

Embodying Social Justice: Reshaping Implicit Biases with Gendlin's Implicit Precision

Community:

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Abstract

Gendlin's philosophy of Process and the Implicit challenges and integrates the dominant Western ideology, and thus is potentially a critical embodied pedagogy and decolonizing practice. As in-training academics and mental health workers, however much we are in agreement with social justice approaches e.g. critical race theory, we feel a creative lack and in-ability to integrate the disembodied theories offered in academic settings that are still structured within the colonizer's creation i.e. we read the books and write the papers but forget to embody the felt-sense of the oppressed-others experiences. For this presentation, we describe a group practice that uses The Process Model through a social justice lens to shape our embodiment. Gendlin's responsive order offers the possibility of a deepening freshness beyond the logical structures of the oppressor systems. By utilizing embodied practices like Focusing, Thinking At the Edge (TAE), and breath-work, we create an integration practice of sacred story-telling where the oppressor and oppressed identities can meet in an intentional and informed logical order (symbolic, identity) and co-create an attuning practice that opens from the responsive order (fluid, process) forming an integrative embodied movement that begins to re-write social conditioning, thus transfiguring embodied implicit biases based in stale sediments of oppressor beliefs, habits, institutions, discourses, and systems e.g. racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and xenophobia. By creating safety in shared vulnerability between the persons practicing, they become able to shape new meaning that integrates into their bodies from the each other's lived experience, thus enhancing their anti-oppressive response ability in social situations. This presentation is part of a larger project that brings Gendlin into conversation with Liberation Psychology, Ethics of Alterity, and Embodiment/ Somatic sciences to form a communal practice of healing in the phenomenology of the implicit.

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Most of us like to think of ourselves as non-violent and well-intentioned and yet, as queer, disabled, Black, Indigenous and people of color continue to remind us, our good intentions are often not nearly enough. So where is the disconnect? Why is it that our good thoughts so often fail to translate to compassionate, empathetic actions? How is it that we find it so easy to turn away from our responsibility and avoid challenging oppressor culture? We propose Western, colonizer culture creates an environment of on-going oppression by disconnecting our mind and body¹. This can be understood as a natural dissociative response to trauma. Through this on-going impact, we begin to lose access to the healing wisdom of our bodies². Our project aims to hold the question; how can we embody social justice³ and deeply listen⁴ to the other person?

We have been forming a co-created space to explore each other's felt experiences of violence, bias, oppression, and privilege. Gendlin's Focusing and Thinking at the Edge (TAE) have offered a practical frame, while liberation psychology and critical theory have provided the conceptual scaffold. TAE and Focusing help cultivate and structure our experiment, to access felt experiences of living in a violent and oppressive culture, and also creates space to restructure our own embodied responses. The practice has so far framed a sufficiently safe movement into vulnerability to share stories of oppression and privilege with each other. This consensual exposure uses the body and shared environment as a source of wisdom to challenge colonial normativity⁵.

¹ Ventriglio A., & Bhurga D. (2015); Mehta N. (2011); Gendle M. H. (2016); McGilChrist (2009).

² Badenoch (2017); Kolk (2015); Menakem (2017); Porges (2018); Siegel (2020).

³ Much of this idea has been inspired and supported by the work of Rae Johnson, who is also part of a community that is developing training programs around embodying social justice, see <https://www.theembodlab.com/embodied-social-justice-certificate>.

⁴ Using Gendlin's concept of felt sense, Kleinberg-Levin (2008) points to an ethical embodied listening practice that is "mindful of its indebtedness to the voices of others... (and) assumes responsibility for welcoming of their voices (by) silencing its own voice and its words for the sake of their right to speak and be heard" (p.240). In such practice, we hope to recognize voices, both present and past, of the marginalized and oppressed that have been violently silenced by Western colonization, by actively silencing the oppressor voice and then using their privilege, in community with, to lift up the voice of the oppressed.

