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The Tedx Durham Talk (Safety UBUNTU & The Harm Free Zone) NIA WILSON

SUNDAY, JULY 10, 2016

I am the daughter of Ronald and Elmira and the mother of Heather and Paul. I come from saltwater, concrete and Campbell's pork and beans. I am a warrior, I am a healer and I'm a cultural alchemist.

What I am not, at least not in the traditional sense of the word, is an expert. I am not academically degreed and there are no letters behind my name. My wisdom has come through the oral tradition of storytelling, some books, some trial and error, and a great deal of things that I know inherently. I make this distinction about my level of formalized education as much for myself as I do for you as a reminder that so much of who we are, what we know, and what we do comes from deep within us.

I want to just stick there for a moment, while we talk about safety. I'm going to take you through a little exercise called "imagine safety." It's an exercise that will help ground us in this conversation today.

So what I'd like each of you to do is to sit a bit forward on your chair. Place both feet on the floor and let your hands rest on your thighs, with your palms facing up. Close your eyes, if you feel comfortable. Take notice of your breath. Try to breathe a bit more deeply, increasing oxygen into your bloodstream.

Now, Think of a moment when you have felt the most safe. It may be a time in your childhood or a moment last year, last week or last night. Don't rush, if the moment doesn't come to you immediately, just continue to breathe deeply and let it come.

Who is with you? What are you doing? What does the air smell like, taste like? Is your belly full? Are you warm?

Take a deep breath and go deeper into this moment.

Notice your reaction as you are sitting here. What is happening to your body? Your breath? Your mood? Some of you may be feeling happy, nostalgic or even a little sad with longing. All of these feelings are ok and very important to take note of. Now, I want you to take one last deep breath and try to hold on to this moment as you open your eyes and come back into the room.

Welcome back. How are you feeling? Usually, at this point in the exercise we ask a few people to raise their hands and tell us what they saw. What we hear are stories about making pies in grandma's kitchen, driving for the first time with dad in the passenger seat, being at the beach in the arms of the person you love. People reference love, family and creating home, as the places where safety exists. They feel warm, tingly, full and light. Which I hope is what you all are feeling right now.

We are on the porch at my Aunt Mottie's house in Trenton, New Jersey. Yes, I did say Trenton. That's me, right there. The only girl, with the bravest guys I know. I'm sitting with my oldest brother who is still my favorite person in the world and right there is my dad, my superman, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. There was nothing to fear in this familiar place surrounded by people I loved who loved and cherished me in return.

Now, what I'd like you to do is please raise your hands if the first images that came to your mind, was an ADT sign, bars on windows, weapons, surveillance cameras, security guards or the police?

Did any of those things make you feel warm, nostalgic or provide you a deeper breath? You get where I'm going here. We have been conditioned to believe that we live in a perpetual state of danger and that these things are the only things that will keep us safe. But what we know inherently, is that safety is more than just the absence of physical violence. We feel the safest when we are loved and cared for, secure in the fact that our needs are met.

Understand that I am not living in some utopian universe in my head. I am not suggesting that bad things are not happening in the world. Just in the last few years we have collectively mourned the violent losses of life at Sandy Hook, in Charleston and in Orlando. Unfortunately, these incidents are not as isolated as we hoped they would be. However, the promotion of this perpetual state of danger increases our feelings of fear rather than the feelings of that safety. And it has also resulted in the loss of life for Trayvon Martin, Jonathan Ferrell, Renisha McBride and just this week Alton Sterling and Philando Castille. And it is disproportionate to our everyday realities.

Now I'd like to talk to you about trauma, trial and error and transformation for a bit. Exactly ten years ago, Durham found herself in the middle of a scandal that drew international attention. A young Black woman, who was working as a dancer, accused 3 white Duke Lacrosse players of sexual assault. Stories about violence against women trigger a great deal of anxiety for me because I am a survivor. When I hear them I immediately feel powerless, my body freezes, my breath becomes shallow and I begin looking for some kind of cave that can make me invisible.

This type of response is called post traumatic stress and it is not uncommon for people who have survived any kind of trauma; and for a time here in Durham, many Black women, survivors of sexual assault and students of color felt powerless, disoriented and unsafe. The media was everywhere. While people across the country were taking this story in through thirty second sound bites, we were being consumed by it. Everyone had feelings and opinions that were often split along lines of race, class and gender. And some of us, women of color and survivors who dared to speak out were received hate mail and death threats.

