

The Window of Tolerance https://www.wallscounselingcolorado.com/blog/exam-ple-blog-post-1-pjkmr

Unconscious/Implicit Bias Exercise  https://www.nonprofnetwork.org/resources/Documents/Un-conscious%20Implicit%20Bias%20Exercise.pdf

# Section 3
# Power: How Stories are Amplified or Erased

In this manual's third section we explore how and why some stories are magnified while others are silenced. This process is a product of personal and institutional power and privilege. Facilitators need to be aware of how historical harms, and particularly racialized harm, affects which stories have been told and how these stories are presented. Here each of us will examine the impacts of how our own identity/ies as facilitators can elevate certain stories while suppressing others.

Stories are powerful - not only because they highlight important events - but also because of their potential to literally re-vision history. Through this project our goal is to create public forums that invite more community members to center stage. Expert facilitators understand their own bridging role in this process and know when they need to step back and out of the limelight. Second to this, they know how to use memorialization processes as ways to celebrate wider community engagement.

## Skills Explored in this Section

- Understanding five domains of power
- Explore how power and privilege influence the facilitation process
- Use the Action Continuum to map your anti oppression awareness and work

## Examining How Power is Held

Power in and of itself is neither good nor bad. In some situations, power is used in bad, oppressive, dominating, competitive, and destructive ways. In other situations, power is used in good, anti oppressive, and constructive ways. In facilitation, how power is used determines whether participants will bravely engage in dialogue or disengage from the whole process.

## Facilitator Reflection

1. How can the facilitator's power influence the facilitation process?
2. How are the stories we tell influenced by the power of each of our identities?

# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

Beth Roy describes the following five domains of power:

**Internal Power** - One's sense of confidence, ability to articulate thoughts, skills for recognizing emotion and for managing it, and command of language. All of these factors play into how powerfully one operates in transactions with others.

**Transactional Power** - This consists of everyday behaviors that occur between and among us -- choice words, body posture, eye contact, and forms of touch --all communicate and negotiate power.

**Organizational Power** - Sets of agreements, tacit or explicit, create environments in which power is distributed in particular ways. Roles in families, organizations, communities--those institutions we experience personally on a daily basis--may be assigned by agreement or assumed de facto, and power accrues to them.

**Cultural Power** - Particular histories and identities influence individuals to behave in particular ways and also influence the meanings attributed to behaviors by others. Ethnic origins, religious communities, racial identities, gender, and physical abilities all have associated with them sets of cultural habits and assumptions that are brought to bear on power dynamics.

**Structural Power** - Both face-to-face transactions and group situations exist in the context of greater social structures, which define an underlying set of power relations. Often, these structures appear to be abstract (the economy), distant (the government), impervious to the wishes of individuals. Relations in this realm attach to cultural identities and attributes and become internalized in a sense of self (for instance, as a global sense of privilege or powerlessness).

# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

Whether a facilitator or a participant, we are all navigating these domains in the facilitation process. Through self reflective practices, facilitators need to be aware of the personal power and privilege they possess. Factors like education, economic affluence, gender/sex, where you were raised, and a sense of safety provide access to privilege that others may not have. A facilitator's privilege and access to power directly relates to our exploration of stock stories. Where a facilitator is positioned in relation to these stock stories reveals the potential access they may/may not have to power and privilege.

## Racialized Power and Privilege

Patricia Hill Collins describes access to power and privilege in the Matrix of Domination. She identifies how social identities intersect with social groups. Identities like race sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability/disability, religion, and age are associated with how someone experiences three different social groups (privileged social group, border social groups, and oppressed social groups). Where one identifies in this matrix helps to reveal access to privilege and power. As a facilitator is planning and leading a facilitation, they must be aware of how their power and privilege is influencing the process and the participants.

Reflect on the following definitions from NCCJ (National Coalition of Christians and Jews):

**Privilege** - Unearned access to resources (social powers) that are only readily available to some people because of their social group membership; an advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by one societal group above and beyond the common advantage of all other groups. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it.

**Social Power -** Access to resources that enhance one's chances of getting what one needs in order to lead a comfortable, productive and safe life.

**Target or Oppressed Identities -** Social groups that are negatively valued, considered to be inferior, abnormal, or dependent and given limited access to resources and social power.

**Agent or Privileged Identities -** Social groups that are positively valued considered superior, independent, or "normal" and have access to resources and power.

