

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



RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

RSJI



THE TWO WEBS

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WHAT

This is a 3-part, arts-integrated activity designed for in-person learning. Parts 2 and 3 are designed to be facilitated together.

In Part 1, participants construct a Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing (a group mural) to ground themselves in the experience of co-creation, interconnection, and wellbeing.

In Part 2, participants create a Web of Structural Racism & Oppression (a physical web made of yarn, paper, and tape) and discuss how the different manifestations of institutional racism within unique institutions or systems overlap and are connected.

In Part 3, participants have a strategic organizing conversation about the deconstruction of the Web of Structural Racism & Oppression so they can be with and uplift the vital and ever-present Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing. The wisdom of living systems — human and non-human — pulse through the various actions and reflection.

The Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing mural was inspired by a group mural project by Our Bodhi Project founder and The Shape of Trust team member Sonali Sangeeta Balajee.

The Web of Structural Racism & Oppression was inspired by a web activity from the Intergroup Dialogue Education and Action Center (IDEA) at the University of Washington School of Social Work and by an activity facilitated by Lara Davis.

Facilitator Preparation

This activity is complex to facilitate, even for seasoned anti-racism, racial equity, and social justice facilitators. We recommend facilitators work in pairs. Before deciding whether to do this activity with a group, discuss with your co-facilitator how you will facilitate the dif-

ferent parts and the transitions between them. Consider participant feelings and needs that may arise, especially for BIPOC, and how you will support them. If you don't feel capable of supporting them, we recommend that you do not facilitate this activity.

Foundational Knowledge

We recommend using this activity with groups that already have some foundational racial equity and social justice training. Participants should understand what structural racism is, and how it is connected to and different from the other types of racism.

The opening scene of *The Shape of Trust*, the accompanying reflective questions, and the [4 Types of Racism](#) may support this initial learning.

Number of Participants

12–30. This activity works well in small and medium-sized groups.

Time

3 hours total. Each part takes an hour. You may choose to take a break between Part 1 and Part 2. This break can be 10–15 minutes, a lunch break, or even overnight. Part 2 and Part 3 are designed to be facilitated together, although you may choose to take a brief break between them.

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:

Experience a collective embodiment of interconnection and wellbeing in the process of co-creating a visual representation of those same states of being.

Explore the depth and weight of structural racism and other intersecting forms of oppression within a larger frame of collective health and wellbeing.

Envision and strategize how to co-create a racially and socially just world in which we experience coliberation.



Participant Preparation

- Read [Seeking Environmental Justice: Heat Waves Disproportionately Affect BIPOC Communities](#) by Seattle Office for Civil Rights staff. Let participants know this is one example of structural racism, connecting issues of climate justice, housing policy, green space, and neighborhood amenities. Scene 1, Story 3 of The Shape of Trust video also details structural racism at the overlap of the education and criminal legal systems.
- Read [Brief Thoughts, I: Movement as Liberatory Space](#) by Adrienne Maree Brown on her blog.
- Ask participants to reflect on how Adrienne Maree Brown's blog affected their reading of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights article on climate justice.

Facilitation Materials

- **Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing:**
 - Chalk pastels in a range of colors; water colors; crayons. Quantity depends on the number of participants.
 - Artist tape or blue painter's tape.
 - Mural paper. Consider a paper sheet weight of 80–100 lb or more with a slight “tooth” (aka texture) that will help hold the pastel. If you have questions, ask your local art supply store for advice.
 - Consider cutting a mural that will fit within a circle of participants positioned 2+ feet apart from each other around the perimeter. Try visualizing how big that might be. It's okay if the mural is a bit longer than the diameter of the participant circle.
- **Web of Structural Racism & Oppression:**
 - A ball or spool of yarn that can be unwound easily.
 - Artist tape or blue painter's tape.
 - Scissors.
 - A wide marker.
 - Blank pieces of paper, about 4.25 x 5.5 inches each, that are thick enough to write on with a marker (you might use half sheets of 8.5 x 11 cardstock).
 - Note: The thicker paper and wide marker are recommended so participants, when gathered in a circle, can see the words from the other side of the circle.
 - A large, physical space with a firm floor or a long set of tables where you can place the mural paper, and that can get a little dirty (from the chalk pastel). Make sure the entire group can fit standing or seated in a circle.
 - [4 Types of Racism](#) handout.
 - The Shape of Trust Video Facilitation Guide, “Glossary”.

ACCESSIBILITY

As you prepare for this activity, check in with participants regarding their access needs. Asking about access needs always facilitates more inclusive learning spaces, and should be a standard practice in all kinds of learning environments. In this activity, some participants, such as those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices

or experiencing injury or illness, may need to work on the mural on a table instead of the wall or floor. People with low vision may have difficulty seeing the mural and may benefit from increased lighting, larger visual elements, and higher contrast.