And yet, there were a group of us who were able to find strength and safety in the midst of all of this. We called ourselves "Ubuntu" and we came together with a profound desire to end sexual violence. Ubuntu is a Zulu term which means, a person is a person through other persons. Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes Ubuntu as "the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours".

Making deep connections that would bind us together and build our collective power was a new way of thinking for most of us. Individually, and for years, many of us had had ingested negative messages that kept us hiding. Messages that were being reinforced at that time like Black women, particularly poor Black women are undesirable and therefore unrapeable and unworthy of the kind of safety we imagined today.

We realized that the first thing we had to do was to believe that we deserved to be safe by challenging and purging, all the negative messages. And so rather than buying bigger locks for our doors we got about the business of creating a world where we saw ourselves and each other as so inherently valuable that none of us could be thrown away. We gathered on porches and at kitchen tables. We ate together, we cried together, we danced with each other, we wrote poems and love notes to ourselves and each other and we seeded a world that made room for our all of our beauty and all of our flaws. Taking the things that we were afraid of or ashamed of out of hiding was the only way that we could truly meet our our needs. We did all of this unapologetically, in public and out loud.

This is our Day of Truth Telling where we as survivors and supporters, paraded through the streets of Durham in all our colorful splendor.

But we didn't live in a bubble. We didn't forget that the thing that brought us together was our shared experiences of violence and harm. And we understood that envisioning a world where no one gets thrown away included the people who had harmed us.

We had been taught that people who committed acts of violence, people who harm people had to be removed from our communities through incarceration. But many of us in Ubuntu came from families that had been impacted by jails and prisons, We knew that the retributive system did not repair, or heal anything and that sending our loved ones away destabilized our families and increased our fears and loss.

So we kept pushing. Trying to envision a world without walls or cages, where even those that harmed others, in profound ways, could be held accountable by the communities they were a part of without being discarded. This was a defining moment for me. As challenging as it was, it was also exciting. Everything that had kept me connected to all the unrealistic ways that I sought safety, the closing off, making myself small or invisible, moving away from, rather than embrace challenging situations and people, fell away. And I realized that the underlying answer to feeling safe was to be more to be more visible. By extension, I also understood that collectively seeing one another's value and humanity, could actually make us safer.

None of this has come easily. It has required a complete cultural and behavioral shift of quieting the voices in my head that say that I'm not safe that have me measuring people by how much of a danger they are to me. And challenging the voices in community who say our vision for safety was too big and unrealistic. It took/takes a lot of trial error and practice, and a lot of dance parties.

My work has become more focused on transforming harm through prevention, intervention and repair. And I work together with other people in my organization and other community members

often seen as the problem to create harm free families, neighborhoods and schools. Since 2014, we have trained over sixty Durham community members in Harm Free practices.

Our intense training pulls artists, business owners, low wage workers, formerly incarcerated people, church moms, students and retirees, of every age, race, ability, gender, class and sexual orientation into fifteen week incubation hubs. We used a culturally rich, participatory process that included home cooked meals, movement, music, in depth historical analysis, group visioning, and art making (always art making) to create an inclusive community, where we could all thrive without the need to displace or discard anyone.

This may sound easy inside the safety of an incubation hub, but our newly forming Harm Free community has been tested on the outside. An example of this is when two of our participants was taken into police custody. I got a phone call that they had been pulled over and were being taken to the county jail. I immediately sent out a few text messages and within an hour fifty family members and friends were sitting in the lobby of the county jail. The sheriffs didn't understand what was happening and kept asking us why we were there. We let them know that we were there, hugs and food in hand, waiting for our friends to be returned to us.

While sitting there, I had a conversation with another one of our group members, a young man who himself had a few negative encounters with law enforcement. He talk about how it felt to come out from the holding cell, feeling sad and alone. He discussed how healing it could be to come out to a room filled with people who loved you and understood that you were more than just that moment. And what it could me for someone returning home from prison to believe that they too deserved healing and to feel safe. And he talked about how much he wanted to make that happen for his peers. We have worked together since that day, to bring his vision into fruition.

We show up for people when they have been harmed helping them reconnect to their feelings of safety and from there to take their power back. And we also show up for people who have caused harm, understanding that the way to safety is not by distancing, shutting out or hiding from conflict, but it is by transforming it. We have seen that being there helps to strengthen rather than weaken what accountability looks like.

Imagining and providing the feelings of safety that we rediscovered in the beginning of our time together today, can happen anywhere, even in jails and courthouses, and we already have everything we need to do so, if we remember the UBUNTU the essence of being human, and inextricably bound.

