

AWAKENING TO WHITENESS: Using the Dharma to Dismantle Oppression

WHY?

This series is about understanding what it means to be white in this country. It was designed to shed light on whiteness, the experience and privilege of being white, and to provide a space where we can support one other in the process of coming to that understanding. It is a place for us to examine our delusions, and our karmic inheritance, and to engage in right view, right action, to reach out to service unflinchingly when appropriate. If you cannot commit to attending at least 5 of the sessions, we ask that you wait until the next time these series is offered.

WHAT IS IT?

An adaptation of the curricula created by

- WHITE AWAKE: DC - Tara Brach Sangha + Joanna Macy's work
- Waking Up to Whiteness: Dharma and Racism Study Curriculum
 - Spirit Rock Community Dharma Leader 5 participants to Sanghas everywhere.
 - Originally developed for CDL5 in 2015/2016. This version adapted July, 2016.
- Generously shared with us by Heart of Wisdom Zen Temple, which also updates the materials annually.

MONTHLY THEMES

October 13: Personal Experience with Race: Explores the idea of race from both a scientific and culture point of view.

November 10. Historical Racism: Deep dive into the history of racism in America

January 12: Historical / Institutional / Systemic Racism: Explores ways that racism and white privilege permeate our systems and institutions

February 9: Awakening to Whiteness: Looks in more depth at white privilege and white fragility

March 8: Applying Our Spiritual Practice: Why this kind of work is important and intersects with spiritual work. Definitely has a Buddhist flavour.

April 12: GOING FORTH: Now what? Explore what you can do with what you have learned.

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE

SESSIONS TAKE PLACE ONCE A MONTH (No meeting in December)

- 2-Hour meetings (please be on time)
- You're committing to attendance and completion. (Life happens, can *maybe* miss one)
- There will be a body of reading and other assignments for each month. Articles and videos will be sent out a few days after each session to give ample time to read before the following session.
- Guidelines and agreements provide a container for difficult work
- Contemplative practice in group
- Recommend you start a Notebook dedicated to this work, you may want to bring it with you when we meet.

GROUP STRUCTURE (4-6 people per group)

While this series was designed primarily as a space for white people to do the work *they/we* need to do, people of color are welcome to join. In that case, participants will have the option to choose between being in an a) all-white break-out group, or b) a mixed group/or all POC group.

Facilitation is SHARED. Each week a different group member will guide the group through the proposed agenda. The facilitator is *not expected to have any special knowledge* about the topic, and engages in the process as a participant. The facilitator's role incorporates three jobs: a) ensure that all have equal opportunity to express themselves, which is done by dividing the group time evenly among among all members; b) keep time and keep the group moving through the agenda; and c) ensure that a date and facilitator is set for the next meeting

SHARED AGREEMENTS

- Create a nonjudgmental space.
- Respect time limitations.
- Understand that this is not a discussion group, but a space where we can share from personal experience and we listen without fixing, helping, advice-giving, teaching. Balance internal and external focus with sharing and active listening
- Acknowledge that “we are all learning”.
- Acknowledge that “our experience is complex” without denying the reality of racism or its effects on our lives

It is vital that we create group norms that will prioritize mindfulness and be effective, so that transformation can occur. Judgment, shame, and blame do not set the stage for change. You'll have a chance to look over our shared agreements with your group in the first session, and decide if you need or want to adapt them.

An agenda will be provided for your group with your homework each month. The agenda will outline what to do and the time that should be taken for each.