**Christian Privilege -** The unearned access, resources and social status systematically given to Christians at the expense of other religious and nonreligious individuals, cultures and institutions.

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# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

**Class Privilege -** The unearned access, resources and social status systematically given to upper-middle, upper, rich and owning class individuals at the expense of working and poor class individuals.

**Heterosexual/Straight Privilege -** The unearned access, resources and social status systematically given heterosexual/straight individuals at the expense of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and pansexual people.

**Male Privilege -** The unearned access, resources and social status systematically given to men at the expense of women.

**White Privilege -** The unearned access, resources and social status systematically given to white people at the expense of people of color.

**Adult Privilege -** The unearned access, resources and social status systematically given to adults (between age 25 – 55).

**Temporarily Able -** The unearned access, resources and social status systematically given to people who are physically, psychologically, cogitatively and intellectually able at the expense of people with a disability (physical, psychological, cognitive or learning).

**Cis Privilege -** The unearned access, resources and social status systematically given to cisgender people at the expense of trans* people.

## Deep Dive

Using Roys five domains of power, Collins' matrix of domination, and NCCJ's definitions of privilege, reflect on the following questions. How does privilege show up as the facilitator is designing a process focused on historical harms and racialized violence? How can a facilitator use the matrix of domination to help identify how power and privilege can be used intentionally and unintentionally in a facilitation? What are ways to navigate power and privilege in community dialogue processes centered on historical harms, racialized violence, and community healing?

What stock stories are told about the experience of racialized trauma?

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## From Me to We

Adams and Griffin created The Action Continuum to help people identify where they are located in working in anti-oppression work. Read through the different locations on the continuum and identify where you have found yourself throughout the different stages of your life.

**Initiating, Preventing** - Working to change individual and institutional actions and policies that discriminate against target group members, planning educational programs or other events, working for passage of legislation that protects target group members from discrimination, being explicit about making sure target group members are full participants in organizations or groups.

**Supporting, Encouraging** - Supporting others who speak out against oppression or who are working to be more inclusive of target group members by backing up others who speak out, forming an allies group, joining a coalition group.

**Educating Others** - Moving beyond only educating self to questions and dialogue with others too. Rather than only stopping oppressive comments or behaviors, also engaging people in discussion to share why you object to a comment or action.

**Educating Self** - Taking actions to learn more about oppression and the experiences and heritage of target group members by reading, attending workshops, seminars, cultural events, participating in discussions, joining organizations or groups that oppose oppression, attending social action and change events

**Recognizing, Action** - Is aware of oppression, recognizes oppressive actions of self and others and takes action to stop it.

**Recognizing, No Action** - Is aware of oppressive actions by self or others and their harmful effects, but takes no action to stop this behavior. This inaction is the result of fear, lack of information, confusion about what to do. Experiences discomfort at the contradiction between awareness and action.

**Denying** - Enabling oppression by denying target group members are oppressed. Does not actively oppress, but by denying that oppression exists, colludes with oppression.

**Actively Participating** - Telling oppressive jokes, putting down people from target groups, intentionally avoiding target group members, discriminating against target group members, verbally or physically harassing target group members.

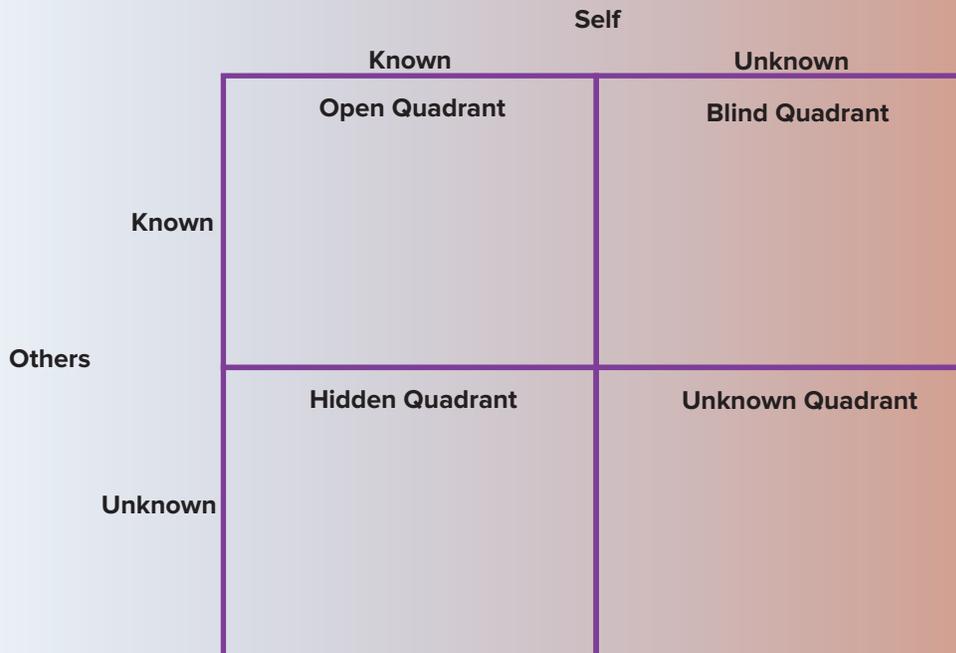## Activity 1: Johari Window (used by permission Matt Tibbles)