Thank you.

Press Release

SpiritHouse Inc.
 www.spirithouse-nc.org
 (919) 697-8090
 February 1, 2017

SpiritHouse's Harm Free Zone City-wide Book Study expands across the South.

SpiritHouse Inc, in partnership with Alternate Roots, is launching The Harm Free Zone Southern Regional Book Study. Over a four month period (from March to June 2017) community member across 14 southern states, and the District of Columbia, will come together to read and discuss Dr. Baz Dreisinger's book "Incarceration Nations: A Journey to Justice In Prisons Around the World". In "Incarceration Nations", Dr. Dreisinger, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, "travels behind bars in nine countries to rethink the state of justice in a global context."

The SpiritHouse book-study series began in 2015 as part of its Harm Free Zone Movement; a community-centered, culturally rooted vision of transformation that helps us repair the lasting damage of systemic racism and oppression. Over the past two years we have partnered with over thirty local organizations to develop a shared understanding about issues impacting poor people and people of color in our community. Developing and deepening our analysis within diverse community settings has proven to be a powerful foundation for building the common understanding that has help us create a Durham that more accountable to all its residents.

"As the South goes, so goes the nation" - W.E.B. Dubois

As we enter our third year of collective learning, SpiritHouse is partnering with Alternate Roots a southern regional arts service organization, to expand our collective understanding of the impacts of criminalization and incarceration around the world; with a particular focus on the southern United States. Some southern incarceration facts that we know today are: 1) the South makes up 45% of all state-based incarceration nationally, 2) seven southern states rank in the top ten nationally as having the highest rates of incarceration (AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, TX) with Louisiana being called the prison capital of the world , 3) in 7 out of 13 southern states, African Americans make up the majority of the prison population (AL, GA, MS, NC, SC, VA).

At SpiritHouse we believe that we have everything we need to change these horrible facts. We believe we can create a South that will lead the world away from its legacy of mass incarceration, towards a world without prisons. We hope that you will join us in this groundbreaking exploration.

For more information, and to join the Harm Free Zone Southern Regional Book Study contact Tia Hall at Tia@SpiritHouse-nc.org.

Look for weekly updates on at: <https://www.facebook.com/HarmFreeZoneSouthernRegionalBookStudy>

Study Group Considerations

- Get people involved and talking about the book.
 - Share Press Release so they understand the reason for The Harm Free Zone Southern Regional Book Study
 - Inform people about the [Facebook page](#) & [Alternate Roots page](#) for updates
- Determine the size capacity for your study group
- Determine the frequency for meeting over the months of March through June.
- Determine the length of time for each meeting and time of day (we suggest two (2) hours.)
- People get hungry. Consider building in snacks or potlucks around your gatherings
- Send out reminders a week in advance of each meeting
- Consider having someone besides the facilitator take notes
- Offer a contact/ sign in sheet at every gathering.
- Consider having people take turns summarizing the assigned reading
- Be mindful of an even exchange so that everyone has access to speak. Utilize the **step up/ step up** policy. If someone is an enthusiastic speaker, **invite them to step up and listen more**. And conversely others who might be quite involved as listeners, **invite them to step up and speak more**.
- Be mindful of your group's needs. Do you need translators? Is your meeting space accessible for everyone?
- Set the 'intention' at the beginning of each gathering.

Reading Schedule

Read Introduction March 1-18

March 14 - In the lounge Webcast

Read Chapter 1 - Revenge & Reconciliation/ Rwanda &

Chapter 2 - Sorry/ South Africa March 19 - April 1

March 28 - In the lounge Webcast*

Read Chapter 3 - The Arts Behind Bars/ Uganda & Jamaica April 2 - April 15

April 11 - In the lounge Webcast*

Read Chapter 4 - Women and Drama/ Thailand April 16- April 29

April 25 - In the lounge Webcast*

Read Chapter 5 - Solitary and Supermaxes/Brazil April 30-May 13

May 9 - In the lounge Webcast*

Read Chapter 6 - Private Prisons/ Youth Detention/ Australia May 14 - May 27

May 23 - In the lounge Webcast*

Read Chapter 7 – Reentry / Singapore May 28 - June 10

June 6 – In the lounge Webcast*

Read Chapter 8 – Justice/ Norway June 11 – June 24

June 20 – In the lounge Webcast*

Week 9 - CELEBRATE OUR ACCOMPLISHMENT

June 27

* In the lounge Webcast with special guests

All webcasts will begin at 6:30pm EST. To join, click this [link](#), or dial [646-558-8656](tel:646-558-8656) and enter meeting ID: [653 299 241](tel:653-299-241).

