



# RESTORING TO WHOLENESS

Racial Healing for Ourselves, Our Relationships and Our Communities



W.K.  
KELLOGG  
FOUNDATION®

*It's a dream  
as old – and as  
important –  
as our  
democracy itself:*

*a country  
where we  
all embrace  
our common  
humanity,  
and children  
of every race  
and ethnicity  
have equal  
opportunities  
to thrive.*





# INTRODUCTION

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For decades, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) has been committed to advancing racial equity in the United States in order to help children thrive. Children – their health, well-being and lifelong opportunities – are at the center of all we undertake.

We know that racism has a powerful and lasting effect on the lives of children, their families and communities. To address that condition, our board of trustees committed the foundation to being an effective anti-racist organization in 2007. We deepened that commitment in 2010 by launching the America Healing initiative. In that groundbreaking effort, we supported communities in healing from the effects of racism and working to transform the systems and structures that limit opportunity for children and families. America Healing led to an approach, a set of practices and a network of skilled facilitators (called racial healing practitioners) for initiating and leading racial healing in communities. Today, that significant work continues through our support of Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) efforts across the country.

Racial healing is a process we can undertake as individuals, in communities and across society as a whole. In healing, we recognize our common humanity, acknowledge the truth of past wrongs and build the authentic relationships capable of transforming communities and shifting our national discourse. Many organizations are taking up this essential work. In this publication, you will see examples of their creativity and dedication. We offer their experiences as inspiration and a call to action. All of us can learn how to promote racial healing and contribute to building the equitable society our children deserve.

**La June Montgomery Tabron**  
***President and CEO***  
***W.K. Kellogg Foundation***







# WHAT IS RACIAL HEALING?

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Racism affects all of us where we live, learn, work and play. We experience these effects when we take our children to school, when we apply for jobs, when we try to rent or buy a home, when we shop, when we interact with the police and more. Racism can affect us both as individuals and within our systems and institutions. It affects our ability to know, relate to and value one another. Systemically, it can be one of the biggest obstacles to solving the challenges we face in our communities because it often keeps us apart.

Facing this reality, communities need tools to help heal from these effects. To heal means to restore to wholeness; to repair damage; and to set right. And, while there are different methods and approaches for leading healing in the world, the Kellogg Foundation worked alongside more than 60 skilled practitioners from different backgrounds, disciplines and cultural and healing practices to co-develop a process for facilitating what we call racial healing. This work was a significant part of our America Healing initiative from 2010-2015.

Racial healing recognizes the need to acknowledge and tell the truth about past wrongs created by individual and systemic racism and address the present consequences. It is a process and tool that can facilitate trust and build authentic relationships that bridge divides created by real and perceived differences. We believe it is essential to pursue racial healing prior to doing change making work in a community. Because, before you can transform systems and structures, you must do the people work first.



# WHAT IS A RACIAL HEALING CIRCLE?

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**Generally, the racial healing process is composed of three parts:**

- 1) Listening**
- 2) Becoming open to one another's perspectives and experiences**
- 3) And allowing yourself to be impacted and/or be transformed by the experience.**

The process most often involves an experience called a racial healing circle. These begin with a group, typically no more than 30 people, coming together to share individual truths, history and stories. A healing circle's purpose is to reaffirm the humanity in all of us. And it lifts up what unites us rather than what divides us, while discovering, respecting and honoring the unique experiences of each person. A trained racial healing practitioner, or a pair, facilitates the circles, leading the dialogues with a provocative question that can lead to generative conversations throughout the process.

Sessions consist of large group work and smaller breakout work between partners, called dyads, through half-day, full-day or longer experiences. The experience relies on intentional listening. It can be an emotional experience and even transformational for participants as it can unearth painful truths and conscious and unconscious biases. It can also raise the awareness, consciousness and empathy among those who participate. Racial healing practitioners are responsible for helping ensure that these circles are confidential, safe spaces for participants to have truthful conversations with one another.