HOW IT WORKS

PART 1: THE WEB OF INTERCONNECTION & WELLBEING

PREPARE/THINK/CONNECT (2 min)

Prepare ahead: Tape the mural paper flat to the floor, wall, or to a grouping of tables. You will be moving the mural to a (different) place later, so keep that in mind as you consider how much tape you use to hold it in place.

Ask participants to think of a living system they love, and silently visualize that system in-balance and at-ease. They might choose

a human or a non-human living system, such as a river, animal, mountain range, plant, etc.

Invite participants to connect with that living system they love and notice what comes up in their own bodies as they experience the ease and balance they are witnessing. How do they feel as they engage in this connection?

CREATE TOGETHER (30 min)

Tell participants that they will have 20–30 minutes to collaborate on a large mural that portrays a Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing. Ask them to refrain from using words as they do this. You may

also choose to ask them to stay silent. Show them the materials they will have to use: large mural paper and whatever drawing or painting materials you've chosen from the materials list.

HOW IT WORKS (continued)

SHARE/REFLECT (30 min)

Upon completion of the mural, ask participants to move back and take in what they have co-created. Invite a few comments about the art they have made together:

- What do you notice in this mural?
- What feelings and/or ideas does it convey?
- How does it tell the story of the co-creative process you just experienced?
- What was the co-creative process like? What did you notice about yourself and how you created in relationship with others?
- Do you currently experience these qualities in any group work in your workplace?
- How might bringing these qualities to group processes such as the development of programs, policies, procedures, and budgets change the content and impact of those things? How might this support anti-racism, racial equity, and social justice?

Next, invite them to reflect on their wordless group process and consider questions such as:

- What brings us together? What creates a sense of belonging?
- What is inherent in us as creative, living beings? How do we co-create?
- What is possible when we are connected to our creativity, our bodies, and the interconnection between us?
- How do we communicate as a group when we aren't using words?
- What does any of this have to do with our individual and collective health and wellbeing?
- What does any of this have to do with trust?

Make sure to save the mural for use in Part 3.

BREAK

The break between Part 1 and Part 2 can be 10–15 minutes, a lunch break, or even overnight. Part 2 and Part 3 are designed to be facilitated together, although you may choose to take a brief break between them. We recommend having Parts 2 and 3 follow no more than a day after Part 1.

HOW IT WORKS

PART 2: THE WEB OF STRUCTURAL RACISM & OPPRESSION

PREPARE / MOVE / EXPLAIN (4 min)

Make sure you have prepared all of the supplies in “Facilitation Materials”, above. The paper should be cut to size and short pieces of tape should be ready to use.

Ask participants to get into a circle with a little bit of space (1–2 feet) between them.

Let participants know that in a moment, the group is going to construct a Web of Structural Racism & Oppression. Name that talking about racism is painful, especially for BIPOC, and that it is important that the tone of the conversation you’re about to have is connected to the real physical, economic, emotional, and spiritual impacts on BIPOC. Invite everyone to continue to notice the

energy in the room and to keep each other’s health and wellbeing front and center.

As a facilitator, be mindful of discussions bringing up strong emotions and even trauma responses from participants. See the Guide, “Providing a Content Warning: Racism, Sexism, and Other Forms of Oppression”, for some resources to support you. Remind participants to notice the difference between discomfort about participation and actual or potential harm from the impact of talking about so many examples of structural racism. BIPOC participants may opt to be present without offering ideas if that feels most supportive.

REVIEW/EXPLAIN (7 min)

Briefly review the handout [4 Types of Racism](#).

Explain to participants that together, they will construct a Web of Structural Racism & Oppression by passing yarn across the circle

as they name the institutional racism of one system and connect it to the institutional racism of another system, thus forming a web of structural racism — the overlapping racism of two or more institutions.

START WEB (10 min)

Use an example to demonstrate how it’s done: Invite someone to name a system (e.g. education, housing, transportation, healthcare, etc.) and share a few examples of the institutional racism in that system. Encourage people to name the intersections of racism and other forms of oppression, such as how a policy or procedure has a particular impact on BIPOC children with cognitive disabilities or how anti-Blackness or anti-Indigeneity affect women and non-binary people.

For example, if someone chooses the educational system, write “EDUCATION” on one of the pieces of paper and tape it to the beginning of the ball of yarn. Have that person hold that end of the yarn up so “EDUCATION” faces inside the circle where everyone else can see it. You will want to write the system name large enough for people to be able to read it from the other side of the circle.

Ask the person holding the first system to name 2–3 examples of institutional racism within that system. If they are discussing

education, they might talk about how BIPOC youth are disproportionately disciplined for the same behaviors as their white counterparts or how BIPOC youth are more likely to attend schools that are underfunded.

