



The Truth, Liberation, and Justice Project: Engaging Students in Conversations about Antiracism in Social Work

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The racial injustice of 2020 revealed that the social work profession was not upholding its commitment to antiracist practice (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). In *Undoing Racism Through Social Work: NASW Report to the Profession on Racial Justice Priorities and Action*, the NASW apologized for perpetuating racist practices

and created a framework by which to promote antiracism and social justice across the country (NASW, 2021). Following a meeting of the North American Network of Field Directors and Educators (NANFED) in 2021, field educators Kimberly Gibson (University of Alabama), Julie Navarre (Michigan State University), Julie Kates (Portland State University), and Carmen Reese Foster (University of Tennessee) responded to this “call to action” by developing the Truth, Liberation, and Justice (TLJ) Project. The TLJ Project promoted ethically grounded, antiracist practice in social work by engaging students residing in urban and rural locations in authentic, transparent, and planned conversations about the reality of racism and the movement towards liberation and justice. This article provides a road map for other social work faculty who are interested in creating a free, accessible, and voluntary program for BSW, MSW, DSW, and PhD students interested in enacting their personal and professional commitments to antiracist social work practice. The authors share the structure of the program, materials used, lessons learned, and implications for social work education and practice.

Inception of the Project

The TLJ Project was conceptualized based on the Just Mercy project created by Dr. Reese Foster and executed with Professor Gibson. In 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial injustice of 2020, these two schools collaborated on this project, which brought their social work students together to discuss Bryan Stephenson’s book, *Just Mercy* (Stephenson, 2014), and the racial injustice that is present in the mass incarceration epidemic. The regional Just Mercy model served as the launchpad for the national TLJ Project.

The TLJ Project, developed by Professors Gibson, Kates, Navarre, and Reese Foster, engaged students cross-culturally, racially, regionally, and nationally in deepening their understanding of and commitment to antiracist work in social work. The TLJ Project aimed to immerse students in authentic conversations about racism, with the overall goal being that these conversations would lead the participants to make commitments to take action to address racism in their social work practice.

TLJ Project Description

The five formal goals of the TLJ Project were to (1) foster collaboration across diverse groups of social work students around antiracism issues; (2) encourage diverse social work students to listen to one another about their experiences with racism, both personally and in the field of social work; (3) provide a safe, shared space for students to engage in authentic conversations about antiracism in the social work curriculum and profession; (4) understand the ethical mandate of antiracism in the social work profession; and (5) discuss practical ways in which social workers can be antiracist

in their professional and personal lives. To achieve these goals, we utilized Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2017) to inform the learning activities and materials used. Kolb and Kolb discuss an experiential learning process in which participants receive information through concrete experiences of a subject, transform it through reflection and conceptualization, and act to create change. We included and centered a structure that aimed at maximizing learning by incorporating the following teaching elements: engagement with peers; observation of role models; and emphasis on clear communication, including actively listening, practicing empathy, and providing space for self-reflection.

In theory, the project design was simple: create a curriculum that includes readings and videos to support members' participation in two 90-minute facilitated roundtable discussions. Each participant would be required to join one roundtable discussion in fall and one in spring, and a culminating workshop would be offered in the spring for all participants. The leaders would welcome informal feedback throughout the process, and would disseminate an evaluation at the end of the spring term. In practice, the project design was infused with purposeful decision-making at every stage, which ultimately was the key to the strength and effectiveness of the design and project. We intentionally utilized purposeful decision-making at every stage of the process by gathering input and feedback from leaders and participants.

Project Design: Six Key Steps

Choosing Student Leaders

Prior to developing the formal aspects of the project, we each identified a student leader from our respective universities to join the planning and implementation team. While the processes for the selection of these students varied, there was a standard requirement that the students possess a strong interest in racial justice. Two universities identified students with whom they had previously worked on other social justice projects; one university asked for faculty recommendations; and another chose a student who was already interning with a race and justice group for their field placement. We shared expectations with the students related to communication, participation, collaboration, and number of hours they would commit to spend on the team. As an additional benefit to being a student leader, some programs were able to offer field hours towards their participation on the leadership team.