⁵ We follow Fay's (2018) broad-spectrum definition of colonization and decolonization; that "colonisation equals power and privilege plus prejudice. Wherever prejudice can be projected with enough power and sustained with enough privilege, colonising dynamics result." And "if anyone can be a coloniser in relationships of unequal power where they are the dominant

This process is an example of how we, as therapists, are attempting to better prepare ourselves to recognize our presence as colonized, which is possibly traumatic, when sitting in front of the oppressed other, our clients⁶. We hope to better expand our awareness in our bodies when such colonial conditioning might be affecting the other person at implicit levels. This discernibility might help us to pause, listen, and then better respond to our client's voice, or redirect them to a more healing resource, which might not be us.

The idea for such a project began in our graduate psychology cohort program, where we have had separate classes involving embodiment practices or liberation and critical theories, but not combined⁷. In studying some of the theories we felt we sometimes missed the bodily integration to better practice such liberation styles. We wanted to be able to at least implicitly bring these concepts to our clients, as well as our daily environments in hopes to be informed about the trauma oppression creates, including our own presence as possibly traumatic. We started with an eight person TAE group, including six graduate students and two trainers⁸: one facilitating the group and the other offering supportive reflection. We are still very much in the middle of this group but below are some descriptions of our experiences thus far, and the beginning of a frame for an embodied social justice group.

Unlike a typical TAE group, we do not have our own separate projects, but rather are working through a key question: how do we embody social justice? We share a common bond that informs the patterning and instances we seek. Where we stay close to TAE, is that instances, patterns, and stories curated are uniquely the individual group member's experience but are used as an offering to the larger group and support this inquiry. We also recognize that we are all continually interacting with and

party, then conversely, anyone can become a decoloniser by sharing power, equalizing privilege, and challenging the assumptions of superiority and inferiority that sustain unbalanced power and privilege" (p. 50-52).

⁶ Caldwell & Leighton (2018), Johnson, Leighton, & Caldwell (2018), Fay (2018), Johnson (2015, 2009).

⁷ A salient example of combining such theory and embodiment into a college course can be found in the work by Helberg, Heyes, & Rohel, (2009).

⁸ We offer appreciation and gratitude to Beatrice Blake and Frank O'Neil for their willingness and openness to explore and support such journey, where much of the time we do not know where we are headed or how exactly to move.

responding to dominant culture and language that already presuppose the experiences we share in sessions. Here we draw from Liberation Psychology and the work of Paulo Freire (2018):

The oppressed must see examples of the vulnerability of the oppressor so that a contrary conviction (denying the magical belief of oppressor's invulnerability) can begin to grow within them...This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection; only then will it be a praxis.

We may diverge from current activist trends that suggest oppressor groups should never draw from their oppressed peers. What we do in each session to address this is to check in and allow each group member to emerge in each session. Meaning that we do not expect each person to show up exactly as they may have previously. A person may also need to hear from another person to co-create vulnerability. We practice this as deep attunement to each other.

Liberation Psychology demands us to hold seriously that at some point we have to *join together*⁹ to disrupt colonizer culture, that traumatizes us all, to be able to shift what can be useful, helpful, and healing from its privileged position, if we are to actually decolonize land and body, finding forms of reparation from privilege. Freire (2018) writes, "once a situation of violence and oppression has been established, it engenders an entire way of life and behavior for those caught up in it—oppressors and oppressed alike. Both are submerged in this situation, and both bear the marks of oppression". In the shared space of our project, we lift out from this "situation" and examine how it has sedimented into our bodies. The movement of doing this together opens up something other than colonizer culture

⁹ We understand anti-racism work to be committed to community, that together "we need to generate greater cultural awareness of the way white-supremacist thinking operates in our daily lives. We need to hear from the individuals who know, because they have anti-racist lives, what everyone can do to decolonize their minds (*and bodies*), to maintain awareness, change behavior, and create beloved community" (hooks, 2003). We read hooks and Freire through an embodied-mind lens [Johnson, M. (2012), Gallagher & Zahavi (2007), Siegel (2015)] which means *consientization* is not simply a way of thinking differently, but an actual shift embodied-being which affects environment and relations to others, disturbing and "unsettling" white privilege and thus creating accessibility to resources for colonized communities, and thus, unlike Tuck & Yang's (2012) argument on Freire's work, we feel the process of critical consciousness would translate into embodied actions that that disrupt settler colonialism, creating reparations that must give up white land, power, and privilege as part of such process.

taking place between us. It is an excess beyond the individual or the Westernized self and possibility for a new, healthy culture to emerge.

