



## *What We Know: Multi-racial Relationships Project*

### Information for Participants

#### Project Background

The three people who conceived of and lead this project - Karena Montag, Lucinda Garthwaite, and Shelley Vermilya -- are all part of multi-racial families, with parents, partners and/or children who identify differently from each other in terms of race and racial history, and whose skin color is different from each other. We are all activists and scholars of racism, race, and social justice, and the colleagues we've invited to work with us on this project join us in our dedication to dismantling racism and white supremacy.

We share a belief that biological *race* is a myth, unsupported by science and social history, created and maintained to support and enforce the subjugation of particular ethnic and cultural groups. We also know that *racism* is alive and well, costing lives, degrading humanity, and limiting access to economic opportunity and basic human rights at every moment.

The experience of the project founders is of holding both of these truths every day: In order to be in loving family with each other, we see each other as fully human, transcending race. At the same time we acknowledge racism, and our differing realities and experiences of race and racism.

Our experiences and beliefs lead us to believe that multi-racial families, collectively, know something that could contribute to an ongoing social transformation toward a more equitable and less violent world. Increasingly, social change agents understand that relationships are as critical to sustained and long-term change as politics, activism and policy. Writer and activist Adrienne maree brown has gone so far as to say that in the work of social transformation, "relationships are everything."<sup>1</sup>

Families are complex. They are not always easy; some are nurturing, some not. Some joyful, some tragic. When we're in the day-to-day of family, we aren't always conscious of their dynamics, our commonalities and differences, and how we navigate them. Regardless, families are made of relationships, and in multi-racial families those relationships can't help but play out in the context of a racialized world. In our stories of being in those families, there is something to be learned. This project is designed to find out *what we know*, and then get that into the world.

#### Project Overview

The project begins with research; you are invited to be part of that research by participating in an interview with a member of the research team. All told, we will interview at least 100- adult members of multiracial families. All interviews will be conducted via Zoom, and will be recorded and transcribed, and those transcriptions will comprise the core data for our research.

Once we've completed interviews, interviewers will clear the transcripts of anything that might identify individual participants, and share the collected transcripts with a multi-racial group of readers who have not been interviewed, and who have some background in racial equity work. Those readers will report

<sup>1</sup> Brown, a.m. (2017) *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change. Changing Worlds*. A.K. Press. Page 19.

what they see in common among the experiences of the participants. Informed by those insights, project leaders and senior research associates will apply principals of transformative phenomenology<sup>2</sup>to document the collective insights of project participants, and draw out the implications of those insights for application in the world beyond families.

Our hope is that the findings of this research will lend themselves to a book, publicly available webinars and workshops, and resources for organizations.

### Institute for Liberatory Innovation

*What We Know* is a project of the Institute for Liberatory Innovation (ILI)with a mission to create opportunities for change-makers to think, experiment and learn together, and to generate strategies for a more equitable and nonviolent future. Our agenda is guided by conversations with our [advisors](#) - leaders, activists, artists, and thinkers who work across many sectors, and who bring diverse perspectives, histories, and experience to our thinking about where to focus our work.

Each of our [initiatives](#) proceeds in two stages aligned with our mission. In the learning stage we think together through formal research or inquiry to inform the generation of impact strategies. In the impact stage we implement those strategies for outcomes we can see. You are signing on to participate in the learning stage, contributing your experiences of living in a multi-racial family to our effort to understand collective insights that we'll then translate into strategies for change.

To learn more about the ILI, [please visit our website](#).

### What it means to be a project participant

Research participants (you) are adult (18+) members of multi-racial families who agree to an interview with an ILI research Associate.

**Pre- Interview:** We encourage you to read this entire document. Prior to the interview and having read this document, please complete a [consent form](#). We cannot conduct the interview until that consent form is complete. If you would like to talk with the project Lead, ILI Director Lucinda Garthwaite, before your interview, please feel free to [email](#) or call her at 802-522-929.

**Scheduling the Interview:** Interviews can be scheduled via Calendly [here](#). If the dates or times available do not work for you, please contact Jordan Laney ([jordanlaney@liberatoryinstitute.org](mailto:jordanlaney@liberatoryinstitute.org)) to schedule an interview.

**The Interview:** Your interview will be conducted via Zoom. You may dial in or sign in online with a computer or phone. If you sign in online, you will have the option to turn your camera on or off. The interview will be recorded, and the recording transcribed by Zoom software. Once the transcription is complete, the recording will be deleted.