## RACIAL HEALING CIRCLES...

- are experiences that engage the heart
- require the heart to be open and expansive
- reaffirm the humanity in all of us
- acknowledge that unconscious bias lives in all of us
- are the spiritual work of affirming and loving ourselves
- acknowledge (by "listening") the harms of the past through people's stories

Racial healing is not based solely on emotional encounters or conversation alone – such as saying, “I’m sorry” for painful experiences in the past. Rather, it’s built upon truth-telling. One of the most essential parts of a healing circle is determining *whose truth?* We all have our own truth and collective conversations are necessary to help us reach common truths and a shared vision for the future.

And while sharing individual truths requires exchanging stories, connecting different experiences to our common humanity is more than a blending of stories. It’s about co-creating social connections of mutual respect and a common set of morals, principles, wisdom and guidance that is written on our hearts, captured in our beliefs and demonstrated in how we treat each other as human beings.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation believes that we all can benefit from participating in racial healing and that deep, productive relationships can emerge to help our country heal from the effects of racism and racial inequities. This work increases engagement in and among a community and can help develop people into more effective leaders. We believe that we must work together to make it happen. It is not one person’s, one group’s or one organization’s responsibility. The responsibility belongs to all of us.

## RACIAL HEALING CIRCLE PROMPTS

*The following are examples of prompts used in former WKKF-hosted Racial Healing Circles*

- Describe the moment when you first felt affirmed as a human being.
- Share a memory of one of the first moments you realized people are different.
- Describe an experience which caused you to feel that you had the power and capacity to thrive.
- Share a personal story about a time when you overcame, challenged, changed and/or stood up to what you felt was a false narrative about yourself or your identity group. How did that moment influence or change your life and/or the lives of others?

# WHAT RACIAL HEALING CIRCLES CAN DO AND RARELY DO

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WKKF interviewed more than a dozen of our racial healing practitioners, who have decades of professional experience in this space, to gain their insights on the brief (half- or full-day) racial healing circles they've facilitated. We summarized their observations into two categories – what healing circles usually do and what they rarely do. Racial healing is often an intentional, long-term process that requires more than one circle or one day of work to be transformative.

## What brief healing circles usually do

- Provide a safe place to begin to talk openly about race, racism and history or individual/personal experiences with racism.
- Create a space for cross-cultural truth-telling where individuals feel connected, respected and able to tell their story without tiptoeing around their raw experiences.
- Open and grow participants' consciousness about other people's experiences with racism and different manifestations of being "othered" or marginalized.
- Lift up the history, personal experiences and knowledge of people whose stories are often untold.
- Support perspective sharing in a finite timeframe and increase awareness and personal insights.
- Humanize other groups by providing windows into others' truths and individual experiences. Feeling safe to be vulnerable with your truth is a powerful connector.
- Some circles are capable of delivering immediate increases in empathy, hope and trust, contributing to longer-term willingness, openness and reduced anxiety to form relationships outside participants' own cultures or ethnicities.
- Encourage participants to begin taking actions in their communities to bring about positive change.



## What brief healing circles rarely do

- Unpack all of the ways in which systems devalue people of color.
- Fully heal interracial traumas.
- Foster deep understanding of the roles of culture, art and ritual as necessary for individual and collective healing.
- Explicitly integrate lessons from the past with contemporary systemic injustices to maintain a sense of urgency to make progress.
- Identify ways to heal intergenerational wounds.
- Create or sustain a movement that supports leaders, fosters reflection and growth, and promotes people being interconnected long-term.
- Help measure systemic transformation.
- Engage people in conversations about intentionally noticing, shifting and journaling about their own reactions and/or coming back to the group to be held accountable for shifting.



# RACIAL HEALING EFFORTS

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The following are ways that WKKF has supported racial healing efforts.

## Conferences and Convenings

In 2011, WKKF began holding annual conferences for the America Healing initiative. One full day of the four day meeting was always reserved as a “healing day” in which more than 500 attendees participated in racial healing circles. Over the course of the four national meetings, a cohort of more than 60 racial healing practitioners were recruited and asked to facilitate the circles at the conferences using a prompt or question inspired by the conference theme. In addition to our America Healing conferences and Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation 2016 summit, WKKF has also hosted racial healing circles at the national conferences of the National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, National Association of Community Action Agencies, Independent Sector, American Library Association, joint MBA Hispanic and African American Convention, and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.



