

# 12 Step Model of Recovery from White Conditioning



# RECOVERY



**Recovery emerges from hope**

**Recovery is person-driven**

**Recovery occurs via many pathways**

**Recovery is holistic**

**Recovery is supported by peers and allies**

**Recovery is supported through relationship and social networks**

**Recovery is culturally-based and influenced**

**Recovery is supported by addressing trauma**

**Recovery involves individual, family, and community strengths and responsibility**

**Recovery is based on respect**

<http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//PEP12-RECDEF/PEP12-RECDEF.pdf>



# Being in this Space Together

## **Agreements, from Vanessa Jackson, LCSW**

- **Speak your truth...but hold my heart while you do it.**
- Accept that the feelings and issues raised will need to be continued.
- We all share responsibility for creating safe enough spaces.
- Respect that we are at different levels of development on these issues. We need to be creative and patient in holding our container to include a variety of experiences.

## **Agreements for Courageous Conversations, Glenn Singleton**

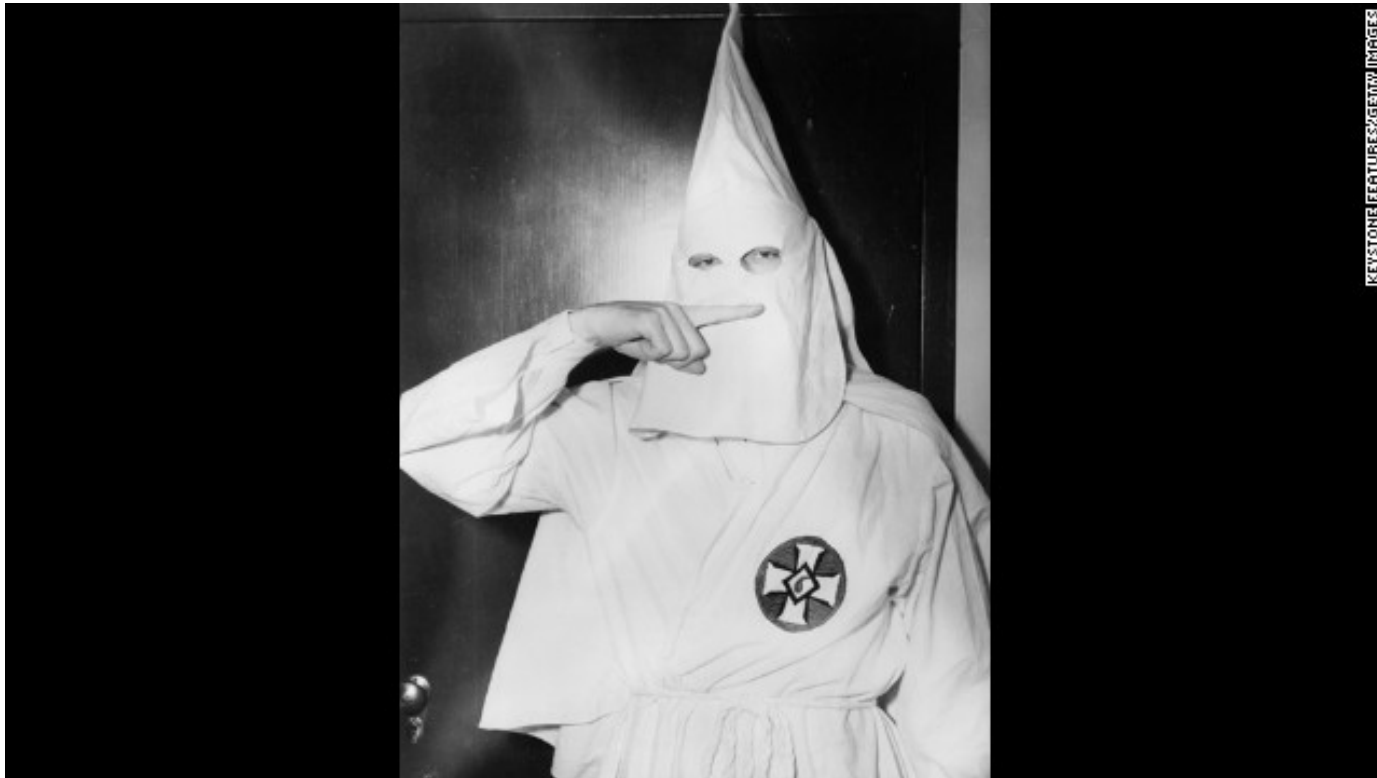
- Stay engaged.
- Experience discomfort.
- Speak your truth.
- Expect and accept non-closure.

