



PYE Third Thursday Assembly

July 21, 2016

\*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers! Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is an exciting new format we have been developing where people contribute and discuss a niche aspect of facilitation.

Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!); Goals and Agreements for today's session (please add anything you need/want to the agreements, and hit "like" to agree to uphold these agreements during the session); 4 discussion questions and 4 case studies (posted approximately every ten minutes; answer in any order). I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a pdf transcript posted on the pyeglobal.org website, as well as the files of this facebook page, in a short while.

This month we are discussing FACILITATING ANTI-OPPRESSION CONVERSATIONS

Oppression is the use of power to put-down, disempower and suppress members of a certain social group or category like race, sex, religion, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, age, or class. Anti-oppression frameworks for group processes attempt to help participants recognize oppression and diminish its impact on interpersonal and group dynamics. As facilitators, an anti-oppression framework can support you to: balance voice and power in a group, build bridges of trust across difference, empower marginalized voices, build community momentum for projects and visions, and support your group participants to work together with increased empathy and self-awareness. However, a group's journey to recognizing that there is an imbalance to be corrected can be difficult. These conversations can bring up strong emotions and are sometimes fraught with conflict and defensiveness. Our task today is to share our knowledge and experience so that we can all grow our capacity to hold space for tough conversations.



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This 3rd Thursday is NOT a discussion on WHETHER oppression exists or how it is experienced. It is a session on HOW TO facilitate a conversation about anti-oppression. We will be focussing on structure, activities, and best practices. For more information on anti-oppression frameworks you could start with this link: [http://wiki.freegeekvancover.org/.../What\\_is\\_Anti-Oppression...](http://wiki.freegeekvancover.org/.../What_is_Anti-Oppression...)

This is a link to a collection of further resources. If you have anything you'd like to add to this collection please message me: <https://we.tl/VnSUoAbH5Z>

IT IS REQUIRED FOR THIS SESSION THAT YOU READ AND "LIKE" THE COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS BEFORE COMMENTING IN THE THREADS.

What is Anti-Oppression - FGVwiki

[http://wiki.freegeekvancover.org/article/What\\_is\\_Anti-Oppression](http://wiki.freegeekvancover.org/article/What_is_Anti-Oppression)

[Mayan Patel](#) [http://wiki.freegeekvancover.org/.../What\\_is\\_Anti...](http://wiki.freegeekvancover.org/.../What_is_Anti...)

What is Anti-Oppression - FGVwiki

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[wiki.freegeekvancover.org](http://wiki.freegeekvancover.org)

[Mayan Patel](#) Link in the post above didn't seem to work for me so wondering if that one works?

[Nadia Chaney](#) yes, yours worked. Thanks Mayan Patel. Did the other one work, with the zip file?

[Mayan Patel](#) Yep!

[Mayan Patel](#) Awesome topic I was already considering approaching this topic at Lifebeat next week so I am sure will bring much learning and insight

[Nadia Chaney](#) Brilliant. Tunde James is also working on it in your part of the world.

[Tunde James](#) Yes Mayan! See you on camp! x



[Mayan Patel](#) Tunde James Awesome yay!!

[Tunde James](#) Nadia Chaney I'd like to hear your own responses to the questions too.

[Nadia Chaney](#) I answered a few of them...maybe I'll go back in answer the others

[Silvia Giovannoni Webster](#) Sorry to have missed this! Really looking forward to reading the transcript. Such an important conversation to be had. Always - but so much now! Tks Nadia and PYE!

**\*[Nadia Chaney](#)**

Goals and Agreements for this session:

Goals:

- 1) To explore the role of the facilitator in anti-oppression conversations.
- 2) To learn to facilitate more effective anti-oppression conversations.
- 3) To explore some of the more challenging aspects of facilitating anti-oppression conversations
- 4) To share our diverse experiences, activities and best practices in facilitating anti-oppression conversations.
- 5) To support each other in creating visionary change in our communities.

In order to achieve these, here are some suggestions for COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS to make our time together flow really well. Be sure to add what you need or want AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS. Let the group know or



privately message the facilitator if you are concerned that an agreement is being broken.

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe. If the facilitator finds your comments aggressive or inappropriate in any way you will receive a personal message.
- 2) Be willing to entertain simultaneous truths. People have very diverse opinions about anti-oppression, power, privilege and politics. Rather than proving a point, try to listen to understand, and be willing to agree to disagree.
- 3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often. The questions move around depending on how many people are answering, so please scan the whole page for new questions now and then.
- 4) Maintain CONFIDENTIALITY by not sharing names or personal information about the participants in your groups, sharing from your own perspective, and asking permission before sharing someone else's story.
- 5) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads.
- 6) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!) A pdf transcript of the conversation will be provided. Feel free to continue the conversation even after the 90 minute period has ended.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Lovely to see you, my friends. Check the check in question, and I'll start posting the discussion questions in a couple of mins.

[Mattice Haynes](#) Check in question says May 19th. Is that a typo?

