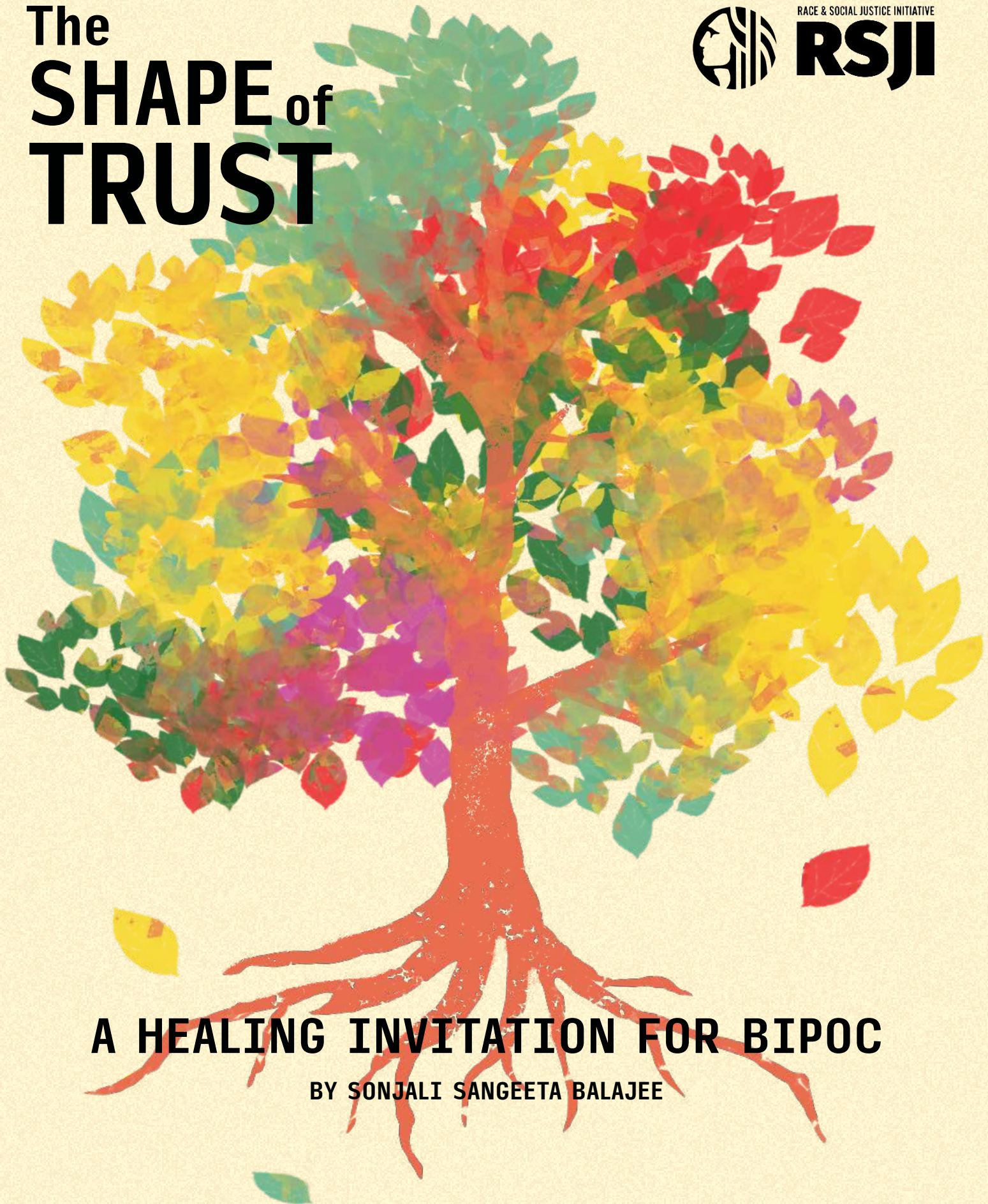


The **SHAPE** of **TRUST**



RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

RSJI



A HEALING INVITATION FOR BIPOC

BY SONJALI SANGEETA BALAJEE



WHAT

A 3-part experience designed for BIPOC facilitators to facilitate with BIPOC participants (individuals and groups) to engage with their healing in voluntary, optional, BIPOC caucuses or groups that are all-BIPOC. The activity is grounded in loving kindness teachings from [Our Bodhi Project](#) Founder Sonali Sangeeta Balajee's Buddhist traditions. These teachings are found in various traditions around the world that focus on the power of love, relationality, and the deep interconnectedness within and among living systems. Additional inspirations include: Reverend Angel Kyodo Williams, Lama Rod Owens, the Dalai Lama, priests from Sonali's family's temples (both in the United States and in India), and other leaders from various wisdom traditions around the world.