In oppressor culture, both the oppressor and oppressed are denied access to authenticity, and though the intensity of traumas differs, in order to enact change, there is a need for mutual interdependence to reconstruct a new way of interacting with the environment. As an embodied opening to such interdependence, we share a common theme in our felt-sense approach in the group, e.g. *The Other can feel for me in a way I can become responsible for and take action from*, or as Mary Hendricks-Gendlin (2003), TAE co-creator, said, "when a person can pause and go inside and say what is 'my sense' of this situation, that is the thing that makes them less vulnerable to oppression." If we have a common focus, we can shape our movement and practice toward the idea of embodying social justice from our unique perspectives.

To prepare ourselves to respect and empathize, without reducing or tokenizing each other's experience, we use a phenomenological conceptualization of empathy. This has helped us train in different modes of embodied listening, as well as providing the empowering language for framing the space. Fernandez & Zahavi (2020, *forthcoming*) differentiate three types of empathy: cognitive, emotional, and basic, as means for postural offerings of how I can show up when hearing the other.

In our context of embodying social justice; cognitive empathy would draw on our theoretical applications of something like gender theory, to describe why we have been forced to perform certain gendered cultural roles that do not feel authentic. Emotional empathy is when we use imaginative perspective taking to share similar feelings from our own life experience e.g. as the other describes the experience of denying an authentic expression of self to fit a gendered social role, I feel into my own experience and history with gendered roles, and offer some of my story as it relates to theirs. Basic empathy follows the phenomenological tradition and "acquaints you- in the most direct and immediate manner possible- with another's experiential life" not trying to have the same mental state, "but about

me being experientially acquainted with an experience that is not my own” (Fernandez & Zahavi, forthcoming, p. 1-2). This mode of empathy does not involve “emotional contagion or a fusion of identities”, but respects an asymmetry of the other’s experience, whereas listener, I am not trying to assimilate and make theoretical sense of what the speaker is saying.

By providing a basic empathy as our starting space for Focusing we potentially witness the other in a whole new way and upholding their uniqueness. "Nobody else lives the world from your angle, no other organism can sense exactly ‘the more’ that you sense" (Gendlin, 2017, p.289), so we honor the other by listening and opening a space to ‘protect’ their implicit individual bodily-felt sense of oppression or privilege. We hold space for the spill over, the excess potentiality becomes a possibility of limitless intricacy, a wellspring of implicit potentiality for new embodied patterns. It is here we can mutually challenge colonized supremacy. Below, in Sean listening to Kaleb, we identify these different forms of empathy in brackets: basic, emotional, and cognitive, correlating to when they are happening during a TAE group session.

The TAE practice space offers the creative and experimental playground. We have reshaped the TAE steps to create a social justice orientation. This is how the first few steps have begun to take shape:

- 1) Preparation: Begins with grounding in co-created safety e.g. embodied meditation and check-in, recognition of the other via identity¹⁰ in ADDRESSING model¹¹, clarity of language for availability, safe words and gestures for expressing needs for pauses, space, breath, water, movement, or to stop.
- 2) Allow a felt-sense to form: Let the felt-sense form and then feel toward an experience of implicit biases, oppression, or privilege, allowing whatever comes up to lead the way. What moments of cultural conditioning do you remember; can you touch into the felt sense of such experiences?

¹⁰ We want to recognize that we are using parts of our social locations very intentionally and that each of us have complex and intersecting identities. Articulating some aspects of our identities is salient to the work we will be sourcing throughout this paper. Niki is a queer, white and female-bodied person who uses she/they pronouns; Sean is a white, male-bodied person who uses he/him pronouns; and Kaleb is a cis-gender, black and male-bodied person who uses he/him pronouns.

¹¹ The addressing model (Hays, 2001) is helping us identify language and map around our complex identities.

3) Instancing: Feel for an instance, allow your felt-sense to hand you an experience from your life of oppression, implicit bias conditioning, or privilege recognition. e.g. first experience of racism and being black bodied (oppressed) or feeling of privilege being male bodied (oppressor). When did it happen, who were you with, what did you notice, where did you feel it, what is important about this experience? What happens in your body when you recall this scene?

