

# REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE UNITED STATES: FACILITATOR GUIDE

## **PREPARING FOR THE SESSION**

Make copies of the paper titled "Reflections on the History of White Supremacy in the United States." Pass out these copies before the session for participants to read in advance of this session. Reading time should be between one hour and an hour and a half.

Participants can also read copies of the paper on line at [www.uua.org/araomc/143205.shtml](http://www.uua.org/araomc/143205.shtml)

Make copies of the discussion questions on "Reflections on the History of White Supremacy in the United States." Pass these questions out to the participants as well. Explain that these questions will be the focus for small group discussion at the next meeting. These questions are found at the bottom of this document.

Before the meeting write instructions for the group discussion on newsprint.

## **OPENING WORSHIP**

Begin each session with a brief opening worship which might include a chalice lighting, reading, or song.

## **REVIEW OF THE GUIDELINES FOR BEING TOGETHER**

Please see the facilitator guide for the Examining Whiteness curriculum for some suggested guidelines.

## **REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

If there is a another meeting before you do this session you might want to review the key learning's and what further insights participants may have had during the week.

## **GOALS FOR THIS SESSION**

When it comes to addressing issues of race today, history is critical because our current race relations are deeply embedded in our history. Coming to terms with our history is essential if we are to move toward becoming a more racially just society.

Any attempt by those of us who are white to deal with issues of white identity must be grounded in an understanding of how white identity came to be shaped over the past four hundred years. This is the reason that we read the paper "Reflections on the History of White Supremacy" in preparation for this meeting.

The paper first discusses the use of the term white superiority. It then explores the understanding of race that whites brought from Europe when colonization first began. It describes the understandings of whiteness that were shaped during the time of colonization. It touches on a number of important historical events that shaped the development of white supremacy. It notes briefly the role of science, law, and religion in supporting white supremacy. Finally the paper draws some conclusions regarding white identity from a historical perspective.

## **FORMAT**

After the introductory remarks break the participants into small groups. At that time participants will have an opportunity to talk about the questions that were passed out. I suggest that you take one hour for the participants to work in small groups. Then come back into the large group. For the next half hour, have each group report back on two important learning's they had from their discussion.

## **SUMMARY OF WHAT'S BEEN LEARNED**

Summarize the key points made during the review of the video and the sharing during the personalizing exercise.

## **DESCRIBE THE NEXT SESSION**

Share with participants the format and goals for the next meeting. Pass out any handouts they will need to read in preparation.

## **CLOSING RITUAL**

It is helpful to close with a brief ritual. It might be as simple as going around the circle and having people share one word about how they feel.

Maybe there is a song, prayer, or benediction members of a congregation use on a regular basis.

You may also want to invited participants in the program to sign up to lead a closing.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON THE PAPER "REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE UNITED STATES"**

1. Reflect on the relationships between white working class people and people of color. How have white workers been abused and manipulated by the racist system? And how have white workers willingly participated in the oppression of people of color and benefited from this oppression?
2. How did the movement toward democracy in America actually lead to the oppression of people of color?
3. Identify the time when your ancestors came to the United States? What was happening at that time? How was whiteness shaped at that time? How did this impact on your ancestors and the members of your family? What affect does this family history of whiteness have on you today?
4. What are the forms of white identity in the earliest days of the country (the 1600s)? How has white identity changed and evolved since that time? What forms can we imagine whiteness will take in the twenty first century?
5. Yes whiteness confers power, privilege, and benefits. But what are the emotional and spiritual costs of white supremacy for white people?
6. What about the definitions of whiteness offered on pages two and three of the paper? Do they work f or you? Is there anything you would add?
7. As you were growing up what did you learn about the first encounters between Native Americas and the Pilgrims/Puritans? How accurate were they?
8. What do you think are the biggest impacts of the history of white supremacy on the current realities of racism we are struggling with today?