THERE IS A CRACK  
IN EVERYTHING  
that's how the  
light gets in.  
- Cohen

What comes to mind...

...when you hear the term  
“White Supremacy”?

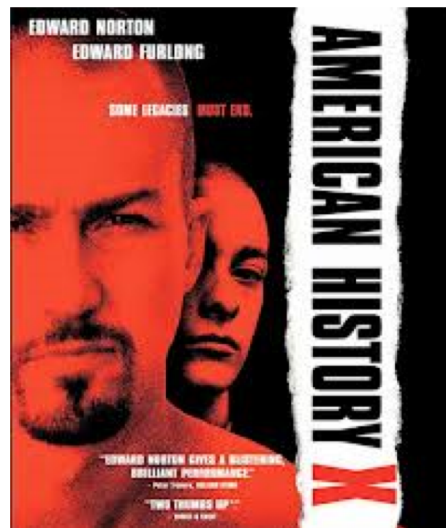
# The face of White Supremacy



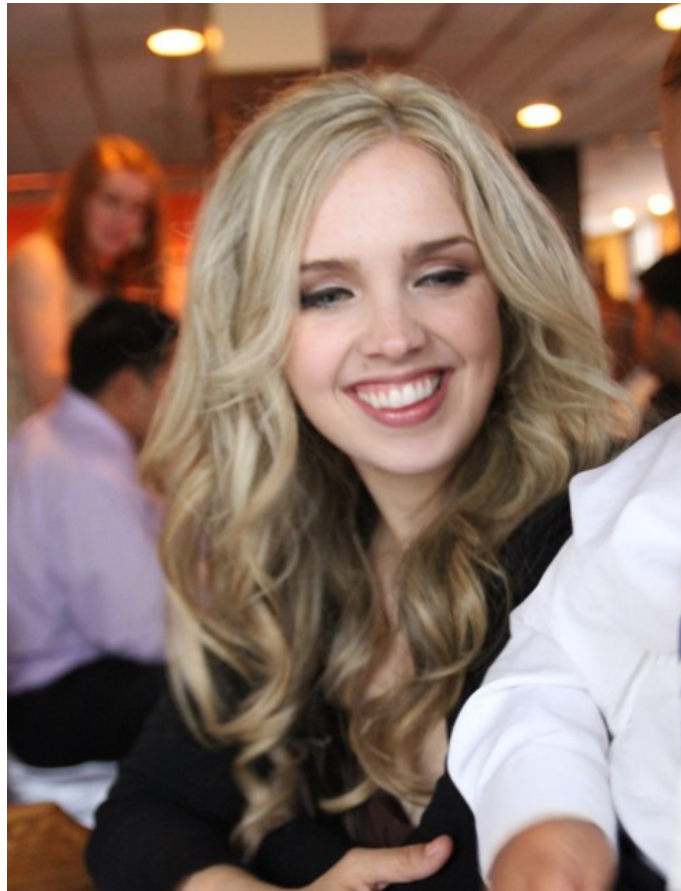
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# The face of White Supremacy



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# Foundational Statement

*"The United States of America was established as a white society, founded upon the near genocide of another race and then the enslavement of yet another."*

<http://sojo.net/blogs/2013/07/29/racism-americas-original-sin>

# Definition of White Supremacy

- an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege.
- a system, a web of interlocking, reinforcing institutions: economic, military, legal, educational, religious, and cultural. As a system, white supremacy affects every aspect of life in a country.

[http://soaw.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=482](http://soaw.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=482)

