



Taking America (USA) Beyond the Legacy of Enslavement

COMING TO THE TABLE

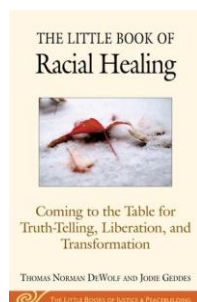
Starting a Coming to the Table Local Affiliate Group A CTTT Guide

Online social networks, community conference calls, newsletters, and email certainly have their place in Coming to the Table, but there is nothing like meeting in person to build the kind of community our work requires. This guide is designed to help you start and sustain a local/regional CTTT group where you live. This is not a set of rules. Rather, we hope this guide will help set the stage and then inspire your creativity; that it will serve as a springboard to additional ideas to fit your group and its needs. For additional information and support, or if you have questions about starting a CTTT Local Affiliate Group, please contact us by clicking [on this link](#).

After you've read through this guide, studied the resources, and are ready to form a Local Group in your community, fill out the **online application form** [HERE](#).

Before you get started

1. Review the [CTTT website](#), especially the "About Us" links. Be sure to read [CTTT – Then & Now](#) and the [Vision, Mission, Approach and Values](#) of CTTT.
2. For a more complete understanding of CTTT, download and review the following Guides under the [Resources](#) links:
 - [Transforming Historical Harms](#)
 - Using the [Circle Process](#) to facilitate effective group dialogue
 - Using [Touchstones](#) (agreed-upon principles for group dialogue)
 - An introduction to [Restorative Justice](#) principles & CTTT
 - There are many additional guides, videos and other resources that you will also find quite valuable – simply click on the "[Resources](#)" tab to see the drop-down menu



We strongly recommend reading a few of the "Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding." These brief, powerful books rest at the foundation of the CTTT Approach to racial justice and healing. In particular, we recommend [The Little Book of Racial Healing](#) (which introduces the entire CTTT Approach), as well as *The Little Books* of [Trauma Healing](#), [Restorative Justice](#), and [Circle Processes](#). Once you've completed the application form, CTTT will mail you a copy of each of these books.

How to find others who may be interested

1. Join the CTTT [Facebook](#) page and post a message there.
2. Talk to family members, friends and colleagues
3. Ask at meetings such as genealogical societies, anti-racism groups, faith communities, history societies, museums, and events that draw like-minded people (film screenings)
4. Public speaking often draws people out of the woodwork. Share your story. Give a talk at a local church, library, or community event (or other opportunities) about your family's connection to slavery or your interest in working with others to heal from the legacy of slavery. Tell them about Coming to the Table and let them know you'd like to meet others who are interested in this work. Share and collect contact information. Follow-up with everyone who seems interested.
5. Depending on location and need for funding, host someone from CTTT to give a presentation in your community
6. Host a film screening of [Traces of the Trade](#), [Moving Midway](#), [Meeting David Wilson](#), [Shared History](#), and/or [Anywhere But Here](#). The film you use may depend on your location.
7. Distribute CTTT brochures. Contact CTTT [here](#) regarding availability of brochures.
8. Ideally, work with a partner; a racial counterpart with whom you get along well, and work together to launch your CTTT group.
9. IMPORTANT: You don't need a large group. Start small. Focus on connecting well and racial balance (more on this below).

Once you have connected with a few people who are or may be interested

1. Focus on building trust and connection; try to listen as much as you share, and look for people who can listen as well as share.
2. Use story sharing to encourage connection-building. Share your personal and family stories related to slavery, its legacies and aftermaths, and racism.

3. We strongly recommend using a Circle Process for group sharing of stories. [*The Little Book of Circle Processes*](#) by Kay Pranis is a helpful resource for learning to conduct dialogue through use of a circle process.
4. Use Touchstones (located at the end of this document) for establishing group norms and guidelines. Listening without interruption, criticism or judgment, sharing time equally (more or less), and confidentiality are really important.
5. Keep an eye on “racial” balance in group leadership and membership. A group that is much more than half European American is less likely to feel and be safe and welcoming to African Americans. The reverse is also true. Imbalance tends to result in less likelihood for success.
6. Take time to share your stories over multiple meetings. This is crucial for building connections, safety and trust between you. People are more likely to stick around for the challenging conversations once they have heard one another’s stories and seen one another’s humanity through those stories.
7. Use the [Videos for Educational/Dialogue Settings](#) from the Resources page of the CTTT website. You’ll find “Study Questions” below the links to the videos that will help spark dialogue.
8. Utilize the CTTT [YouTube channel](#), as well as films, books, and community events to inspire more story-sharing.
9. Intellectual or academic discussions have their place, and can be important, but engaging in them without warm and respectful relationships, built through sharing stories, can stir up defensiveness, distance, mistrust, competition, etc., and can be counterproductive to connection and healing.
10. Talk about taking some sort of action as a group. Are you ready? Do you have good relationships? Do you need more time to build community? Would working on something together help you build community? What kind of action would you like to engage in?

