



FREC
Facilitating Racial
Equity Collaborative

Overcoming Racism: The Power of Truth Telling Workshop Request for Proposals

“History is written through the eyes of the conqueror/colonizer/oppressor.” And so it is with the written history of the United States.

Overcoming Racism: The Power of Truth Telling is the theme of this year’s conference. The theme reflects the power and importance of truth telling as we work to become anti-racists and create anti-racist communities, systems and organizations. Truth telling can be done in many ways – through stories, the arts, protests, community organizing, staff development, community forums, curricula, etc. Truth telling includes highlighting the strengths, resiliency and contributions of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals and communities, as well as their experiences throughout history told through their lenses.

Truth telling is a process that welcomes counter storytelling, defined as “a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told”. So, counter-stories can be used to expose, analyze, as well as challenge deeply-entrenched narratives and characterizations of racial privilege, sex, etc. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Truth-telling comes by amplifying the voice of all who must be in the conversation, especially those who are systematically excluded.

To better understand truth telling as a tool for praxis, we can look to our own nation’s history. People of all nationalities have contributed to the continued growth of the United States; however, the initial and sustained growth and prosperity was built on the labor of Indigenous, enslaved, and immigrant communities. An example of this labor includes the U.S. agricultural system that has been dependent on BIPOC communities throughout history. For example, early Indigenous communities taught the colonizers/settlers how to grow and harvest the food needed to survive. It was enslaved Africans that taught the southern plantation owners how to grow indigo, cotton and rice, their primary cash crops. The unprecedented growth of the American economy throughout the north and south depended on the industrialization of these crops. Migrant and immigrant workers ensure fields and food processing plants are capable of producing the volume of food needed today. The work of BIPOC communities has made a world-wide industrialized food economy possible.

Tragically, these stories are rarely told and are seldom reflected in the U.S. history taught in K-12 schools today. Instead, most of the stories that are told about BIPOC communities are designed to create ignorance, fear, and are intended to devalue their worth. All of us, no matter our race/ethnicity/culture, are socialized to fear difference instead of embracing and celebrating it. The United States will continue to struggle with racism and white supremacy until we begin to challenge our founding myths, elevate the stories of those marginalized, and reimagine what a “*more perfect union*” can be.

How do we get there? One way is through the power of truth telling, including listening to the stories of and from BIPOC communities. Most of the stories that are highlighted

today are grounded in white exceptionalism. The term, “white exceptionalism,” speaks to a history and norm of requiring a universal set of requirements and expectations (laws, rules, procedures) that all should follow with an underlying understanding that these norms serve the interests of white people – while others may benefit from them. When those norms (laws, rules, procedures) fail in serving the interests of white people, “white exceptionalism” is invoked to ensure that white people are accorded preferential treatment and allowed to diverge from norms that no longer serve their interests. The systems within the US – education, law enforcement, criminal justice, health care, social services and housing – were created by and to help primarily white people. Structural or institutional racism continues to exist in all of them, despite efforts to transform them to benefit everyone.

Racism hurts all of us. The accepted assumption is that racism hurts only BIPOC individuals and communities. The reality is racism hurts all of us, but in different ways. Institutional/structural and individual racism, along with unconscious bias, create barriers which all too often limit the ability of BIPOC individuals and communities to fully thrive. Most do despite this, but they have to work harder and prove more to get there. Racism limits economic growth and opportunities for all people and communities, places limits on building relationships between people of different racial/ethnic/cultural heritages, inhibits our abilities to be our authentic selves which can impact our mental health, wastes resources and opportunities. (See *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice* Diane J. Goodman, 2001, p.103-124 for more information on the cost of racism.) Part of learning how to live in a truly multicultural and intercultural society in which everyone thrives, is learning how all forms of racism hurts all of us. Truth telling is one way to learn the cost of racism.

For the U.S. to become a just, ethical and intercultural society, we must know our true history, warts and all. One way to do so is through truth telling.

The Overcoming Racism Conference is seeking workshop proposals from activists and community organizers, educators and others involved in antiracist work in urban, rural and suburban areas. We encourage proposals from people who identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Color and from a continuum of perspectives ranging from youth to seasoned change agents. Proposals should speak to a broad audience, both BIPOC and white allies, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Community artists and activists
- Employees working within organizations/institutions
- Students and educators
- Entrepreneurs
- People trying to discuss issues of race with friends and family
- Individuals working to change the internalized racism we all carry in our heads and hearts.

Truth telling happens in multiple ways, including, but not limited to:

- Protests
- Performing Arts
- Visual Arts – posters, paintings, story cloths, etc.
- Spoken Word
- Written Word, and
- Story Telling

The Overcoming Racism Conferences encourages the submission of proposals that include one or more of these methods of truth telling, as well as other ways truth telling may be occurring.

Be Prepared.

The work that we are doing at the conference is challenging for all involved. The material you present could bring up painful memories and re-traumatize participants. Be aware of your audience and aware of this possibility. Be prepared to step out of your planned presentation and facilitate a process to unpack whatever is coming up for people. It could be a powerful learning opportunity for everyone. FREC volunteers will attend each workshop and be able to bring in additional support if needed.

Conference Learning Objectives:

As a result of attending this Conference, participants will:

- Understand the power of multiple stories and truths, and the consequences of living with and accepting false narratives.
- Identify the shared costs of racism to both BIPOC and white communities, and understand how race has shaped/affected every aspect of our culture and history
- Know where and how to find a more holistic and inclusive history of the U.S., and be equipped with tools to engage in courageous dialogue about racial justice/equity and take action.
- Learn how to challenge the narrative themselves and explore the possibility of creating a universal story of the US we can all embrace (current mythology is of white colonialism and exceptionality) – not false narratives.
- Possess strategies, courage and ways to center both the stories, experience, power and influence to put BIPOC individuals in positions to challenge systems and operationalize racial equity.

Logistics and Proposal Considerations

- The Overcoming Racism Conference will return to being in person this year. All conference activities, plenary sessions, and workshops, will be held on location at Metropolitan State University, in Saint Paul, MN.

- Workshops will be 90 minutes in length and should utilize a variety of techniques, incorporating features that engage workshop participants.
- Workshops must specifically address and be aligned with the conference theme and learning objectives. Those that are not will be rejected.

The deadline for workshop submissions is Monday, July 11th at 5:00 pm Central Daylight Savings Time

The following information must be included in your workshop proposal submission:

- The first and last name(s), contact email and exact titles of ALL presenters if you will have multiple presenters. If selected, we will be collecting short bios and headshots of all presenters and will need this information.
- Information about your presentation, including how it is aligned with the conference theme and learning objectives.
- How you plan to engage workshop participants during your presentation.

Additional Information:

- Selection notifications will be sent out by August 8th.
- Free registration **is provided for up to two presenters** from each workshop selected. If a workshop has more than two presenters other presenters will be required to pay if they want to attend the conference.
- We are providing \$150 per workshop to those presenters who request it, no questions asked, to help remove any barriers that may interfere with their ability to present a workshop.

Workshop Selection Criteria

The Overcoming Racism Conference Program Committee will be selecting proposals for workshops **that are aligned with the Conference theme and learning objectives.** Those proposals not meeting these requirements will be rejected.

All workshop proposals should be submitted using [Google Forms](#).

Please use the following link to access the form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeg1QxRwgypdwqQ0-begpNhYbKLNb3ENFpbhhMRmtVoGF3lag/viewform?usp=sf_link