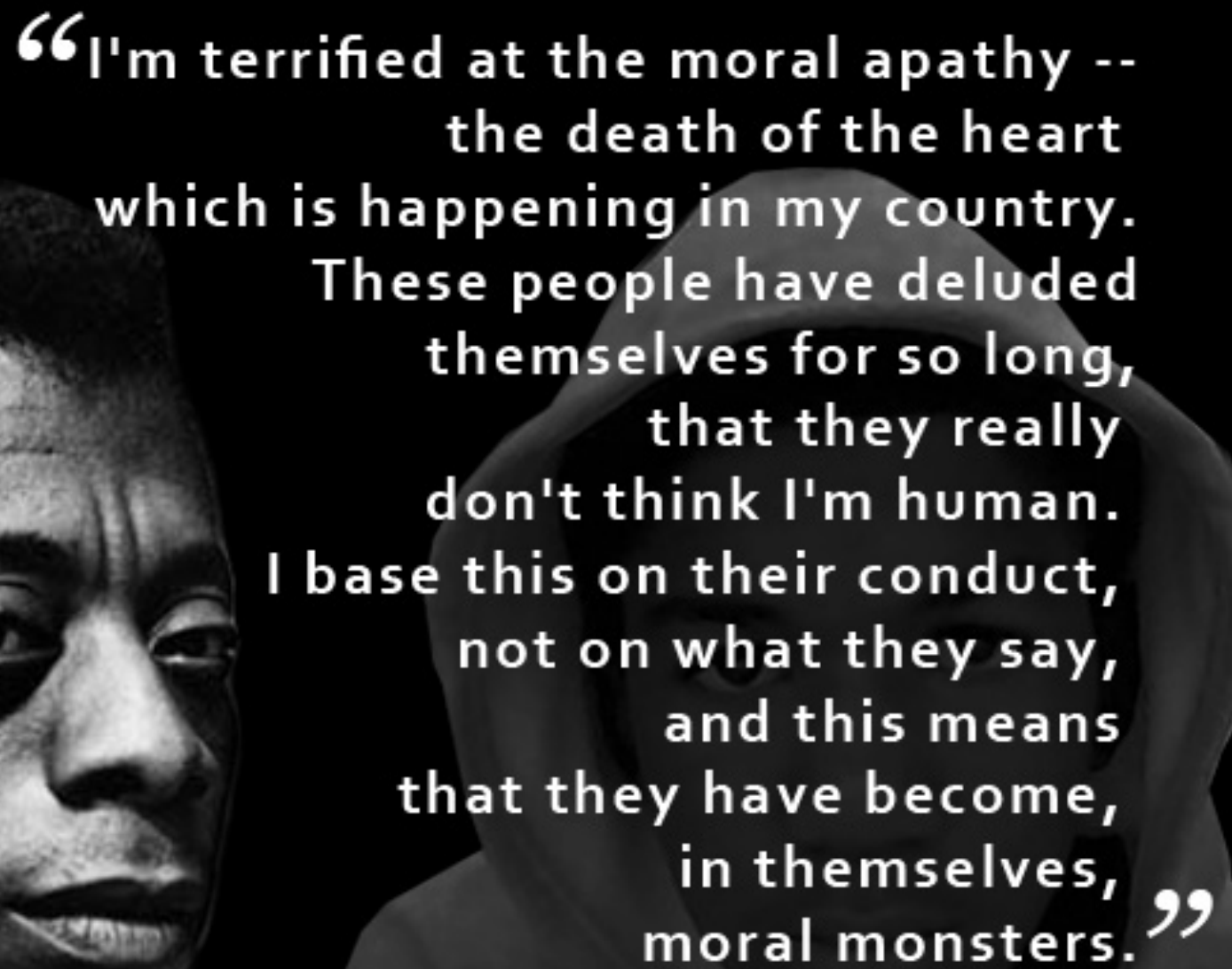


bell hooks: “imperialist white supremacist  
capitalist patriarchy”  
the power structure underlying the social order



**“The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land. Confusion all around.” –Dr. MLK Jr.**





“I'm terrified at the moral apathy --  
the death of the heart  
which is happening in my country.  
These people have deluded  
themselves for so long,  
that they really  
don't think I'm human.  
I base this on their conduct,  
not on what they say,  
and this means  
that they have become,  
in themselves,  
moral monsters.”

-- *James Baldwin*



**“The plague of racism is insidious, entering into minds as smoothly and quietly and invisibly as floating airborne microbes enter into bodies to find lifelong purchase in bloodstreams.”**







**"The separation of the races is not a disease of colored people, but a disease of white people. I do not intend to be quiet about it. There is...a somber point in the social outlook of Americans... Their sense of equality and human dignity is mainly limited to men of white skins. Even among these there are prejudices of which I as a Jew am dearly conscious; but they are unimportant in comparison with the attitude of 'Whites' toward their fellow-citizens of darker complexion, particularly toward Negroes...The more I feel an American, the more this situation pains me. I can escape the feeling of complicity in it only by speaking out."**