Our use of instances in TAE is also inspired by the practice of testimonio's in Liberation Psychology. Alejandro Cervantes (2020) writes:

To be witness to a testimonio requires solidarity, humility and empathy. Testimonio's are a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more human present and future.

In this way the oppressed-other's voice is privileged, and becomes the initial point of departure for exploring possible reparations. We make space to share context of the stories that arise from our felt senses, as much as we can share with each other. These stories become the source to develop fuzzily related instances, patterns, and crossings. These stories start to live in each of us. Even though I can never fully know or experience your story it becomes alive in my body and I can begin to use the gift of your story to interrupt my culturally-given biases. This leads us to be able to use our bodies for the other person through an interruption process. We also recognize this is a departure from typical TAE and Focusing practices.

4) Looking for patterns: In identifying patterns, we might be able to use the felt-sense to pause and to get a whole feel of our embodied situation that can possibly reshape cultural conditioning. In this way, we are holding space both for the feeling of the original patterning, the social conditioning, and then a novel space that the shared felt sense has opened for feeling outside the normative social role.

5) Crossing: Here, we honor the unique perspective of the focuser, but the crossing step becomes collaborative in the endeavor of shared experiences and stories. We share different forms of empathy as offering, and the potential for crossing identities, instances of oppression juxtaposed with privilege, co-create new patterns. This was not something particularly planned in the group, but is something we are learning as we continue to uncover patterns. Patterns emerge fuzzily into view that often intersect, or meet, with each participant's experience. We are finding that one person's experience tends to evoke something in another and from their experience.

Here is an example of the offering from a TAE listener, as the focuser, Sean, navigates an instance of early childhood where gendered roles were enforced and denied access to creative expressions of self. The TAE listener has said back these exact words from the focuser for them to reflect and carryforward:

Dressing up as a little girl, thought it was the most wonderful thing to do. Costume day. I was 7. (When I got to Catholic school that day) Feeling of wrongness, couldn't put words to it. The way people looked at me. Makeup, wig, went to the restroom and took it all off, this should never happen again! Felt like a slap. Feels masculine. Didn't tell anybody about it for years. Didn't know what was going on. Shame about who I wanted to be and what I had fun doing. Certain numbness to it. I deny something that is really there, then I numb it. Went from excited to the NO! (he is gesturing with a violent downward slamming), then to monotone.

Patterns:

"When I show up in my excited playful self, and it doesn't fit, I can't access myself".

"There is something numb there. Numbness is connected to tension and protection".

"If I release the numbness connected to tension and protection, I feel more available".

"Access or denial points".

Instance:

Conversation with Kaleb about masculinity and offering each other our bodies.

Pattern: In the presence of a man, get tense, protect and hide your body. Don't reveal, don't give.

Crossing those two instances and speaking from felt sense:

First instance is developmental. Fierce reinforcement. Hard, solidified. Jaw is tight, hands are tight.

Solidifying of a hollow frame. Then I can go off somewhere. Feels connected to the numbness. It's something I do. Then I go out the side door. I escape. I lose my authentic self.

Here is an experience from a different speaker, Niki, that shows a similar cultural phenomenon.

Two totally different experiences from two different focusers, and yet, we can see a kind of fuzzy relation between them. We are using this fuzziness that is formed by the unique experience of one to unwind these culturally given biases:

Felt sense and an instance:

Working with a client. I had heard this and felt this for many years with others. Larger, quadrupled in size, really hot. Shame. Questioning authenticity, around desire that is repressed. What happens when a person forces themselves to repress desire, does it set the conditions to continually come into violation? Cultural rape. Does that shame mean that I'm defective, making me disconnect from my authenticity? If I am participating in intimacy, Asking someone else for help, There is a lessening of self. Hidden piece. Pretending, An eroding of self that can create conditions for hiddenness. Something looming over myself, really hot, hidden piece. Really feel it in my teeth, is it about holding back? Something about how I participate, what I share and don't share.

Acting, forced to pretend. Being queer was the worst thing you could be, so don't be anything. Stay hidden, skipped. Cultural messaging from on high.

Patterns: When there is no invitation to be who I am, I tend to stay hidden.

This leads to a kind of shame that keeps me in conversation with that cultural message. It leads to a violent re-shaping of desire, redirects desire, and misshapes understanding of boundaries. Shame about who I wanted to be which restricts access to myself.

