



This template offers a structured approach to introducing themes, guiding discussions, and reinforcing key concepts during a speaker series viewing of **“Trauma-Informed Race-Sensitive Work: How do you actually do it?”** by Dr. Yodit Betru.

## Dr. Yodit Betru Bio

Yodit Betru, DSW, LCSW, is the Director of the Master of Social Work (MSW) Program and a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Social Work. She holds both an MSW and a BA degree from the University of Oklahoma and earned her Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) from the University of Pennsylvania. With a strong commitment to advancing the field, Dr. Betru is developing a trauma-informed curriculum designed for case managers who serve women and families experiencing homelessness. Her goal is to equip these professionals with the knowledge and tools necessary to provide compassionate, comprehensive care to individuals and families facing profound hardship.



Dr. Betru’s extensive clinical experience spans various settings, including schools, shelters, jails, public child welfare systems, and therapeutic services in both community and private practice environments. Her work reflects a deep commitment to marginalized populations and has given her a unique perspective on the intersection of trauma, mental health, and social inequality, which informs her approach to teaching and program development. With a passion for addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, Dr. Betru consistently focuses on providing healing-centered care to individuals who have been historically underserved. Her research interests closely align with her practical experience, emphasizing trauma-informed care, race-based stress, homelessness, school-based intervention, child welfare issues, and mental health. Through her research and clinical practice, she is dedicated to addressing systemic challenges that affect women, children, and families while developing strategies that alleviate their trauma, ultimately driving change toward more equitable support systems and better outcomes for those in need.



# Key Terms & Concepts + Notables Quotes

## Terms & Concepts

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### **Affirming Interventions**

Therapeutic or supportive actions that specifically validate and support an individual's identity, experience, or culture, particularly for those from marginalized or oppressed groups.

### **Appropriation**

The adoption or use of elements of one culture by members of another culture, often without permission or understanding, leading to exploitation or erasure of the original culture.

### **Clark Doll Experiment**

A psychological study conducted by Kenneth and Mamie Clark in the 1940s that illustrated internalized racism in Black children by showing how they preferred white dolls over Black dolls, reflecting societal attitudes of the time.

### **Collective vs. Meritocracy**

The debate between valuing communal or group success (collectivism) versus valuing individual achievements based on merit (meritocracy), often discussed in the context of race, privilege, and systemic inequalities.

### **Cultural Humility**

A practice of maintaining an openness to and respect for different cultural perspectives, acknowledging one's own biases and limitations, and fostering mutually respectful relationships across cultures.

### **Devaluing Blackness**

The systemic and societal practice of diminishing or dismissing the value, worth, and contributions of Black people and their culture, perpetuating racial hierarchy and oppression.

### **Disproportionality**

A situation where a particular racial or ethnic group is overrepresented or underrepresented in a certain context or system compared to their population size, often seen in education, criminal justice, and healthcare.

### **Idioms of Distress (Coded Language)**

Expressions of emotional or psychological distress that are conveyed through culturally specific metaphors or language, often reflecting underlying social or cultural issues.

### **Internalized Oppression**

When individuals from marginalized or oppressed groups begin to accept and internalize the negative stereotypes and beliefs imposed by the dominant culture, leading to self-sabotage and diminished self-worth.

### **Internalized Racism**

A form of internalized oppression where members of a racial group accept and believe in the negative stereotypes, biases, and limitations imposed on them by society.

## **Liberatory Consciousness**

An awareness and commitment to recognizing and challenging systems of oppression, striving for personal and collective freedom through sustained action and reflection.

## **Othered from Migration Perspective**

The experience of being treated as an outsider or foreigner because one's migration status, race, or ethnicity, often resulting in marginalization and exclusion in the host society.

## **Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome**

A theory by Dr. Joy DeGruy that explains the multi-generational trauma experienced by African Americans as a result of slavery and its lasting effects on the behaviors and mental health of descendants.

## **Race Based Traumatic Stress**

Psychological distress and trauma caused by experiences of racism, discrimination, and racial violence, which can have lasting mental and emotional effects on individuals and communities.

## **Race Sensitive Work**

Work that is attuned to the complexities of race and racial identity, ensuring that race and racial dynamics are acknowledged and considered in interactions, policies, and decisions.

## **Racial Awakening**

The process by which individuals, particularly from marginalized racial groups, come to recognize and understand the realities of racism and their own racial identity in society.

## **Racial Battle Fatigue**

The cumulative emotional, psychological, and physical stress experienced by people of color as a result of constant exposure to racism, microaggressions, and discrimination in their daily lives.

## **Racial Pride**

A sense of pride and positive self-identification with one's racial or ethnic group, often developed in response to societal attempts to devalue or marginalize the group.

## **Racialization Process**

The process by which society assigns racial meanings to individuals or groups, often based on physical characteristics, and uses these distinctions to create hierarchies and social norms.

## **Socialization**

The process through which individuals learn and internalize the norms, values, behaviors, and social skills necessary to function within their culture or society, including the understanding of race and racism.