The Johari Window is a self-awareness tool to help in understanding how people see themselves and how others see the individual. It was developed by Joseph Luft and Harry ingham in the 1950's. The Johari Window is divided into four quadrants/regions. Each quadrant is filled in with information or understandings that are known/unknown by the person and known/unknown by the group. The four quadrants are: known by self/known by others; unknown by self and known by others; known by self but unknown by others, and unknown by self and unknown by others. We will adapt the Johari Window activity to help us uncover what we know and don't know about privilege, group members will use the terms (provided on pages 33-34) and determine what is known and unknown by them selves and the group. Example: in the Known by individual and Known by others quadrant, what do you know about your social power (your ability to get what you need)? In groups of 3 or 4, take the time to fill out the Johari Window.

Debrief questions to consider:
    What was unknown by you but known by others about oppressed/privileged identities?
    What was known by you and know by others about social power?
    What was unknown by you and unknown by others about temporary able privilege?

|              | **Self**          |                    |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
|              | **Known**         | **Unknown**        |
| **Known**    | Open Quadrant     | Blind Quadrant     |
| **Others**   |                   |                    |
| **Unknown**  | Hidden Quadrant   | Unknown Quadrant   |

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## Activity 2: Worldviewing (used by permission Matt Tibbles)

In this activity, participants process each worldview represented in the action continuum. Divide participants up into groups of 3 or 4 people.  At each point on the continuum (pg. 35), groups will ask the five worldview questions (What is real or true? How is the real organized? What is valuable or important? How do we know about what is real? How should I/we act?). The purpose of this activity to help participants understand the worldviews driving each point on the continuum so that participants can engage other perspectives and help others move toward collaborative anti-oppression work.

## References

Collins, P. H. (2000). Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. Routledge.

Roy, B. (2008). Power, culture, conflict. In M. A. Truijillo & S.Y. Bowland & L. J. Myers & P. M Richards & B. Roy (Eds.), Re-centering culture and knowledge in conflict resolution practice (pp. 179-194). Syracuse University Press.

## Additional Resources

Bryan, M. Four Forms of Oppression https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnJ3MwFNMvY

Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization https://philanos.org/resources/Documents/Conference%202020/Pre-Read%20PDFs/Continuum_AntiRacist.pdf

From Trauma to Powerwounding http://www.breathingforgiveness.net/2013/11/anti-slavery-campaign-interview-series.html

Jackson, V. Power: A User's Manual http://www.healingcircles.org/uploads/2/1/4/8/2148953/power_workbook_september_2018.pdf

# Section 4

# Process: Ways to Connect Stories

Facilitating group processes inevitably involves navigating difficult conversations. This includes being simultaneously aware of the pitfalls of framing narratives to blame others as well as the critical importance of truth-telling. Speaking truth to power engages both the why and how of accountability – for ourselves as well as for others. Practices of emergent systems design equip facilitators with skills necessary for these types of challenging interventions.

In this part of the training we will spend concerted time on group process skills, learning and practicing how to hold accountable spaces. This includes crafting group safety agreements, circle keeping, soliciting reflective insights, holding space for under-represented voices, fostering practices of inclusive dialogue, and generating constructive group rituals. In all these practices, our goal is to celebrate places, people, power, and processes that actively connect Maryland's many diverse communities.

## Skills Explored in this Section

- Understanding how to navigate the three types of difficult conversations in a facilitation
- Understanding the facilitator's role
- Designing facilitation processes
- Designing listening and dialogue circles

## Facilitator Reflection

1. Reflect on a difficult conversation you have had in the past, what went well? What didn't go so well?
2. What do you believe the role emotions play in difficult conversation?

