

**Mahtomedi District Leadership  
Racial Justice Training**

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# Notes



# Opening – Ground In

## **Grounding In: Breathe**

- Feet flat
- Sitting as upright as possible
- Eyes closed or cast your gaze to a neutral site
- Breathe as deeply as you are comfortable and able
- Focus only on the breath as it comes in and out of your nose
- Your mind will wander, do not judge this; simply notice it and then bring your attention back to your breathing.

## **Grounding In: Key Aspects**

- Just as the mind can have an impact on the body (e.g. stress) the body can influence the mind. So, as you calm the body, you can help to calm the mind. And, we need supple minds to do social justice work.
- Focusing on breathing can, even if for just a moment, interrupt the “story” that so often runs in our head. In this way, focusing on the breath helps us open a bit more to seeing things from different points of view.
- The present moment is the only moment where we have any power to act and so it is vital that we “be here” in order to engage in racial justice work.
- We make many more mistakes when we are not present
- It speaks truth to our connection
- And it is a radical act to be embodied in the face of oppression

## **Connection**

- Nervous system’s EM field is about 3 meters from our bodies
- Heart’s EM field is measured at a minimum of 10 meters
- Butterfly effect
- Cosmology and Quantum Physics
- Systems of faith and spiritual philosophies around the world

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# Arc of Racial Development Notes

