

Toward Healing Racial Stress and Intergenerational Trauma: *Contemplative, Communal, and Empowerment Processes*

Presented by
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for the
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***“We are each, at the same time,
like all others, some others, and no others.”***

(paraphrased from Kluckhohn & Murray, 1953)

ALL – Our shared humanity

SOME – Our diversity and group identities

NONE – Our unique individuality



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Stress and Human Diversity

- Universal, group, and personal dimensions of stress
- Our stressors vary depending on who and where we are in the world
- For example, women have different stressors than men
 - Women in different parts of the world have different stressors depending on the status of women's equality and justice
- Different types of stressors may benefit from different coping and resilience strategies
- Coping and resilience strategies vary in diverse cultural contexts and situations; what works in one context may not be useful in another



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Types of Racial Stress

- **Stressors related to racial group membership**
 - Racism-related Life Events
 - Racial Microstressors (*aka Microaggressions*)
 - Vicarious Racism (direct witnessing of enacted racism)
 - Chronic Conditions related to Racial Disparities
 - Collective Racism (indirect exposure to current racial disparities)
 - Transgenerational Transmission of Racism-Related Trauma



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Intergenerational/Historical Trauma

- Intergenerational impact of collective traumas:
 - Enslavement of Africans
 - Genocide of Indigenous Persons
 - Holocaust targeting Jewish Persons
 - Internment of Japanese Persons
 - Armenian Genocide
 - Colonization throughout Latin America and Africa
 - Ethnic “cleansing” in former Yugoslavia
 - Apartheid in South Africa
- Characteristics
 - Threats to Safety (violence, threats of violence)
 - Loss and Grief (persons, places, etc.)
 - Emotional Availability of Parents
 - Disconnection from Community (Separation, Alienation, Isolation)
 - Disconnection from Cultural Resources for Healing



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Oppression and Liberation: Collective Wisdom

- *Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds. -Bob Marley*
- *Power is the ability to define someone else's reality and get them to believe it as if it were their own. –Wade Nobles*
- *The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. –Steven Biko*
- *Take a day to heal from the lies you've told yourself and the ones that have been told to you. -Maya Angelou*
- *You cannot keep the human mind forever locked up in darkness. A ray of light, a spark from freedom's altar, the idea of inherent right, each, all, will become fixed in the soul. -From Slave Narrative of William Wells Brown*
- *Breaking out of your mental and emotional prison and deepening the range of perception enables you to link inner reflection and vision...with social political action and lived experiences. -Gloria Anzaldua*



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Effects of Racism-Related Trauma

- ☀ Impacts: individuals, relationships, and communities

Adverse Physical Health Outcomes

- ☀ High blood pressure
- ☀ Increased risk for heart disease
- ☀ Changes in immune, neuroendocrine, and cardiovascular system functioning
- ☀ Respiratory problems, obesity, diabetes, and cirrhosis of the liver
- ☀ Increased vulnerability to a variety of negative mental health outcomes
 - Contribute to greater psychological and emotional distress



(Carter, 2007; Grills, Aird, & Rowe, 2016)



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Effects of Racism-Related Trauma

Adverse Mental Health Outcomes

- ⊗ Depression, sleep disturbance, hypervigilance (Carter, 2007)
- ⊗ Anxiety, paranoia, helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, resentment, fear (Grills, Aird, & Rowe, 2016)
- ⊗ Anger, hostility, negative behavior(temporary and sustained)
 - Anger can lead to both positive and negative outcomes
- ⊗ Symptomatology can mimic those associated with PTSD at times (Butts, 2002)
 - Re-experiencing: distressing dreams and flashbacks
 - Avoidance: affective restriction and the avoidance of thoughts and feelings associated with the racist event
 - Hyper-arousal: insomnia, hypervigilance, and startle reactions
 - Dissociation: disconnecting from the self; splitting



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Culture is part of the soul.

