

Unmasking Whiteness: An AWARE-LA Summer Institute

July 23-26th, 2015 - Los Angeles

Who should come to this institute?

All self-identifying white people interested in contributing positively to race relations in the U.S. - This experience is essential for educators, students, school administrators, social workers, community organizers, social justice activists, and all those invested in building equitable multiracial communities.

How will participants benefit?

Increased knowledge and skills to: recognize racism in interpersonal interactions and institutions, engage in constructive dialogue about race, build an anti-racist community, and build confidence to disrupt racism in action.

What does this institute involve?

This four-day experiential workshop series invites participants to explore seven topic areas around race:

The Meanings of Whiteness

Many people struggle to grasp what it means to be white in today's society. How do we create a positive, anti-racist white identity? An important issue is figuring out how we relate to white culture and support the movement toward a culture dedicated to social justice.

Historical Assimilation into Whiteness

Becoming "white" didn't happen the same way for all European groups. How did the experiences differ? What impact does this have on different groups? Understanding how our assimilation history affects how we view race can help us when in conversations in diverse groups.

Institutional Racism

Racism is not just about individuals' ideas and actions. Institutional racism is a systematic way of organizing the world that privileges one group at the expense of others. How do we participate in the maintenance of this system unknowingly? What can we do about it once we become aware?

White Privilege

U.S. society does not usually ask white people to explore how race affects our lives. When we honestly grapple with this question we become able to recognize the various ways we receive social and economic benefits based on being seen as part of the white group.

The Many Aspects of Ourselves

We are more than just our race, our class, our gender, our sexual orientation, etc. We are an interrelated mix of our multiple social identities and each can affect how we contribute to social justice efforts. An essential step is attending to the areas where we feel oppressed and staying responsible for areas where we experience privilege.

Guilt and Shame

Two common emotions that arise when we learn about our history of racism and privilege are guilt and shame. These emotions often lead to paralysis and an inability to effectively participate in movements for change. Working through negative emotions is essential to building a solid anti-racist practice.

Building an Anti-Racist Practice

A key to creating a viable and sustainable anti-racist practice is forming a community that is similarly striving. Within a community we can develop and practice skills, hone our analysis, be challenged, and find support. This institute invites the creation of this type of community.

Are scholarships available?

Yes! A limited number of partial scholarships are available for individuals without institutional funding. If you would like to be considered for a scholarship, please submit a letter of request explaining 1) why you should be considered for this scholarship and 2) the amount you are able to contribute to the registration cost.

Is university credit available?

Yes! If you are interested in receiving university credit at either the graduate or undergraduate level, please see the Projects page on the AWARE-LA website for an information sheet that describes 1) additional readings and assignments due, 2) registration information, and 3) a link to UCCS, our partnering university, (for tuition costs, application procedures, and the related, optional certificate program): See <http://www.awarela.org/projects/2015-unmasking-whiteness>

Why do we meet as a group of white people?

For many, it sounds contradictory: "It's racist if just white people to get together. Isn't that segregation? Isn't this being exclusive?" Recognizing that concerns are raised for many, we'd like to detail some reasons we have taken advice from our colleagues of color who suggest that we gather to build white anti-racist skills and community as a white community:

1. People of color shouldn't always have to be the ones to educate white people about racism and oppression. So, we are taking responsibility for learning about racism, our own white privilege, and how to challenge it as white people.
2. To challenge racism, white people need to unlearn racism and discover how we enact white privilege. This is a long, difficult, and often painful process. Having a community of white anti-racist people gives us hope, helps us grow our practice, and gives us strength to stay in it for the long haul.
3. A commitment to anti-racist identity and practice as a white person can sometimes mean increased alienation and conflict in our lives, especially with other white friends and family who disagree with us. This is a space where we can get support from people who are experiencing similar struggles.

What do previous participants say about their experience?

"I have never been around such a caring, warm, and informed group of people (white people especially) and my heart is forever grateful."

"My juices are flowing, battery charged...I am invigorated."

"Life changing. I am not the same person I was four days ago."

"I left the institute feeling confident, renewed and motivated."

"The institute was extraordinarily well planned and implemented, with a potpourri of activities to keep our minds, bodies, and spirits alive."

"The building of trust within this group was incredible. All of the exercises created a sense of community and a space to share, mess up, and succeed."

"I leave with increased courage, intention, desire, and tools. I feel very blessed to have had this opportunity to grow ..."

"Facilitators did a great job balancing facilitation and participation and bringing in developed thinking as anti-racists, along with openness and transparency about their own continued growth."