Introduction

March 1-18

March 14 - In the lounge

A. Welcome (snacks and centering)

- a. Tea suggestion – Do you have a favorite tea or drink that reminds you of “home”?
- b. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)

B. Group Imaging: Where I’m From

- a. Materials: Where I’m From Activity Sheet
- b. Where I’m From is a SpiritHouse practice that helps us connect with people in our community beyond their mistakes and resumes. I am not the sum of my worst mistakes. We understand that we are more than our worst mistakes or greatest accomplishments. This practice is meant to acknowledge the people, places and things that have shaped and influenced the way we move in the world.
 - i. Who are your people
 - ii. Where are your roots
 - iii. When did you come up
 - iv. What was happening culturally and politically
- c. Share poems with the group. If the group is large, break into small groups of 3-5 people and share)

C. Chapter Discussion

- a. Summary : What topics or themes stuck out for you in this chapter
- b. Possible Guiding Questions: In the book introduction the author talks about the racial disparities in incarceration rates in this country.
 - i. How do race and class impact incarceration where you live?
 - ii. How does your local media portray people who have been arrested in your area?
 - iii. What suggestions can be made to address the ways that media portrays people in your community?

D. Gratitude

- a. Closing out

E. Resources

- a. Bryan Stevenson - https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice

Where I'm From

Write 2-3 lines:

About your family (who are your parents, how many people are in your family, what are some family traditions)

I am from

I am from

About where you grew up (describe something about your neighborhood and your city)

I am from

I am from

About when you grew up (what was on TV or the radio, what are clothing styles)

I am from

I am from

Write about your favorite time of the day? What does the sky look like?

What is happening on the streets at that time? What are you usually doing at that time?

Write about your favorite food? Who cooks it? What does it taste like?

Write about your favorite song/type of music? Why does that music speak to you? What happens in your body when you are listening to it?

Chapter 1 - Revenge & Reconciliation/ Rwanda

Chapter 2 - Sorry/ South Africa

March 19 - April 1

March 28 - In the lounge – Nia Wilson Harm Free Zone

A. Welcome (snacks and centering)

- a. Tea suggestion – Widely Rwandans drink hot tea (chai or icyiya) which is brewed sweet and milky. Tea is Rwanda's largest export.

Rooibos (red bush in Afrikaans) was first used medicinally by the Khoisan of South Africa. It has anti-inflammatory and anti-allergic properties.

- b. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)

B. Group Imaging: Embodiment Revenge and Forgiveness (Living Sculpture)

- a. Materials : none

b. Revenge Sculpture

- i. Begin with 2 people create image of revenge add 1 person at a time.
- ii. What is possible from this place? Where is there tension in your body? What part feels good?
- iii. Have the group take three (3) deep breaths together

c. Forgiveness Sculpture

- i. Have the last person who joined the living sculpture break off and begin making a sculpture of forgiveness. One by one join the forgiveness sculpture. Understand that as living beings we always have a choice to and can always change
- ii. What is possible from this place? Where is there tension in your body? What part feels good?
- iii. Have the group take three (3) deep breaths together
- iv. Shake it off. Return to seats. Discuss exercise

- d. If possible have someone document the images of revenge and forgiveness and send them to Tia@spirithouse-nc.org

C. Chapter Discussion

- a. Summary: What topics or themes stuck out for you in this chapter?
- b. Possible Guiding Questions –
 - i. What are the similarities between the gacaca courts in Rwanda and the restorative justice practices in South Africa?
 - ii. What are the differences?
 - iii. How can you see these accountability strategies being implemented in your community?

D. Gratitude

- a. Closing out

Chapter 3 - The Arts Behind Bars/ Uganda & Jamaica

April 2 - April 15

April 11 - In the lounge

A. Welcome (snacks and centering)

- a. Tea suggestion – Many Ugandans drink a ginger tea similar to chai *
Bush teas are popular in Jamaica some of them are black mint, peppermint and lemon grass)*
- b. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)

B. Group Imaging: Liberation Collage

- a. Materials: paper, scissors, glue, old magazines, books, photos
- b. Activity: Create a liberation collage that represents a collective vision of liberation.
- c. Please take a picture and email it to Tia@spirithouse-nc.org

C. Chapter Discussion

- a. Summary: What topics or themes stuck out for you in this chapter?
- b. Possible guiding question - In this chapter Baz talks about art behind bars is largely being used as a band aid. In the book's introduction (page 7) the author talks about a rapper that she met in Uganda who produces music from prison "If liberty is the only right lost when one lands in prison shouldn't Cure's music be permitted to roam free?"
 - i. What if we saw the use of culture and art as career develop?
 - ii. What are the necessary steps for that to happen?