Naming the Project

With student leaders embedded on the team, choosing a name and theme for the project was the first action step for the group. This was a highly intentional process that the student leaders took very seriously, because the name would also brand the

group. They brainstormed content they identified was missing in their social work education. While the term “antiracism” was trending due to recent events, the group decided against using the word in the name because they did not want to have a vague or general name, which they felt would deflect from the purpose of the group. Instead, they chose to clearly define our goals with the group name, and the Truth, Liberation, and Justice Project was created. The group chose the word “truth” to emphasize that we would acknowledge the devastating impact of institutional racism on our society; “liberation” because racial injustice conversations typically emphasize trauma versus healing for marginalized populations; and “justice” to convey a desire for tangible change and accountability for individuals and for the social work profession.

Establishing Committees

Next, we developed the program’s structure to ensure integrity in our mission and goals. To accomplish this, the team established five committees: the application committee, the fall curriculum committee, the spring curriculum committee, the final workshop committee, and the swag committee. Having multiple committees offered opportunities for every team member to serve meaningfully and to showcase their leadership skills.

The application committee standardized the form students used to express their interest in participating in the TLJ Project (see Appendix A: Application). Each school tailored the application to their unique needs and the program options offered by their university. Applications included key questions about the student’s involvement in social justice work, including ideas about dismantling racism in social work practice. The goal was to identify up to 20 students per school.

The fall and spring curriculum committees selected reading and video materials for the TLJ Project participants to review and reflect on prior to their roundtable discussions each semester. These committees spent several hours studying and reviewing materials for the project. Once the curriculum committee suggested the materials, the entire team reviewed the materials and then met to discuss them before making a final decision (see Appendix B: Curriculum). The discussion portion of the process was important as it created an opportunity for the leadership team to connect and reflect on the material. This allowed time for the team leaders to share their own truths, to reflect on their personal experience with racism, and to be vulnerable with the team members. This conscious, parallel process of building trust and vulnerability was essential to future work with the student participants. A roundtable discussion guide and script were created for leaders to use as they facilitated the discussions (see Appendix C: Roundtable Discussion Guide). This guide standardized the roundtable format, with the aim of ensuring that participants received the same information regardless of which roundtable they chose to attend.

The final workshop committee created a culminating activity that would bring students from each roundtable together to mark the ending of their experience. This committee was charged with securing a speaker and funding for the final workshop and managing both the technical and marketing logistics.

The swag committee created a logo for the TLJ Project. The committee brainstormed ideas and one student leader took the initiative to develop several mockups of potential logos. The team voted on a logo with the words “Truth, Liberation, and Justice Project” written above broken chains. They used this logo to create merchandise for each participant.

Choosing Facilitators

While the faculty leaders each agreed to facilitate roundtables, the chosen student leaders also shared this role and responsibility. Two out of the four student leaders served as roundtable facilitators because their individual skills around facilitating were strong, and they had a desire for the student voice to be present in a leadership role in the roundtables. We intentionally focused on ensuring there was racial diversity within in each pair of roundtable facilitators. Since the faculty leadership of the project included only one non-White member, it was necessary to partner with another organization that had social workers of color who could share facilitation. The non-White member of the leadership team, Dr. Reese Foster, founder and executive director of the Coalition of Black Social Workers (CBSW), identified several qualified Black social work professionals willing to serve as cofacilitators. Dr. Reese Foster attended several of the roundtables as both a leader and an observer to provide feedback to the leaders and to process situations that emerged during the roundtable discussions.

Structuring the Roundtables

In order to effectively provide a brave space for strangers to be vulnerable enough to discuss racism on a personal and societal level, we capped each group at 10 participants and offered multiple date options each semester. It was important to have a structured roundtable, in which the first portion of the meeting was centered on establishing the “why” of the project, introducing individuals, and creating group norms for the space. We explained the “why” of the project through a video with all leaders represented. The roundtable script was created with specific introductions, suggested group norms, predetermined questions based upon the readings and videos, and even suggested answers that the group might give with helpful responses for the facilitators. Meetings were held with the facilitators to review the script in detail, gather feedback, and role play different scenarios that might arise. After each roundtable, the leaders checked in with one another to debrief about the roundtable

and to process any potential changes before the next roundtable group.