[Nadia Chaney](#) YIKES.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Totally.

[Nadia Chaney](#) thanks, Mattice! Edited.

[Nadia Chaney](#) People, let me remind you, this format can be kind of...branching and fast paced. Don't let it overwhelm you. If you want to stick with one question and just pay attention there, it's totally cool.

### \*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Check-in Question for July 21, 2016: What gifts are you bringing to this conversation? Describe them as something in nature.

[Michael Schacherl](#) Is this for today?

[Nadia Chaney](#) yes

[Michael Schacherl](#) A big rock - smooth and worn on some parts (experience, have read a fair bit), and still rough on others (lots of questions, curiosity) and a big chunk of moss on one side (ready to absorb). Unfortunately, I may get lost in the mountains for a while this morning as partner is very sick this morning 😞.

[Nadia Chaney](#) So sorry to hear that Michael. Sending her lots of love.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Shall I get this one started? I'm bringing experience, and lots of lessons learned through failure and obstacles. I'd describe this as a stream that has worn through a big boulder and created it's own little flow.

[Sobey Wing](#) I bring symbiotic relating forged of networks, efforts in cross cultural relationship building from the roots of ancestry. Image: mycorrhizae



[Nadia Chaney](#) beautiful, thank you [Sobey](#)!

[Ezra Bridgman](#) I'm bringing curiosity, appreciation for this conversation, and interest in practices & postures that will help me create less oppressive spaces when I am facilitating. Image is a chipmunk looking at a colourful stream.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thanks Ezra! I just posted the first discussion question. They don't always show up in order so just scan the page...

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) I'm bringing curiosity and vision this morning, like mists slowly rising up from a lake in the interior

[Nadia Chaney](#) Beautiful Cindy! Great to see you here!



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[Doug Blessington](#) I'm bringing openness, like the sky.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Doug! Hello! Great to see you!

[Doug Blessington](#) Nadia Chaney Great to see you too!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Wow! The house is full of so much power and experience. Thank you all for being here. The first discussion question is posted, and the second will follow soon. <3

[Barb Applepieski](#) Bringing careful listening and willingness to carry messages into my community, like a warm and fuzzy bee ready to get covered in pollen.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Welcome Barb!

[Robin Connolly](#) I'm bring soft leaves of a tree who is affected by the weather. Sometimes still, dry, warm. Other times cold, rustling, stirring.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Welcome, Robin!

[Robin Connolly](#) Thank you Nadia!

[Lindsay Ganohsanohwe Bomberry](#) I'm bringing vulnerability, curiosity and authentic Self

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you Lindsay! Great to have you here.

[Taylor Pearson](#) I, too, am coming in with a deep openness to feedback, observation of & adaption to patterns, and willingness to serve as a channel for the distillation & redistribution of information to my own community.... Like water making its way down the surface of a rock face and into a pool downstream.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you, Taylor!



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[Andrew Nalani](#) I'm bringing curiosity and desire for humans to see each other deeply, like the ocean with it's depth and surface that sees the shoreline.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Welcome, Andrew!

[Andrew Nalani](#) Thank you, Nadia

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) Sky above as in "perhaps"...Half the Sky(?)

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Clarinda! Welcome!

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) Hi - thank you for the welcome Nadia!

[Tunde James](#) Hi all, I'm bringing deep appreciation and desire for this conversation, like dry summer grass. Perhaps thirsty for water to grow green, perhaps ready to spread a fire.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Tunde! Thanks for being here, and for lighting the fire for the conversation in the first place!

[Tricia Sharpe](#) I'm bringing commitment like a salmon's journey; with openness & curiosity like where an estuary meets the ocean. A desire to flow from shallow to deeper. Willing to struggle against currents.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Tricia!

[Tricia Sharpe](#) Hi Nadia! What a great resource, thank you for facilitating this!

[Nadia Chaney](#) loving it. what an exhilarating convo

[Arindita Gogoi](#) I bring in experience, like an old tree.





\*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #1: What is the role of the facilitator in an anti-oppression conversation? How does this differ from other types of dialogue or facilitation?

[Sobey Wing](#) Allowing a safe space to enter into sensitive topics. I like the notion of this conversation as an example that it can be specified that it is a space not to determine whether oppression exists but how to bring an end to behaviors that are oppressive.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you Sobey. If you go to question [#2a](#) which I just posted, I'd love to hear some of your techniques and practices for creating that safer space.

[Sobey Wing](#) It differs from other types of dialogue or facilitation in that it requires sharing a language of anti-oppression which needs to be learned to participate in a positive way.

[Nadia Chaney](#) How do you balance the aspects of teaching and facilitating, Sobey?

[Sobey Wing](#) I think introducing framework, terminology before opening to discussion.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Do you find people ever get overwhelmed? ...actually hold that, that question is coming up!

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Part of the role is to be aware of the dynamics or history we may have with oppression and how others may respond to that, then acting in ways that show we want to connect with others and are taking risks too

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you, Cindy! How do you show your intention to connect and take risks?