Additional Information

1. Relationship to the national CTTT organization: This relationship is spelled out in the [Application and Agreement](#). CTTT strongly encourages the creation of local groups, and we provide resources and support to the best of our ability.
2. Policy regarding use of the Coming to the Table name: Once you have a group, if you want to name yourselves, we encourage creativity and, if you wish, including your location. It needs to be something other than simply

“Coming to the Table.” Some examples: **NLPS (New Legacy Puget Sound)**, **WTTT (Welcome to the Table)**, or **Shenandoah Valley Chapter of CTTT**.

3. Donations for local activity: you’ll need to handle your own finances. CTTT does not have the capacity at this time to process donations and reimbursements for local activity. This is also spelled out in the [Application and Agreement](#).
4. A few final reminders. Connections are at the heart of this work. Start small. Build warm relationships. Grow from there. Ask for support from the CTTT Community. Contact us [here](#).

Existing Local and Regional CTTT Groups

Here is a list of many of the places where CTTT Community members meet regularly, or are actively working to build a local community. We can put you in touch with people who have successfully started local CTTT groups: Welcome to the Table (WTTT) in Oakland/Bay Area CA, New York City and Albany NY, Sacramento, Pasadena, and Santa Monica CA, Shenandoah Valley, Richmond, Vienna, Lexington, Harrisonburg, and the Eastern Shore in Virginia, Annapolis, Montgomery County, and Harford County in Maryland, Atlanta GA, Triangle Area of NC, Minneapolis MN, Wilmington and Asheville NC, Knoxville TN, Albuquerque NM, Lafayette CO, Charlotte NC, and Sisters, and Bend OR.



TOUCHSTONES

Touchstones are an established set of mutually agreed-upon principles that guide how participants will treat, and be with, each other in “deep dialogue” using the Coming to the Table Approach. They aim to address participants’ needs and expectations to feel safe and/or brave enough to speak openly and honestly and help us all make more space for each other. There shouldn’t be too many, nor should they be too rigid, lest they feel like a straitjacket. Touchstones are reminders of standards of behavior, not hard rules. They are a means to an end, a way toward relationship. If they become an end, they should be revisited. Below are examples that can be used or modified to meet the needs of your group. Developing your own Touchstones is a good way to build group cohesion. The above description is adapted from, and more information about Touchstones can be found in, [The Little Book of Racial Healing](#).

- **Be 100% present, extending and presuming welcome.** Set aside the usual distractions of things undone, things to do. Bring all of yourself to the experience. We all learn most effectively in welcoming spaces. Welcome others here and presume that you are welcomed.
- **Listen deeply.** Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. *“To ‘listen’ another’s soul into life, into a condition of disclosure and discovery—may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another”* (Douglas Steere). Listen to yourself also. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting.
- **Try it on.** Make an opening for new ideas by trying them on for size. Give yourself the time to get to know them, to consider how they fit you.
- **Always by invitation.** It is never “share or die.” You will be invited to share in pairs, small groups, and in the large group. The invitation is exactly that. You will determine the extent to which you want to participate in our discussions or activities.
- **No fixing.** Each of us is here to discover his or her own truths. We are *not* here to set someone else straight, or to help right another’s wrong, to “fix” or “correct” what we perceive as broken or incorrect in another member of the group.
- **Identify assumptions; suspend judgments.** Our assumptions, although usually invisible to us, often undergird our worldview; our judgments, frequently automatic, can block our growth. By pausing to identify assumptions and suspend judgments, to the degree possible or reasonable, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully.

- **Speak your truth.** Say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard, and your contribution respected, even if it is different from or even opposite of what another has said. *Own* your truth by speaking only for yourself, using “I” statements.
- **Be aware of and allow for the difference between intention and impact.** Give yourself and others the grace of assuming that no one present *intends* to harm others, while also being ready to acknowledge that words or behavior/actions (nonverbal communication) can have a harmful impact.
- **Whenever possible, acknowledge uncomfortable responses: say “ouch!” or “whoops!”; then explain.** Let others know when you are responding with pain to remarks in the group, either from others (“ouch!”) or yourself (“whoops!”), especially when your feelings are impeding your ability to stay connected to others. Help them understand the reason for your reaction.
- **Respect silence.** Silence is a rare gift. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect and fully listen, without immediately filling the space with words.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature and content of discussions in the circle. What is said in the circle remains here.
- **Respect Difference:** Recognize that different cultures have different norms for speaking in groups (such as interrupting, or degrees of assertiveness). There may be differences regarding power dynamics. Over-emphasis on norms of politeness and “safety,” for example, can be an unconscious way to reinforce white fragility and prevent expressions of anger.
- **When things get difficult, turn to wonder; try “both/and”, rather than “either/or.”** When someone else’s truth challenges your own, try turning to wonder: “I wonder what brought her to this place?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” Also, allow for the possibility of multiple experiences and perspectives: let “both/and” create a larger, shared space.
- **Expect “non-closure.”** Stay in the present. We probably won’t get to the end of the road today.

Remember that Coming to the Table is the first step. *Staying* at the Table, *staying* conscious and committed, is the key to racial healing & transformation.

These Touchstones are adapted from ideas, concepts, and practices used in a [Circle of Trust](#). Another resource is [Visions, Inc](#). This version was initially developed for [Coming to the Table](#) by Ann Holmes Redding, Ph.D. & Pat Russell, Psy. D., and has been updated to reflect experience in their usage.