D. Gratitude

- a. Closing out

E. Resources

- a. *Recipe for Ugandan tea <http://www.drinksmixer.com/drink3308.html>
- b. *Recipes for Jamaican tea <http://www.jamaican-recipes.com/jamaicanbushtea.html>
- c. Music therapy in prison <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDer8tAOFz4>
- d. **Larry Joe Prison Music Project**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQgXj1s1sQ4>

Chapter 4 - Women and Drama/ Thailand

April 16- April 29

April 25 - In the lounge

A. Welcome (snacks and centering)

- a. Tea suggestion- Thailand's tea tradition is adopted from China. A very popular beverage is Cha Yen (Thai Iced Tea) made from Black tea.*
- b. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)

B. Group Imaging: 5-7-5 Her Name Is Freedom Haikus*

- a. Materials: computer/tablet access to the internet, paper pencils or pens
- b. Activity: Watch I'm a Woman First - <https://youtu.be/EaQvM6GjUDA>
- c. Take a few minutes to think about the significant women in your life.
 - i. Who is she? What are the things that make her special? What are the hats she wears?
- d. Write a Haiku poem for the significant woman.
 - i. A Haiku is a 3 line short poem

Line 1- 5 syllables
Line 2 - 7 syllables
Line 3 - 5 syllables

Example haiku written by Nia Wilson
Harriet moon guide
Safe burrow under-ground cloak
Assata be free

- e. Please email haiku poem to Tia@spirithouse-nc.org

C. Chapter Discussion

- a. Summary: What topics or themes stuck out for you in this chapter?
- b. Possible guiding question - Often times incarcerated people are separated from their children for many year.
 - i. How does this impact their abilities to have healthy, thriving families?
 - ii. What is the impact on the parents?
 - iii. What is the impact on the children?

D. Gratitude

- a. Closing out

E. Resources

- a. *Thai Iced Tea Recipe <https://www.eatingthaifood.com/thai-ice-tea-recipe-cha-yen/>
- b. *5-7-5 Her Name is Freedom <https://www.facebook.com/575hernameisfreedom>

Chapter 5 - Solitary and Supermaxes/ Brazil

April 30-May 13

May 9 - In the lounge

A. Welcome (snacks and centering)

- a. Tea suggestion – A tradition tea in Brazil is Yerba Mate or Chimarrao*
- b. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)

B. Group Imaging:

- a. Materials: computer, tablet, access to the internet, speaker, paper pencils or pens
- b. Activity: Collective Sun Reshape the Mo(u)rning “Letters”
<https://youtu.be/vVub3InOl8>
- c. Think about a person in your life that you haven’t spoken to in a while.
 - i. Take about 15 minutes to write them a letter.
 - ii. When everyone has finished have a group discussion about the importance of human connection.

C. Chapter Discussion

- a. Summary: What topics or themes stuck out for you in this chapter?
- b. Possible guiding question: Solitary confinement has been called a torturous practice and there are many campaigns around the world seeking to ban the practice.
 - i. What are some of the symptoms of sensory deprivation that people living in solitary confinement experience?

D. Gratitude

- a. Closing out

E. Resources

- a. *How to make Chimarrao <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMLE9WAnLNg>
- b. What is impact of prolonged solitary confinement
<http://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2015/06/10/solitary-confinement-effects-fisher-intv.cnn>
- c. Effects of solitary confinement
<https://www.nytimes.com/video/science/100000003831139/effects-of-solitary-confinement.html>

Chapter 6 - Private Prisons / Youth Detention/ Australia

May 14-May 27

May 23 - In the lounge

A. Welcome (snacks and centering)

- a. Tea suggestion – Some Aboriginal Australians traditionally drink Gulbarn bush tea which is similar to green tea.*
- b. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)

B. Group Imaging: Telling our stories (process borrowed from John O’neal founder of June Bug Productions)

- a. Materials: Chairs, stopwatch or timer
- b. Activity: Have the group sit in a circle (If the group is larger than five people split into more than one group). Choose someone in each circle to be the timekeeper. Each person will get 2 minutes to tell a personal story about the same question/prompt. (We will do 2 rounds of questions/prompts)