Invite someone else to name a system whose policies, practices, procedures, patterns, or budgetary decisions overlap with the education system. For example, the criminal legal system. Pass the ball of yarn to them, write “CRIMINAL LEGAL” on one of the pieces of paper and tape it to the part of the yarn that they are holding. There should now be a relatively taut line of yarn between “EDUCATION” and “CRIMINAL LEGAL”.

Now, ask the person holding the second system to share 2–3 ways that institutional racism in the second system overlaps with the first system. For example, how racism in the criminal legal system overlaps with racism in the education system.

HOW IT WORKS (continued)

WEAVE (35 min)

Ask the group if someone can think of another system whose policies, practices, procedures, patterns, or budgetary decisions overlap with the criminal legal system. Repeat the same steps as before: pass the ball of yarn to them, write the name of the system on one of the pieces of paper, and tape it to the part of the yarn they are holding. Give each person 1-2 minutes to share a few examples of overlap.

You can now see the web begin to emerge: The institutional racism of multiple systems criss-cross and touch repeatedly, in asymmetrical ways.

Continue until all people have shared or there are enough systems named that a visible web emerges. If time remains and participants who have named systems want to name another one, and the group feels they want to include this one, invite someone who hasn't yet named a system to hold the sign and yarn. If everyone has named a system, you can have people double up.

Keep the conversation and the web focused on structural racism. If the person sharing veers away from connections to the system that was just named, remind them to name examples of institutional racism that connect their system with the previous system. Similarly, when you ask for somebody to name a new system, reiterate that you're looking for something that has explicit connections to the system that came before. By encouraging the group to name those explicit connections you are helping them build their collective understanding of structural racism and its impacts.

Before taking a break, invite participants to share a moment of silence and, if they choose, to take a few deep, slow breaths. Invite them to check in with themselves to notice what they are feeling in their bodies.

This may be a time for BIPOC facilitators to offer a separate healing-focused moment for BIPOC: If not already in a voluntary, optional BIPOC caucus or an all-BIPOC group, offer a voluntary, optional space for BIPOC to come together. This moment could look like a quiet space for collective breathing, journaling, or some time to share reflections and feelings. If there isn't time to break into a group, offer an opportunity for BIPOC to self-reflect and journal.

Some questions you might offer, from the [BIPOC Journal for Healing & Liberation](#) by Alina Liao of Zenit; Astrologist, Activist, and Life Coach Tracey L. Rogers; and Kimberly Díaz and Andrew Daub of oneTILT:

- How do we communicate as a group when we aren't using words?
- What does any of this have to do with our individual and collective health and wellbeing?
- What does any of this have to do with trust?

BREAK

If you take a break before Part 3, ask participants to place the web gently on the ground where they are located. The group will need to pick it up again for Part 3. As they place it on the ground,

remind them to do this with care to show care for the BIPOC life and non-human living systems that this web harms.

HOW IT WORKS

PART 3: MOVING TOWARD COLIBERATION

This part follows Part 2 and should be done in the same session, although you may choose to take a brief break between them.

MOVE / REFLECT (10 min)

Ask participants to remain or get back into the circle, holding the Web of Structural Racism & Oppression.

Pick up the Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing mural and place it on the floor underneath the Web of Structural Racism & Oppression.

REFLECT (50 min)

Select from these additional reflective questions to support an ecosystemic, strategic understanding of how to move collectively toward liberation. Consider what the group you're facilitating most needs to deepen and expand its learning and practices. You may choose to take notes on the feelings and ideas expressed.

- What resources exist within the Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing? How can we cultivate and draw from those resources to co-create a world in which all of us — human and non-human living systems — can experience health, wellbeing, belonging, justice, and freedom?
- What can we do together — on our teams and in our organizations — to more clearly see, feel, nurture, and move from our inherent connection with the Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing? How do accountability and trust fit into this?
- How could moving from our inherent connection with the Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing affect the policies, practices, procedures, and culture we create and which guides us within our workplace? How might this in turn affect how we engage with the community outside of the workplace?

Invite participants to be together in silence as they witness this layering, with the Web of Structural Racism & Oppression on top of and partially obscuring the Web of Interconnection & Wellbeing.

Invite participants to work with the Bodhi Frame guidepost Behold. What comes up for them in their bodies when they are asked to see these two webs “clearly emotionally, politically, and spiritually, holding the whole”?

- We all live within both of these webs. What is it like to notice this reality? Are there any tensions coming up for you?
- Where do you see the RSJI Truths reflected in these two webs?
- What beliefs get in the way of us cultivating and drawing from these resources? Consider the Bodhi Frame guidepost Believe, which asks us to “interrupt and question our conditions, emphasizing multiple ways of knowing and being”.
- What are our different roles, based on our social positionalities (race, gender, etc.) and hierarchical positionalities (where we are located within the organizational hierarchy), in the organizing that is needed?

Consider how the feelings and ideas expressed in this conversation can inform work that involves planning, strategy, policy development, community engagement, workforce equity, and more.