

Body + Language: Invoking, Remembering, and Embracing our selves.

A guided cross-cultural and cross-generational drawing activity. (1 hour)

This drawing activity aims to encompass the whole self—that is, the past, present, and past stewardship of ourselves—in order to process, metabolize, and make space for our inherited racial trauma. Throughout this hour, our goal is to not only examine ourselves, but also the ways we interact with the spaces we inhabit, the histories of these spaces, and the ways these histories affect those interactions. In doing so, we are Counter-Mapping the unseen, unspoken, and unheard pain we carry with ourselves. While this activity centers those who self-identify as Black, Native, and/or BIPOC, participation is encouraged for anyone of any cultural or ethnic background willing to process and metabolize inherited trauma.

We will achieve this through one 45 minute drawing in three (3) stages:

1. (Re)membering our selves
2. (Re)membering our ancestors and lineage
3. (Re)membering the original stewards of the lands/space we inhabit, and the spaces that have been lost to us, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.

Throughout this activity, which should take in total one hour, participants will utilize artifacts, remembered family histories, oral tradition, digital resources, and other methodologies in order to access, process, and metabolize their cumulative histories. Here, the notion of family is not restricted to biological family. Suggested artifacts and materials include:

- Family photos (physical is best, but digital is fine)
- Family videos
- Items of personal historical sentimental value
- Heirlooms and trinkets
- Remembered important family histories and stories

The aforementioned items and memories will enable participants to access key and keen emotional stimuli inherited in this and prior lifetimes.

Materials:

Materials for this activity are very minimal:

1. A large-enough sheet (or sheets) of paper combined until you have a slightly larger than comfortable working size. The paper size shouldn't be intimidating, but outside of your comfort zone. Paper does not have to be white.
2. A dry or quick dry drawing material (Graphite, Charcoal, Ink, Ballpoint, Conte, Micon, etc.)
3. Something to support the paper.
4. Any water or nourishment needed during the time.
5. Space to work.
6. Any relevant artifacts as listed above
7. Internet access for the activity and means to communicate during

Prompts:

Introduction: 5 minutes

Stage 1: 15 minutes.

(Re)membering our selves

1. Who are you?
 - a. Who are you culturally?
 - b. Who are you racially?
 - c. Where are you from? Or, What is your personal space-dependent history (if different from culture)?
 - d. How did you get where you are now?
2. How do you identify socially?
 - a. Gender/Sexuality
 - b. Socio Economics
 - c. Social Mobility
 - d. Belief system

Notice where you feel the emotion in your body, then draw yourself as dictated by this emotional response. This drawing does not have to be representational or realistic. Let the emotional response guide your drawing. See yourself in relation to how your personal history makes you feel.

Stage 2: 15 minutes.

(Re)membering our Ancestors and Lineage: Think 3 generations back.

1. Who were your Ancestors?
 - a. Who are they culturally?
 - b. Who are they racially (if applicable)?
 - c. Where are they from? Or, what is their personal space-dependent history (if different from culture)?
 - d. Did they migrate? If so, did they do so willingly?
 - e. Where they enslaved, displaced, colonized, persecuted, or otherwise harmed?
 - f. Were they colonizers and/or antagonists themselves?
2. How did they identify?
 - a. Gender/Sexuality (if applicable)
 - b. Socio Economics/Class/Wealth
 - c. Belief system

Notice where you feel the emotion in your body. Without conscious thought, try to envision an ancestor 3 generations before you. Invoke that person on top of the drawing of yourself. Do not attempt to make direct contact with anyone, but attempt to spiritually and emotionally invoke that person now.

Stage 3: 15 minutes.

(Re)membering the original stewards of the lands/space we inhabit, and the spaces that have been lost to us, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Again, think 1-3 generations back.

1. Where, When, and How did you come to be here?
2. Who were the original stewards of this space you inhabit?
 - a. For example, if you are in New York City right now, you are on Munsee, Lenape, and Wappinger Land.
3. Are their progenies still living on the land?
 - a. To expand upon the last example, there are still Munsee, Lenape, and Wappinger people in New York.
4. Do you have a connection to the land, if so, how?
 - a. To further the example, I do not have a connection to the land of New York. However, I do have connection to Cherokee, Iroquoian, and Piscataway territories by lineage.
5. If you do not have a connection to the land, what land do you have a connection to?

When meditating on these questions, notice where you feel the emotion in your body. Connect the land you currently inhabit with the land you have connection to. If they are one and the same, map that space emotionally around the drawings of yourself and your invoked ancestor. If you are a visitor of the land you inhabit, meditate on what you would say to the original stewards of this land given the chance.

Benediction and Discussion: 10 minutes

After completing the activity, take a moment to reflect and (re)member the emotions, feelings, thoughts, struggles, pains, joys, and various other stimuli you encountered in this activity. Where did you feel most of your emotion in your body? Does that space carry tension and discomfort now? Have you been able to process that emotion? If not, take a moment and reflect on what was felt, and where, and perform a helpful activity to release the tension and trauma.

Write down any question that you were not able to answer for yourselves, and seek out a relative, chosen family member, or trusted individual to help you process and seek answers to those questions.

Suggested Supplemental Media:

Butler, Octavia E., and N. K. Jemisin. *Parable of the Sower*. Grand Central Publishing, 2019.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. 1st ed., One World, 2015.

Jemisin, N. *The Fifth Season* (The Broken Earth, 1). Reprint, Orbit, 2015.

Jennings, Willie James. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. Yale University Press, 2011.

Menakem, Resmaa. *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. Illustrated, Central Recovery Press, 2017.

TEDx Talks. "What I Am Learning from My White Grandchildren -- Truths about Race | Anthony Peterson | TEDxAntioch." *YouTube*, uploaded by TED x Talks, 4 Nov. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5GCetbP7Fg.

TED. "Thandie Newton: Embracing Otherness, Embracing Myself." *YouTube*, uploaded by TED, 20 July 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzKBGtf0i0M.

thepostarchive. "James Baldwin & Nikki Giovanni, a Conversation [FULL]." *YouTube*, uploaded by The Post Archive, 16 Jan. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZmBy7C9gHQ.