In Buddhist traditions, loving kindness is called metta. In this activity, metta is practiced for the sake of touching into the inherent nature of love and relationship in our bodies and minds. In this activity, it makes room for all parts of ourselves by embracing an experience of racism that affects one negatively or brings suffering.

This activity can be adapted for live, virtual learning.

Number of Participants

Any number of participants can engage in this.

For large groups, there are notes on how to do group debriefs differently, accounting for time.

Time

20–60 min. Timing for each step is flexible, based on the needs of the group and overall facilitation plan. Some suggestions are provided. Total time will depend on format (in-person, virtual, or hybrid), number of participants, and other factors such as where you want to focus learning and for how long. We expect that experienced facilitators will know how to adjust and limit time as needed.

This Activity Spotlight is a component of The Shape of Trust Video Facilitation Guide by the City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI). For information on the facilitation experience recommended for those using the Guide, a glossary of terms, and tips to support collective health, wellbeing, and belonging – in particular of BIPOC – please download the Guide from the RSJI website.

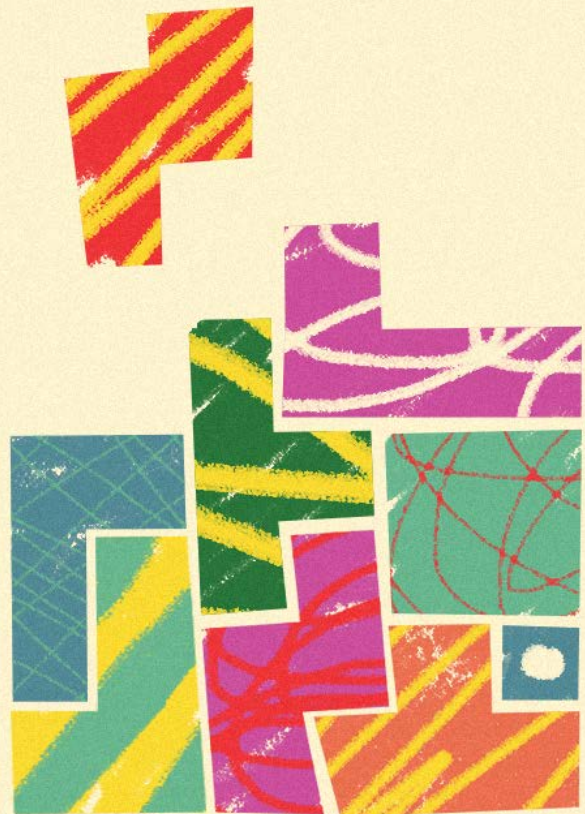
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

Practice grounding in the power of their breath, bringing some ease and calm to their bodies and minds.

Identify and practice with an expression of loving kindness (also known as metta in the Buddhist tradition).

Identify and send loving kindness to an experience of one or more types of racism, including internalized racial inferiority and other intersecting forms of oppression they may discover by pausing to listen to their bodies, hearts, and minds.



Participant Preparation

Participants do not need to prepare or bring any materials.

Facilitation Materials

- Sheets of paper and pens or pencils.
- The [4 Types of Racism](#). To avoid intellectualizing or trying to define BIPOC emotional experiences, use this handout as you prepare to facilitate this activity. Share a few examples of different types of racism, including of internalized racial in-

riority, rather than have participants review the handout. This activity is not about getting clear on terminology; it is about making space for difficult and even painful feelings in order to support healing.

- The Shape of Trust Video Facilitation Guide, "Glossary".

Maya Milton, *Metamorphosis*, 2019,
Mixed media, 24"x 19"

Seattle Public Utilities 1% for Art Portable
Works Collection



HOW IT WORKS

EXPLAIN (1 min)

Introduce the purpose of the activity (see above) and learning objectives. Let participants know that this activity may bring up strong feelings. See the section of The Shape of Trust Video Facilitation Guide, “Providing a Content Warning: Racism, Sexism, and Other Forms of Oppression”, for some resources to support you.