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Hmm, it is something in my body language and in listening and acting as participant as well whenever possible. Through games and activities

[Nadia Chaney](#) wonderful. Would you go to question [#2a](#), and maybe share some of those games and activities with the group?



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[Barb Applepieski](#) Not shying away from difficult subjects or topics.. and not telling people what to think, but asking the right questions until the group finds their own way there. Does anyone have suggestions for questions to ask?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Do you mean what questions will bring you to an anti-oppressive framework, Barb?

[Barb Applepieski](#) Hmm.. my brain's a bit fuzzy right now but, thinking out loud, if I'm committed to an anti-oppressive framework within my methodology, any conversation I have in a group has the potential to be anti-oppressive in its traits (even if my explicit end goal for the group is as simple as "explore protest art".) So, if I hear someone making a racist comment, or using a word inappropriately, I can ask questions.. "what do you see that makes you say that?" "what does that word mean to you?" "what might that mean to someone else"? Or I could also just say "ouch!" but then I miss out on the journey. Nadia Chaney awesome. yes. For me, those kinds of questions have helped me keep my own emotions and triggers at bay as a facilitator and helped me to stay focused on the work.

[Arindita Gogoi](#) Sorry for joining in late! I think one of the biggest roles a facilitator has in such discussions is to be able to give a space for non judgement and help the group avoid preconceived notions. Also to help the group stay focused because of the high possibility of emotions clouding non violent communication.

\*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question [#2a](#): What techniques, processes, activities and practices do you find MOST useful in an anti-oppression conversation? (posting [#2b](#) right now, as well)

[Sobey Wing](#) Centering the marginalized or most oppressed voices



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Are you overt about this? At what point in the conversation do you bring this intention to centre marginalized voices?

[Sobey Wing](#) Yes, this would be framed and contextualized first. This has been done later in the workshop in one instance after front loaded concepts before.

[Robin Connolly](#) Story-telling, the use of contrast in honest storytelling. using FACTS as much as possible to paint a clear picture. I found in my experience at HOF when we heard two back to back life stories (one from a male POC and then the other from a young white woman), that immediate contrast was very impactful!

[Robin Connolly](#) \*impactful

[Ezra Bridgman](#) I think about a clear framing that covers agreements like the ones for this conversation + a check-in that allows everyone to express their preferred pronoun / other aspects of their identity they wish to share. So @nadia IMO at the very beginning of the convo

[Nadia Chaney](#) Ezra, I think that openings are SO important in Anti-O conversations. I just posted question #3, which is focussed only on openings.

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Questions, when appropriate, reframing and/or asking to come back to that. I woke right at 8am so am honestly just trying to imagine a conversation at this point haha

[Nadia Chaney](#) haha! thanks for being here Cindy! I know it's early PST! We like to make it possible for our India participants to join in, it's like 9pm for them :) Barb Applepieski is asking which questions you find most useful for framing an anti-O conversation

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Ok and you asked about games! For questions, I was thinking of "what's the cost" even if that isn't asked out loud I find this question is getting my gears moving internally. For the games, I enjoy ones that are quick, easy, and involve movement. I like to move into experiential as quickly as possible as I discover this helps people move beyond their mind and into the body, which maybe helps them move beyond habitual thinking and/or judgements

[Nadia Chaney](#) I agree. Do you know a game called Blind Taps? It's lately my favorite game to talk about power and privilege.



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[Sobey Wing](#) Curious about Blind Taps

[Nadia Chaney](#) I'll post a link. It's from an old curriculum I wrote, so excuse the extra bits...

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Don't know it but am interested to play. It is reminding me of those mice

[Nadia Chaney](#) ha! I love how your mind works, Cindy

[Nadia Chaney](#) here's a link to Blind Taps: <https://we.tl/Llkg3Y7m6D>



[Blind Taps.docx](#)

15.9 KB of files sent via WeTransfer, a free service to send big or small files from A to B

wetransfer.com | By WeTransfer

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Thank you! Can't wait to check it out

[Doug Blessington](#) I had the luxury of participating when Nadia facilitated Blind Taps for our group and I found it incredibly transformative. It allowed me to reflect on my behavior in the exercise and apply it to my life. It helped me see how I was not living my values as fully as I wanted, and how I can abandon my Self when in uncomfortable or new situations.

[Doug Blessington](#) I enjoy exercises that invite vulnerability in a relational and present moment context. eg. "I see how my unconscious use of privilege negatively impacted you, and I regret that. I am often blind to how I harm others, and I am committed to doing my personal work to become more aware. What comes up for you hearing me say that?..." I find that modeling vulnerability in a facilitation role encourages depth of sharing. It also takes the dialogue from the realm of ideas to the realm of the interpersonal and the body.

[Robin Connolly](#) I have yet to play a facilitator's role in this type of conversation, beyond the setting of friends and family dinner table discussions... but just to add- As a person who has



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grown up inside a certain level of privilege, i think its also important to place myself in the conversation as such. To acknowledge that as a settler, I can witness other people's truths- so acknowledging that right off the top there may be a certain systemic power imbalance (depending of course on the group i am facilitating).