~Duran, Firehammer & Gonzalez (2008)

- Oppression's impact on the soul is an assault on the culture of a people... culture is part of what connects and enlivens us.
- Hopson and Hopson (1999): "soul detachment" as alienation from ourselves, our connection to others, our aliveness
- hooks (2003): "soul murder" as racism's impact that can result in disconnection from and repression of feeling (a way of managing repeated assaults on one's humanity)
- Duran (2006): "soul wounds" as the spiritual-cultural-intergenerational effects of historical/collective trauma; disruption to the natural harmony of mind-body-spirit; disconnection and damage to the soul of the community



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Cultural Soul Wounds and Internalized Racism

- **Cultural Soul Wounds**

- Impact of collective and historical trauma experience that leads to disconnection from collective (extended) self – the part that of who we are that holds deep relationship with persons, places, ancestors, practices, resources, communal belonging, and ways of being that are part of our culture

- **Internalized Racism**

- Believing societal messages of inferiority or deviance
- Taking negative stereotypes as truths
- Devaluing own racial-ethnic group and idealizing others (particularly white persons); seeking approval and acceptance from white persons
- Believing one's own group is deserving of bad treatment



Important Themes for Healing Racial Stress and Trauma

- Acknowledgement and Validation of Experience
- Opportunity for Voice and Visibility
- Connection to group – Countering Exclusion
- Affirmation of Humanity – Countering Dehumanization and “Othering”
- Consideration of Power Asymmetries, Injustices, and Racial Disparities



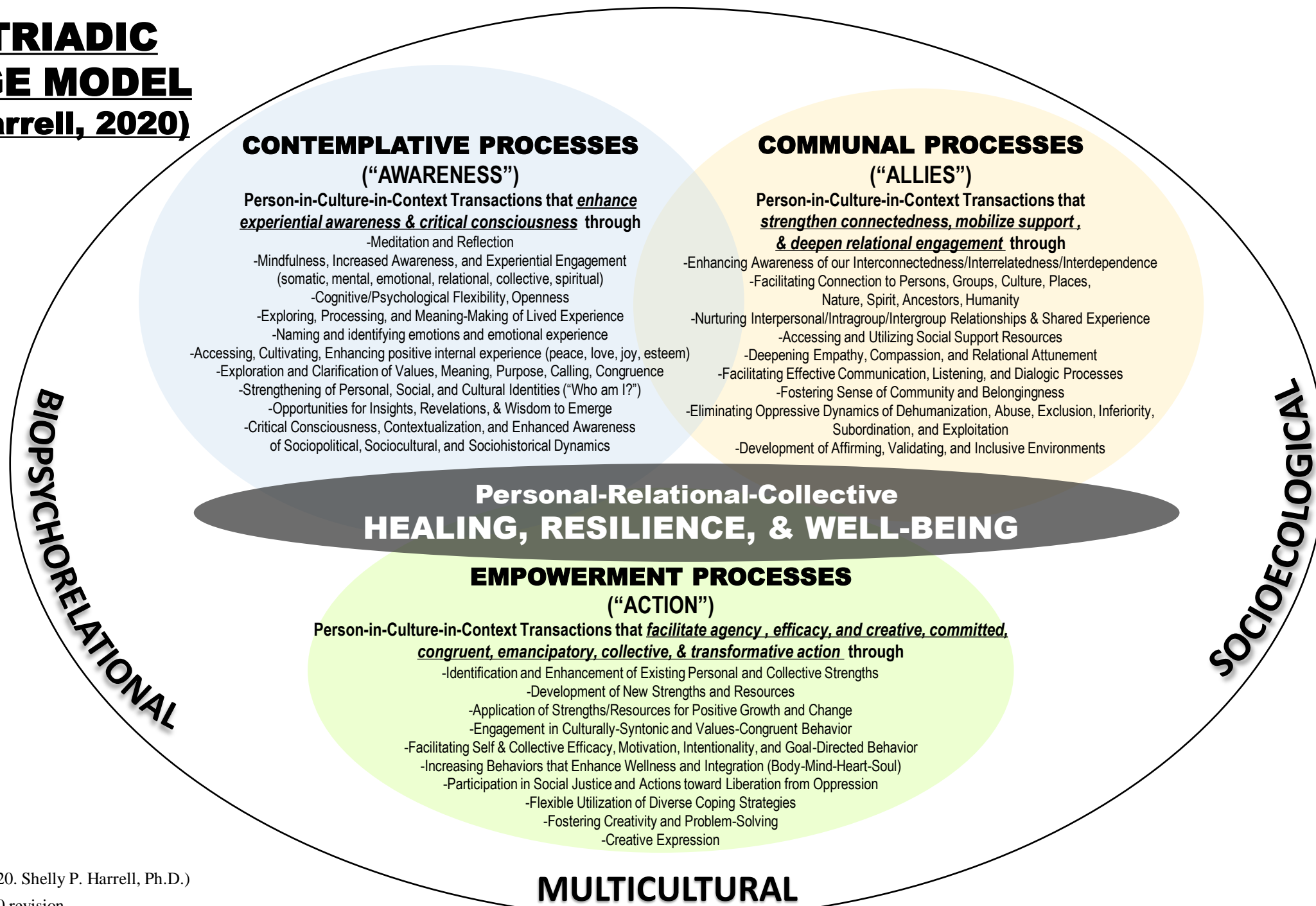
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The Three Core Healing and Resilience Processes