I want an invitation.

Instance: Conversation with Sean about how culture develops gender.

Pattern: In the presence of a white, male bodied person, unsure of safety, can I share, will I be accepted if I do? I want to be accepted without having to justify or fight. Ease tension from chest, shoulders, and back, to the healthy, rooted feeling in my hips.

Crossing those two instances:

Felt sense: Desire, an ache to be heard/seen. Teeth are tight, mouth is open, jaw tight, in the mouth there is a little baby making shapes with its mouth. Trying to speak. Wanting to speak. Frustrated.

When the rootedness and invitation come, my back has wings. I can expand, take up space and hold space for others. I feel connected to self, others, and environment. It's a kind of hope. There's water over my feet and birds above me. They point the way, re-orienting. I feel invited, and that I can also invite, and ask for help.

Above is some of the raw material we work with in attempts at re-patterning and illuminate how we are using TAE steps in the context of stories of colonizer culture. Here is a later, more complete picture of the process from Kaleb when sourcing instance and patterns around the felt experience of racism:

Kaleb: Even with a strong relation supporting us, it is important to acknowledge I still do not like entering these spaces due to the differing identities that Sean, Niki, and I share. With me as a black body and them as white bodies, it takes great vulnerability to bring presence to our space. After all, society demands we not create such a space. However, we oppose society's decree and have laid down careful frameworks to help us establish safety for each other. We start each session with a grounding exercise

which allows us to be in the present moment with each other and attempt to let go of societal noise and judgments. Then, we transition into the roles assigned, one person who speaks their testimony and the other who listens and attends to the needs of the other by providing space, reflection, empathy, and vulnerability. This is where we begin to share stories, an instance that the felt sense has opened for sharing:

I was on a jog with a friend of mine in my neighborhood and we got into a passionate conversation about social justice. This became problematic due to how exposed and vulnerable I felt discussing such a heavy matter. To my friend, a white identifying male, we were two men on the side of the street talking enthusiastically. However, in my own body I felt suddenly unsafe. The tempo of the conversation was breeding eyes of concern and judgement all around me. Then a police car rolled by. The hairs all over my body rose, my ears turned red hot, and a lump in my throat stopped me from speaking. The reality of the situation was that my friend was shielded by his white privilege to the concerning gazes around us. Whilst for my black body, death itself was present. I felt bad wanting to stop my friend from having our conversation. I did not want to make him feel like he wasn't being a good friend, so I silenced my experience. I continued inflicting violence upon myself and my black body instead for the sake of our friendship. I told this story for the first time to Sean and later, re-told it to Niki. It was hard to share because I haven't even told my friend who I was jogging with what had occurred for me. To this day we have never spoken about it, repeating the violence, by not seeking to cultivate a safe space for our different identifying bodies. However, with the space that Sean, Niki, and I are developing, their willingness to hold my story, while realizing their divergent identities, and experience it in their own bodies we are able to find movement, something we all could take forward and apply to our lived experiences in the world beyond our group.

This is the next step we are in the process of forming. It happens when the listener shifts their posture to from basic empathic witness to an emotional empathizer; sharing a story having do with the similar identifying group, for example, queer identifying vs. straight identifying bodies, but from their unique felt sense experiences. Here, both become attuned listeners to the other's experience and the embodied patterning of the situations. The shared vulnerability and safe enough frame allows for a telling and feeling of the stories like never before. The participants get a felt understanding of what the oppression felt like in the original environment, while also an opening to a possible new patterning "where the collaborative interaction can create a new social product right there" (Gendlin, 2017, p. 289) as a micro-authenticity, as opposed to micro-aggressions, that then can be carried out in the daily lived environment. The praxis is at least a two-part movement: 1) reshaping a more robust awareness of the other person's experience of oppression that will then affect the potential for listener or witnesses to respond to violence and colonized spaces from a privileged identity, and 2) a new potentiality for embodied performances outside the cultural norm for the oppressed to try on in the quotidian.