**- ALBERT EINSTEIN (May 3rd, 1946, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania)**

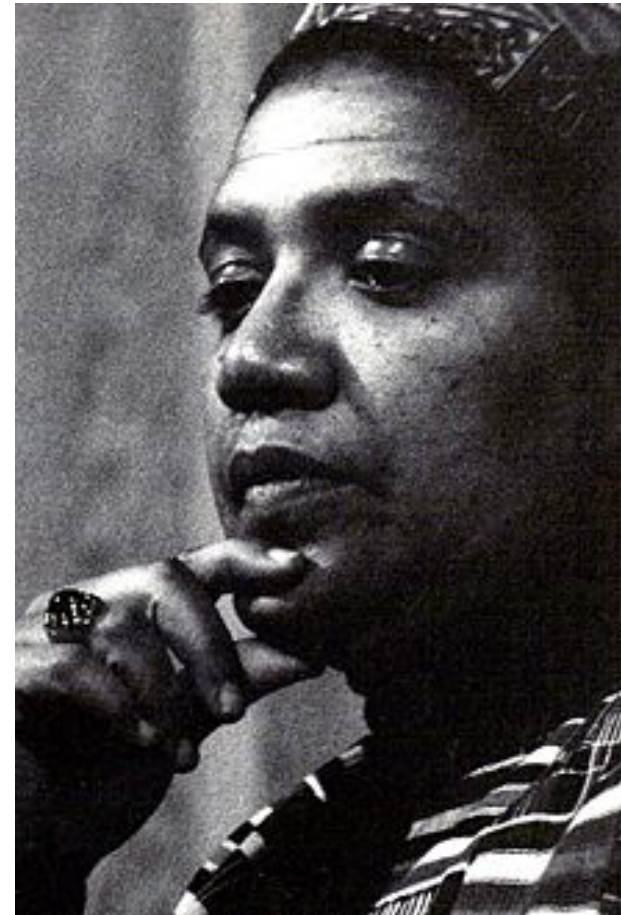
# Dr. Alvin Poussaint, Psychiatry Professor



- After several racist killings in the civil rights era, a group of black psychiatrists sought to have extreme bigotry classified as a mental disorder. The association's officials rejected the recommendation, arguing that because so many Americans are racist, even extreme racism in this country is normative—a cultural problem rather than an indication of psychopathology.

# Audre Lorde

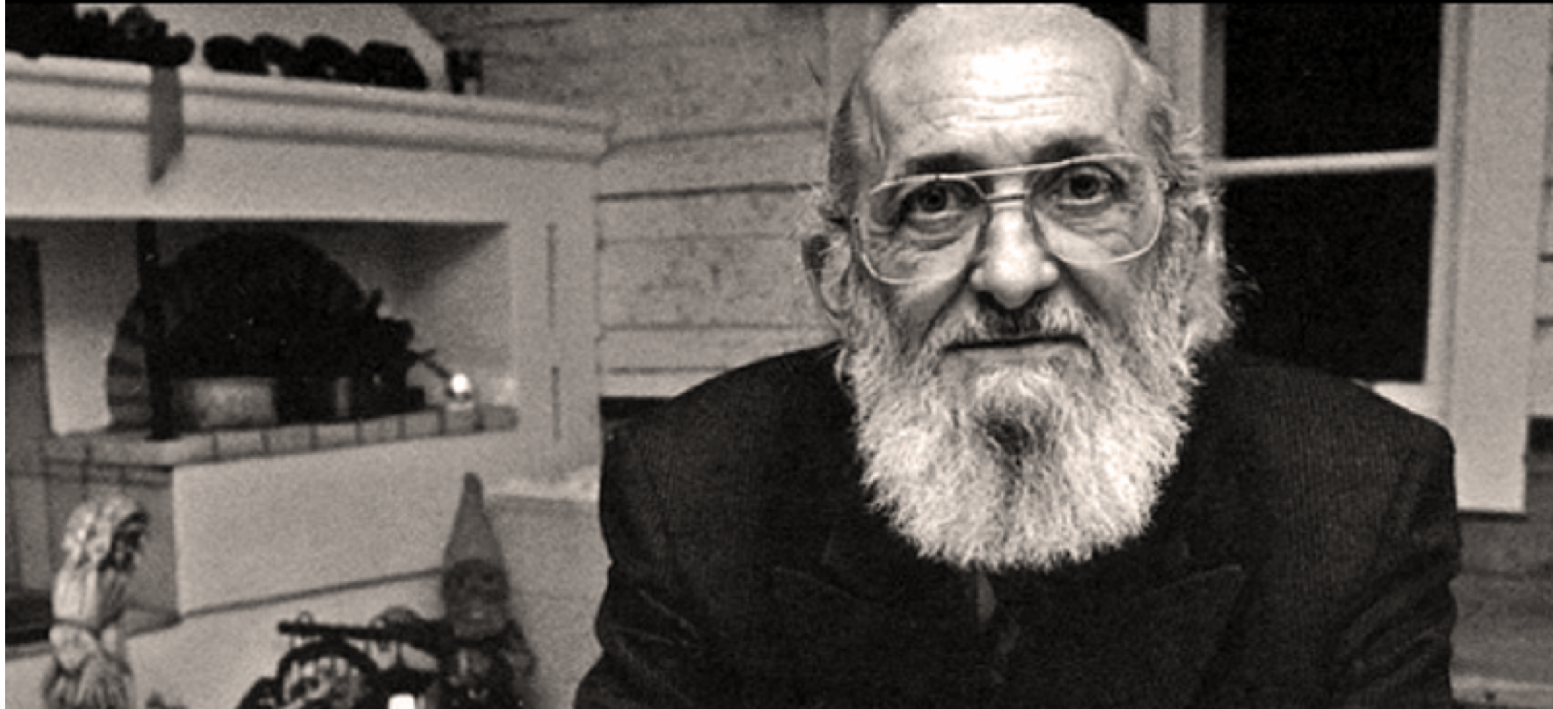
“When people of colour are expected to educate white people as to their humanity... the oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions.”