[Andrew Nalani](#) Robin, how do you do that without talking yourself down, invalidating your personal power or voice?

[Robin Connolly](#) Thank you for that question, [Andrew](#)! I might have to sit with that one...

[Robin Connolly](#) [Andrew Nalani](#) your question led me to seek advice from the Anti-O Network's blog. I think that speaking about allyship as a practice, and about the constant responsibility to be aware of the impact of my own privilege is important. To consciously and explicitly bring that into the room (as efficiently as possible in order to allow space for the voices we want to center). A really great one to dive into. How not to bring my OWN white tears into the room; owning my story, to serve the intention of creating a safer space to unearth tough questions and simultaneous truths (love that agreement, [Nadia](#)). <https://theantioppressionnetwork.wordpress.com/allyship/>



[allyship](#)

an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a...

[theantioppressionnetwork.wordpress.com](https://theantioppressionnetwork.wordpress.com)

[Tunde James](#) I like metaphors, as recommended/used by Nadia - e.g a visual metaphor of privilege - three people looking over a wall. One is standing on a block, one is standing on the ground, one is in a hole.

[Tunde James](#) [the people can appear to be equally placed, when in fact they are in different situations, or the one on the block could be able to reach higher - while the one in the hole could be invisible behind the wall]



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[Andrew Nalani](#) Placing 3 labels in 3 corners: "Agree" "Disagree" and " Not Sure" then reading out statements that participants have to respond to by walking to the label to show where they stand....then after each movement, participants talk about what they mean when they choose to agree or disagree or remain neutral.....important to remind participants that they can change their positions as they consider other perspectives

[Arindita Gogoi](#) We sometimes do this activity where we have people choose one of the two statements related to oppression. And then ask them to stand on the either side of a line. Then let the conversation flow from there. This is primarily to build perspectives.

[Tricia Sharpe](#) I once learned an important lesson from an Inuit youth in a program I was co-leading. I was noticing that she wasn't speaking much in group conversations. In trying to have a balance of voices, I would occasionally ask her if she would like to add anything. after a few months she told me in a private conversation that made her feel uncomfortable, and asked me why I wasn't noticing her non-verbal cues to speak. I asked her what she meant and she said when she raises her eyebrows she is saying yes. I had no idea! I was able to see then non verbally when she would be interested to share more with a gentle prompt, rather than singling her out randomly. I have used this in other groups with youth who may feel a sense of powerlessness. (If we have the time to talk privately) I will let them know in advance I would really value hearing their voice & perspective, while asking them if they would feel comfortable giving me a non verbal sign that they would appreciate a pause or prompt. It has worked well the few times I've used this.

\* [Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question [#2b](#): What techniques, processes, activities and practices do you find LEAST useful in an anti-oppression conversation?

[Nadia Chaney](#) For me, the practice of using shame is a real no, no. And I have to say, I've seen in a LOT in this work. As if to acknowledge the past requires shame...which I don't believe it does. But, for many years I think I DID unconsciously believe that.



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[Robin Connolly](#) Can I ask what some of the most common ways are that you have seen this happen?

[Nadia Chaney](#) yes, using activities or questions to make people feel like victims or predatory aggressors based on their social location...does that make sense?

[Robin Connolly](#) yes! I would imagine that stops open and honest sharing pretty quickly

[Nadia Chaney](#) yes. It does. It can also stir up important information that works to unlock blindspots...but for teh group dynamic it can be shattering.

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Uggh, this is the worst. I have seen people teach that shaming is the purpose of the circle and that is the best way for others to learn appropriate behavior :(

[Munisha Tumato](#) Hi Nadia! Given this idea of shaming shattering a group dynamic, I'm curious to know how, as a facilitator, you might deal with something like this: let's say someone in a position of relative privilege is (unknowingly) enacting that privilege in a group in a way that's obviously triggering for people in the group without those same privileges. Call out/in? I find this scenario quite challenging - as of late I've erred on the side of calling out privilege (likely because of my own conscious and unconscious reactions to the ways I'm seeing privilege and oppression played out in the larger, global context). But it's certainly not guaranteed that the person being called out/in will not have a shame response/reaction to this. (Does this make any sense? ;) )Nadia Chaney makes a lot of sense Munisha (and wow, so nice to hear from you after so long!) Let's take it to the case studies...they're kind of all focussed on this question in one way or another. You'll see I just posted the first one.

[Nadia Chaney](#) makes a lot of sense Munisha (and wow, so nice to hear from you after so long!) Let's take it to the case studies...they're kind of all focussed on this question in one way or another. You'll see I just posted the first one.

[Robin Connolly](#) WOW!

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Ignoring what's occurring and moving on to what is next on the schedule

[Nadia Chaney](#) word.



[Nadia Chaney](#) I've found the Step to the Line activity super unhelpful lately. PS, for people who don't know these games, check the zip file I posted in the introduction. Most of them are in there.