For the spring roundtables, participants were charged with identifying an area in their personal or professional life where they could take steps to work on dismantling racism (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE] 2022, EPAS Competencies 2 and 3). Participants were encouraged to think about racist policies that they could work to eradicate. They were also encouraged to use their positions of influence in their respective communities to educate others about exposing truth, enacting justice, and moving towards liberation for everyone.

Culminating Workshop

After the participants completed a roundtable in both the fall and the spring terms, a culminating workshop was held later in the spring. This workshop created an opportunity for students to reflect on their journey together as a collective. We invited a speaker who shared her practical experience as a woman of color in America and how she has navigated the world every day as a social worker of color. Dr. Sebrina Jackson (Alabama) was our final workshop speaker, and shared a powerful story about her upbringing, her truth, and the ability to hope for a better tomorrow.

Outcomes: Goals Achieved

There were five goals for the project, and all five goals were achieved. The first three goals were achieved by the program design. The program was designed to engage a diverse group of social work students from across the country; to give them the opportunity to share their experiences with racism and listen to one another; and to provide a safe, shared space in which the conversations could occur. The fourth goal was achieved in the first workshop, where participants were charged with critically thinking about antiracism and its presence in the *NASW Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2022). The final goal was achieved in the spring roundtable, which included an assignment for participants to put their ideas and thoughts into tangible actions to effect change in their communities.

Student Participant Feedback

Overall, 60 students from across all social work degree programs (BSW, MSW, PhD, and DSW) at the participating universities signed up to participate in the TLJ Project. We surveyed participants after the spring roundtable prior to the culminating workshop, and received an overwhelmingly positive response (see Appendix D: Survey). The most consistent response from participants focused on an appreciation of engaging with social workers and fellow students in different regions of the country to learn more about the racial challenges and opportunities that exist in their respective

communities. One participant wrote this about their spring roundtable experience: Getting to speak with other social work students across the country embroiled in their own pursuits of social justice-oriented scholarship felt a bit like coming home. While the challenges that various regions are facing with regard to systemic racism were challenging to hear, the fervor and commitment to antiracist practice and social justice that was shared in our group also left me feeling hopeful.

Lessons Learned from the TLJ Project

The TLJ Project had several strengths, including the intentional program design, the sharing of experiences across different geographical regions, the opportunity for students to serve on the leadership team with faculty, and the affordability of the program, which involved little to no cost. There are two things we would do differently. These include seeking IRB approval and incentivizing student participation.

Strengths

Intentional Program Design

From the forming of the faculty team to the selection of the culminating workshop speaker, every aspect of the program design was intentional and related to the goals of the program. The approach to the application process, which included each faculty member working with their student leader to adapt the application questions to their regional context, provides an example of intentionality and collaboration that was then implemented in every aspect of the program design. This process highlights the strengths of collaboration and the inclusion of multiple, diverse voices and experiences, which mirrors competent social work practice.

Regional Voices

Participants consistently reported that they were grateful to have the experience of interacting with other social work students from different parts of the country. Even some of our doctoral student participants who are deeply engaged in researching racial justice were challenged by hearing others' experiences in other areas of the country. The participants' willingness to share and listen to others' experiences created an opportunity to enhance active listening skills while also demonstrating empathy.

Utilization of Student Leaders

Student leaders from each campus were integral parts of the leadership team and

were involved in every aspect of the program design. The student leaders received presenting and publication acknowledgements as well as the visibility of being a leader for racial justice in their social work program. Student leaders reported gratitude for the opportunity to build a mutually beneficial relationship with a faculty mentor who provided ongoing reflection of their strengths and abilities as emerging social workers, and who could serve as a reference for future education, training, or scholarship.

Accessibility

One of the unstated goals was to keep the project costs low so that it could be replicated by programs with varying budgets. Although all of the schools represented were sizable programs, we wanted to make the project accessible to any school or college program, as an act of social justice. The program was designed to run with no funds; however, we did request a small amount of funding from the University of Tennessee to cover swag for participants and the speaker fee.

