

Body, Spirit, and Reflection : Embracing and Metabolizing Otherness

A guided cross-cultural and cross-generational drawing and listening 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. What makes you Other? What makes your Unique?
2. Looking out, to our neighbors and support systems
3. Exchange those drawings with your neighbor

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

- Journals, diaries, and vision boards
- 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.

What makes your Other?

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
3. What makes you unique? What makes you different from your neighbor

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.

Draw your neighbor:

1. Who is your neighbor?
 - a. describe them visually
2. What makes your neighbor different from you?
 - a. spend a moment noticing all their features, and clues about their personality
3. Highlight the things you like about this person
- 4.

Notice where you feel the emotion in your body. Without conscious thought, take a moment to try and capture your neighbors likeness.. Invoke that person next to the drawing of yourself. Do not attempt to force this reaction, but attempt to spiritually and emotionally invoke that person now.

Stage 3: 15 minutes.

Exchange the drawings with you neighbor

1. What does your drawing of yourself, say about how you view yourself
2. What does your neighbor see that you don't see
3. What does your neighbor see that you wish to see for yourself

When meditating on these questions, notice where you feel the emotion in your body. Connect to the emotional landscape you entered into the activity with. Now , inhabit the emotional space you have connected to during the activity. If they are one and the same, map that space emotionally around the drawings of yourself . If you feel distressed, anxious, or upset, meditate on these new emotions, identify them and make note of them for later contemplation.

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.

