

A4BL

AN ACADEMICS FOR BLACK WELLNESS AND
SURVIVAL LIBERATION BOOTCAMP PROJECT

TRANSFORMATIVE ACADEMIC FACILITATOR TOOLKIT

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TAFT
1.0

INVITATION TO A BRAVE SPACE

by Micky ScottBey Jones

Together we will create *brave space*
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”—
We exist in the real world.
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love.
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine
What we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be.
But
It will be *our brave space together,*
and
We will work on it side by side.

<https://thepeoplessupper.org/>

<https://writingforyourlife.com/micky-scottbey-jones/>

PURPOSE, VISION, ASSUMPTIONS

Purpose: Provide tools for facilitators working in academia to set up a transformative space to facilitate meetings with guidelines for how to create and use community agreements.

Vision Statement: Inspired by the principles of Transformative Justice (TJ), this toolkit aims to address white supremacy in academic culture, create space for honest conversations, and reduce harm to BIPOC in academic settings while engaging in anti-racist institutional change.

Assumptions: This is a flexible and evolving toolkit that can and should be adapted for different situations and people. We anticipate that the tool will change with practice.

**TAFT is a project of the
A4BL Liberation Bootcamp
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<https://www.academics4blacklives.com/>

DEFINITIONS

Transformative Justice (TJ)

TJ is understanding the context of the harm and oppressive structures we operate in and working toward Black liberation. TJ is a response to punitive justice; punishing and controlling and doing more harm. It is beyond restorative justice; not just getting back to where we were before the harm. TJ is resilience, healing, and connection. For more information, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-_BOFz5TXo.

Community Agreement (CA)

A CA is a set of statements that become agreements to guide meetings and discussion. CAs require that people give their individual consent to a set of agreements. CAs create a culture of intervention where calling each other in is expected and encouraged. This concept comes from the work of adrienne maree brown in [Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds](#) (2017). For more information, see <https://adriennemareebrown.net/>.

PRINCIPLES

- While this Toolkit is inspired by transformative justice (TJ) principles and ideas, we acknowledge that there are systemic barriers to transformative justice in academia.
- We acknowledge that racism and harm always happens, it is always present, and it is a part of day-to-day existence. We aim to create mindfulness and an honest conversation about how we engage with systemic issues and address them as they come up using TJ principles.
- We work intentionally when setting up the spaces where this work happens. Having a vision for the work, creating community agreements, and naming our values is essential.
- We start by shifting power in the room. Distributing power among all attendees and acknowledging when a person speaks are key ways to do this. As we do this work, we are mindful of racism and intersectional power dynamics, always seeking to center those with the least power in the room.
- We check in on the process and hold ourselves accountable. Remember that the goal is transformation, not the status quo.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

This section discusses how to create community agreements by giving specific examples. At the start of a meeting, it is helpful to read your community agreements out loud. A suggested practice is to put your agreements in writing on the wall or find other creative ways to place reminders in physical meeting spaces. For virtual meeting spaces you can "pin" the reminder on a main page or location in your Learning Management System (e.g. Canvas) or within your online meeting provider (e.g. Zoom).

The following examples were inspired by these resources:

- Racial Equity & Liberation: Move to End Violence, a Virtual Learning Series facilitated by Monica Dennis and Rachael Ibrahim. (See <https://movetoendviolence.org/lp/relvirtuallearningcommunity-evergreen-registration/>)
- Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation (2021) by adrienne maree brown.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENT	WHAT IT IS-- EXAMPLES	WHAT IT IS NOT-- EXAMPLES
Opening Rituals	Giving land acknowledgements; acknowledging local history/context of harm/anti-black racism; reminding ourselves of who we are working with and naming the groups and communities to remind us of the work to be done; opening the meeting recognizing racism; increasing mindfulness; balancing between ritual and freshness	Launching into a meeting without acknowledging people or the space
Active Listening	Constructively affirming people whose voices need hearing; Listening and noticing with all our senses; actively reading the space	Seeking to be the smartest person in the room; being on a cell phone or dividing attention, leaving the meeting
Be Present	Being present, and describing what that means; silencing inner chatter; managing challenges and refocusing	Being on two Zoom calls at the same time; doing other things or work
Push through the Growing Edge	Moving out of a comfort zone to a place of learning; taking risks; when things get hard, leaning into it	Being defensive; feeling you have the answers; not being open to learning from others

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

COMMUNITY AGREEMENT	WHAT IT IS-- EXAMPLES	WHAT IT IS NOT-- EXAMPLES
No Quick Fix	Recognizing the importance of relationship and belonging; recognizing the focus is not just on outcome; acknowledging justice takes time; allowing questions and thoughtful deliberation	Rushing the meeting to the next agenda item at any cost; expecting a solution to happen before the next meeting; expecting someone to tell you what to do
Trust the Process	Defining what the group believes this process should be, checking in how it is being experienced; trusting the process will unfold with accountability; trusting the values inherent in the community agreement	Not acknowledging when harm occurs; not remaining accountable to the group
Learning Space	Listening to students as teachers and learning from them; appreciating intersectional wisdom	Making assumptions and generalizations about groups - especially of BIPOC communities; using statistics for harm
Brave and Safe Spaces	Being able to fail and consider that part of learning; calling in with love; reacting to being called out by making amends; allowing for differing needs depending on the positionality of participants	Not addressing harm; not willing to engage; lacking of awareness by privileged folx in the dominant group
Racism and...	Acknowledging and practicing intersectionality while centering race; being intentional and specific about the language we use (e.g. anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism)	De-centering race by focusing on different intersections of power and privilege

