

## **2024 RELI SESSION DESCRIPTIONS**

The sessions primarily focus on the Smithsonian's Museum of African American History and Culture topic areas, with supplemental material focused on Native American colonization and oppression. The second session gives individuals an opportunity to learn skills helpful to handling difficult and necessary conversations about race and racism. All sessions encourage participants to practice such conversations and consider how they can take their learning into antiracist action.

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 life and work. Below is a summary of each session:

### **Colonialism & Racism in the U.S.: Historical Oppression Lives On – January 11**

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 historical foundations of race, white supremacy culture, and anti-blackness. Minnesota history is included.

### **Having Difficult & Necessary Conversations for Change – February 1**

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

### **Race and Experiencing Racism – February 29**

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. This session will help us deepen our awareness of the impacts on all aspects of life for those who experience racism, as well as how racism impacts our collective society in the U.S.

### **Why is Whiteness the Norm? – March 28**

Socially and politically constructed, whiteness is not simply referring to skin color but is an ideology that reinforces power for some at the expense of others and strengthens systems of oppression. This ideology (often subconscious) is pervasive and we all lose so much. How can we recognize whiteness as a cultural norm and our internalized whiteness, whether we are white or BIPOC? And how can we act to disrupt white supremacy culture? Let's dig deeper.

### **Racial Identities, Social Identities and Systems of Oppression – April 25**

An oppressive system is built around the ideology that some groups are superior to others. These systems have many forms, but they are based in the same capitalism, colonialism and anti-blackness that pervade all systems of oppression in the U.S. As we explore aspects of our various identities, we learn about intersectionality and how identities can overlap in systems of oppression. How can we understand the complexity of intersectionality and how it plays out in our lives?

### **Being Antiracist: Action is Required – May 23**

No one is born racist or antiracist; these result from societal conditioning when we are young and then 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 the oppression 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.

Please contact [leadership@overcomingracism.org](mailto:leadership@overcomingracism.org) if you have questions about this series.