

## ASDIC Curriculum

### Value of the ASDIC Study and Dialogue:

Participants experience –

- Depth of analysis at socio-historical and personal levels
- Interactive dialogue and reflection in an environment that is nonjudgmental, safe for risk-taking, supportive
- Being commissioned as informed, empowered, and responsible
- Understanding and empathizing with the mourning and grieving associated with this legacy
- Formation of an effective, long-lasting antiracist community oriented toward personal and social transformation.

### Themes – We attend to:

- Reflection on who we have come to be and what we need from ourselves and from the “other” in the face of the real and imagined differences that divide us
- Learning the language and finding the voice to break the silence regarding US racial history and white racism
- Historical and contemporary racist discourse, ideology, practices, and social arrangements and the transformative, resistance practices contributing to a just, democratic society
- Socialization into the white racial frame (worldview, beliefs, images, values, assumptions supportive of white, elite domination) – exploring our formation as “raced” persons within the system of U.S. racism
- Emotional, spiritual, psychological dispositions and practices to productively and healthily confront our historical racist legacy and implicit biases, practices of exclusion, indifference, abandonment, and patterns of disconnection
- Restoration of our humanity through the telling and reinterpreting of the “origin” stories underlying and justifying our contemporary social arrangements and racial hierarchy
- Resources and relationships to motivate and empower us toward personal and social transformation

### Guiding Assumptions:

We humans exist as interdependent peoples. No wound is *other*-inflicted that is not also *self*-inflicted. Racism is an infectious wound – a wound with material and relational consequences. Yet, it is a “thing” apart from us – imposed on us, possessing us; – a thing created and sustained by us and by others through omission and co-mission, through conscious and unconscious behavior and unaware complicity. It is also a system of ideas and worldview – an ideology. Its consequences need to be addressed through confronting it as a legacy still active in personal and institutional behavior, informing our interpersonal and corporate relations. We need to learn of its origins and the ways it continues to function as a central organizing principle in all of our social relations and institutional arrangements. We need to learn how we may organize our social realities differently, so that we may live differently.

### Practice:

In this Circle, we engage in collective practice. We share lessons learned about the transformative power of dialogues – reflection, study, storytelling, and practice – to understand, own, and be accountable for our shared legacy. We identify ways to build responsible, just relationships and social patterns. We create a sense of empowerment, so that we may be compassionate, capacity building agents of social change in our own settings. Our interactive, experiential curriculum draws upon narrative, communication, and cultural theory in support of conversations on race. We engage each other in supportive interactions to provide therapeutic and transformative experience. This course of study brings people into dialogue to talk about the “founding evil” of our society—how it has shaped us and shaped all of our social institutions, making authentic neighbor-relationships impossible.

**Pedagogical Assumptions:** Transformation results from:

- The experience of being heard and understood even as one's views change.
- Storytelling with reframing, redefining and new meanings, and with alternative futures becoming possible through the hearing of multiple stories from within the room.
- Dialogue as searching – the practice of truth-telling; of living with questions and of searching for what we do not know; of experiencing, exploring, deconstructing and reconstructing cultural symbols through storytelling and social analysis.
- Mutual influence, support, feedback, encouragement.
- Revealing one's self—leading to the revealing of truths/understandings within the others engaged in the dialogue.
- The lived experience of creating a new social reality, beginning with being held in a circle of compassion, reflection, reevaluation, visioning of what can be, and commitment to action.

\*(Adapted: M. E. Mullins, in Park and Nelson, eds. 2001:19)

**Intervention Principle and Theory of Change:**

The sessions involve intensive, reflective, and dialogic cognitive and emotional engagement with that which comprises our racial legacy – a “foundational” legacy manifested in acts, decisions, laws, social norms and practices and ongoing meanings, consequences, and reproductions. Most significant to this legacy is “the white racial frame.” We engage this legacy through a “praxis” process: a cycle of study, reflection, theory formation, acting upon new understandings, and reflection and assessment of the outcomes of our action. This process allows for the possibility of change.