No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so.

- Paulo Freire





# Origins of this 12 Step Model

- BA and MSW Education: limitations in learning/training; in-home family therapy → dreams of an alternate universe
- Ta-Nehisi Coates:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pm9DJuTrO8Q>
- 2015, 2016, 2017: MN's Racial Disparities:  
<http://247wallst.com/special-report/2015/12/07/worst-states-for-black-americans-2/4/>
- Blessings from mentors

# The 12 Steps

A derivative work of Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Step Model

# Step 1

- **We admitted that we had been socially conditioned by the ideology of white supremacy—that our minds were subject to racial biases, often unconsciously so.**
- The first step to any kind of recovery is admitting that we have a problem. Individuals not ready to acknowledge a problem may be unable to pursue and receive the help they need. Becoming aware of a problem—and admitting it to others—can be challenging, but it is a fundamental step on the recovery journey.

# Step 1

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rfpo-gUDSuE>

# Step 2

- **We came to believe that we could embrace our ignorance as an invitation to learn.**
- We acknowledge that we, as white people, will *never know* what it feels like to walk in the world as a person of color. We embrace our “*not knowing*” as a powerful reminder of our ongoing need for new learning, and we abandon white supremacist traditions of “*knowing*” how others should feel, think, and act.







# Step 3

- **We developed support systems to keep us engaged in this work.**
- We are aware that facing and recovering from the effects of white conditioning will involve difficult, sometimes painful, moments. We commit to developing practices that facilitate self-care...to ensure that we are gentle with ourselves while also bravely able to confront the dehumanizing ideology of white supremacy.

Be gentle  
with yourself.

You are a child of the  
universe, no less than  
the trees and the stars.  
In the noisy confusion of life,  
keep peace in your soul.

(Max Ehrmann)

# Step 4

- **We journeyed boldly inward, exploring and acknowledging ways in which white supremacist teachings have been integrated into our minds and spirits.**
- After acknowledging the problem, we must also acknowledge that it has impacted *many* areas of our lives, consciously and unconsciously. Each of us must explore ways, past and present, in which the ideology of white supremacy has negatively impacted us: our understanding of history, our social networks, and our patterns of interacting with people of color, with an emphasized focus on microaggressions.