The Triadic Change Model (TCM):
*The Three Pillars of Healing,
Resilience, and Positive Well-Being*

THE TRIADIC CHANGE MODEL (TCM; Harrell, 2020)



CONTEMPLATIVE PROCESSES
("AWARENESS")

Person-in-Culture-in-Context Transactions that *enhance experiential awareness & critical consciousness* through

- Meditation and Reflection
- Mindfulness, Increased Awareness, and Experiential Engagement (somatic, mental, emotional, relational, collective, spiritual)
- Cognitive/Psychological Flexibility, Openness
- Exploring, Processing, and Meaning-Making of Lived Experience
- Naming and identifying emotions and emotional experience
- Accessing, Cultivating, Enhancing positive internal experience (peace, love, joy, esteem)
- Exploration and Clarification of Values, Meaning, Purpose, Calling, Congruence
- Strengthening of Personal, Social, and Cultural Identities ("Who am I?")
- Opportunities for Insights, Revelations, & Wisdom to Emerge
- Critical Consciousness, Contextualization, and Enhanced Awareness of Sociopolitical, Sociocultural, and Sociohistorical Dynamics

COMMUNAL PROCESSES
("ALLIES")

Person-in-Culture-in-Context Transactions that *strengthen connectedness, mobilize support, & deepen relational engagement* through

- Enhancing Awareness of our Interconnectedness/Interrelatedness/Interdependence
- Facilitating Connection to Persons, Groups, Culture, Places, Nature, Spirit, Ancestors, Humanity
- Nurturing Interpersonal/Intragroup/Intergroup Relationships & Shared Experience
- Accessing and Utilizing Social Support Resources
- Deepening Empathy, Compassion, and Relational Attunement
- Facilitating Effective Communication, Listening, and Dialogic Processes
- Fostering Sense of Community and Belongingness
- Eliminating Oppressive Dynamics of Dehumanization, Abuse, Exclusion, Inferiority, Subordination, and Exploitation
- Development of Affirming, Validating, and Inclusive Environments

Personal-Relational-Collective
HEALING, RESILIENCE, & WELL-BEING

EMPOWERMENT PROCESSES
("ACTION")

Person-in-Culture-in-Context Transactions that *facilitate agency, efficacy, and creative, committed, congruent, emancipatory, collective, & transformative action* through

- Identification and Enhancement of Existing Personal and Collective Strengths
- Development of New Strengths and Resources
- Application of Strengths/Resources for Positive Growth and Change
- Engagement in Culturally-Syntonic and Values-Congruent Behavior
- Facilitating Self & Collective Efficacy, Motivation, Intentionality, and Goal-Directed Behavior
- Increasing Behaviors that Enhance Wellness and Integration (Body-Mind-Heart-Soul)
- Participation in Social Justice and Actions toward Liberation from Oppression
- Flexible Utilization of Diverse Coping Strategies
- Fostering Creativity and Problem-Solving
- Creative Expression

BIOPSYCHORELATIONAL

SOCIOECOLOGICAL

MULTICULTURAL

CONTEMPLATIVE PROCESSES ("AWARENESS")

