For a course like mine, given for OLLI, "Let's talk about <u>So You Want To Talk About Race</u>" transitioning from an intimate group discussion about a difficult subject was a bit of a bumpy ride. I had used Zoom before for board meetings with very few problems, but being the primary leader complicated things considerably. First of all, there are a lot of technical issues overlaid by various administrative hiccups. The university has one account, but OLLI had a separate log in process requiring a different account. There were several emails with links to each of the separate courses in which one either was enrolled or taught. Each had different passwords for meetings ID, creating a dizzying array of passwords that could not be saved. Some days, one had to logout of Zoom and then log back from a different account. One day, I spent 30 minutes trying to log into my own course to teach, finally just being sent a link by the tech assistant in the course. The simplest process has been for the EUEC colloquia.

Beyond the login process, there are the inevitable vagaries of internet/phone connections that may be local to each participant's home. Internet speed is often not consistent over time, but varies with other users and provider. People may have intermittent audio feeds or lose connection altogether and get kicked off. There are video freezes. This is simply the state of the technology. And yet, they serve as distractions from the discussion which can interfere with fluidity and ultimately a sense of group trust so important for honesty in hard discussions.

A considerable amount of time is spent in asking people to either mute (as when someone else in their room answers their phone and continues to talk) or unmute. People seem to lose their common sense about conversation and courtesy toward speakers. They are reluctant to use the chat feature rather than blurt out side discussions. Older people, many not confident about negotiating simple tech features, have not explored the app and even when told, don't. This makes it difficult to establish class rules, like the raise your hand indicator for instance. The instructor is forced to waste valuable time in Zoom instruction, almost no matter how much organizational effort has been invested in instruction before classes start. This simply bores more knowledgeable participants. Inevitably, instructions have to be repeated for multiple classes.

In person classes posed a problem when some speakers just blurted out comments rather than waiting their turn but Zoom makes controlling that even more difficult, more so I think with a small class. It is a difficult dance to allow everyone to speak, especially when some are reluctant. Ultimately I guess, an unrecognized speaker can be muted in midstream, which introduces the specter of etiquette discussions and/or resentment. More time spent away from the subject matter.

There is something about face to face communication that can invoke trust which is missing in Zoom classes. In part, it involves the loss of touch that can provide reassurance for these fearful of offending or anticipating a reproach. It may be possible to build up the kind of rapport that one has with associates or acquaintances over time on Zoom, but the time needed is longer than 6 sessions.

My hope is that familiarity with the platform can eliminate problems that arise from lack of knowledge and create a bridge for exploring the more complex questions of instruction on Zoom for adult learners. I think there is great potential for the medium. On the other hand, an important component of senior adult education is socializing and the opportunity to get out of the house to mix and mingle, especially for those living alone. I fear that without that, it will be difficult to maintain OLLI financially.