# The United States' Long History of Racial Preferences - For Whites

- **Early Racial Preferences**
- European indentured servants → replaced by African slaves → new rights for support
- 1830 Indian Removal Act; 1862 Homestead Act; 1790 Naturalization Act
- Alien Land Laws (California and other states)
- Federal government's failure to follow through with promises of reparations for freed slaves; only 1 instance of reparations (gov't paid slaveholders for loss of property)
- Jim Crow laws: best jobs, neighborhoods, schools and hospitals → white people
- **Advantages (for white individuals and families) Grow, Generation to Generation**
- Social Security Act of 1935 excluded two occupations: agricultural workers and domestic servants, who were predominately African American, Mexican, and Asian.
- 1935 Wagner Act: granted units right to collective bargaining → millions of white workers gained entry into the middle class while the Act permitted exclusion of non-whites.
- The Federal Housing Administration helped generate much of the wealth enjoyed by white families today. Between 1934 & 1962, the federal gov't backed \$120 billion of home loans. >98% went to whites (Neighborhood Appraisal System explicitly tied mortgage eligibility to race; integrated communities deemed a financial risk and ineligible for loans)
- New segregated white suburbs; government subsidies for municipal services → developed and enhanced these suburbs further → fueled commercial investments.
- Today, Black & Latino mortgage applicants still 60% more likely than whites to be turned down for a loan, after controlling for employment, financial, & neighborhood factors.
- **Reaping the Rewards of Racial Preference**
- White advantage is passed down, parent to child to grand-child. Some economists estimate that up to 80% of lifetime wealth accumulation depends on intergenerational transfers.
- In 1865, just after Emancipation, African Americans owned only 0.5 percent of the total worth of the United States. By 1990, a full 135 years after the abolition of slavery, Black Americans still possessed only a meager 1 percent of national wealth.

# Microaggressions

- Wing Sue and his colleagues identify three types:
- 1. A *microinsult* is characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity (for example, eye rolling during a discussion about an individual's racial identity).
- 2. *Microinvalidations* are communications that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color. An example is a white person stating to a person of color that they "don't see color", which denies that person's racial and ethnic experiences.
- 3. A *microassault* is an explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim. This can happen through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions. Microassaults are typically more conscious and deliberate than other forms of microaggression.
- <http://www.extension.umn.edu/family/cyfc/our-programs/ereview/docs/cmhereviewOct10.pdf>



# Step 5

- **We confessed our mistakes to ourselves and others.**
- Beyond identifying ways in which our thinking, feeling, and relating have been impacted by white conditioning, honestly addressing the *actions* that have emerged from that conditioning is a separate, necessary step. Confessing past (and ongoing) microaggressions to a group and receiving support is an essential part of recovery.

**CONFESS YOU WERE  
WRONG YESTERDAY;  
IT WILL SHOW YOU  
ARE WISE TODAY**

Proverb

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PICTUREQUOTES.com

# Step 6

- **We were entirely ready to deconstruct previous ways of *knowing*, as they had been developed through the lens of white supremacy.**
- After admitting these problems (white conditioning and related actions), it is then time to let go of “knowledge” developed in isolation from people of color.

**WHAT IF I TOLD YOU**

**IT'S OK TO CHANGE YOUR OPINION  
BASED ON NEW INFORMATION**

zpmeme

# Step 7

- **We humbly explored new ways of understanding...proactively seeking out new learning and reconstructing a more inclusive sense of reality.**
- This step involves mindfully and intentionally engaging in learning to more deeply understand the experience of people of color in a society organized around white supremacy. This type of learning can take place in a variety of ways, including: reading texts written by people of color, actively listening to the experiences of people of color, patronizing businesses owned by people of color, etc.

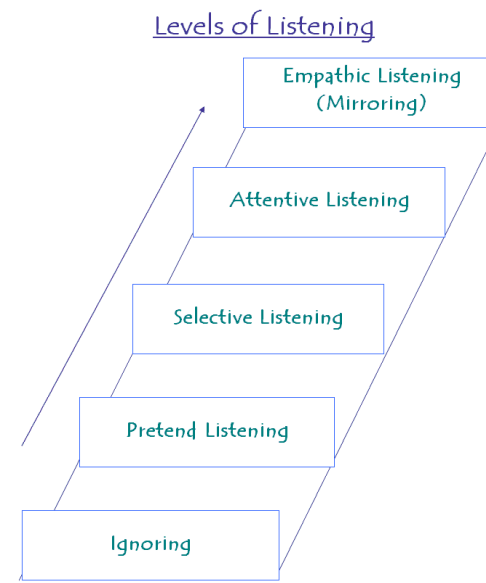


# Reconstructing a more inclusive sense of reality

- <http://www.hmongchamber.com/>
- <http://www.blacktwincities.com/black-business-directory/>
- <http://www.ledc-mn.org/>
- <http://aeds-mn.org/category/little-africa-of-minnesota>

