

Statement on Positionality and Antiracism (Sean Horrigan)

As a white trainer, positioned in an academic setting in San Diego, I recognize I have biases. I am committed to being anti-racist and fighting against systemic racism because racism is alive and well in our country and Black, Brown, and White lives are intimately interconnected. As a human being and RJ practitioner, I am aware that no one in our society can be free until we are all free. One of my main goals in this training is to support participants in seeing the connections between restorative justice and racial justice. The training materials and design were reviewed by a diverse, national team of RJ experts. Nevertheless, as the trainer, I am sure to have made mistakes and will continue to do so in my own learning process.

Here is an example: At a recent training I showed a video illustrating the use of a “reentry circle” to support a black high school youth in their transition back to high school after a period of incarceration. I had shown this video in numerous training sessions without issue and provided trigger warnings to prepare participants. However, in this particular training I changed the order of materials and prior to this video I showed a video illustrating a “community building circle” among predominantly white high school students. My juxtaposition of these two videos unintentionally communicated the message that positive and proactive circle work is reserved for white students while negative or reactive circles are used for BIPOC students. My blind spot around what it might mean to show these two videos in sequence without acknowledging the systemic realities about who gets access to RJ, and when, was triggering for some participants who helped me see the underlying message I was communicating. Feedback in this instance made me a better trainer and RJ practitioner. In this training, I welcome feedback in an effort to continue improving the training from an antiracist perspective.

A Word on Self Care and Triggers

RJ is all about harm, which means this training will present stories of harm and how people use RJ to heal from it. These stories may bring up strong feelings within you and I encourage you to anticipate known triggers and engage in self-care. Firstly, ensure you are in touch with a professional, if appropriate for you and the circumstances. If you need to recuse yourself from any material, please do so and let the training team know to not expect you to engage in particular content. This communication will stay anonymous between you and the relevant trainer. Additionally, please take breaks, meditate, connect with your support system, and reach out to the trainers as needed. If there is material we have “required” but is particularly difficult for you, please prioritize your own well-being. Part of becoming an RJ practitioner is learning what cases you want to facilitate and what cases are not for you.