

## Introducing to Coming to the Table Speaker Script Template: 5-10 minute version

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This document includes elements to help speakers and workshop leaders – anyone who will introduce Coming to the Table to new audiences – to develop a 5-10 minute presentation to accurately provide a brief overview of CTTT. This information is intended for use by CTTT members with an understanding of, or training in, CTTT history, vision, mission, values, and approach, as well as the partnership between CTTT and the Center for Justice & Peacebuilding and the STAR program (Strategies for Trauma Awareness & Resilience) at Eastern Mennonite University. If you need more information, let us know!

This information can be used to write a verbal-only speech, or for use in conjunction with PowerPoint slides (CTTT has lots of pictures!). In many cases, when you have just five or ten minutes you may want to skip trying to incorporate PowerPoint. However, everywhere you see the word **IMAGE** below is a place designed for a PowerPoint photo. We have a standard PPT presentation template to go along with this document that you can use “as is” and/or modify to fit your particular needs, preferences and style, and the needs of your audience. Speakers are encouraged to review information on the [CTTT website](#) for additional/alternative resources.

Presenters are encouraged to incorporate these elements into *your* story of Coming to the Table: your personal story, your CTTT story and what attracted you to CTTT, stories of slavery and its legacy (institutionalized racism and white supremacy), and why people should care. Stories like:

- “Let me tell you about this amazing organization I belong to that is doing some things no one else does.”
- “When you hear about another African American person being killed by a cop, an African American church being burned, and other incidents in which racism is clearly a part, do you wonder what you can do or who you can talk to?”
- If you are of European descent, perhaps something like, “I am a recovering racist. Let me tell you about an organization that helped me see how I was unconsciously involved in perpetuating structural discrimination and white privilege...”
- If you are of African descent, perhaps something like, “I have never trusted white people before in my life. This is the first time I have encountered white people who are willing to have the hard conversations about race and to be accountable for their actions...”
- “Why do we care about preserving slave dwellings? Because each dwelling houses the memory of people held in bondage who exerted skill, knowledge and effort to build this nation. And why does it matter to preserve those memories?”

We encourage you to make *your* CTTT speech *yours*; to incorporate the pieces of the following information/template that are relevant to your audience and you. What gets you excited about CTTT? What engages you? When you are excited about CTTT, your audience will feel it. Write *that* “Introduction to Coming to the Table” speech.

If you have questions or suggestions about any of the various elements below, about adding, deleting, or modifying any information here, please contact Coming to the Table [HERE](#). Thank you.

## **Introduction: IMAGE**

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce the work of Coming to the Table. Though legalized slavery ended more than 150 years ago, and Civil Rights laws were passed more than fifty years ago, as we all know, the United States is still very much divided along racial lines. Coming to the Table is a growing community of descendants of the enslaved as well as enslavers working together to break down those divisions and heal the wounds of our nation and us.

## **CTTT History: IMAGE**

Coming to the Table (CTTT) was launched with a four-day gathering at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Virginia in January 2006. The idea for CTTT came from Will Hairston and Susan Hutchison, both white descendants of prominent American enslaving families. Susan and Will worked together with their “linked descendants” of African and European descent and the Center for Justice & Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University to plan that first gathering.

**IMAGE** - The CTTT name comes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *I Have a Dream* speech delivered August 28, 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

*“I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”*

**IMAGE** - Two dozen descendants of African enslaved people and European enslavers gathered together that January weekend to share and listen to each other’s stories, to learn about trauma and how it impacts our brains and spirits, and to explore an approach to healing grounded in peacebuilding as taught and practiced at the Center for Justice & Peacebuilding at EMU.

## **CTTT and the [Center for Justice & Peacebuilding](#) and EMU: IMAGE**

While Coming to the Table is affiliated CJP and EMU, CTTT is not associated with any religion. Both CJP and CTTT welcome people from all cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions, and those without such affiliations.

## **Coming to the Table Vision and Mission: IMAGE**

CTTT sees present-day racism – and systems of inequity and injustice based in race – as both an outgrowth of unhealed historical trauma and a present-day traumatic wound in itself; inflicted by the institution of slavery and the systems of beliefs and values that held slavery in place for centuries.

- **Vision:** CTTT’s vision for the United States is of a just and truthful society that acknowledges and seeks to heal from the racial wounds of the past—from slavery and the many forms of racism it spawned.
- **Mission:** Coming to the Table provides leadership, resources, and a supportive environment for all who wish to acknowledge and heal wounds from racism that are rooted in the United States’ history of slavery.

**The CTTT Approach: IMAGE** – Our approach to achieving this vision and mission involves four interrelated practices:

1. **Uncovering History:** researching, acknowledging, and sharing personal, family and community histories of race with openness and honesty
2. **Making Connections:** connecting to others within and across racial lines in order to develop and deepen relationships
3. **Working Toward Healing:** exploring how we can heal together through dialogue, reunion, ritual, ceremony, the arts, apology and other methods
4. **Taking Action:** actively seeking to heal the wounds of racial inequality and injustice and to support racial reconciliation between individuals, within families, and in communities.

### **The Future IMAGE (with web address)**

More than 4,000 people are now connected to CTTT. As one member wrote, “CTTT has changed my life forever. I now have the tools I need to make a difference in the world.”

We welcome you to join us at the Table: Taking America Beyond the Legacy of Enslavement.

You can find more about CTTT values and programs on our website, which is loaded with useful resources. We also have printed information about Coming to the Table available for you to take with you.

**Call to Action:** – (Depending on your audience, and how much time you have, it is important to issue a “Call to Action” for those in your audience.)

For example, “We all know what’s happening in this country and around the world. The next 5-10 years in the United States are going to be critical to healing the harms of the past, addressing injustices, advancing racial equity and raising consciousness on these issues. What role are you going to play? What role do you want to play?”

### **Some ideas for Taking Action with CTTT include:**

- Spend serious time researching the CTTT website: educate yourself!
- Join a CTTT local group or start your own!
- Attend the CTTT National Gathering
- Join the CTTT Facebook group, subscribe to our newsletter, follow us on Twitter
- If you are in a social justice organization, let’s find ways to partner together
- Participate in our monthly community conference calls
- Help raise funds, volunteer for a committee or working group
- Join us at the Table now. Together we’ll change the world, one heart at a time.

Q&A, and point out again any handouts you have.