- Recommended Authors

- Ta-Nehisi Coates
- bell hooks
- Gish Jen
- Chimamanda Adichie



# Step 8

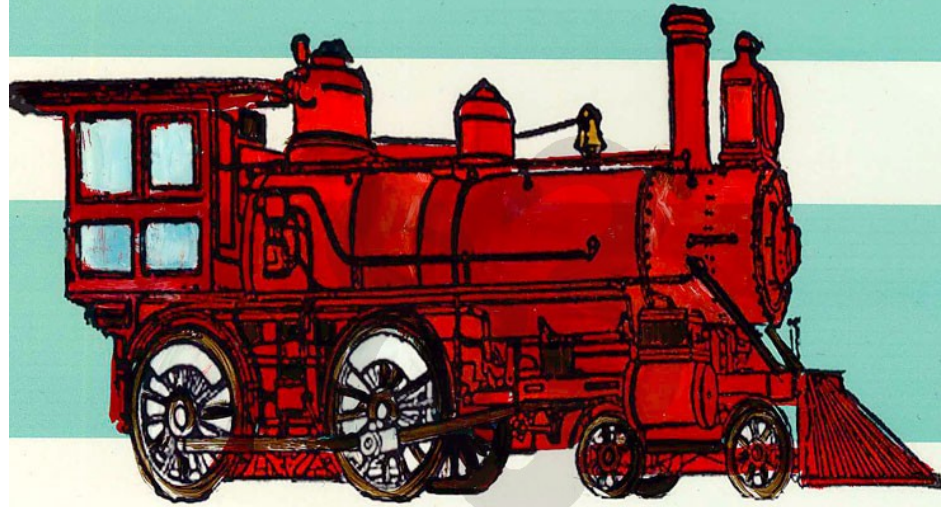
- **We committed ourselves to ongoing study of our racial biases, conscious or unconscious, and our maladaptive patterns of white supremacist thinking.**
- This step is about identifying our triggers to negative thoughts (or other stereotypes, positive or negative) about people of color. We remain curious about the source of our thoughts, fears, and assumptions...and perpetually aware of their existence.

	Situation or Trigger	Automatic Negative Thought	Distress (0-100%)
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

# Step 9

- **We developed strategies to counteract our racial biases.**
- Developing positive associations to counter negative thoughts is an important, proactive strategy in recovery from white supremacy. We believe that the most powerful way to develop positive associations is to develop authentic relationships with people of color. In lieu of such relationships, we can still engage in daily, proactive practices to retrain our brain from the ill-effects of white supremacist conditioning.

i think i can



i think i can

i think i can



# Step 10

- **We embraced the responsibility of focusing on our impact, more than our intentions, in interactions with people of color.**
- Taking responsibility for the *impact* of our actions is an ongoing part of recovery. If we fall back into perpetuating white supremacist ideology—or defending actions that have caused hurt to people of color—it's important to stop and admit it. Prioritizing impact, instead of explaining the intent of our behavior (i.e. “I didn’t mean to offend you”), is essential for attending to the human being in front of us.

# Intentions: Province of the Privileged

Ken Hardy's Tasks of Participants in Discussions about Race and Other Aspects of Social Identity

## GENERIC TASKS:

1. To be the expert in your own experience, not of others.
2. To create space for the telling of one's story.
3. To make space for both thoughts and feelings.

## TASKS OF THE PRIVILEGED:

1. To resist false notions of equality. It is not helpful to equate suffering.
2. Intentions vs. consequences: to understand that intentions may be good, but that doesn't change the fact that consequences may be bad. It is not helpful to just clarify intentions when consequences were hurtful. Acknowledge the *effect* of consequences of your actions. Intentions are the province of the privileged; consequences are the provinces of the subjugated.
3. To challenge the ahistorical approach. History does matter, the past does effect the present. The privileged cannot understand the subjugated "out of context."
4. To develop thick skin. Need to be able to thicken one's skin, to not give up on connections with people who have been subjugated even if you are initially rebuffed, to continue to go back and back, to continue to try.
5. To not become a FOE—framer of others' experiences.