What We Would Do Differently

IRB Approval

While the TLJ Project met all its identified goals, the faculty leaders noted not seeking IRB approval as a key limitation of the project. We wanted the experience for social work students to be as transparent and authentic as possible. We felt that this first approach needed to be organic with no agenda except to provide an opportunity for students to engage in conversations around truth, liberation, and justice. By not going through the IRB process, we did not collect data that can be shared and generalized. Therefore, although this project can be replicated, we cannot make generalizations about outcomes.

Participation Incentive

Because the TLJ Project requires that students engage in additional work on top of their required social work coursework, it would have been helpful to provide an incentive to the participants. While some programs were able to offer field hours as an incentive, there was really no incentive offered to students who were not in field placements at the time of the project. Therefore, we realize having some type of incentive for all social work students would be helpful as a recruitment and retention tool.

Implications

With the addition of Competency 3, “Engage Antiracism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Social Work Practice” in EPAS 2022 (CSWE, 2022), it is imperative

that social work programs create deliberate opportunities for students truly to learn, understand, and practice antiracism. The TLJ Project creates an easily accessible and affordable way to achieve this end in multiple programs, or in discreet courses, across the country. When social work students from different parts of the country have the opportunity to share their experiences with racial injustice and work together to create solutions, they fulfill the social work mission to “to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW, 2022). Because of the collaborative nature of the TLJ Project, this could open up a plethora of opportunities for students to begin networking across the country, expand scholarship productivity among social work students, and increase practical antiracism policies and practices within their local communities.

References

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Appendix A

Truth, Liberation & Justice Project Application

Application

Due by Wednesday, 9/1/2021

Students and faculty from the University of Tennessee College of Social Work, the University of Alabama School of Social Work, Michigan State University School of Social Work, and Portland State University's School of Social Work have formed a national partnership and will be launching an online national learning collaborative: "Truth, Liberation & Justice Project" for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Our shared goals are to:

1. Foster collaboration across a diverse group of social work students who are committed to antiracist practice.
2. Provide a shared, facilitated space for students to engage in authentic conversations about antiracism in the social work curriculum and profession.
3. Encourage participants to listen to one another about their experiences with racism both personally and in the field.
4. Understand the ethical mandate of antiracism in the social work profession.
5. Discuss practical ways in which social workers can be antiracist in their personal and professional lives.

This cohort is led by Professors Carmen Reese Foster, Kimberly Gibson (UA), Julie Navarre (MSU), and Julie Kates (PSU). Student representatives are Tyesha Butler (UT MSSW Nashville), Carina Villarreal (UA), Trisha Washburn (MSU), and Pax Charles (PSU). Each school will select 20 social work students, across all programs, to participate in the collaborative.

Program Design

- There will be a topic during fall and spring terms that will include light readings and materials to reference prior to participating in a (virtual) facilitated roundtable discussion.
- Each participant will be required to join one roundtable discussion in fall and one in spring.
- Roundtables will last approx. 1.5 hours.
- A final workshop/lecture will be offered in the spring.
- There will also be a pre- and post-test after each quarter to evaluate the program and the student experience.

To apply, please complete this application by Wednesday, September 1, 2021 at 5:00

PM PST. Social work students across all programs (BSW, MSW, PhD) are encouraged to apply. Students selected to participate will be notified during the week of September 13.

Application Questions

1. Email
2. First Name
3. Last Name
4. Program
Mark only one. BSW MSW DSW PhD
5. Can you commit to completing all assigned readings/videos prior to attending a roundtable discussion?
Mark only one. Yes No
6. Can you commit to attending one online roundtable discussion via Zoom in either October or November, and one in February or March?
Mark only one. Yes No
7. Briefly explain why antiracist practice is important to you and to the social work profession.
8. Briefly explain why you are interested in being a part of the Truth, Liberation & Justice Project.
9. What would you like to learn?
10. What are you hoping to experience?
11. What other social justice initiatives are you currently involved in?
12. What ideas do you have about what social workers can and should be doing to dismantle racism?

Thank you for your interest in the Truth, Liberation & Justice Project! We appreciate your time.

Appendix B

Curriculum: Fall 2021 Materials

Please review the materials below prior to your scheduled roundtable discussion. These materials are designed to provoke deep thought about race and discrimination in America and our journey towards antiracism and healing as social workers.