The following WKKF grantees have been actively leading and facilitating racial healing work in communities, relying on local expertise as well as WKKF's cohort of racial healing practitioners:



**Example: *In Communities & Neighborhoods***

### **William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation – The Welcome Table**

The Institute works with youth, educators and communities in Mississippi and beyond, to foster racial equity, racial healing and reconciliation. Their Welcome Table process creates relational trust, unity, teamwork and cohesiveness in a group of community members with expressed interest in improving racial relations and addressing other community problems. As of 2016, there were 18 Welcome Table communities across Mississippi and that work has expanded into 8 active Welcome Table New Orleans circles through a partnership with the mayor's NOLA FOR LIFE initiative. The circles followed a facilitated process of discussions and relationship building in safe, civil spaces. In New Orleans, six neighborhoods formed circles. Furthermore, two other circles formed: one for mothers who had lost children to gun violence and another for business and civic leaders. When each circle began, participants exchanged personal histories and perspectives, as well as discussed events that have caught the nation's attention. Additionally, they participated in workshops on implicit bias, race and reconciliation, as well as attended weekend retreats. Their efforts helped them to explore their own thoughts and feelings on race and call attention to the need for racial healing in New Orleans and across the country. Each circle created a reconciliation project that has informed, educated and engaged the people of New Orleans.

<http://winterinstitute.org>

<http://www.welcometableneworleans.org>





**Example: *In a High School***  
**Little Black Pearl Art and Design Academy**

In Chicago, Monica Haslip established the Little Black Pearl Art and Design Academy, an innovative high school program for youth, many of whom come from underserved communities. The program helps young people thrive in a spirit of racial healing, educating them on a model based on love, value and culture-centered interventions, combined with a rigorous academic curriculum. She says, “The community is in the building all the time, so students see more opportunities and possibilities.”

<http://www.blackpearl.org>

Watch a video: <https://www.wkkf.org/what-we-do/featured-work/little-black-pearl-offers-chicagoan-youth-a-safe-art-haven>

**Example: *Between a State & Tribal Nations***  
**First Alaskans Institute – Advancing Native Dialogues on Racial Equity (ANDORE)**

When Alaska became the 49th state in the U.S., its Native peoples were treated differently from tribal nations in the lower 48 states. This resulted in significant disparities in health and well-being for many children and families. For the past seven years, the First Alaskans Institute has led its ANDORE project, which began as a series of racial healing dialogues to address systemic, institutional and societal racism in Alaska and create new policy solutions to “shape the Alaska we all know is possible.” Today, those dialogues continue and have become the foundation for stronger relationships in the state – especially for transforming the child welfare system. The racial healing dialogues brought together different groups – Tribes, their attorneys, public interest and Native interest attorneys, representatives from state government and key funding partners that had been suing each other for decades. A key outcome of the work is the first ever Department of Health and Human Services strategic plan that includes a shared vision including the statement “Alaska Native cultures keep Alaska Native children safe.” This work has put children and advancing racial equity at its center and honors authentic government-to-government relationships. This outcome was the result of racial healing that led to effective policy change.

<http://firstalaskans.org/alaska-native-policy-center/racial-equity>

## Example: *In a City & Region* Initiatives of Change – Hope in the Cities

Richmond, Virginia served as the nation’s first interstate slave market; was the Capital of the Confederacy; and Virginia led a campaign of massive resistance following Brown v. Board of Education. Yet, in 2007, Virginia became the first state to formally apologize for its support of slavery. In recent years, communities in Richmond have engaged in honest conversations in pursuit of racial healing. Since the early 1990s, Initiatives of Change, through its Hope in the Cities program, along with other partners brought residents from different backgrounds together to develop an alternative vision of Richmond: that if Richmond could face its history honestly, it might not only begin to heal itself but also serve as a model for other communities. The Hope in the Cities work laid the groundwork for the current Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) effort in Richmond, and builds upon work from the past 25-30 years. IofC’s Community Trustbuilding Fellowship is a five-month module designed to increase the capacity of community leaders to overcome divisions of race, culture, economics and politics by mobilizing a coalition of skilled facilitators, competent coalition builders, credible influencers and racial equity advocates.