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## Facilitating Difficult Conversations

Stone, Patton, and Heen (2010) describe three types of conversations that can be difficult to navigate. They are:
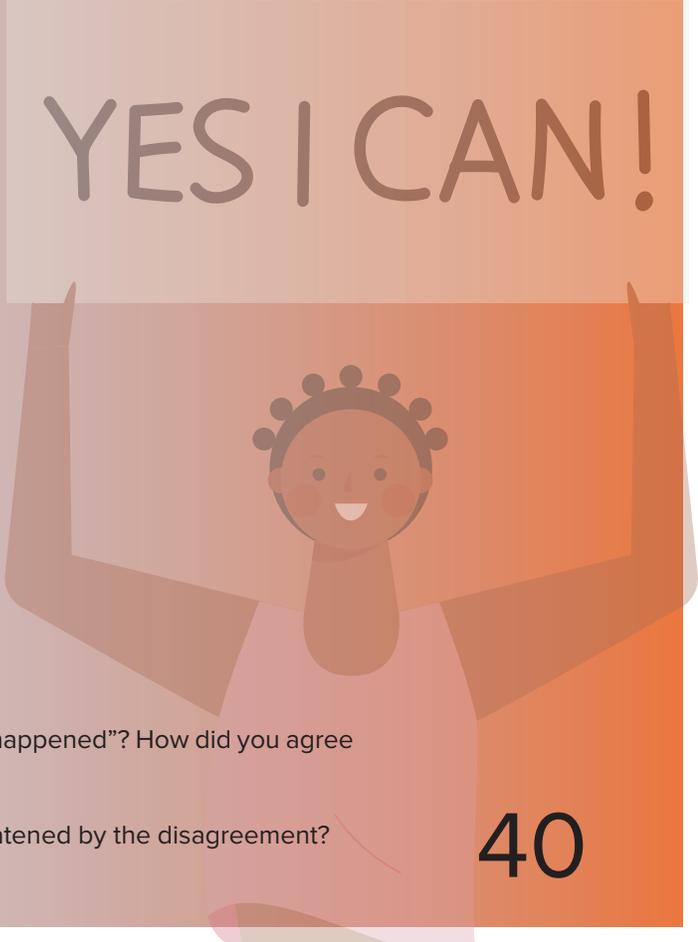
**The "What Happened?" Conversation -** disagreement about what happened or what should be done.

**The Feelings Conversation -** feelings are always involved and each participant is asking a range of intra/interpersonal questions (Are my feelings valid? Appropriate? Should I acknowledge or deny them? Keep them private or make them public? What about other people's feelings? etc.)

**The Identity Conversation -** internal conversation we have with ourselves about what the difficult conversation means to us, what is at stake in our identity(ies), questions of competency, good/bad, love/unlovable are constantly being asked of our identity(ies)

In order for people to work through each difficult conversation, the conversations must move to what Stone, Patton, and Heen call a "learning stance" (p 16). A learning stance involves understanding "what has happened from the other person's point of view, explain your point of view, share and understand feelings, and work together to figure out a way to manage the problem going forward" (p. 16).

## Facilitator Reflection

1. Describe a recent difficult conversation that revolved around "what happened"? How did you agree on the "facts" of the disagreement?
2. What role did your feelings play in the difficult conversation?
3. Name your identities that were threatened or perceived to be threatened by the disagreement?

# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

In order to constructively shift the conversation certain skills are required. These skills include (Stone, Patton, & Heen, 2010):

- Navigate the conversation away from binaries (right/wrong, good/bad)

- Hold space for other lived experiences. Remember everyone views life through different worldviews and perspectives.

- Let curiosity be your guide

- Understanding someone else's story requires the suspension of judgment and the embrace of curiosity

- Adopt the And Stance - In the "And Stance," you are able to assert your views while not diminishing other lived experiences

- Disentangle Intent from Impact

- Our assumptions about intentions are often wrong

- Good intentions do not sanitize bad impact

- Contribution and the Blame Frame - acknowledge harmful and violent actions (and oppressive systems) while not perpetually trapping people in the 'blame frame'.