- [READ] Chapters 6 & 7: *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies* (Resmaa Menakem, MSW, LICSW, SEP) (Approx. 20 minutes)
- [WATCH] *A therapist breaks down how our bodies carry racial trauma.* (Interview with Resmaa Menakem about his book). <https://tinyurl.com/y4breune> (Approx. 12 minutes)
- [READ] Armstrong, M. (2021). From lynching to Central Park Karen: How White women weaponized White womanhood. *Hastings Women's Law Journal*, 32(1), 27–52. (Approx. 15 minutes)
- [READ] Cardoza, N. (July 19, 2021). Confront the weaponization of White women tears. *Antiracism Daily*. <https://tinyurl.com/ybta8tya> (Approx. 3 minutes)
- [READ] Tatum, B. (1993). Racial identity development and relational theory: The case of Black women in White communities. *Work in Progress*. Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at the Wellesley Centers for Women (No. 63). (Approx. 20 minutes)
- [READ] Tenbarge, K. (August 11, 2021). The author of *So You Want to Talk About Race* says a White woman's popular Instagram page with a similar name co-opted her book's success. *Insider*. <https://tinyurl.com/5n85ze76> (Approx. 3 minutes)
- [READ, WATCH, or LISTEN] Cerre, M. (April 4, 2021). "Hate is learned": Tracing the history of anti-Asian violence in America. *PBS Newshour*. <https://tinyurl.com/j8b5nr85> (Video: Approx. 8 minutes)

Curriculum: Spring 2022 Materials

Please review the materials below prior to your scheduled roundtable discussion. These materials are designed to provoke deep thought about race and discrimination in America and our journey towards antiracism and healing as social workers.

- [READ] McGhee, H. (2021). The solidarity dividend. *The Sum of Us*. (pp. 270–289). One World.

Appendix C

Roundtable Discussion Guides: Fall and Spring

FALL 2021

Welcome: Facilitators (10 minutes)

FAC 1: Welcome to the fall roundtable of the Truth, Liberation, and Justice Project. Tonight, you will have two facilitators for the roundtable. I am (NAME) from (UNIVERSITY OR THE CBSW) and I currently serve as a (PROFESSION or HOW LONG YOU'VE BEEN IN THE FIELD).

FAC 2: And, I am (NAME) from (UNIVERSITY OR THE CBSW) and I currently serve as a (PROFESSION or HOW LONG YOU'VE BEEN IN THE FIELD).

We will begin our time together with a video from our TLJ Committee. Trisha Washburn from Michigan State also played an integral role in this project, but she is not included in the video.

TLJ Video

FAC 1: Tonight (or today) we are going to discuss themes from the pre-work. We want to invite you to be honest and to share your stories in hopes of moving us forward as social workers committed to antiracism.

FAC 2: We know that this is the first time that you all are meeting one another, and we are asking you to share your sacred experiences with others. Please participate and share only as much or as little as you feel comfortable.

FAC 1: As a reminder, we desire for this to be a brave space. We want to recognize that we are all growing in our knowledge of truth, liberation, and justice, and we want to be respectful of others' experiences while also holding us accountable to fulfilling our mission in our code of ethics to eliminate discrimination in all forms. This is a step. We will not cover everything. There may be some areas where we disagree, but this is an important step. You each play a critical role in moving us all forward on our journey to antiracism.

FAC 2: So, let's see who is in the room. Please introduce yourself. Tell us your name and pronouns, if you wish, what program you are in, and one goal that you have for this experience. Once you are finished, please call on one of your peers.

Student Introductions: (20 minutes)

Allow the students to introduce themselves. Keep a list of goals to review at the end of the session.

TLJ Roundtable Discussion: (Approximately 45 minutes)

FAC 1: Thank you for taking the time to introduce yourselves, now we will move on to our discussion portion. Here is our first question:

1. Menakem, the author of *My Grandmother's Hands*, says that racism is not something that can be tweaked. Most people believe it is episodic, not structural. What is your earliest memory of racism – when did you first encounter racism? When did you discover that this was structural/systemic and not episodic?

