

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

The first five sessions each focus on one of the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture topic areas. The sixth session gives individuals an opportunity to learn skills helpful to handling difficult conversations about race and racism.

The pre-work is an opportunity for participants to become familiar with new material and concepts, while online sessions are dedicated to digesting and applying the material to one's work. Below is a summary of each topic (based on the Smithsonian website's description where applicable):

Historical Foundations of Race - January 13

American society developed the notion of race early in its formation to justify its economic system of capitalism, which depended on the institution of forced labor, especially the enslavement of African peoples, and land stolen from Native Americans. To more accurately understand how race and its counterpart, racism, are woven into the very fabric of American society, we explore the history of how race, white privilege, and anti-blackness came to be. Minnesota history is included.

Race and Racism - February 3

The scientific consensus is that race has no biological basis - that we are all one race, the human race. Racialized identity, however, is very real. And, in a racialized society, everyone is assigned a racial identity whether you are aware of it or not. Let's broaden our awareness.

Whiteness - March 3

Socially and politically constructed, whiteness is not simply referring to skin color but is an ideology that reinforces power at the expense of others and strengthens systems of oppression. This unconscious ideology is pervasive, and we all lose so much. How can we recognize our internalized whiteness, whether we are white or BIPOC? Let's dig deeper.

Social Identities and Systems of Oppression - March 31

An oppressive system is built around the ideology that some groups are superior to others. These systems take on many forms, but they all have essentially the same structure. Let's learn and reflect about our multiple social identities and recognize our roles within them.

Being Antiracist - April 28

No one is born racist or antiracist; these result from the choices we make. Being antiracist results from a decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. Ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection is required as we move through life. In the absence of making antiracist choices, we (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions and society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are, it is about what you do.

Handling Difficult Conversations - May 26

To create change, we must be prepared to have emotionally challenging conversations about race. To effectively handle difficult conversations with family, friends, colleagues, and strangers, we adopt a mindful approach and practice having dialogues in a controlled setting. Participants learn about the importance of listening for understanding, staying curious, finding common ground, identifying judgment (both positive and negative), and becoming aware of triggers.