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Why I, as a White Person, offer White Allyship Trainings – by Irene Greene

Many training formats are available for white people to address our whiteness and anti-racism work. There are differing opinions about anti-racism trainings being taught by a white trainer or geared toward only white people. I believe there is unique value for some white people to do some of "their work" in a white affinity space format.

When we white people do our educational and personal work in white affinity or white caucus spaces, we are often more honest and vulnerable in unpacking our conscious and unconscious internalization of white supremacy. When white people do our anti-racism work, we inevitably center our white experience.

A white affinity space offers white people an opportunity to muck around in our messiness, fear, and upset. We can more freely express and explore our white fragility and entitlement without doing direct harm to Black, Indigenous, or Persons of the Global Majority (BIPGM). We can more easily confront our and each other's white performative allyship and white savior tendencies.

In these white affinity spaces, we will not be able to look to BIPGM for permission, forgiveness, education, responsibility, validation, or comfort. We won't be able to hold back our inner examination to protect the BIPGM people from hearing our racist thoughts. Doing our privilege work together will help reduce at least some of the pain and disrespect our unexplored whiteness may cause BIPGM.

Together, we can learn to understand the roots of our white identity development and increase our appreciation for our ethnic backgrounds. We have space to heal our inter-generational moral injury, guilt, shame, and loss. (Connecting with our European ancestry can decrease white people's tendency to appropriate BIPGM culture.)

Note: It is essential to understand that too much time in white-only spaces can keep us in a safe, artificial allyship bubble. If we protect ourselves from taking risks, we continue to center our whiteness. Being in only white spaces significantly reduces our potential to build personal and professional relationships with people of the global majority. Additionally, it minimizes potential professional and personal alliances in our commitment to decolonizing mental health and social work and limits our agitating together for justice and liberation. True allyship is a verb, not a noun.