- Frame feelings back into the problem

- Express the full spectrum of your feelings

- Be open to sharing without judgment

Facilitation is "a **commitment** to the **power of the collective**. We hold space for **humans to find each other,** clearing the debris between them so that they can **access** the **forward motion of life**, the flowing **river of change**, the **rich ecosystem of differences**."

adrienne marie brown

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## Facilitator's Role

adrienne marie brown describes the facilitator's role as:

> To make it as easy as possible for complex people to do the complex work of shaping change together;

> To make it easier for a group or organization to understand where they are going and how to get there;

> To understand the culture they are trying to create, and give them a place to practice;

> To understand how their visions can be made manifest, and can shape their decisions in the here and now;

> To support solid, authentic organizing

> And to use every space to dismantle colonial legacies of oppression and supremacy

**What facilitation isn't**

- Training/teaching
- Manipulation
- Organizing
- Fixing the Group
- Keeping people calm
- Leadership development
- Performance
- Diversifying

The facilitator's role is about listening to what is said, what isn't said, and discerning the undercurrent of feelings, fear, and scars so that the process of "clearing the debris" can occur and humans can find each other in the fullness of their lived experiences.

A myth of facilitation that needs to be addressed is the myth of neutrality. Killerman & Bolger (2016) "suggest that attempting neutrality isn't just unrealistic, it's unhelpful. Instead of expending energy on being perceived as neutral, you're better off (and your participants are better off) naming and working with the biases present--the biases we all have, and the societal pressures at large that are shaping the conversations in the room" (p. 26). Being honest is better than attempting to be neutral.

## Designing a Process

The following steps will help you in your design process.

**1**

**Facilitator Reflection**

When an organization or community approaches you to consider facilitating a facilitation process (e.g. listening circle, dialogue circle, etc.), ask yourself the following questions:

⁕ Are you the right person for this facilitation?

⁕ How do your ascribed identities influence the process and potential outcomes?

⁕ Do you have the right skill sets and experience to facilitate what is being asked of you?

⁕ Who is someone you could co-facilitate with that could bring in other needed identities and lived experiences? (When facilitating listening circles and especially dialogues focused on historical harms, multiple facilitators are recommended to attend to the participants and process.)

**Context Matters**

⁕ When facilitating dialogues on racial injustice, historical harms, and structural violence, do local contextual work before you begin to plan the facilitation process. Talk to the organization inviting you to facilitate and learn local stories in order to help you ground your process in the local community.

**2**

⁕ Remember to ask questions using trauma-informed strategies. Asking someone to retell a story may expose them again to the trauma response.

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## 3 The Process - Creating a Trauma-Informed & Resilient Space

**Location -** acknowledge those that have walked the land before everyone present; acknowledge the land was stolen from indigenous people who have suffered genocide, slavery, and historical trauma; say the names of the indigenous tribes; current racial violence is a continuation of past racial violence

**Physical Environment -** consider ease of access when considering a physical place (ADA compliant, easy for participants to get to, and available parking; Use a trauma-informed scan created by GDTA, reflect on the following:

Initial Welcome (what the entrance looks like, how the space is set up, language/tone on signs or instructions

Participants are oriented to the physical space

Security (e.g. staff, systems) is available and balances welcoming, hospitality , & safety and is developed with participant and staff input

The building is accessible for people with hearing, visual, or mobility impairments

Spaces are well lit (especially common areas, outdoor spaces, offices, and bathrooms

Space is clean and well maintained

Bathrooms can be locked. Ideally, bathrooms are gender neutral.

Created a calm atmosphere (e.g. lighting, furniture, artwork, plants, music)

Trauma/stress Reduction/Wellness/Recovery materials available

Environment reflects the talents and cultures of participants

Materials are available in the languages of participants

Designate a 'soothing room' or quiet spaces where possible

Create child and family-friendly spaces (if applicable), with activities and materials such as books, games, and craft supplies, or toys

Screen books, movies, magazines, etc., for negative ethnic, gender, and racial or other cultural stereotypes(connect to oppression/domination)

Easy exits available from program space

Staff receive training in non-violent crisis prevention & intervention (e.g. de-escalation; responding to disruptive or aggressive behavior)

Peer support is available on site

Participants are invited to make suggestions about improving the physical space in order to feel safe and welcome

# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

### Emotional/Psychological/Spiritual Space

✴ Do participants have the opportunity to contribute "resistance" stories when facilitating dialogues on historical harm/trauma and oppression? In telling participant or ancestral stories, are participants invited to participate in undermining the power of the stock story or system of oppression?