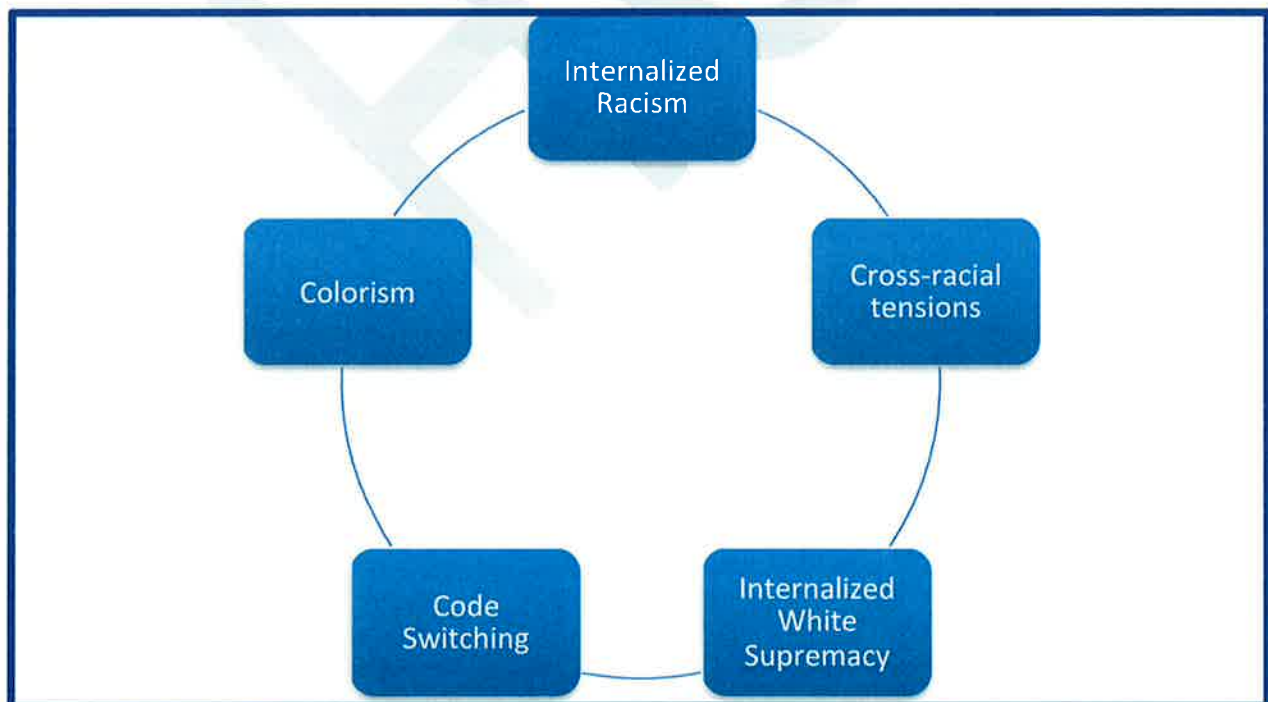


# Our Shared Work

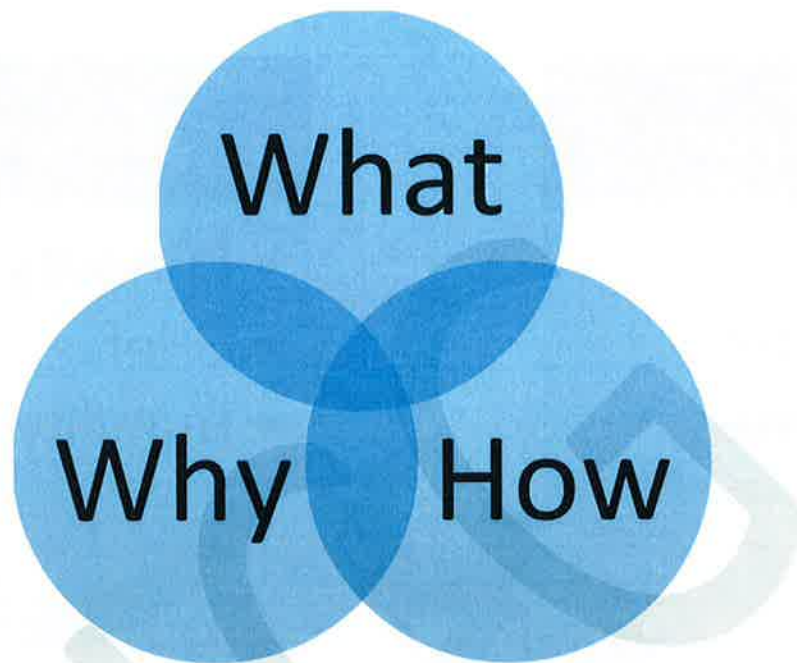
## White Folks



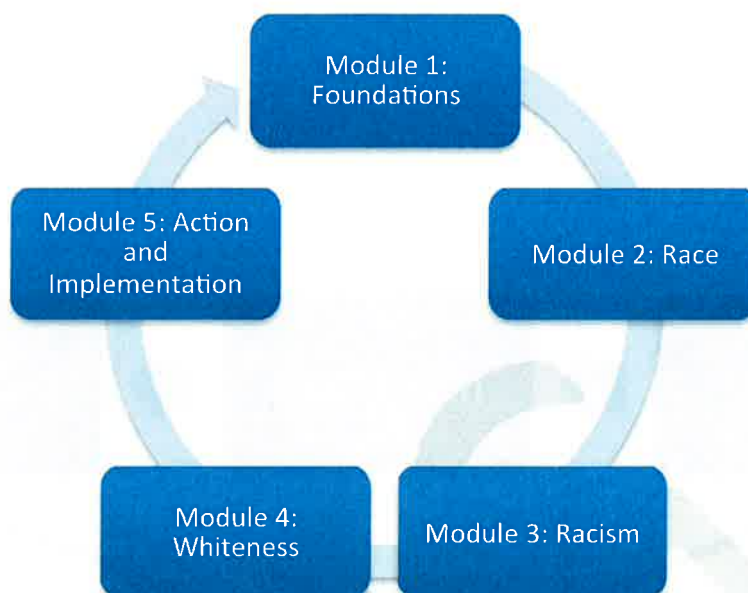
## People of Color / Native Folks



# Big Picture of Racial Equity Work



# E/SJ Conceptual Frame: Content



## **Module 1 – Foundations**

**Setting the Context**

**Critical Thinking**

**Equity v. Equality**

**Diversity – Cultural Competency – Social Justice / Racial Equity**

## **Module 2 – Race**

**Social Construction (R v. C/E)**

**History**

**Five U. S. Racial Narratives**

## **Module 3 – Racism**

**Pressing Down**

**Transactional Racial Oppression (Tube Model)**

**Walkway**

**Structural Racism**

## **Module 4 – Whiteness**

**WN = WP + WS**

**Define WP**

**Define WS**

**Presence In Our Work**

## **Module 5 – Action and Implementation**

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## E/SJ Conceptual Frame: Process





## **Critical Thinking**

The following is a summary of what “critical thinking” actually is (and questions to consider). It is taken from the critical pedagogy literature (Freire, Giroux, McLaren, Shor, Kreisberg, hooks, and the like).