Facilitators: Encourage students to share, but if students do not want to disclose a personal memory, then they can talk about their discovery of structural racism. It will be helpful for facilitators to have a “story in your back pocket” to help start the conversation if there is silence. But allow space for the silence because that tells a story, too. (Facilitators, please be mindful that the identity of the students will impact/influence what they share; please always bring the conversation back to the issue of racism, not other forms of discrimination.)

2. **FAC 2:** In Chapter 6, pp. 89–90, of *My Grandmother's Hands*, the author states: “Dark-skinned immigrants to the US sometimes ask, ‘Why are so many of us doing well after being here only a few years, while so many African Americans are doing badly, even though their ancestors were here for centuries?’ When asked out of genuine curiosity and concern, rather than hatred or dismissiveness, it’s a valid question – and an important one.” What type of explanation does the author give for this question? Do you agree with his explanation?

Facilitators: This conversation should center around historical and collective trauma. Menakem writes: “The answer to why so many of us have difficulties is because our ancestors spent centuries here under unrelentingly brutal conditions. Generation after generation, our bodies stored trauma and intense survival energy and passed this on to our children and grandchildren” (p. 89). He goes on to talk about the systematic brutalization of the Black body. So, make sure that trauma is at the forefront of this conversation. In addition, he talks about the fact that African American ancestors did not choose to come to America like other immigrants, but were stolen/kidnapped and forced to come. **Please also mention in the conversation that while the trauma was passed down, so was “resilience and love.”

3. **FAC 1:** Think about the article by Nicole Cardoza, “Confront the Weaponization of White Women.” Think about the TikTok Trend where the White woman pretends to cry and says that a Black woman assaulted her. Cardoza says: “When White women weaponize their emotions to cause harm against people of color, they perpetuate the same systemic oppression they often claim to oppose.” What are some other examples of how White women have weaponized their tears? And why do you think this happens so frequently?

Facilitators: (As students share their experiences, you can also remind them of the example in the Cardoza reading of Amy Cooper who called the police on Christopher Cooper in Central Park. Of course, mentioning Emmitt Till is another key example, as is the Tulsa Massacre that started from the accusation of a White woman.) Talk about the power dynamics and how White women use their tears as a way to receive power and attention, at the expense of a Black life. **Most of the White women in the group will probably say things like “if this happens, it is subconscious.” If this statement comes up, it is important to point out that while it may be subconscious, as we study and learn the historical damage of White women’s tears, it is imperative that we correct that – that we make White women aware of the damage that their tears can inflict on Black people.

You can recall from Cardoza’s text Joan Williams’s concept of “compensatory subordination” here as a way to explore the ways in which White women weaponize their axis of advantage (Whiteness) in order to compensate for their axis of disadvantage (gender). In this way, White women’s tears are a tool to gain some control and power in a society that is not only White supremacist, but starkly patriarchal as well.

This also may lead to a conversation about interracial relationships, because some of the examples are of White women accusing Black men of flirting with them or wanting to be with them. So, it is possible that you can ask a follow-up question about how interracial relationships are viewed when they consist of a White woman and a Black man.

4. **FAC 2:** Menakem says in *My Grandmother’s Hands* that “Many White Americans need to be confronted – firmly and compassionately – on their White fragility. Much of that fragility is a trauma-driven, lizard-brain defensiveness that quickly fights, flees from, or freezes out all such caring confrontation.” What happens when White people are confronted with their fragility? As we discuss this, also think about the images in the article “From Lynching to Central Park Karen”: Central Park Karen, Road Rage Karen, BBQ Becky, Permit Patty. What did that

confrontation look like? Would anybody like to share about how confronting White individuals has affected their relationships with White people?

Facilitators: (You may need to clarify the term “lizard-brain.” The lizard-brain is described in the book as only understanding survival and protection: rest, fight, flee, or freeze). As students share their experiences, provide space for the conversation to be more personal. People may share about their racist family members and how the past and current political climate escalated tensions in families. You can also discuss the idea of fragility, since it has become a “buzzword.” You can ask White students who may share if they are conscious of their fragility and how they work to respond in a less defensive way.