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) How is it unhelpful, in this context?

[Nadia Chaney](#) It polarizes victims and perpetrators. and it doesn't account for personal power, so it can give a very tilted impression of what wisdom and history are really in the room.

[Sobey Wing](#) Interesting. I can see that point.

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Is there a way the game can be changed?

[Nadia Chaney](#) It's interesting with these games...it's like they come in and out of phase for me. Sometimes one will work...then I think it's me that grows or changes in my understandings, and it's another game that will really be helpful to me...

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) I like that with a game, the teaching I learned may show up in a week or so. Or in a dream. The learning can be so subtle in a game

**\*[Nadia Chaney](#)**

Discussion Question #3: What are your best practices, advice and tips for OPENING an anti-oppression conversation?

[Sobey Wing](#) Acknowledging the ancestral, traditional territory where the conversation is situated. Perhaps any inspiring or important historical context of the space/neighborhood in relation to anti-oppression. Significance of date if anything meaningful.

Hearing from folks what is important to them for outcomes, their preference for pronouns. Accessibility needs.





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Hearing what experience people have with the subject. Hopes/fears

Sharing who is available for support for things that come up. How to get support and how not to disrupt the process ie. white tears

[Barb Applepieski](#) I love the suggestions here - great way to set the intention for anti-oppressive space. Thanks.

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) what are "white tears" ?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Clarinda, it's a term that is used to talk about the powerful feelings of guilt that can come up for people who haven't realized before how their privilege affects others, or the pain that others live with due to systemic inequities. Does that make sense? Our last case study today will look at it more closely.

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) WOW! saw a large piece of art the other day Titled: Renounced Eyes that had a square, blank white square in it that my daughter(i too) wondered what it was about - intuitively the artist may be conveying this "unknowingly" (?)

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you Sobey! Posting the last question now...

**\*[Nadia Chaney](#)**

Discussion Question #4: Conflict and strong emotion often arise in anti-oppression conversations. What do you believe are the root causes of this kind of tension? What advice, principles and practices do you use to handle this kind of tension?

[Nadia Chaney](#) this is the last discussion question...we will soon be ready for Case Studies!!! Yay!



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[Sobey Wing](#) Conflict isn't something everyone has learned is productive or useful. It can bring up past associations with being judged or ostracized. Coupled with that is the daily oppression people have experienced that is more sensitized in these spaces. I've asked people if they consent first to enter this charged territory of discussion. I've also been given feedback that there wasn't enough support for people new to their role as oppressors ie. colonizers so I do consider that but I also am aware of the limits to that.

[Nadia Chaney](#) oh that is interesting. I've never thought about it quite that way...being new to the role. I need to think about that!

[Sobey Wing](#) Learning settler colonial identity is a game changing aspect to anti-oppression i think. Curious how others have worked with this.

[Nadia Chaney](#) I know. There are some great folks out there working deeply with White-folks Anti-O. I'm going to post some names here and see if they chime in! Rebekka Goldsmith, Devin Majkut, Marianna Ani Pinchot, Ashley Cooper, ...would be so grateful for a word or two from you here.

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) it seems to me that the underlying issue req's deep inner healing that comes from a/the process/act of forgiveness

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) it could really pertain to something as core as seating round the dinner/family table - where trespasses have been made over a long period of time w/o any discussions about it - i think that in this case that individual healing/repentance needs to take place b/f sitting across each other to promote change or discussions on solutions

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) reason being is that we'll confront w/hurt as oppose to entering the conversation w/a healed heart/soul

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) I've witnessed that people sometimes experience the strongest tension when they don't know something and are afraid to ask. When they haven't had this conversation before, they may not have asked themselves the questions before and so feel conflict within. Sometimes in groups, the tension is felt and experienced by others as their own tension, when it may not be. It is like the elephant is sitting in everyone's lap



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[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) For myself, as a Facilitator, I somehow can zip up and not feel so much the other people's physical tension. But as a participant, or just walking around having human experiences, I will sometimes feel an extreme tension/anxiety and will have to work through whether it is mine or another persons. Once I determine where it has originated, I can work through it

[Sobey Wing](#) I once happened to have an elephant statue at a conference I was facilitating at and it became the perfect tool for unveiling the elephant in the room.

[Ezra Bridgman](#) I think that we all carry the pain from systemic oppression in our bodies and that these conversations bring that pain to the surface. One thing that I find helpful is to acknowledge and normalize that pain -- i.e. if someone is crying, angry, or upset, that's ok and we don't need to 'fix' it

[Tunde James](#) Acknowledging conflict as a vital part of the process of building a strong group

[Tricia Sharpe](#) Movement & deep belly breathing can be helpful. Also acknowledging tension usually means there's an opportunity for growth & learning, as painful as it may be. Drawing on your intro question Nadia Chaney maybe bringing in an art based activity to allow the tension to express in another form (painting tension in nature..) The Catch the Fire book is an amazing resource. I once had to co- lead a very divided racially mixed group during an exchange on a mid project retreat, and the activities from this book helped us to address the issues, while lifting the vibe and creating cool art at the same time.