1. CT involves examining issues from **multiple, non-dominant** perspectives and sources of information,  
“Who is not at the table? Whose perspective is not being represented here? How would I think about or understand this issue if I looked at it from ‘this’ perspective?”
2. CT always considers issues of power and privilege from the smallest to the most significant levels of society; thus, power must always be a part of the discussion when thinking critically,  
“Who benefits (or not) from this? Who is overly served / advantaged? Who is not served disadvantaged?”
3. CT involves **rigorous** self-reflection.  
“How do I actually know what I think is true? Or, have I just thought this for so long, that I am mistaking it for fact? What information have I read, what classes have I taken, who do I know from this group or who has first-hand experience with this?”

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# Equity v. Equality

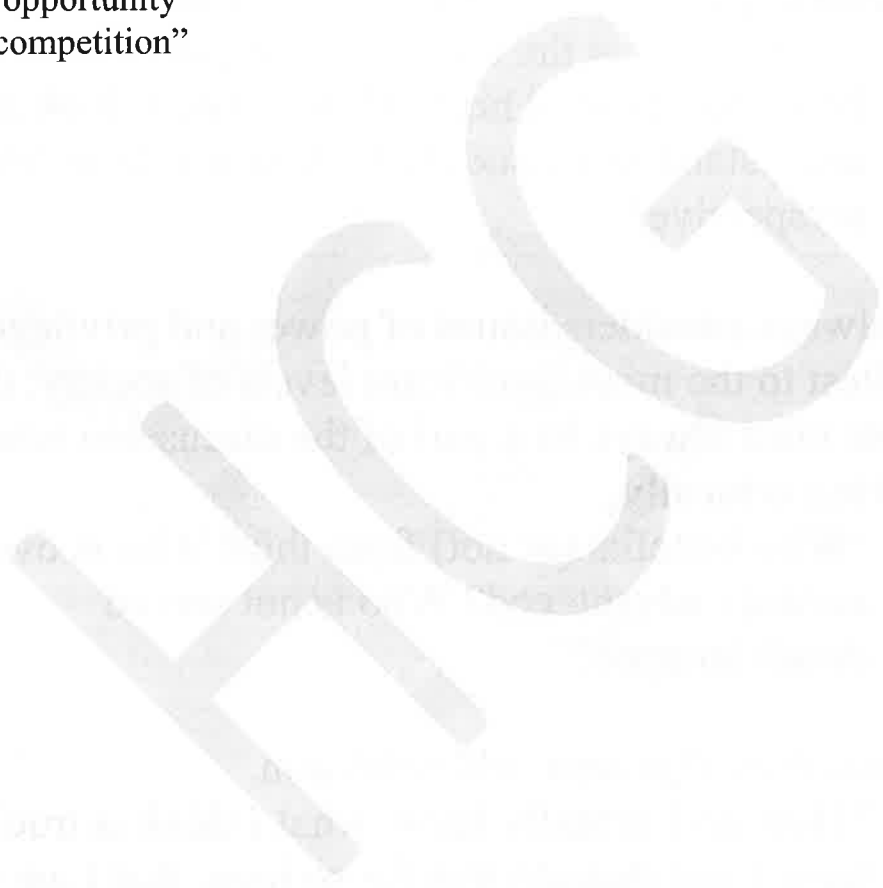
## Equity

- Resources
- Access
- Humane Baseline

## Equality

- Equal opportunity
- Fair “competition”

## Diagram



**Bottom line: Equity precedes equality; equality flows from equity.**

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# Diversity, Cultural Competency and Equity / Social Justice

## Diversity

- **Awareness and appreciation** of difference
- Not about access to resources, power and privilege
- Not about systems
- (Vaguely used)

## Cultural Competency

- **Skill development** for work across cultural lines
- Not about access to resources, power and privilege
- Not about systems

## Social Justice (i.e. Racial Equity)

- Big Picture *and* daily lives
- Examines **systems** and how they impact individuals
- Looks squarely at **access to resources, power and privilege**
- Is hopeful - a steward of our best values

# Your Race

Please take a few minutes to write responses to the following questions:

1. When did you first learn what your racial identity was in the US? Please go as far back as you can and write out your earliest memory of this.
2. How did it happen?
3. How did it impact you (if you can remember)?
4. How did you respond (if you can remember)?