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

COMMUNITY AGREEMENT	WHAT IT IS-- EXAMPLES	WHAT IT IS NOT-- EXAMPLES
Intent and Impact	Apologizing for harm done; centering impact over good intentions	Thinking "but I didn't mean it that way"; failing to apologize for unintended harms
No Right to Comfort	Understanding that the right to comfort is a white supremacist value and privilege; being in a space where you are the only one	Expecting people of color to accept discomfort, while white people expect comfort; complicity in the status quo; giving up when things get har
Culture of Intervention; Recognize that Addressing Conflict is Liberatory	Creating a culture of intervention; handling difficult situations in a way that leads to growth and/or action; being thoughtful in calling people in	Expecting perfectionism; not being allowed to fail; being silent in response to problematic behavior as a consequence of "niceness"; fearing conflict and a loss of power
Move up/Move up	Moving up into speaking for those who often withdraw; moving up into listening for those who often dominate	Maintaining traditional roles
"I" Statements	Speaking about your own experience and knowledge; allowing others to use their own voice	Making generalizations about groups; putting words in someone else's mouth
Closure	Thanking participants; putting in cushion time and being considerate of different cultural norms; asking for feedback from folx in the room	Ending abruptly; running out of time; making assumptions about how the meeting went for different participants

FACILITATION PRACTICES

Passage from "What Is and Isn't Facilitation" in Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation. adrienne maree brown (2021).

"Facilitate: To make easy, or easier. To facilitate movements for social and environmental justice is to support movement workers to bring about change.

People are complex! Organizations are complex, society is complex.

The work of a facilitator is:

- To make it as easy as possible for complex people to do the complex work of shaping change together;
- To make it easier for a group or organization to understand where they are going and how to get there;
- To understand the culture they are trying to create, and give them a place to practice;
- To understand how their visions can be made manifest, and can shape their decisions in the here and now;
- To support solid, authentic organizing;
- And to use every space to dismantle colonial legacies of oppression and supremacy."
(brown, 2021, pg 95)

"Facilitation is a way of listening through and beyond the words being spoken, feeling for the current of longing underneath what can be spoken, listening through the fear, listening through the scar tissue: What is possible? What is the next step towards that possibility?"
(brown, 2021, pg 97)



Address Microaggressions

We need to address microaggressions in our meetings. A helpful resource is Microintervention Strategies: What You Can Do to Disarm and Dismantle Individual and Systemic Racism and Bias. (Sue, Calle, Mendez, Alsaidi & Glaeser, 2021).



Model Apologies

To learn how to use this approach consider The 9 Rules for True Apologies in an article by Harriet Lerner.

[<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-dance-connection/201409/the-9-rules-true-apologies>]



Engage Deep Listening

"Facilitation is a practice in deep listening, noticing and engaging with words, body language, facial expressions, vocal tone, and the energy within the space." (Ejeris Dixon, 2021, p 85). Learn more by reading "We Keep Us Safe: Facilitating Safer Spaces" (see next page for reference).

"WE KEEP US SAFE: FACILITATING SAFER SPACES"

From Ejeris Dixon's chapter "We Keep Us Safe: Facilitating Safer Spaces." In adrienne maree brown's Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation (2021, pp. 83-88). More details about each concept are available in the chapter.

- Preparing to Facilitate: Safety and security Considerations
 - Why you?
 - Understanding Context
 - Unlocking Necessary Truths
 - Safety and Security Structures
- During the Meeting: Facilitator Opportunities
 - Create a Culture of Intervention
 - Avoid Defensiveness
 - Deep Listening [see above]
 - Navigating Unknown Dynamics
 - Interrupting Violence and Harm
 - Adhering to Security Agreements
- After the Meeting: Supporting Reconnection, Accountability, and Repair When Needed
 - Be available
 - Be accountable.

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ADDITIONAL REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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Gready, P, & Robins, S. (Eds.). (2019). From Transitional to Transformative Justice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316676028

Morris, R. (2000). Stories of Transformative Justice. Canadian Scholars' Press.

Sue, D. W. (2013). Race Talk: The Psychology of Racial Dialogues. *American Psychologist*, 68(8), 663.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Videos

Dr. Ebony Green; From Empathy to Equity - The ebb and flow of reciprocal leadership - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASlIRAGq15Q>

Websites

Community Accountability - <https://transformharm.org/community-accountability/>

Community Organizing - <https://communityaccountability.wordpress.com/resources/>

Indigenous Land Acknowledgements - <https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>

South Asian Queer + Trans Collective - <https://www.saqtc.org/transformative-justice>

Sparq Raceworks Toolkit - <http://sparqtools.org/raceworks/>

Transformative Justice - http://www.generationfive.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/G5_Toward_Transformative_Justice-Document.pdf

Transformative Justice Journal - <https://transformativejusticejournal.org/>

Transformative Justice Resource Compilation - https://www.resourcesharingproject.org/sites/default/files/RSP_2019_Compilation_of_Transformative_Justice_Resources.pdf

VAWNNet - online list of resources - <https://vawnet.org/news/how-can-advocates-better-understand-transformative-justice-and-its-connection-gender-based>