<http://www.newsociety.com/Books/C/Catch-the-Fire>

### \*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #1: There is overt homophobia in the opening session of a 3-day residential youth leaders conference of 50 teens and 20 adults in your community. You are facilitating a session on the third day, and otherwise have



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been invited to watch and participate in the conference. Do you intervene? If yes, when and how?

[Sobey Wing](#) Oh dear.

[Nadia Chaney](#) right?

[Sobey Wing](#) I'd be observing the field to note what peoples reaction is including facilitators and allowing pause to see if they caught it before jumping in..if nothing then it may warrant speaking up about it, not allowing complicit homophobic behavior on my part.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Munisha Tumato, it's here. Feel free to make it more specific to your particular question if you like

[Nadia Chaney](#) the question of when and how to call someone out/in is at the heart of this whole topic. Interrupting, mirroring, questions, neutrality, clarity...it's a facilitator's dream.

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Revisiting agreements. Checking in with those who are in charge and asking if they need help rather than jumping in

[Ezra Bridgman](#) I believe there is strength in naming things immediately as opposed to letting them simmer / fester: I would hope to intervene at the earliest possible moment, either standing up immediately and speaking in support of LGBTQ\* peoples or asking the people in charge to make an announcement. I wonder about youth or adults who would feel ostracized if the homophobia wasn't addressed immediately.

[Ray Schöne](#) We can't be 100% sure whether our observation is true or not. So we could raise the topic amongst peer facilitators, during a break, to see whether others had a similar experience, and ask whether as a team we could find a way to diffuse the situation.

[Ray Schöne](#) Sometime the homophobia we apparently see in others is merely our own interpretation and a deeper lying problem within ourselves. So I think humility is important



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when addressing such an issue - i.e. avoiding a top down approach. Try make people curious to talk about it openly and supportively..

[Munisha Tumato](#) This really gets to the heart of the dilemma for me. Waiting, checking in with yourself and the other facilitators - this seems like the right approach to avoid triggering shame in the group and to ensure that your response is appropriate....but by not calling it out in the moment you risk alienating LGBTQ members of the group and allowing the space to lose its safety for them. Maybe the question is really how to call out in the moment in a way that minimizes the potential for shaming...and then having tools to deal with a shame response should it come up.

[Nadia Chaney](#) I think a lot of it has to do with our own inner state when we do the call out/in. If I'm triggered, defensive, aggressive etc I'm unlikely to help create transformative shift...for me my dream is to do it with gentle humour and wisdom...

[Munisha Tumato](#) Nadia Chaney YES, this. ♥

[Sobey Wing](#) Good goal. Meditate before session reminder!

[Michael Schacherl](#) Nadia Chaney I am reading the notes post-discussion and immediately thought of "come from place" (which I associate with Charlie Murphy) and how well I have seen you do this.

[Barb Applepieski](#) I can feel so much resistance when the culture of the camp has already been established... yikes!

[Barb Applepieski](#) Maybe inviting a facilitated lunch/dinner discussion, first with adults, then with youth who are impacted directly (maybe based on suggestions from adults), then with a wider group.



\*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #2: You are facilitating a four hour anti-racism conversation for 20 social workers in your home town. What are some of the issues you want to be aware of while designing your process?

[Nadia Chaney](#) What I'm hoping for with this case is that we build a list of best practices in designing anti-o sessions.

[Sobey Wing](#) Colonial history and impacts, migration history that can show historical contexts of migrants who have settled in the area.

What social issues have been arising that social workers are facing.

Decolonial views/contexts of social work itself

[Nathan Taylor](#) First, "who's in the room?":

- What are the identities of the workers;
- what's an estimation of their prior knowledge of this topic;
- are there existing power relations between each other from work;
- why are they in particular there?

[Andrew Nalani](#) Hopes & Fears basket can be a first step to sharing vulnerability and hearing how people are entering the space

[Nadia Chaney](#) nice one. that basket goes a loooooong way, I believe.

[Robin Connolly](#) great idea! never used this before!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Robin, I think I have a write up of it

[Robin Connolly](#) If you are willing to share I would love to read that! <3

[Nadia Chaney](#) rats, I just looked for it. I don't have it. Here's the essence: give each participant a cue card, have them write a hope for teh process on one side, and a worry or a fear on the other. Do not put their name on it. Write as clearly as possible. Put them all in a hat. Everyone takes a new card AND READS IT AS IF THEY WROTE IT. If they can't read the writing they have to do their best to figure it out before hand so the



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illusion that they wrote it is good. Do either all the hopes or all the worries at once, then do a second round for the others. After, debrief by asking if people see patterns, what stood out for them etc. The effect is that the whole group becomes accountable for all the hopes and fears in the room at a more palpable level.

