

Calling In White People Affinity Group - Primer

Notes based on small discussion from our second meeting

September 8th 2022

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Recognizing that our Black, Indigenous and People Of Color colleagues have long been carrying the load of Anti-Oppression work, we want to hold this as a space that supports white-identified staff of TNC member agencies to dig deeper, and to take on their share. We are holding this as a space open to all to provide transparency but we recognize that some of our BIPOC colleagues may not want to bear the burden of witnessing this work in action, while some might wish to be a part of this effort, and they are welcome.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

- we are seeing this TNC "calling white people in" space as one where our BIPOC colleagues are welcome, and they can vote with their feet in terms of whether they wish to be present to support this agenda of assisting white folks to really step up, investigate and practice the dismantling of white supremacy .

- this is a new, exploratory space for these aims, we don't know how this will all unfold, but will try to create what is needed/desired as we go. We would try this over the next 3 sessions and see where to go from there.

- this space won't be able to do everything that may be needed for our personal growth/development: that a range of practice and learning spaces is probably needed for each of us (e.g. triad groups, BIPOC affinity group, white-caucused groups, inside/outside our workplaces, etc.). For the moment, we could hold this TNC space as one where we explore some practices/learning together to deepen our capacity to support white staff/people to be "called in" to take on greater anti-oppression roles and commitments.

- if people want support to form associated white-caucused discussions/practice spaces, we/TNC can support that too - but they would happen alongside this open "calling white people in" space. As this evolves, the larger group could also become a space to share our insights learned from these other spaces.

LEADING WITH JOY

- We hope to lead with joy and inspiration, modelling encouragement and mutual support that does not downplay or wish-away our capacities to sustain harmful patterns of white supremacy, but that helps us maintain energy and passion to sustain this challenging work; to focus on opportunities to change these dynamics, within ourselves and with each other, in our personal and work contexts. Pleasure Activism!

Meeting Times

· Once a month, (first Thursday each month from 4-5/530pm)

We are proposing we start with scheduling 3 more sessions until the end of December 2022 and reviewing the time and practice to begin again in January.

Meeting Content, Facilitation & Structure
(suggested for next three sessions, then we will reassess)

We would ideally like each session to include 3 things:

a) **Prompt:** some sharing of a video, text, concept, etc. or optional short book section/reading that we can view/read ahead of time and then share what excites us about it, informed by one/a couple of questions that the facilitators can proposed - but really pretty open sharing and reflection, nothing too structured

b) **Practice:** some hands-on practice or activity that we can do together to gain some practical "feel" for the ideas being explored,

c) **Reflection:** and reflect on that experience together (e.g. exercises we can do on our own before the session and share our experience of them, or activities we can do together in the session). Even if someone has not completed a reading/viewing or preliminary activity that doesn't need to be a barrier to showing up (and may even be useful to explore as resistance).

- We want to encourage hosting/facilitation among group members, as opportunities to practice and bring in what's feeling important to explore for each of us. Please let us know if you would be interested in leading or co-leading one of the sessions, maybe with some particular book passage, video, or exercise/practice you are excited about sharing.

- With a one hour session, focusing on one dimension, theme or question may be more than enough of a prompt to engage with as a group. These are really jumping off points for us to share together and see what emerges for us. The aim is to focus on our experience and learnings from the prompts

We will support and work with each other to:

a) **Stretch:** strengthen our capacities to show up as active and effective participants and allies in efforts to advance racial justice and other dimensions of anti-oppression work (e.g. abolitionism, decolonization, challenging patriarchy and harmful dynamics of status and power-over (versus solidarity and power-with)

b) **Support:** reflect and practice with each other in real time; sharing and engaging in practices together that help us identify and un-learn white supremacist interactions and experience/engage in alternative patterns. Helping each other notice and explore tough dynamics that need to be tackled

c) **Inspire:** share what inspires us, and create inspiration together in ways that helps us stay with the hard work

d) **Resource:** share insights and strategies that are helping us to engage more white-identified staff in our organizations and communities to actively advance anti-oppression work