Here is a glimpse into this step from the same session Kaleb described above, but from Sean's experience as listener:

We begin into co-attunement, I hear Kaleb begin to express the embodied awareness that is unfolding in this moment, I am preparing my body to join into his, an attuned presence trying to hear him at the deepest levels, to purely listen, *as if* I was in his flesh in this present moment [basic empathy]. I am offering only simple reflections, a few of his words or gestures. I watch him shift from felt sense to the instance it brings on, a story has come up, an experience that is intimate but feels available to share. He feigns, covers his face, closes his eyes, I feel pangs in my own body wanting to connect, share, take away his pain, [example where Sean's emotional empathy could possibly obstruct Kaleb's experience]. I breathe deep trying still to only listen and follow, trying to stay with his body as the discomfort and terror comes up in my body. I quiet my

angst and continue to follow him for another 10 minutes. And then he asks, “how does this feel for you? What's coming up?” Kaleb is asking for my response [emotional empathy] and checking for my presence. I am flooded with emotions to share, stories that feel connected but different, I pause to listen to my own felt-sense and offer what emerges. I share a story from a similar setting as his, how my privilege felt when a white cop in an affluent neighborhood pulled me over, found incriminating objects, and then told me to “drive home safe”. I touch on how it felt then, how it feels now in juxtaposition to his story, what rising sensations came in such an environment, what patterns were learned at an implicit level, conditioned into my body, and how Kaleb’s experience of his body has accessed a different feeling in mine. My gut swells with guilt, shame, fear of offering, my body is tensing, then we breathe deep together, release some resistance, connect in shared breath.

After sometime, we shift to a shared intellectual space beginning to deconstruct the experiences through the social justice and critical theory lenses we know at a theoretical level [cognitive empathy]. We feel how our conceptual identities are at play in culture. How we might carry the felt shifts we have experienced into the street or in front of our clients. We source and name shared felt-sense to remember, a new and co-created imprint to take away from the practice. I have done this with both Niki and Kaleb, engendered a new felt sense pattern, one that brings their body into mine when I am wandering day to day life. This has become a preparation practice where my privilege becomes useful, a shift of normative cultural patterns that we might have never chosen in the first place.

In this way, the potency of a privilege identifier that constitutes social normativity, can instead be offered to the marginalized other, where the privileged body might become theirs as support and empowerment. Kaleb’s felt experience offers a sort of embodied training or pedagogy from his unique perspective as well as an identifying Black body. Momentarily, we, in white bodies, feel into his experience, his tone, affect, gestures, his experience of oppression, and together move towards co-

creating awareness in our bodies of such experiences for the purpose of future action and working to discern and protect a body within white supremacy culture. This practice is inspired by Judith Butler (2020) when they write aggressive nonviolence is an "ethical stylization of embodiment, replete with gestures and modes of non-action, ways of becoming an obstacle, of using the solidity of the body and its proprioceptive object field to block or derail a further exercise of violence". When a privileged body begins the process of being decolonized, its previous ignorant privilege might become empowering protection for another's body. This preparation practice understands both self and other in radically different ways than prescribed by Western colonizer ideology, like the gender and race roles that deny parity to female and Black identifying bodies. The focuser is offering a gift of felt-experience, a teaching of oppression for the listener to feel into, and an opportunity to reflectively respond to the other's shared experience. Then, the co-created experience provides an opportunity to integrate the shared feeling, so the listener can become more aware of the oppressed other's everyday experience in a colonized environment, and then use their body to disrupt such oppressive instances when they are felt at a future time.

To conclude, we will offer a dialogic reflection between Kaleb, Sean, Niki, and Julia on generating intentional relationships to be able to undertake this experiment, resistance to the experiment or work, invitation to sharing and being heard, and being a witness of the group process.

Kaleb: This group was created to tend to the stories of the oppressed, to bestow the oppressor with the gift of the lived experience of others in order to enlighten their walk in the world, and to acknowledge socially constructed barriers of privilege. In doing so, we work towards liberating the oppressed from the lie that their freedom and safety cannot be reality. We have forged this group starting first with friendship and through our fellowship we have created spaces of immense vulnerability where we can unearth our authentic selves and offer *empathy, support, testimony, and*

witness for the other person's divergent identity in hopes of aggressively altering oppressive spaces in the world.

