

Unpacking Sexism and White Privilege in Pursuit of Racial Justice: A Workshop for White Women



Frequently Asked Questions

In what ways have People of Color been involved in shaping your work? Who are you accountable to?

This workshop's foundation comes from our connection with People of Color activists, scholars, and friends. We were first inspired by the People's Institute Northwest in the 1990s to organize other white people and collectively examine our collusion with white supremacy culture. Angela Davis's *Women, Race and Class* was instrumental in our initial thinking about how white women have chosen race over gender, and not both, in women's movements throughout US history. Other People of Color, writers, and activists that have influenced our thinking include (but are not limited to) James Baldwin, Dr. Derald Wing Sue, Dr. Leticia Nieto, Alicia Garza, Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, Dr. Joy DeGruy, Malcolm X, Melissa V. Harris-Perry, Ibram X. Kendi, Dr. Claude Steele, Antonia Darder, Ronald Takaki, Isabell Wilkerson, Glenn Singleton, Shakti Butler, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Edwardo Bonilla Silva, Joanna Kadi, Ijeoma Oluo, Michelle Alexander, Paolo Freire and Gary Y. Okihiro, Gloria Ladson Billings, and Janice Hale.

We practice relational accountability, where we have on-going reflective conversations about sexism, white privilege, and our workshops with our co-conspirators at Cultures Connecting and other People of Color who we frequently partner with to cofacilitate.

We also honor our white sisters Anne Braden, Suzanne Pharr, Mab Segrest, Margo Adair, Francie Kendall, and Peggy McIntosh in whose footsteps we follow, as well as the many white women who graciously added their voices to the stories in our book.

Wouldn't it be better if this workshop were facilitated by Women of Color? Why are white women getting paid to facilitate?

This workshop was created after People of Color asked us to take a closer look at our behaviors and assumptions as white women and do the work to learn with and educate other white women. We know from experience the value of white caucus spaces in doing deep work together to grow our anti-racist analysis and practices. Although our work is rooted in scholarship and relationship with People of Color, we don't believe they should be solely or primarily responsible for educating white people.

We regularly question the value of white people being paid to facilitate racial justice workshops with the goal of holding ourselves responsible for both our intent and impact. If we offer all of our workshops for free, it could result in undercutting the value of similar workshops offered by People of Color. We also know that white people work every day in occupations that uphold white supremacy culture and believe occupations that challenge white supremacy culture directly should also be paid.

Part of our accountability is partnering with organizers, trainers, and facilitators of color as well as donating time and money to support People of Color led organizations. Proceeds from our book are donated to [Tsuru for Solidarity](#) and [The Unspoken Truths](#).

Who is allowed to participate in this workshop?

We are two cisgender white women who offer a model that examines the harmful impact of patriarchy within a society that promotes a false gender binary. Any white women, including trans and gender non-conforming people, who want to look at the ways we've internalized or navigated sexism are welcome to attend. Multiracial women who present as or are perceived as white and want to interrogate internalized white superiority are also welcome.

I'm a Person of Color. Am I invited to attend this workshop?

This workshop is essentially a white anti-racist caucus space, as we recognize the potential harm we may cause People of Color as we learn and grow together. It is our experience when People of Color attend that white women become more inhibited and/or more performative instead of honest and vulnerable. We create an environment where white women can learn together about the ways we collude with white supremacy so that we can be more effective in multiracial spaces.

We know that the history of white people meeting exclusively has not ended well for People of Color, so we are happy to share our agendas and handouts to make sure you know what we are covering in our sessions. We also welcome questions and conversations about our content and goals.

Is your model based on Dr. Kimberle' Crenshaw's work on intersectionality?

We've read and appreciate Dr. Crenshaw's insight on the fact that the intersection of two or more marginalized identities leads to an amplified experience with oppression that is not captured by examining one or the other. We are also clear that our model and workshop is not an example of intersectionality, as we are looking at one privileged (white) and one marginalized (women) identity.

What about capitalizing or not capitalizing white in your documents?

While we agree on many things, this is one topic on which we hold different perspectives and talk about regularly. We both agree that Black should be capitalized, because as Lori L. Tharps observes, "Black with a capital B refers to people of the African diaspora. Lowercase black is simply a color." However, we are less in alignment when it comes to white.

One perspective focuses on the idea that, right or wrong, both Black and White are words that describe racial categories, so both should be capitalized. In addition, it is important to stress the

capital W in “White” to name it as a concrete racial category whose privileges are embedded by its very definition. By capitalizing White, those privileges become visible and therefore doesn’t allow White people to identify as the “norm,” while PoC are marked as “other.”

(Eve L. Ewing in article written by Nell Irvin Painter:
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/07/22/why-white-should-be-capitalized/>)

A different perspective is that by capitalizing both Black and white, it insinuates a similarity and equality in the power and meaning of both words, which does not exist. White people have not faced oppression because of our skin color. While it is true that white people’s skin color plays into systemic inequalities and injustices, capitalizing the term white, as is done by white supremacists, risks subtly conveying legitimacy to such beliefs. Capitalizing white can be seen as an aggression towards People of Color, and in particular to Black people. It infers that the survival and pride associated with Black is the same as the racist supremacy and violence of white.

(<https://apnews.com/article/archive-race-and-ethnicity-9105661462>)

We have decided at this point to not capitalize white, and we will continue to learn and grow, being intentional about how we use language to address complex issues of racism in ever adaptive ways.

How do I bring this workshop to my campus/workplace/faith community/organization?

We would love to work with your organization! Please reach out to ilsa.govan@culturesconnecting.com and/or TilmanSmithConsulting@gmail.com to talk about details.