[Robin Connolly](#) Nadia Chaney Love it! Thank you for taking the time to explain the details :) Much appreciated

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Size of room, location, how to break the space down in order to induce heart/mind opening. Can we smudge there? What are the ages/races/genders of the workers, what level of lateral violence are they facing within the workplace and how often do they get pro-d and self-care. I may not get answers to any of those questions in advance but feel they are key to opening the conversation in a good way

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Ooh, I just re-read the case study where it says "in your home town" Juicy!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Yes, how would it change for you...to be in your own hometown? Love to hear some specifics

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) My hometown is notorious for racism. It has long been the violent crime capital of Canada (don't know if it still is). There are major differences in terms of economics, views on environment, etc. A lot of people are unconscious of the ways they are pitted against each other and a lot of people are blamed on the daily as the reason for why things are so messed up. AND some people truly LOVE the place and are there with great intentions. There was a great speech about how "This land is haunted because it was Stolen" written about this place (Williams Lake BC) and one other place (in Australia). I would read a section of this speech introducing the idea that racism in this place has been around for a very long time and is something we all need to be aware of and address. I'd make it available as a resource - it will take me awhile to find this but I will and will share it when I do. I would want to bring the social workers to a place of remembering something of who they are and why they do what they do. "I am at my best when" is a great ice breaker. I would want to feed them and get them into a space of feeling open and nurtured. They could be great allies and I hope they already are.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) amazing. thank you so much for sharing Cindy. I think that anti-O is by FAR the best when the precise local contexts are clear

[Tricia Sharpe](#) A few months ago at my previous workplace where I was supporting youth aging out of care I facilitated a conversation with co-workers about how best to support the first nations youth & families. The FN community is divided over treaty process and is impacting where youth feel comfortable receiving support. Because i knew everyone in the room was from a different region of Canada, I asked each person to share where they were born, whose traditional lands they born on and if there was a treaty. It sparked a really illuminating conversation for a group of settler folk.

[Barb Applepieski](#) I will say that I am very new to this, and in my limited experience I've found that people generally do not like to be told what to do, or how to think. Especially when they consider themselves "experts" on their field, and early adopters (ie taking an anti-o class). So, I would approach this by harvesting the wisdom of the group. Case studies, discussions, slowly deepening the group discussions by asking key questions. And leaving them with lots of resources for further exploration. Books! Websites! Local groups doing great work!

[Arindita Gogoi](#) I would first try to go deeper into the demographics of my hometown and identify spaces where racism prevails. Also because we have a history of migration in our home town, so I'd also try to figure the group's interaction frequencies with various communities.

[Muna Mohamed](#) 2 things i have to add to this amaaazing thread of ideas 1) it's important to take a trauma-informed lens to an anti-o session. realizing that talking about anti-o for many marginalized groups can be re-traumatizing and ensuring that there are mental health/ wellness supports identified prior to deep diving into any anti-o workshop is important to me as a facilitator. 2) self reflecting on the space you take up as a facilitator. what are your privileges in society? how does that reflect on your facilitation style. sharing some of that with the entire group helps foster a healthy culture of vulnerability in a topic area (anti-o) where vulnerability is needed!

[Muna Mohamed](#) trauma-informed is really important in this case specifically because social workers face such high levels of burn out! we should be supporting their engagement in a healthy way :)





\*[Nadia Chaney](#)

with just 20 mins left in this session, I'm going to post the last two case studies, in case one of them is more interesting to you:

Case Study #3: You are asked to design an anti-oppression training for a local NGO who are having trouble retaining new employees due to incidents of homophobia and racism from staff who have been there a long time. How would you open this session?

[Sobey Wing](#) Have been in a variation of this scenario but not exactly. I would reflect my understanding of the work of the NGO based around it's core values/mission statement and contextualize the intention of the training. Entering into a situation as a facilitator who is a POC and knowing that racism is part of the background I would maybe open with some personal storytelling that relates to how I've seen an org I'm part of work to undo internal racism/homophobia if I have something like that to draw from which I do. I would keep in mind that people may be worried about losing their jobs and maybe name that as an elephant in the room or perhaps ask what that elephant is. (an elephant statue helpful)...thoughts so far..good case study question

[Ray Schöne](#) Begin with 10 minutes of open-ended question about the topic to inspire deeper thinking about the topic and more self-reflection.

\*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #4: In a project planning conversation for a racially mixed group a couple of White folks in the room react with tears and defensiveness after hearing personal stories from people of colour about violent racism in their community. Their reaction takes over the rest of the session. The end of the



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session is bitter and there is clearly a major rift in the group. What can you do to a) avoid this type of reaction in the future and/or b) move forward from this point?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Sobey Wing, Clarinda R. Laforteza, Munisha Tumato, Robin Connolly...this may continue some of what you've raised here today...

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) I like to mention at the start that what comes up for you, if for you, and what you notice is something for you to learn, deal with and so on. I truly believe that but I hope that it doesn't come off in a way that makes someone feel entirely responsible for a crappy experience. I have seen some people attend events that they were so not ready/open for and their behavior/experience could take over as much as participants and the facilitator allow it. There are so many ways this can happen. I hope that bringing people back into thoughts of what we were there for is enough to re-focus. If there was a bitter end and a rift, perhaps there is a possibility to revisit this separately, in one-on-one's or even in a group setting.