Sean: This point on friendship is an important one. We are creating a space for vulnerability and empathy, but to support this we need other modes of relating as to not tokenize the experience of the oppressed other, and then force them into some vulnerable relationship. This is the difficult part in trying to package any such experience into a practice, one we do not offer as prescriptions, but maybe a frame to hold loosely and offer humbly. In many ways, we all have wanted to try and do this practice, but we all have felt various forms of resistance and doubt, the possibility comes first from the trust of our everyday friendships and then a willingness to want to enter such space. It takes time to build this kind of dynamic and needs cultivated invitation into safe enough space. I have become aware of how important it is to invite the other to speak or share, but also so that we can see each other in a different way formed by this story-telling practice.

Niki: I'm sharing something of myself, being revealed and being de-masked, but I'm also opening myself up to criticism or potential violence. Some days have been hard to show up, we miss each other by not having set a clear frame, or doing attunement exercises. This can create rupture, which is scary, but also comes to fruit since we have spent time creating the conditions where we are actively working, almost seeking this out from each other. Because this is largely experimental, ruptures have led us to create more consent-based practice. This is particularly notable for me as I work with two male bodied people, and consent is not often practiced in our culture and when it is, tends to be taken seriously only if it is somehow provable, or rational. Both Sean and Kaleb are working on the kind of space they take up in our group. We have developed a practice that we pay particular attention to each other, which also includes inviting each other into conversation. This allows me to feel like I have space and time to articulate my senses and thoughts. I do not have to rush, nor do I have to be precise. I can say, "this feels like this, but that's not the whole story or totally quite right". TAE and focusing practices have been

really helpful creating structure to be somewhere in the field, and not get hung up on precision. It is also part of our decolonizing practice.

We offer each other a lot of grace to be imperfect. This might be a practice of imperfection. Again, this isn't common to most of our culturally Western spaces, for example, male bodies often silence or question the expertise of female bodies. Sean has started a regular attunement to me, so he watches or catches me withdraw and opens an invitation for my return - his attunement to me and brings me back to myself, while also interrupting the patterns that help create the original distance. Kaleb questions the use of the word "guys" as in, "hey, what do you guys think about this...". He wonders what it's like to constantly hear, and then to use, gendered language like that. This is partly from our direct practice work, and we are all responding differently because there is an embodied connection to each other's stories and needs. I feel this change in my body as a kind of rising energy ball that sits in my chest, and rises into my throat, it can be hot and asphyxiating, something like anger. What Kaleb and Sean offer me helps this ball move down my body and into my hips where it takes root and roots out in all directions. It feels healthy and helpful in my hips, unlike the stuck, fireball in my chest. I feel grounded and more available for listening as well as sharing. These are intentional practices that we are using to create conditions for vulnerability and responsibility to unfold. Despite not wanting to show up sometimes, by the end of practice, I am reminded that this is what provides me my freedom.

Julia: I am noticing my own felt shift because I've been able to witness you all talk about these stories, some of them in the moment, some of them after. And so, in sitting and witnessing and listening to all now I'm struck by that difference in my body. I have this warm, fuzzy, kind of shaky feeling. I definitely had goosebumps that began when Kaleb started and rose when Sean started and then kind of started to take root Niki when you were talking about that went down in your body and settled your hips. I'm noticing this powerful change and difference in this new emergence for me as a witness in this

process. These are stories you each have had for years and I'm struck by the shift in sediments in this new moment.

Julia's comment directs us toward the critical shifting moments, subtle to expansive, where possibilities for change in our bodies and environment can begin to deny the insidious patterns of oppression. This project started as a way to understand how we might actually embody social justice, wanting a felt change and sensing that holistic integration was missing, that we could no longer only think about oppression and decolonization through reason alone. It has become a way to share stories of oppression from persons being oppressed, but only when it is an expression they want to share and feel safe enough, not one we can ask for from our clients or force onto friends. It is a practice where the oppressor and privileged find ways to return what is not ours, that in community with the voice of the oppressed leading the way, we can better understand stories that reveal ignorant and cultural patterns of supremacy, and then learn how to reparate power. We have given you a glimpse into an ongoing dialogue, a fumbling communal effort to try something, anything, to challenge the ongoing violence we enact upon each other's bodies. This is not a practice with a conclusion or answer, only a humble invitation for your critique and response, so we might continue to better listen and move in a practical and communal love.

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