Race

Culture

Ethnicity



## Race

Skin Color  
Physical Features  
Socially Constructed  
Categories

## Culture

Language  
Values  
Beliefs  
Traditions  
Food  
Music  
Clothing  
Holidays  
Religion

## Ethnicity

Ancestry  
(Family) of Origin  
More Geographically  
Located

### Key Points Regarding Race / Culture / Ethnicity

- Race and racial categories in the United States are a social construction created by the dominant group with the intent to determine Dominant and Subordinate categories and thereby control access to resources; they have an assigned meaning.
- Culture and Ethnicity, in contrast, are not imposed by a dominant group and instead arise out of the communities themselves. While they also change over time, they have an intrinsic meaning that gives them substance and purpose in ways that racial categories in the United States do not. (One exception to this is the African American community whose various cultures and ethnicities of origin were forcibly lost as a result of the Atlantic Slave Trade; thus, African American culture has arisen in relation to, and many would say in spite of, the racial categorization and construction of Blackness created by a White dominant society.)
- Racial categories have changed over time and therefore how various communities experience race has changed over time:
  - White immigrant experience (1880-1924, 1925-1960, 1961-present)
  - Various immigrant Communities of Color (e.g. 1930 “Hispanic” versus 1934 and 1980)
  - The example of recent immigrant families (for example University families)
- Race and racial categories in the US are about power, privilege and conferred dominance for Whites and the denial of access to resources for People of Color / Native people.

# Historical Construction of Race and Whiteness

While divisions among people have existed throughout world history, the contemporary U.S. construction of race is a fairly recent invention, taking shape principally in the last 400 years. Burgeoning capitalist expansion by European powers led to the colonization of Africa and the Americas. This colonization began in the late 1400s with Spain and Portugal and was later principally carried out by the Netherlands, England, and France. The scale was massive and the amount of resources expropriated by European colonizers led to a huge demand for labor. Being unsuccessful in enslaving Indigenous Americans, European imperialism seized Africans and in 1619, a Dutch slave ship brought twenty people of African descent to Virginia. The Atlantic Slave Trade had begun in British North America and by the latter portions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was in full swing.

## Race

**Race is a socially constructed classification** of people created and perpetuated by Europeans (British with respect to U.S. racial categories) from the 16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to justify and rationalize their treatment of Native peoples and People of Color. Fundamentally, the construction of race in this period is based on Christian hegemony, rigid class hierarchies, and ultimately, skin color.

**Purpose:** To buttress British colonial power and to support British (European) imperialism and colonization. Specifically, it is meant to justify the denial of resources to / extraction of resources from Native People and People of Color.

## The Invention of the “White Race”

The late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of the “White race” as a deliberately constructed social group for the first time in U.S. (colonies) and in world history. The reason for this was two-fold:

- 1) To codify the political, economic, and cultural “superiority” of Whites,
- 2) To drive a wedge between poor Whites and People of Color / Native peoples (POC/N), thus minimizing their identification with each other and organizing against the power of the White elite.

Racial justice work focuses on the social construction of race, how it serves as the foundation of racism and Whiteness, and the overall impact of race-based narratives in the United States. Historically, these categories have been constructed to maintain systems of power for Whites and justify economic and political subordination of POC/N. By necessity, then, effective racial justice work requires all of us to talk about the construction of race before addressing the systemic nature of racism and the pervasiveness of White privilege and White supremacy.

# Identifying the Five U.S. Racial Narratives





# The Story of My People



# Color Blindness v. Racial Consciousness

## Color Blindness:

- What is it and why do White folks want it so badly?
- What does it do to People of Color / Native People?
- What does it do for White people?
- In reality, we have the *idea* of CB but not at all the *practice*.

## Racial Consciousness:

- Acknowledges the social construction of race and why it was created AND,
- Acknowledges that while these categories are made up, they have very real consequences in our society (racism) AND,
- Acknowledges the “cultural” realities born out of the shared experience of centuries of fighting against racism.

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## **His Holiness The Dalai Lama**

### ***Ethics for a New Millennium***

Compassion is what makes our lives meaningful. It is the source of lasting happiness and joy and it is the foundation of a good heart, the heart of one who acts out of a desire to help others. Through kindness, through affection, through honesty, through truth and justice toward all others, we insure our own benefit. This is not a matter of complicated theorizing, it is a matter on common sense. There's no denying that consideration of others is worthwhile. There's no denying that our happiness is inextricably bound up with the happiness of others. There's no denying that as societies suffer, we ourselves suffer. There's no denying that the more our hearts and minds are afflicted with ill will the more miserable we become. Thus, we can reject everything else – religion, ideology, all received wisdom, but we cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion.