Enhance experiential awareness & critical consciousness through

- Meditation and Reflection
- Mindfulness, Increased Awareness, and Experiential Engagement (somatic, mental, emotional, relational, collective, spiritual)
- Cognitive/Psychological Flexibility, Openness
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COMMUNAL PROCESSES

(“ALLIES”)

Strengthen connectedness, mobilize support, & deepen relational engagement through

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EMPOWERMENT PROCESSES ("ACTION")

Facilitate agency, efficacy, and creative, committed, congruent, emancipatory, collective, & transformative action through

- Identification and Enhancement of Existing Personal and Collective Strengths
 - Development of New Strengths and Resources
- Application of Strengths/Resources for Positive and Liberation-oriented Growth and Change
 - Engagement in Culturally-Syntonic and Values-Congruent Behavior
- Facilitating Self & Collective Efficacy, Motivation, Intentionality, and Goal-Directed Behavior
 - Increasing Behaviors that Enhance Wellness and Wholeness (Body-Mind-Heart-Soul)
 - Participation in Social Justice, Community Betterment, and Societal Change Efforts
 - Flexible Utilization of Diverse Coping Strategies
 - Fostering Creativity and Problem-Solving
 - Creative Expression

The Basic Practice: “The Three Questions”

- **What am I experiencing?** (What can I be aware of that needs my attention?)
- **Who/What will I connect with?** (people, places, groups, organizations, community, ancestors, Higher Power, values, etc.)
- **What choices will I make?** (What actions will I take?)



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Applications to Racial Stress and Trauma

- **AWARENESS:** *What am I experiencing in the context of racism?*
 - Soul contact and soul-level experiencing with particular attention to scanning for ways that racism experiences and their effects may be minimized, denied and opening space for experiencing and processing them
- **ALLIES:** *Who and what can I connect with where I will feel seen and heard in my full humanity?*
 - Strengthen communal affirmation and belongingness
 - Being seen, valued, and included
- **ACTION:** *What personal and collective actions will I take to facilitate empowerment in the context of racism?*
 - Emphasis on intentional, empowered choices in the context of obstacles, barriers, discouragement, etc.
 - Contributing to the collective empowerment



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A “Soulfulness” Approach to Healing and Resilience

- Why “soulfulness”?
 - Healing racial stress and trauma requires connecting to the deep knowing of one’s value and worth despite external circumstances and dehumanizing, devaluing messages of inferiority and/or deviance
- Primary goal: Facilitate access to soul-level experiencing, individually and collectively
- Connect to cultural and spiritual strength and wisdom within
 - Awakening inner life of the soul, being “moved” or “touched”
 - Create opportunities for resonance with shared human experience
 - Integration of music, dance, poetry



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Understanding Soulfulness:

“I Got Soul” (from *Superbad* by James Brown)

“I got somethin’ that makes me wanna shout” (*I am connected to an inner aliveness that is compelled into expression.*)

“I got somethin’ that tells me what its all about” (*I am connected to an inner wisdom where I can find personal and collective truths.*)

“I got soul” (*I am connected to the deepest essence of my being, an energy that stirs and moves me.*)

“And I’m Superbad” (*I know my innate dignity and worth, that I am a person of value with gifts to share in the world.*)



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Qualities of Soulfulness

Well, I think soul is certainly a feeling that is transmitted in one way or another...It's something that's very empathetic—and it's deep. Soul is deep. ~Aretha Franklin

- Psychological, spiritual, and cultural perspectives on “soul” that incorporates:
 - the deepest core of authentic experiencing, the truth of one’s lived experience
 - being “moved” through connecting deeply to experience
 - a sense of aliveness, an experiential or feeling modality
 - an inner resource for healing necessary for “wholeness” (in conjunction with attention to mind, heart, and body).
 - having resonance with shared human experience
 - creativity and expressiveness
 - freedom and refuge from oppression centered in recovery from “soul wounds” (Duran), “soul murder” (hooks), and detachment from soul (Hopson & Hopson)



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There is no such force as the force of a [man] determined to rise. The human soul cannot be permanently chained. ~W.E.B. DuBois

We can cancel the captivity of our soul and destroy the enslavement of our minds by refusing to compromise any of our human rights.