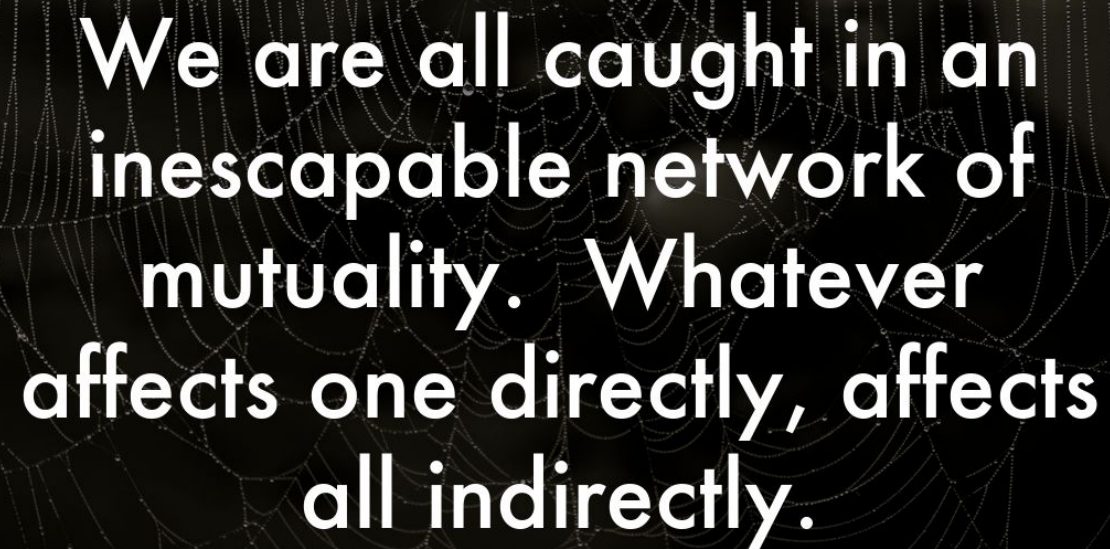
# Step 11

- **We engaged in daily practices of self-reflection.**
- Reflecting on the day—on moments in which we confronted our own white supremacist conditioning and on moments in which we were still bound by its limiting beliefs—is an investment in our recovery. Relevant spiritual practices may play a helpful role in this step, as a way to encourage us toward continued growth and connection, beyond our mistakes.



# Step 12

- **We committed ourselves to sharing this message with our white brothers and sisters...in order to build a supportive recovery community and to encourage personal accountability within our culture.**
- Assisting others to seek help in recovering from white conditioning and in becoming an ally with people of color is a core component of recovery. Working with future recovery-from-white-conditioning groups is a common choice for this step.



**We are all caught in an  
inescapable network of  
mutuality. Whatever  
affects one directly, affects  
all indirectly.**

© SEAN NI



# Meeting Structure/Rituals

- Call to Recovery: “We are here to be fully human to ourselves, fully accountable to each other.” (credit: Shailja Patel, author of *Migritude*)
- Welcome & Introductions
- Announcements, calendar, etc.
- Minute of silence; quick reading about a white anti-racist
- Read aloud the 12 steps.
- Focus of today: Step \_\_ → Reading + uninterrupted time to speak (or pass)
- Closing and repeating of Call to Recovery
- Post-meeting Dialogue (back and forth!)

# Your turn:

- For POC: Reflecting/Listening/Healing Circle
- For white people: Experiencing a meeting together.
  - In your small group, identify a volunteer to read the meeting outline/facilitate the meeting.
  - Today's focus will be on Step One.

# Call to Recovery

“We are here to be  
fully human to  
ourselves...  
fully accountable to  
each other.”

-Shailja Patel, cr. author of *Migritude*

# DISCUSSION

- Reactions: personal, professional
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, cautions
- Implications for our/your work
- Q&A

# Next Steps

- Your presence here today → You = Trusted Servant
- Freedom to apply these concepts in your life/work/community
- Current website: [recoveryfromwhiteconditioning.com](http://recoveryfromwhiteconditioning.com)
- My Contact Info, if you have follow-up questions: [cristinacombs@gmail.com](mailto:cristinacombs@gmail.com)
- Weekly Group: Wednesdays from 6-7 pm @ Unity Unitarian Church, St. Paul

COURAGE DOESN'T

ALWAYS ROAR.

SOMETIMES COURAGE IS THE

QUIET VOICE AT THE END

OF THE DAY SAYING 'I WILL

TRY AGAIN TOMORROW.'

-MARY ANNE RADMACHER





# “ I am human too” Maya Angelou

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePodNjrVSsk>