

Unpacking Whiteness: A First Step Toward Anti-Racism

Unpacking Whiteness* is an immersive learning experience designed to enable participants to understand and explore their white privilege in a non-judgmental environment. Participants delve deeply into the origins of systemic racism and resultant impacts. This program is designed for participants who identify as white.

Background:

The workshop was originally developed in 2015 by members of a Universalist/Unitarian church in Massachusetts. The group designed the ground rules and agreements that make the workshop effective. One of the members of the original group brought the workshop to Tufts University where it has run for a few years. In 2020, The Boston chapter of The Transition Network engaged a facilitator from Tufts and piloted this program. The Boston chapter then conducted a train-the-trainer program for potential facilitators to roll out this program nationally. In 2021, dozens of programs are expected to be delivered nationally for The Transition Network.

The Program Design - An Immersive Learning Experience:

The program is designed to be delivered once a week for two hours for seven consecutive weeks. Two facilitators deliver the program to cohorts of six-eight individuals. Each week participants explore a different topic. Between sessions, participants are given content (written materials, podcasts, TED talks, etc.) to explore for two-three hours. At each session, participants share reactions and stories and then listen non-judgmentally to others' stories. Each of the seven sessions focuses on a different aspect of whiteness and its impact on African Americans. The focus is on reading and listening, doing self-reflection and then processing the learning as a group. The focus of the experience is to listen to participants' stories and thoughts in a structured format. It is NOT a discussion group or circle; it is about listening and learning together.

****Unpacking Whiteness is the new name for the program that was initially called Understanding Whiteness.***

Unpacking Whiteness: Seven-week Outline	
Listening	Introductions and the importance of listening respectfully to one another's stories.
White Privilege	What "white privilege" really looks and feels like.
Systemic Racism	The history of systemic racism in the United States.
Micro-aggressions	Understanding the harm caused by micro-aggressions and how to stop them.
Language and Stereotypes	Language and stereotypes that create barriers to understanding and productive action.
Allyship and Introduction to Reparations	How to be an ally in the fight against racism.
Reparations	Current thinking about reparations and options.

Testimonials:

"Understanding Our Whiteness has not only changed the way I see racial injustice, but also how I see my place in it. I'm learning how to be comfortable with the uncomfortable."

Dawna, Boston member

"The very welcome opportunity to participate in TTN's Understanding Our Whiteness initiative has been an exceptionally profound experience. The content is powerful, the nature of the group format excellent and facilitators superb. I am new to TTN and enormously grateful to have access to such compelling discourse on a critical topic."

Jodi, National member

"I thought I knew a lot about racism before I did this program, but I learned so much more that I didn't know. We are all used to discussion, but this is listening, not discussion. It is so different and a great chance to practice the important skills for listening. This makes the program unique. Finally, it was wonderful to meet other TTN members from across the country while taking the program; it enhanced the experience because we are from different places."

Nancy, Philadelphia member