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) \*is for you

[Sobey Wing](#) Perhaps this case study could be introduced early on lol

[Nadia Chaney](#) lol 😊 I thought it would be best once we had done some thinking together...

[Nadia Chaney](#) wait. you mean IN the hypothetical group, BRING this case study? lmao

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Totally bring this case study to the hypothetical group early on! hehe

[Sobey Wing](#) Yes, part of the intro as an unwanted outcome that everyone can agree upon



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[Ezra Bridgman](#) It's interesting, this idea of the elephant in the room keeps coming back. In this case, the white folks' guilt/reaction have taken over the session, perpetuating a cycle that leaves a bitter taste in everyone's mouth. Can this be named with empathy & caring?

[Nadia Chaney](#) yes, in some ways I guess doing anti-o IS a way of noticing the elephant. But then...now you have an elephant.

[Ezra Bridgman](#) I wonder if this proverb applies - can make for an interesting metaphor with a groupe: let's notice it and slowly....'eat it?!



[Ezra Bridgman](#) Perhaps diminish its power is more apt

[Ray Schöne](#) Help people understand that our core and common wish is just to be happy, and this is true for each and everyone, whatever skin colour we have. Then try acknowledge and respect this wish each time we see someone else in the eye - using some group or pair exercises.

[Tunde James](#) Maybe the defensiveness and tears are a necessary part of the process, but those voices don't have to take up the whole time. How about acknowledging how they are feeling, and saying (explicitly) in the interests of balancing voice and power in the time available - I'd like us to move on to invite others to speak who hadn't spoken so much, or who have a different perspective.

[Munisha Tumato](#) I really like this approach.



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[Robin Connolly](#) Me too, have felt this working in sessions I've been a participant in

[Munisha Tumato](#) Yes, it acknowledges both the feelings of defensiveness and the larger power structure/context while making space (explicitly, yes!) for voices that don't usually have much space in that larger context.

[Tunde James](#) I like how Robin DiAngelo says that if we are from a dominant group in society we will benefit from oppression, consciously or not - and that isn't about being accused of being a bad person. I'll look for the link...

[Tunde James](#) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktVaZVVgJyc>



[White Fragility by Dr. Robin DiAngelo](#)

Presented during MLK Week, 2016. Dr. Robin DiAngelo discusses White Fragility and provide the perspectives needed for more constructive cross-racial interact...

youtube.com

[Tricia Sharpe](#) As a white woman facilitating these conversations, reading Robin DiAngelo's work on White Fragility was super important for me to understand the dynamics of how this can play out. <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/viewFile/249/116>

[Nadia Chaney](#) She really helped me contextualize my class privilege, too.

[Tricia Sharpe](#) oops - refresh button! I didn't see Trunde that you just mentioned her work.



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[Tricia Sharpe](#) I also recently saw this and think I will use this in the future as a tool.



\*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Well, thus endeth our 90 mins together this month. (feel free to stay, or revisit anytime)

This has been a really useful session, thank you everyone for bringing your experience, curiosity, and witnessing to the process. I love doing this work, and it is so much easier knowing you all are out there doing it too. Thank you for your depth, compassion, insight and intelligence this month. PYE will soon post the transcript and this page stays open if you would like to add anything to any of the posts, or invite a friend to comment.

We are always open to new topics for the upcoming sessions. If you have any ideas please feel free to post them on this page. If you enjoyed today's session please tell your facilitator, teacher, manager, social worker, group therapist,



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activist and social artist friends! Don't forget to check [www.pyeglobal.org](http://www.pyeglobal.org) for upcoming trainings, too, there's some new ones just posted.



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PYE Global - Partners for Youth Empowerment ignites creativity and potential in youth and adults. Our Creative Community Model brings learning alive.

[pyeglobal.org](http://pyeglobal.org)

[Cindy M Charleyboy](#) Great session - went so fast!

[Sobey Wing](#) Thanks Nadia and all! Found this valuable and cool format to try.

[Nadia Chaney](#) thanks Sobey! We started it early in 2014, Kitty Jackson was the innovator, and I brought the structure...we've found it pretty exciting, especially since we have such a wide network of likeminds around the world...

[Sobey Wing](#) Shameless plug and invite to anyone interested in joining:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DecolonizeConsciousness/> Applying anti-o to hippie culture, fun!

[Decolonize Consciousness](#)



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[Ezra Bridgman](#) thank you Nadia for your facilitation and everyone for your insight and presence!

[Tunde James](#) Thank you! ❤️. Later, facilitators x

[Ray Schöne](#) Thanks very much for this Nadia, a great opportunity to learn and grow together 😊

[Ray Schöne](#) Thanks very much for this Nadia, a great opportunity to learn and grow together 😊