5. **FAC 1:** As a follow-up to the previous question, what do you think about the CAREN ACT that has been proposed in California, New York, Oregon, and Washington? The CAREN ACT stands for Caution Against Racially Exploitative Non-Emergencies, and it works to criminalize racially motivated emergency calls. Do you think this will help deter White women from making racially motivated emergency calls? Why or why not? Is this a step closer to justice?

Facilitators: This is meant to be a quick follow-up to discuss potential policy related to racially motivated calls. I would not spend a lot of time here, but I think it is important to notice that there is movement on the policy side.

6. **FAC 2:** In Tatum’s article, “The Case of Black Women in White Communities,” she describes racial identity development theory and relational theory as a way to understand how Black women navigate their identity growing up in predominantly White communities. Tatum makes the claim that in order to develop mutuality between Black and White women, White women, in particular, must be able to “hear, see, and understand the authentic experience” of their Black friends, even if it exposes the White woman’s own racial tendencies. Jordan, another author quoted in the article, uses the term “stretching” to indicate that White women have to stretch to understand their own privilege and racism instead of leaving it out of the conversation. If they are not willing to recognize their racial tendencies (and subsequently their own privilege), then mutuality is not possible. Do you agree or disagree with this notion, and why?

Facilitators: Give space for both the Black women or women of color and the White women to answer the question. Expect people to share about understanding their White privilege and feeling guilt over that. Expect for Black students to share experiences when their White friends reacted in a patronizing or condescending way, and they needed to retreat from the friendship to find a

safe space.

7. **FAC 1:** Let's discuss the situation of Ijeoma Oluo and the influencer behind the "So You Want to Talk About" Instagram page. The influencer, Jessica Natale, ran a page named after Oluo's book and amassed two million followers. Oluo reached out to the Instagram page to get clarity about who was running the account and why they were using the name of her book. After many exchanges and Instagram stories about what was happening, Natale revealed that she was behind the page, issued an apology to Oluo and her followers, and said that she would take the following steps: (1) She renamed her Instagram page to "so informed"; (2) She halted the production of her book; and (3) She said that she would start citing the information on her Instagram and paying contributors, while also creating a separate page to receive feedback. Did Oluo receive justice in the situation? Do you think Natale should have revealed her identity earlier? Do you think her intent was to capitalize off of Oluo's success and steal from a Black person's ideas?

Facilitators: Expect people to respond in a range of ways: some people saying that this is not justice and that Natale should have suspended her account. Others will say that she went above and beyond and apologized so it should be a nonissue. Emphasize in the conversation the historical oppression that Black people have faced with White people taking ownership of their ideas and how this is a larger problem, e.g., Elvis co-opting Black songs and dance styles as his own; White TikTok influencers using Black creatives' dances and taking ownership of them; the Jack Daniels whiskey recipe that was originally created by a Black enslaved man who just recently was named and now has his own whisky line named after him. Encourage students to wrestle with how to make this "right": what does justice look like in these types of situations?

8. **FAC 2:** Thinking about the article, "Hate is Learned: Tracing the History of Anti-Asian Violence in America," do you agree that hate is learned? Does our country have a history of blaming "others" when situations don't go our way? How do we as social workers help stop the spread of misinformation, especially when a community of color is being targeted and brutalized?

Facilitators: Expect a conversation around the pattern of blaming others in our country, for example, the rise in hate crimes against Muslims after 9/11. Students may give examples of ways that social workers can continue to work towards eliminating discrimination by advocating on behalf of the oppressed. Students may also mention (as the article does) that prior to this in recent times, Asian Americans are seen as the "model minority" and how there was a sharp contrast in their treatment after the former president began calling COVID, the "China

virus” and blaming China.

9. **FAC 1:** *(This question needs to be asked last.)* How can people of color, specifically, Black people, begin to heal from racial trauma? What are you specifically doing to heal from trauma. How can non-Black people assist in the healing process, and what role, if any, should they play in the process?

Facilitators: Expect a variety of answers, from changes in policy, more protections like the CAREN ACT, reparations, and a call for White people to own their historical and present oppression. The conversation may lead to a call to dismantle White supremacy and to engage Black people in spaces where they feel seen and heard.