Before you begin, let participants know that they are at choice: some may have reasons why engaging in breathwork does not feel supportive and may even be harmful. For a few healing and trauma-informed considerations, see the section in the Guide titled “Before you facilitate a grounding or centering activity”.

PART 1: ENGAGING WITH CALMING BREATH

BREATHE / REFLECT (5 min)

- Share that the purpose of engaging with breath is to bring some balance to our nervous systems, and bring some ease and stillness into the space. As BIPOC people, we move through moments of hypervigilance and are often in survival mode. Breathwork can help settle our sympathetic nervous systems (fight, flight, freeze, and appease) and our sympathetic nervous systems, while strengthening our parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest).
- Invite participants to find a comfortable position. This might mean adjusting their position, rocking side to side, or doing a few neck or shoulder rolls.
- Invite participants to just breathe and bring some attention to their inhale and exhale.
- Next, invite them to do deep breathing. They should slowly inhale through their nose and slowly exhale through their mouth, if they are able. The only invitation is to notice the quality of their breath. Remind them that thoughts will come and go, and this is very normal. A way to be with this is simply to name a thought “thinking” or “thought” and imagine it continuing on as if floating down a river.
- After a minute of this, invite them to take longer on their exhales.
- Close with inviting them to wiggle their toes, fingers, or move other body parts to bring them back into the space.
- Invite them to take a moment to reflect silently on what they are feeling. They can write this down and anyone who is willing can share out loud. If online, they can write it in the chat if they feel inclined. (If in the chat, read out loud what they write as it comes in.)

HOW IT WORKS (continued)

PART 2: ENGAGING WITH LOVING KINDNESS THROUGH MEDITATION

MEDITATE (10–13 min)

- Invite participants to go back to deep breathing, for a cycle of 5 inhales and exhales.
- Invite participants to allow one wish of loving kindness to surface in this space of breath and ease. This should be something that would best support where they are right now. They might say, “May I be...” and fill that in with that wish of loving kindness. Give them a few examples from your own experience, such as: “For instance, during the calming breaths, I was in touch with how tired I am feeling. So my loving kindness meditation is, ‘May I find some rest and ease today’.”
- *A note to share with participants: As you discover what this “May I...” loving kindness phrase is for you today, and allow it to rest and seed in this space, you might say it quietly to yourself,*

or you might envision it in your mind and continue saying it quietly to yourself. This is a practice of allowing the phrase to just be, and to be supportive of your wellbeing in whatever ways it can.

- Have them be with their loving kindness phrase for one or two minutes.
- Invite participants to write down the loving kindness phrase in their notes to go back to later in the day or whenever it feels supportive to them.

Invite participants to get into pairs or small groups and share their loving kindness meditations with each other.

HOW IT WORKS (continued)

PART 3: CONNECTING WITH THAT WHICH MIGHT INTERRUPT OUR FLOWS OF LOVING KINDNESS

CONNECT (5 min)

- Let participants know that this next part is an inquiry into an experience of grounding in loving kindness before examining one or more of the four types of racism, including internalized racial inferiority, and other intersecting forms of internalized oppression such as sexism, heterosexism, ableism, nationalism, classism, Christian dominance, and more. We know that racism and other forms of oppression interrupt our inherent and cultivated wisdoms and our ability to embody love.
- Invite participants to breathe deeply, inhaling and exhaling 3 or 4 times.
- Invite participants to get in touch with an experience of tension, pain, or challenge in their bodies. Ask them to name that space in their bodies and then send their next few breaths to that area. Invite everyone to notice how that feels.
- Now, invite participants to get in touch with a moment when they experienced one or more of the four types of racism, including internalized racial inferiority, and any other intersecting forms of oppression connected to that moment. Invite

them to allow this moment to enter their mind, then their hearts, and their bodies. Ask them to notice and describe, to themselves, their feelings as they allow this moment to enter them. They might notice frustration, anger, heat or cold, irritation, tightness, fear, and more.

- Let them know that any experience they are having is part of the greater whole of experiences as BIPOC. Invite them to explore their feelings about any other information they are experiencing around the example of racism they shared, as feels comfortable and safe. This might happen through silent reflection, journaling, pair shares, or staying in the larger group.

For a few healing and trauma-informed considerations, see the section in the Shape of Trust Video Facilitation Guide titled "Before you facilitate a grounding or centering activity".

Ask participants what they need to close the activity and feel connected to their power. Do they need to share with someone else, move their bodies, journal, cry, meditate, etc.?