Things to remember:

- The story must be about your own experience (do not tell a story that you heard or witnessed)
- No cross-talk - participants in the circle should be actively listening to the storyteller. While you may be able to relate to their story, please refrain from commenting this is not (there will be time for cross-talk at the end of the story circles)
- Each person gets a full 2 minutes to tell their story. Important for the time keeper to give 30 second warning to wrap it up. Person speaking must stop at 2 minutes. If the person speaking finishes before the 2 minutes are up the circle sits in silence until the 2 minute time runs out before moving on to the next story. Don't be afraid of silence.
- Snapshot round - After everyone has been through 2 rounds of 2 minute question/prompts each group member get 1 additional minute to share a snapshot of what they heard/ what images they saw from each story.

Question/Prompt 1 - Tell us a story about a mistake for which you had to make amends (ask forgiveness)

(Give the group one minute to think of their story before the 1st person begins)

Question/Prompt 2 – Tell a story about when you felt mentored or guided in your life.

(Give the group one minute to think of their story before the 1st person begins)

C. Chapter Discussion

- a. Summary: What topics or themes stuck out for you in this chapter?
- b. Possible guiding question - What alternative accountability systems can be developed to encourage growth and healing for our youth?

D. Gratitude

- a. Closing out

E. Resources

- a. More about Gulbarn tea <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-20/traditional-bush-medicine-finding-new-life-as-gulbarn-tea/7042550>

Chapter 7 - Reentry / Singapore

May 28 - June 10

June 6 - In the lounge

Welcome (snacks and centering)

- a. Tea suggestion – Singaporeans enjoy the tarik tea (a sort of black tea)
- b. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)

B. Group Imaging: The Box

- a. Materials: 5 people, 5 chairs 5 script excerpts from Collective Sun Reshape the Mo(u)rning
- b. Activity: Sit in a circle with one person sitting in the middle. 4 other people chairs facing out.

Formerly incarcerated person - sitting in center chair

Employer 1- Sit in chair facing out (back to formerly incarcerated person)

Employer 2 - Sit in chair facing out (back to formerly incarcerated person)

Apartment complex manager - Sit in chair facing out (back to formerly incarcerated person)

Admissions officer - Sit in chair facing out (back to formerly incarcerated person)

Employer 1

Have you ever been convicted of?

Employer 2

Have you ever been convicted of?

Apartment complex manager

Have you ever been convicted of?

Admissions officer

Have you ever been convicted of?

Formerly incarcerated person

Yes, I check the fucking box every time. Right there at the end of the application.

Cause, I hear, its worse when you lie. They come around and fire you and you can't get unemployment. So, it's better to take a chance, on the off chance, that they will give you a chance.

Admissions Officer

Have you ever been convicted of?

Employer 1

Have you ever been convicted of?

Employer 2

Have you ever been convicted of?

Apartment complex manager 3

Have you ever been convicted of?

Formerly incarcerated person

Yesterday, the white chick behind the desk, wearing an "I voted for Obama pin and a smile, thumbed through my application. And I watched her eyes. The eyes tell the story.

Admissions officer
Thug.

Apartment complex manager
Another school drop-out.

Employer 2
Hoodlum.

Employer 1
What a waste.

Apartment complex manager 3
Can you give me some more detail about this conviction?

Employer 1
And that is so unfortunate.

Admissions officer
And I really like you but...

Employer 2
And we will keep your application on file. Thank you very much.

Formerly incarcerated person
Damn y'all, I was 16! We were invincible! None of that foolishness is supposed to follow you your whole life!

Employer 1
Who lied to you? Everything follows you.

Employer 2
You must be neat, clean, presentable at all times.

Admissions officer
Intelligent, multilingual and act like you got some couth, class, dignity.

Apartment complex manager
Always be a little more like them, a little less like you.

Formerly incarcerated person
Look, I hear all that but I have a felony conviction that is never going away. When will I get my life back.

Have group remain seated in silence in the circle for one minute take mental note on what they are feeling. After one minute have 4 actors turn their chairs around to face the person sitting in the center. Take another minute to look at each other around the circle. Have entire group stand (if folks are able) and take 3 collective deep, audible breaths. Shake arms, legs, shoulders, hips. Move chairs into larger circle and discuss the experience.