✴ Do participants feel rooted? Do they feel like they belong to the community or place? How can you design the environment and process to help reinforce that participants are not only welcomed to share their stories but that their stories belong?

✴ Do the participants have the resources and ability to draw upon them at the right time and place? How can facilitators support participants in truth-telling, repair, and healing?

### Emergence

Nick Obolensky (2014) defines emergence as "the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions." You can never fully anticipate how people will interact with each other. Planning the whole process is important but also plan for parts of your process to emerge during the actual facilitation. There might be a path emerging that the process needs to pivot to address. Be open to an emergent and iterative process.

## The Process - Listening & Dialogue Circles Processes

✴ Know who is walking through the door. Do the necessary research of the community or organization hosting you. If you are facilitating any type of process that is focusing on historical harms, trauma, or oppression, learn the history of the area.

✴ The role of values in a circle process (Pranis) - Values are not about how to do a circle but how to be in a circle. Core values that can be universal (Respect, Honesty, Trust, Humility, Sharing, Inclusivity, Empathy, Courage, Forgiveness, Love, and Dignity)

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# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

## Principles of a circle process include

Circles call us to act on our personal values

Circles include all interests

Circles are easily accessible to all

Circles offer everyone an equal opportunity to participate

Involvement in Circles is voluntary

In Circles, everyone participates directly as themselves

Circles are guided by a shared vision

Circles are designed by those who use them

Circles are flexible in accommodating unique needs and interested

Circles take a holistic approach

Circles maintain respect for all

Circles invite spiritual presence

Circles foster accountability to others and to the process

## The keepers role in a circle process

Preparing the circle

Providing equal access to information

Setting the tone

Facilitating circle dialogue

Balancing interests and perspectives

Protecting the integrity of the process

Regulating the pace of the circle

Welcoming new people
Maintaining Focus

Participating as themselves

## Circle flow

Introduction
In this part of the circle process, the keeper/facilitator introduces why the circle is being held and explains the process of the circle.

Opening Ceremony
In this part of the circle process, the participants transition from the expectations and pace of their everyday life to a place of being centered and reflective

## Deep Dive

The aims of an opening ceremony include: creating a good feeling of community and connection; generating respect for others and for the anciently shared space of the circle; prepare people for releasing negative emotions in honest, respectful, and constructive ways; open a safe space for the heart to speak and for mutual understanding to grow; inspire participants to act on personal values; reinforce shared values; honor individual and collective capacities for rising to the circle's call; prepare participants to work together as a community; give a sense that the challenges each person faces are shared challenges best faced as a community.

> Reflect on a recent facilitation or meeting that involved the way of being together from the list above. What did it feel like? How did the participants interact with each other?

# of Rounds and Questions associated with each round
In this part of the circle process, consider how many rounds the circle process will involve and what are the specific purpose and question of each round.

Closing Ceremony
In this part of the circle process, acknowledge the efforts to speak from the heart and helps participants transition from the sacred circle space

# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

**Example of a Dialogue Talking Circle (used by permission Matt Tibbles)**

**Purpose -** The purpose of the talking circle is to encourage participants to talk, process, and heal from traumagenic events.

**Participants -** Voluntary participants

**Welcome -** During the welcome, participants are greeted and invited to dwell in the circle space fully; they are acknowledged and thanked for choosing to participate. Acknowledgment is made of being on indigenous land and remembering the people who have previously walked this land before us.

**Introduce the Talking Piece -** The talking would either be an indigenous cultural piece or something that symbolizes the values and purpose of the organization (could be something as simple as the logo)

**Opening Ceremony -** Participants are invited to write on a piece of paper a word or phrase they are bringing into the circle (e.g. hope, love, pain, etc.).  During the opening ceremony, participants are invited to share their word or simply place the word in the center.

**Center -** Clear glass bowl filled with water, floating candles inside the glass bowl, small rocks gathered from one of the beaches, indigenous drums, a piece of fabric or other symbolic artifacts.

**Round -**  Check-in
**Round -** Generating Values for the Circle
**Round -** Offer basic guidelines and ask if these guidelines are okay.
1.    Dignity in ourselves and others is honored by our language, body movements, and facial expression.
2.    Confidentiality of the circle will be honored and kept.
3.    Each person is allowed the space to express themselves when they hold the talking piece
4.    Listening to the other person is expected.
**Round -** Guiding Question 1: Share a story about what you love and enjoy about this work? (The purpose of this round is empathy development.)