## **Notable Quotes**

“The trauma lens helped me understand and conceptualize the way in which folks’ stress and the way they experienced harm got metabolized, but what I soon realized as I was doing that work was that no one was addressing inequity.”

“Over time, I began to realize that this desire to separate or step away from being overtly identified with Afro-American Blackness was a form of internalized oppression that I was digesting.”

“The language that you use to talk about a person really matters. It’s not an exercise in flowered language. It’s an exercise in social justice.”

“You can’t understand social problems in America without understanding racism.”

“I’m not an artifact.”

“It’s your job to understand the structural issues that prevent people from succeeding and how racism manifests in your work.”

## Continued Learning Resources

Visit the link below to engage with resources from Dr. Yodit Betru.

<https://speakers.alleghenycounty.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Dr-Yodit-Betru-2023.pdf>

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## Conversation Outline

*Facilitator:* **Welcome**

“Good [morning/afternoon/evening], everyone! Thank you for joining today’s dialogue. It’s my pleasure to guide us in a discussion about **“Trauma-Informed Race-Sensitive Work: How do you actually do it?”** presented by Dr. Yodit Betru.”

*Facilitator:* “To enhance your learning and engagement with today’s topic, we’ve provided digital and printable activities and tools. These resources are designed to deepen your understanding, increase your comfort level, and help you apply the concepts discussed during the session. **The activities and tools are intended to be used while viewing the Speaker Series**, encouraging attentiveness and focus on the content. **Please feel free to choose the tools that best support your learning experience.**”

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## Activities + Tools

- **Activity/Tool 1: Bingo Card**

A bingo squares have key terms, phrases, quotes, and concepts listed in squares, folks can ‘play’ while they watch the Speakers Series to heighten engagement.

- **Activity/Tool 2: Feelings Card**

A card divided into three sections (beginning, middle, end) with feeling words listed in each. Participants circle or highlight the feelings they experience at each stage of the video to practice introspection and assess comfort levels throughout the engagement. This can be completed while viewing the Speakers Series.

- **Activity/Tool 3: Crossword Puzzle**

The crossword puzzle consists of key terms and concepts to increase learning and understanding of the topic. This can be worked on during the Speakers Series to heighten understanding of concepts and ideas.



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## Warm-Up Questions

Below are optional warm-up questions that facilitators can use to introduce key themes and help participants feel more comfortable with both the topic and the session structure. These questions serve as a useful tool to break the ice, encourage engagement, and set the stage for deeper discussions throughout the speaker series. **These are optional and can be used if time permits.**

“To start us off, let’s dive into a few warm-up questions that will introduce the key themes of today’s event. These questions are designed to get us thinking about **“Trauma-Informed Race-Sensitive Work: How do you actually do it?”**”

- **Question 1:** Why is it important to ask “What happened to you?” rather than “What’s wrong with you?” in your work, especially when addressing issues of trauma and inequity? How does this shift in perspective influence your approach to supporting clients and communities?
- **Question 2:** How can we shift the narrative that racism is solely a problem for people of color, and what responsibilities do individuals and institutions have in addressing and dismantling racism within our society?
- **Question 3:** What are your thoughts on the importance of cultural humility in your work, and how do you build your skills in remaining open and respectful to different cultural perspectives? What challenges do you face in practicing cultural humility, and how do you navigate those challenges?



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## Discussion Questions

*Facilitator:* “Let’s move into some discussion questions to deepen our understanding and begin a conversation. These are intended to help us process the content and resources we’ve learned about in the today’s Speaker Series viewing.”

- **Question 1:** Your understanding of beauty, success, and what makes a “good” client or family is shaped by your racial identity formation, and the language you use to describe individuals is not just about being polite—it’s a vital exercise in social justice. How does this awareness shape the way you approach your work, and how does it influence the way you collect and or interpret data?
  - **Question 2:** What are your thoughts on the importance of affirmation work? Why is it essential to encourage people to seek out spaces that affirm their identities? How can you incorporate this into your work with clients and communities, or if it’s already part of your practice, how can you continue to expand and strengthen it?
  - **Question 3:** In racial equity work, how do you reflect on where you are in your personal journey, and how does this self-awareness shape your approach to addressing inequities? How do you use this understanding to inform the actions you take in your work?
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# Closing + Concluding Thoughts

## Concluding Thoughts

*Facilitator: “Thank you all for your participation in today’s dialogue. It’s been a pleasure exploring the topic of **“Trauma-Informed Race-Sensitive Work: How do you do actually it?”** together. As we wrap up, I invite any final thoughts or comments you’d like to share.”*

**(Allow 5-10 minutes of closing thoughts or remarks)**

## Closing

“I encourage you to stay curious, keep learning, and continue growing in your efforts to advance racial equity and learn practical ways to carryout Trauma-Informed Race-Sensitive Work together. Your dedication to this work is vital in creating more inclusive and equitable communities. Let’s keep the conversation going and carry these lessons forward in everything we do.”