C. Chapter Discussion

- a. Summary: What topics or themes stuck out for you in this chapter?
- b. Possible guiding question – This chapter talks about the work the country is doing to shift the perceptions people have about formerly incarcerated people.
 - i. What are some things we can do to shift negative perceptions and welcoming community members back into our lives?

D. Gratitude

- a. Closing out

E. Resources

- a. *How to make the tarik <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHI9c74m-6E>



Chapter 8 - Justice/ Norway

June 11- June 24

June 20 - In the lounge

A. Welcome (snacks and centering)

- a. Tea suggestion – Coffee tends to be the tea of choice in Norway.*
- b. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)

B. Group Imaging: You might see...But I really am...

- a. Materials: Photos, paper, pencil, pen
- b. Activity:
 - i. Facilitator has 2 photos of a person (one looking thuggish, one looking professional).
 - ii. Give each person in your group a photo (do not tell them there is a matching photo).
 - iii. Have each person make up a story about the person in the photo. Who are they? What is their life like at the time this photo was taken? What does society think of them?
 - iv. Each person read back their stories.
 - v. Facilitator will match photos.
 - vi. Have group discuss the differences and why it is important to challenge assumptions.
- c. Have Group members write a poem about themselves
 - i. You might see...
 - ii. But really I am ...
- d. Share poem with group
- e. Email poems to tia@spirithouse-nc.org

C. Chapter Discussion

- a) Summary: What topics or themes stuck out for you in this chapter?
- b) Possible guiding question – In this chapter what are the barriers in this country, that prevent us from creating accountability systems that allows people who have caused harm to remain connected to their communities?

D. Gratitude

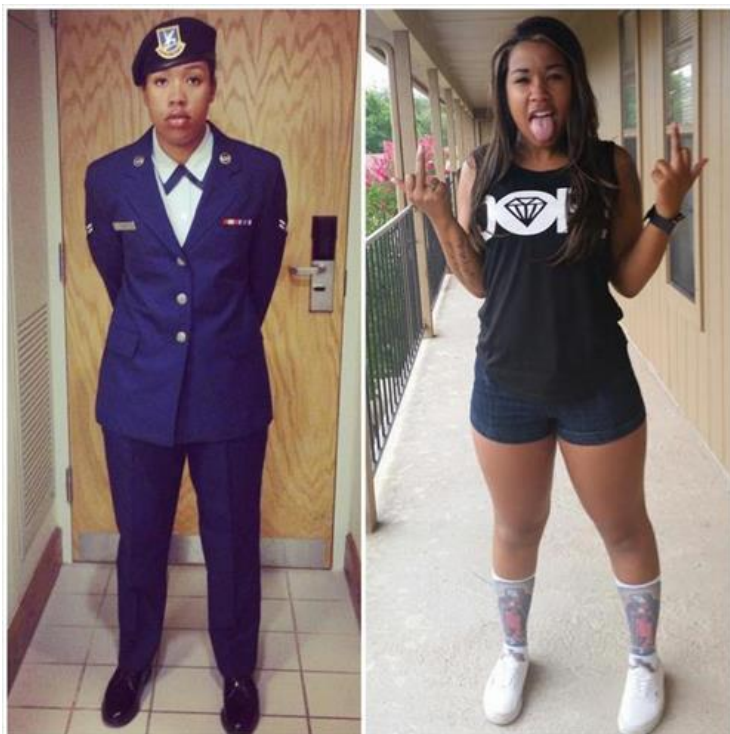
- a. Closing out

E. Resources

- a. Coffee in Norway
https://www.sofn.com/blog/2015/11/15/61/norways_coffee_culture







Spirithouse

INSPIRING & CONNECTING STRONGER PEOPLE - COMMUNITIES

CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT

Convening

June 27

Book Study group host a community event where you share activities, collages and poems with your friends and families. Invite them to join us as we continue to envision and create a world without prisons.