Self-Reflection (Approximately 7 minutes)

FAC 2: Take a few minutes to develop some action steps for what you can do to move more towards antiracism in your personal and professional (student) life. Create at least two action steps. The first step is short-term: maybe you can begin a journal of joy (especially for people of color) where you write down each day a way that you have joy and resilience despite the collective trauma you own. Another example for a non-POC is to identify an area of privilege that you assume, and work to use that in a way that lifts up POC.

FAC 1: The second step is long-term: maybe you need to commit to confront your racist family member. Maybe you choose to disengage in relationships that are harmful to your emotional and racial health. For POC, maybe you join an affinity group and begin to create relationships with other POC where you are affirmed. For non-POC, maybe you engage in an immersive relationship with a POC or engage in spaces where you are the minority, such as attending a Black church, or you ask to review the diversity and equity policies of your social work school and begin to question your school’s commitment to effort.

Take a few minutes to think about your two action steps, and then we will share.

Sharing Action Steps (Approximately 8 minutes)

FAC 2: Would anyone like to share their action steps?

FAC 1: We want to thank you for sharing and participating in this group. We will have one more roundtable in the spring and a culminating workshop with the whole group. More information about that will be available in January.

Facilitators: Consider revisiting the initial goals stated/shared by students during their check-in and wonder together how this work is connected to them moving forward with their goals. And, most importantly, consider what kind of final grounding moments can you have together before ending the group. Breathe, acknowledge what they have experienced, recognize what they have shared and the vulnerability it took, and to focus on the hope of why we are doing this work together.

SPRING 2022

Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

FAC 1: Welcome to the spring roundtable of the Truth, Liberation, and Justice Project. Just like in the fall, you will have two facilitators for the roundtable. I am (NAME) from (WHAT UNIVERSITY OR THE CBSW) and I currently serve as a (PROFESSION or HOW LONG YOU'VE BEEN IN THE FIELD).

FAC 2: And, I am (NAME) from (WHAT UNIVERSITY OR THE CBSW) and I currently serve as a (PROFESSION or HOW LONG YOU'VE BEEN IN THE FIELD).

FAC 1: So, let's see who is in the room. Please introduce yourself. Tell us your name and pronouns, if you wish, what program you are in, and one thing that you are looking forward to the most this semester.

FAC 2: Thank you for introducing yourselves. Today, we have a couple of questions about the spring pre-work from Heather McGhee's book, *The Sum of Us*, and then we will move into a time of listening to each of you share an issue of racial injustice that you have personally experienced or observed and ways that you want to disrupt the cycle of racism specific to that issue.

TLJ Roundtable Discussion: (Approximately 30 minutes)

- FAC 1:** McGhee gives several steps to creating a more equitable society. She discusses target universalism (p. 275) and the discomfort of cross-racial connections being a source of power (p. 280). Here's the question: Do you have ideas for target universalism in your own community and/or do you have any personal examples where an uncomfortable cross-racial connection was powerful (fulfilling/successful)?
- FAC 2:** McGhee discusses the formation of the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation effort that brings together a diverse group of people to talk about race, systems, reforming policy, and healing (sound familiar?) What is

your reaction to the conclusion that McGhee comes to at the end of her book: “Since the country’s founding, we have never allowed our diversity to be our superpower and the result is that the United States is not more than the sum of its disparate parts. But it could be. And if it were, all of us would prosper.”

What does this mean to you? Do you think this is true? What steps do we need to take as a collective in order to make this true?

How will you disrupt racism? (Approximately 50 minutes)

FAC 2: We will now move into our time of listening and problem solving. We hope that everyone has prepared a three-minute or so summary of a racial issue that they see playing out and steps to take by which to disrupt it. After you present, the group will have the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions about your plan to approach this issue.

FAC 1: Remember that this is an area free of judgment. We are here to be supportive and to help. May we have a volunteer to go first? Thank you!

Students share and receive feedback.

FAC 2: Thank you so much for investing your time with us through this process. We hope that this experience has been meaningful for you.

Appendix D

Survey

TLJ Project 2021-2022 Survey

1. What was your experience like at the spring roundtable discussion you attended?
2. What did you learn about yourself through this entire process? What challenged you?
3. What could your facilitators have done to improve the experience?
4. Please share any additional takeaways or reflections that you think would be helpful for future TLJ cohort participants.