~Adam Clayton Powell

The soul that is within me no [man] can degrade.

~Frederick Douglass

The soul's guiding light still shines no matter the extent of our collective blindness. At any moment, at any time, we can turn toward this light to renew our spirits and restore our souls.

~bell hooks



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Soulfulness-Oriented Contemplative Practice: “Meditation for Liberation”

- Foundation for all Soulfulness practices
- Listening for whisperings of the soul
- Accessing the “healing reservoir within”
- Guided meditation to facilitate seeing more clearly how one has internalized dehumanizing messages of racial inferiority, racial self-hatred
 - Freedom from the chains and shackles of internalized racism
 - Emancipation from “mental slavery”
- Creating a safe space to “feel what’s real”
 - Connecting to the truth of one’s experiencing and discerning inner knowing from the distorted messages of oppression



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SOULFULNESS MEDITATION PROCESSES: *STOP, DROP, AND ROLL*

- ☀ **STOP:** The sacred pause. Creating temporal-mental-emotional-spiritual space; taking a break from the noise of the world and lies we have internalized to get grounded and centered.
- ☀ **DROP:** Dropping down into soul-level experiencing, the soulful, interconnected and transcendent core of your being; deepening attunement to self, other beings, nature, Spirit; metabolizing of somatic-emotional-mental-spiritual energy and lived experience.
- ☀ **ROLL:** Experiencing the freedom and flow of a liberated mind, open heart, and energized soul that manifests in how you live in the world.



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“SOUL” Meditation

- **SENSE** the call of the stirrings of your soul, allowing yourself hear its whisperings and to feel the dynamic and divine flow of what is moving within you.
- **Open** yourself to connect to the deepest essence of your being, experiencing your inner aliveness as you awaken and bear witness to the truths of your lived experience.
- **Uncover** what may be buried, masked or hidden; release all that you have internalized that degrades you or holds you down or separates you from your value, worth, and humanity; continue to discern and illuminate truth and wisdom, welcoming what you uncover with courage and gratitude.
- **Liberate** your soul’s calling and wisdom, freeing its emanating energy into expression as you participate in the emancipation of yourself and others, allowing the aliveness within you to actualize its highest manifestation.



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A Communal Practice: “*Sawubona*” (Harrell, 2019)

- Inspired by the South African greeting “Sawubona”
- Means “I see you”
- Emphasis of this practice is on enhancing and deepening relational connection through truly “seeing”, “hearing”, and “feeling” the soul of another
- Done in a group rotating connection with each person in the group with the “Sawubona” phrases
- Can also be done as a guided meditation



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The SAWUBONA Greeting

- *Sawubona* requires being fully present in heart, mind, and soul so that we can see “behind, beneath, and beyond” appearances.
- *Sawubona* is an affirmation and deepening of our connectedness with each other, with community, with our ancestors, and ultimately with the spiritual life force that is within all things.
- Strengthening *Sawubona* is about resisting participation in the dehumanizing dynamics of oppression that do not see us as whole human beings
- Being seen and heard, seeing and hearing each other, is critical for oppressed populations
- Important to experience self and community as more than dehumanizing stereotypes, conditions and treatment
- Necessary for engaging intentionally and meaningfully in our own liberation.
- Bring energy of “Sawubona” to self and others



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An Empowerment Practice: *“The Soul Circle Gathering”* (Harrell, 2019)

- Access inner resources of power, motivation, and direction
- Emphasis of this practice is on enhancing, accessing and illuminating inner resources that can provide inspiration and guidance to fuel empowered action
- Guided meditation that gathers persons, symbols, and other resources in a “soul circle” to hear their messages and guidance
- Followed by processing the messages to inform choices and actions
- Emphasizes Empowerment with elements of Contemplative and Communal Processes



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Soulfulness Communal Chant

☀ **WE SEE IT TO *FREE* IT** ☀

☀ **WE FEEL IT TO *HEAL* IT** ☀

☀ **WE NAME IT TO *RECLAIM* IT** ☀

☀ **WE GO THROUGH IT TO *GET TO* IT** ☀

☀ **WE INVIGORATE TO *LIBERATE*** ☀



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THANK YOU!

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