**Round -** Follow-up Question: What drew you to this work?
Remind the participants of why we are here.  The circle is a place for talking and healing.  The desire is to begin talking about harms that have occurred and help find ways to honor the dignity of everyone.

**Mindfulness Moment -** The mindfulness moment will create a container for participants to hold difficult thoughts, either their own or someone else's.  Participants will be invited to take off their shoes and stand if they are able and comfortable in doing so.  Their feet should be a little wider than shoulder length apart.  Participants will be asked to sway to the right allowing their feet to roll on the edges.  They will be asked to stay there for a few seconds and then sway to the left side.  Hold there a few seconds and then repeat the process swaying to the right and left.  Do this for a short time that allows the participants to find a personal swaying rhythm.  Encourage participants to find their swaying rhythm and not rely on the swaying rhythm of the circle keeper.  Have the participants imagine they are a tree swaying back and forth in the breeze.

**Round -** Guiding Question 2: What makes this work difficult? (The purpose of this question is to allow for the space to hold the difficulties each participant faces each day.  This round will hopefully continue to develop empathy and connection in the participants.  The intent is to help  participants to see each other as humans who struggle just like everyone else.)

**Mindfulness Moment -**  Practice breathing in and out.  Breath in for a count of five, hold for a count of three, breath out for a count a five.  Repeat this cycle 3-5 times.  Allow for the participants' bodies to process the previous round and connect with the energies of the other participants.

**Round -** Guiding Question 3: What emotions do you feel throughout the day? (The purpose of this round is to uncover what emotions are experienced each day.  Again, this round will hopefully continue developing empathy among the participants.  This round is also designed to begin to name difficult emotions that arise from being wounded by personal or structural violence.)

**Round -** Follow-up Question: Share a story when you felt pride or happiness in your work? (The purpose of this question is to reconnect with positive feelings about their job.)

**Round -** Follow-up Question: Share a story when you felt disappointment and frustration in your work?  (A reminder about the circle guidelines will be said before the talking piece is passed.  The purpose of this question is to have participants feel welcome in naming potential traumagenic events.

# Understanding Our Stories: Facilitating Community Dialogues

**Round -** Guiding Question 4: What gives you hope about this work?  (The purpose of this question is to connect the individual and the other participants to a future that is different from the present experience.)

**Round -** Guiding Question 5: Share a story when a colleague supported you and honored your dignity?  (The purpose of this question is to allow the opportunity to see others as potential connections and sources of strength.)

**Round -** Guiding Question 6:  Share a story when you supported a colleague and honored their dignity?  (The purpose of this question is to live into a reality where participants feel connected to colleagues and to their own dignity.)

**Round -** Closing thoughts about the circle

**Closing Ceremony -** acknowledge the sacred work the participants have done together and provide a way for them to re-enter normal life.

## Activity 1

Create a circle process focusing on community healing.

## References

Brown, A. M. (2021). Holding change the way of emergent strategy facilitation and mediation. AK Press.

Obolensky, N. (2014). Complex adaptive leadership: Embracing paradox and uncertainty. Routledge.

Pranis, K., Stuart, B. & Wdge, M. (2003). Peacemaking circles from crime to community. Living Justice Press.

Stone, D., Patton, B. & Heen, Sh. (2010). Difficult conversations how to discuss what matters most (10th ed.). Penguin Books.

## Additional Resources

Circle Keeping Principles https://mediatorsbeyondborders.org/what-we-do/projects/dpace/-conflict-literacy-framework/circle-process/

Courageous Conversations https://courageousconversation.com/about/

Guide to Facilitating Challenging Conversations https://www.montana.edu/diversity/resources/-facultystaff/facilitatingconvos_guide.html

Pranis, K Circle Keeper's Handbook https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/re-sources/stw-glenview-circles-keeper-handbook.pdf

## Members of my cohort:

Name: _____     Name: _____

Name: _____     Name: _____

Name: _____     Name: _____

Name: _____     Name: _____

Name: _____     Name: _____

Name: _____     Name: _____

Name: _____     Name: _____

Name: _____     Name: _____


Mentor Session 1 _____     Mentor Session 4 _____

Mentor Session 2 _____     Mentor Session 5 _____

Mentor Session 3 _____     Mentor Session 6 _____

**Notes**

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