Please document your event and share it with us

Email photos to Tia@spirithouse-nc.org



Supplemental Materials

1. Map -Where are People Incarcerated? Designed By Tim Stallmann for SpiritHouse https://tim-maps.carto.com/viz/ddf82d22-efc0-11e6-86b5-0e233c30368f/public_map
2. Prison Policy Initiative <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/NC.html>
3. Michele Alexander Ford Foundation <https://www.fordfoundation.org/ideas/equals-change-blog/posts/michelle-alexander-on-racial-justice-mass-incarceration-and-black-lives-matter/>
4. Genocide, Justice and Rwanda's Gacaca Courts http://users.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/NysethBrehm_Uggen_Gasanabo_JCCJ_14.pdf
5. Visitation moving to video
 - a. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.businessinsider.com/video-visitation-is-ending-in-person-prison-visits-2016-5>
 - b. <http://www.npr.org/2016/12/05/504458311/video-calls-replace-in-person-visits-in-some-jails>
 - c. <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/community/durham-news/article124758429.html>
6. Restorative Welcome and reentry “Filmed at Bunche High School, this video is a collaboration between Oakland Unified School District and Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth. “ 14 minutes <https://youtu.be/uSJ2GPiptvc?list=PLEKPGH1sk00E--E2V1pA5ZY95EsxU3w5f>
7. Forgiveness - health benefits NPR <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17785209>
8. Prison Cosmetology <https://www.good.is/features/prison-reform-education-cosmetology>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ud8pxcevo0U>

Freedom by Kahlil Gibran

And an orator said, “Speak to us of Freedom.”

And he (the prophet) answered: At the city gate and by your fireside I have seen you prostrate yourself and worship your own freedom, Even as slaves humble themselves before a tyrant and praise him though he slays them.

Aye, in the grove of the temple and in the shadow of the citadel I have seen the freest among you wear their freedom as a yoke and a handcuff.

And my heart bled within me; for you can only be free when even the desire of seeking freedom becomes a harness to you, and when you cease to speak of freedom as a goal and a fulfillment.

You shall be free indeed when your days are neither without a care nor your nights without a want and a grief, But rather when these things girdle your life and yet you rise above them naked and unbound.

And how shall you rise beyond your days and nights unless you break the chains which you at the dawn of your understanding have fastened around your noon hour?

In truth that which you call freedom is the strongest of these chains, though its links glitter in the sun and dazzle your eyes.

And what is it but fragments of your own self you would discard that you may become free? If it is an unjust law you would abolish, that law was written with your own hand upon your own forehead.

You cannot erase it by burning your law books nor by washing the foreheads of your judges, though you pour the sea upon them. And if it is a despot you would dethrone, see first that his throne erected within you is destroyed.

For how can a tyrant rule the free and the proud, but for a tyranny in their own freedom and a shame in their own pride? And if it is a care you would cast off, that care has been chosen by you rather than imposed upon you.

And if it is a fear you would dispel, the seat of that fear is in your heart and not in the hand of the feared.

Verily all things move within your being in constant half embrace, the desired and the dreaded, the repugnant and the cherished, the pursued and that which you would escape.

These things move within you as lights and shadows in pairs that cling. And when the shadow fades and is no more, the light that lingers becomes a shadow to another light.

And thus your freedom when it loses its fetters becomes itself the fetter of a greater freedom.

The Harm Free Zone Southern Regional Book Study

Encompasses

**AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS,
NC, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV, DC,
CA and NY**

Supporters of The Harm Free Zone Southern Regional Book Study

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All of Us or None NC
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Center for Documentary Studies - Durham NC
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Central Park School for Children Equity Team - Durham NC
Committee to Elect DeDreana Freeman - Durham NC
Communities in Partnership Old East Durham (CIP) - Durham NC
DuMBo PriLL BoG
Durham Beyond Policing
Durham Cares
Durham for organizing action DFOACTION
Episcopalians United Against Racism (EUAR) - Durham NC
FADE - Durham NC
Forward Justice - Durham NC
Highlander Research and Education Center - New Market TN
Jewish Voice for Peace - Triangle Chapter
Justice 4 Families - New Orleans LA
M4BL Durham Study Group
Movement In Faith
NAACP Durham NC
NAACP Youth in College - NC
National H.I.R.E. Network- New York NY
NC State – College of Design – Department of Landscape Architecture
Neighborhood Allies- Durham NC
OAR-Durham
People's Alliance- Durham NC
Project South- Atlanta GA
REAL Durham - Durham NC
Scalawag Magazine - Durham NC
SELF HELP Credit Union
Sister Song NC & GA
Song NC
Southern Coalition of Social Justice - Durham NC
Southern Documentary Fund - Durham NC
Spectacular Magazine - Durham NC
The City Well - Durham NC

The Gathering Church - Durham NC

The Heels - reading group NC

The Ordinary People Society (TOPS) - Dothan AL

Tim-Maps.com - Durham, NC

Triangle SURJ

Tuscaloosa-Lakewood Neighborhood Association - Durham NC

Unicorn Sanctuary Study Group - Durham NC

Urban Hope - Durham NC

Village of Wisdom - Durham NC