<https://greaterrva.org/trhtindex#/trhtrichmond>





## Example: With Multiple Sectors in a City National Compadres Network and Race Forward

In 2014, the city of Salinas, California launched an innovative partnership among government, nonprofits and philanthropy called “Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity.” By combining an approach that included racial healing with structural equity, it sought to bring together all parts of the city’s community to undo what had long felt like “us versus them” and “city vs. community.” The Salinas community knew it was a significant and risky undertaking that had the potential for transformation. Local leaders initiated this bold move toward racial justice in response to a series of racially inflaming events, including four police-involved shootings of Latino men within a span of six months. Supported by the California Endowment, the work involved a training developed by National Compadres Network and Race Forward – both WKKF grantees and thought-leaders on racial healing and systemic equity. Four key lessons for creating change in a community resulted:

1. Support community organizing and collective healing.
2. Balance racial healing and systemic equity.
3. Engage government staff at every level.
4. Build the “we” with shared language and experience.

<https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/building-we-healing-informed-governing-racial-equity-salinas>





# TRUTH, RACIAL HEALING & TRANSFORMATION (TRHT) PROCESS AND FRAMEWORK

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Launched in 2016, TRHT is a comprehensive, national and community-based process to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, and to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism. The design phase engaged 176 leaders and scholars as representatives of more than 144 national TRHT individual and organizational partners, with a reach of more than 289 million people. The result of those efforts is a TRHT Framework and related recommendations and an Implementation Guidebook. WKKF invested \$24 million in 14 places around the United States that are actively pursuing racial healing and using racial healing circles to catalyze their transformational work.

Those communities are:

*State of Alaska*

*Battle Creek, Michigan*

*Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

*Buffalo, New York*

*Greater Chicago, Illinois*

*Dallas, Texas*

*Flint, Michigan*

*Kalamazoo, Michigan*

*Lansing, Michigan*

*Los Angeles, California*

*New Orleans, Louisiana*

*Richmond, Virginia*

*Selma, Alabama*

*Saint Paul, Minnesota*



Learn more at: <http://healourcommunities.org>

# NATIONAL DAY OF RACIAL HEALING

## NATIONAL DAY OF RACIAL HEALING



In 2017, the first National Day of Racial Healing was established by WKKF and its Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation grantees and partners. It takes place annually on the Tuesday following Martin Luther King Jr. Day. This day is a call to action to mobilize communities, organizations and individuals across the United States in support of truth, racial healing and transformation. Communities, organizations and individuals are asked to:

1. Find ways to reinforce and honor our common humanity and create space to celebrate the distinct differences that make our communities vibrant.
2. Acknowledge that there are still deep racial divisions in America that must be overcome and healed.
3. Commit to engaging people from all racial, ethnic, religious and identity groups in genuine efforts to increase understanding, communication, caring and respect for one another.

Learn more at: <http://healourcommunities.org>

# REFLECTIONS ON RACIAL HEALING

*The following are reflections on racial healing from participants from WKKF-hosted racial healing circles.*



- Healing is having the space and place to talk about the harm and trauma.
- Racial healing helps us challenge racially oppressive systems and invites each of us to lead in racial equity work.
- Racial healing is reclaiming traditions that are about love, honor, blessing, forgiveness and sharing and finding interconnected sacredness.
- Healing is having people see you, support you, affirm you and believe in you.
- Racial healing for me is a willingness to have an openness that invites a level of forgiveness that encourages healing on all sides.
- Every time we've had magic in a racial healing circle, there have been four elements: (1) a process of slowing down; (2) mask dropping and people showing up as their authentic selves; (3) deep listening through tone and energy – being able to feel where others are coming from; and (4) experience of listening and being listened to without judgment.
- “A racial healing circle is not just a conversation and more than just a safe space. It is an experience that engages the heart and requires the heart to be open and expansive. It reaffirms the humanity in all of us. It is a commitment to acknowledging that unconscious bias lives in all of us, and it is the spiritual work of affirming and loving ourselves.”



Racial Healing for Ourselves, Our Relationships and Our Communities

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*If you are interested in learning more about racial healing,  
we recommend the following resources:*

Visit the Racial Equity Resource Guide to download the TRHT  
Implementation Guidebook or a collection of resources on racial healing at  
<http://www.racialequityresourceguide.org>

Sign-up to follow the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation mailing list at  
<http://healourcommunities.org>



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