

Exploring Our Racial Conditioning

Insight Meditation of the Mid-Columbia (IMMC) is currently organizing an eight-month program for members of the meditation group (sangha) interested in beginning or continuing anti-racism work in a meditative framework. The program will follow an updated (2020) version of a curriculum developed by practitioners from the 2016 Community Dharma Leaders (CDL) 5 training program at Spirit Rock, an Insight Meditation center in Northern California. It was updated by members of the White Heron Sangha and includes easily accessed resource links. You can find the curriculum and course information here: <https://bmor.us/>. Seattle Insight Meditation Society is also using this curriculum in their current program, called Undoing Racism.

The program facilitates exploration of our racial identities and helps us uncover and understand our own racism with the aim of learning and transforming our minds and hearts. One of our goals for offering the program within our sangha is to help the IMMC become a more welcoming, safe, and diverse community. Before the program starts, Chris Murray will give an initial talk on his experience participating in the Mindful of Race program run by Ruth King last year, and why he thinks the process of examining our racial conditioning within a framework of mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion is beneficial and life-changing, even though it can be very uncomfortable at times. This talk is tentatively planned for the Thursday night meeting on February 10, after the 7:30 pm meditation.

The curriculum we're using is primarily geared towards white people, as the original developers were white practitioners seeking to understand and heal their racial conditioning and grow their meditation communities so that they were more open and inviting. However, people of color are warmly invited to participate in the program we're starting. A couple of people have looked at the curriculum and concluded that there are many good resources, questions, and contemplations in the curriculum that should help people of any racial identity explore their racial conditioning.

The curriculum is not offered as a class, but as a self-guided exploration by small peer groups of 3-5 people using the curriculum as a basis. We're suggesting that the groups meet monthly for eight months. We're also suggesting that the peer groups in this program be racial affinity groups, with people identifying as white meeting together, and people of color meeting together. We will suggest some changes to the suggested format of the meetings.

Peer groups can decide for themselves whether to meet in person or online, and when/how to meet. We plan to start the program in late February. It would be nice for groups to start around the same time, finish around the same time and have an end of program debriefing, and if it seems helpful, have a mid-point large group meeting to check in.

These groups will be self-guided and there is no cost or donation to join the program. If you're interested in participating, please email Vas Bhardwaj (vasbhardwaj@gmail.com). Please let us know if you have a group of friends you want to participate with (3-5 people total). Also, if you identify as non-white. We'll then help those interested in the program to form into groups and provide some other information to supplement the curriculum. You can contact Chris Murray with any questions about the program (Insightmeditation.midcol@gmail.com).