We, as a study-dialogue circle, are a community joined with others who share our goals and aspirations to engage in extensive antiracism training. As a community dedicated to mending the *brokenness* of racism, our purpose is to foster wholeness, spin webs of relationship, and untangle knots of oppression. We do this by crossing racial and cultural boundaries to explore the very thing that divides us – the structures of racial domination that create our differing life experiences and that deeply shape us individually and collectively.

These structures are not only social norms and institutional practices. They are internalized structures of heart and mind as well – affecting our emotions, feelings, images, assumptions, predispositions, and worldview (Feagin 2013). They are products of a particular history that continues to impact us. The process of coming into wholeness requires us to unveil these structures – to see how they are affecting the ways we perceive and relate to each other, how they inform self-understanding, and fabricate the social arrangements that structure our daily lives. The discursive understanding of these internal and external structures readies ASDIC members to engage their organization and the wider community.

Our instructional purpose is to “resource” one another with knowledge, tools, skills, and action plans to change the future. With such resources, we move outward into our organizations and the community to dismantle the institutional and systemic racism embedded in our individual contexts, equipped with new language, new networks of support, new abilities to build inter-racial relationships. We develop internal capacity to advance diversity, seek racial equity, and enhance antiracism programming in our own organizational settings based on what we have learned and experienced in this Circle.

But capacity building alone is not enough. As individuals and in groupings, we develop an Action Plan involving identification of: (1) collaborators or a community of support – those others, with whose support we plan and initiate action, (2) the issues to be addressed, (3) the steps required to implement and then to achieve the action goals, and (4) the indicators of success. Change requires action at personal, interpersonal, social, and institutional levels.

**Method of Instruction:**

Interactive, dialogical, small group, and “circle” methodology.

- Opening Reflection – short reflective reading and response
- Review of the objective/topic of the session
- Overview of the session and announcements
- Review of guidelines for sharing (first two sessions – thereafter, periodically)
- Dialogical explorations arising from the readings assigned (small groups/large group)
- Break
- Viewing and discussion of a video (small groups/large group)
- Self-Initiated dialogue: “Related to today’s readings, the race/racism issue I wish to talk about is ....”
- Small or large group experiential exercise (occasional)
- Debriefing and discussion of experiential exercise
- Identification of readings for following session
- Appreciative inquiry evaluative response to session

**Objectives—Intended Outcomes:**

Demonstrated in dialogue, **participants will:**

1. articulate an ethical (social justice) and humanist framing for antiracism reflection and engagement.
2. acquire and demonstrate critical thinking, analytical, and interrogational skills and use these in reading, writing, dialogue, reflection exercises, and self-exploration.
3. actively explore the meaning, construction, and social uses of racialized identity.
4. explain the notions of racial framing and the ideology of whiteness as an organizing principle underlying US culture and structural arrangements.
5. examine the roots of structural domination and social oppression that confer or restrict power, influence, and privilege.
6. recognize how the legacy of racism and contemporary structures of domination shape interpersonal and inter-group relationship.
7. build dispositions to become aware of and acknowledge racism and to recognize taken-for-granted racial privileges, senses of entitlement, and practices embodying the *white racial frame*
8. develop empathy and the capacity to listen and to hold a “double consciousness” in cross/racial interactions.
9. identify the mindset and behaviors needed to cross barriers of difference to form friendships, coalitions, and networks to take action for identifying friendships, coalitions, client relations and networks that would be of service in the work of dismantling racism.

**Reading Assignments—Texts and ASDIC Manual:**

The readings and exercises are central to the Circle dialogues. They inform the dialogues, providing context, substance, and a common language. The text readings are listed in the outline below but various other exercises, notes, and required short readings are found in the ASDIC Manual.

**Text and Manual of Readings:**

Feagin, Joe R. 2020. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter Framing*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge.

Okogyeamon, Otto, Hammersmith, McNamara. *ASDIC Manual for Recognizing and Addressing the Dominant Racial Frame, UCC Southwest Conference..*