<sup>2</sup> This approach to research seeks to “transcend the reality of everyday lived-experience in service of generating common understanding.” For more on this approach, see Rehorick and Benz (2009) *Transformative Phenomenology* or go to [their website](#).

The interview will last 60 minutes, starting with a brief overview and confirmation of your consent to participate and be recorded. The interviewer will have a few questions to ask, which we hope will lead to a conversation based on your individual experience as a member of a multi-racial family. Once your conversation starts, you can expect to be asked questions like, “can you say more about that?” because we are really interested in your particular and specific experience.

Please don't feel any pressure to come up with “wisdom” yourself, though if you have ideas and insights we'll be glad to hear them. We're interested in your experience, your stories. Your voice will be among many others, and it's the researchers' job to find the collective wisdom in all of those stories, together.

*If at any time during the interview you would rather not respond to a question, please just say, “I'd rather not respond,” and the interviewer will move on, no questions asked.* We will not attribute direct quotes to you or any other participant, however, if you say something and regret you said it, or want to be sure it's not quoted directly at all, just say, “Please don't quote that,” and we will not. If you need to end the interview at any time, for any reason, just say that you need to stop, and that will be the end of the interview.

**Confidentiality:** Please read this part of the consent form carefully and check all boxes that apply to you. We will respect your specific wishes regarding confidentiality. If, after your interview, you wish to change your preferences, just [email the interview coordinator, Jordan Laney](#) and let her know what your adjusted preferences are; we will respect those. You may change your preferences up until the research documentation is in its final draft. We will contact you at that point and send you a draft to review, along with an invitation to change your preferences then for a final time.

The only people who will see the unedited transcript of your interview are the two interviewers and the project director (see below). Other readers will see only edited transcripts, cleared of anything that might identify you. Everyone who is involved in transcript review and analysis will sign a non-disclosure agreement prior to reading the transcripts. Transcripts will be stored in a secure folder on the Project Google drive for one year following interviews and then will be deleted.

**Post Publication:** We don't know yet what we'll find, so we don't know the shape of the book or of the workshops we might offer. We may contact you to ask if you would like to be part of whatever evolves, and we trust you'll be honest in your response. If you say no thank you, we'll leave you be.

**In Thanks for your Participation:** If the findings lend themselves to a book, each participant will receive a signed hard copy, and/or an ebook if they prefer. If you agree in the consent form, we will thank you by name in the acknowledgements. If you indicate that you would prefer not to be named, we'll let you know we are grateful in other ways.

**Intellectual Property and Financial Gain:** Participants will not be paid, or benefit financially, except in cases of specifically contracted and paid post-publication engagement (see above.) Research findings, synthesized from all interview transcripts combined, will be the property of The Institute for Liberatory Innovation and individual project team members unless and until they transfer to ownership of a different publisher.

**If you have any concerns about the conduct of your interviewer,** please contact ILLI director and project lead [Lucinda Garthwaite](#). Your concerns will be held in confidence unless you agree otherwise. If, having read this document, you decide you would prefer not to participate, just [send an email](#) to that effect, and we will thank you and leave you be.

## Appendix: Project Leaders and Research Associates

### Project Founders

#### **Lucinda Garthwaite, Project Co- Leader, Lead Researcher**

Lucinda is the Director of the Institute for Liberatory Innovation, which she founded after a thirty-year career in higher education most recently as a senior leader at [Goddard College](#). She was a Fellow of the Fielding Institute for Social Innovation from 2015 - 2017 and holds a Doctorate in Leadership for Change from Fielding Graduate University, a Masters in Education from the University of New Hampshire, and an MFA in Creative writing from Goddard College.

#### **Karena Montag, Project Co-Leader**

Karena is co-founder of [Stronghold](#), offering consultation and facilitation rooted in anti-racist analysis and framed by Restorative and Transformative Justice philosophy and practice. She has trained hundreds of community members in the practices and principles of Restorative Justice and circle-keeping and consulted on and facilitated racial justice processes for nonprofits and educators in the U.S. and in Central America. She received the Harriet Whitman Lee Partnership Award from the Association for Dispute Resolution of Northern California (ADRNC) and Oakland's Finest Award from the LoveLife Foundation. Karena received an M.A. in Integral Psychology from the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) and maintains a private psychotherapy practice in Berkeley, CA.

#### **Shelley Vermilya**

Shelley has taught multicultural education, identity development, race, gender and disability studies for over twenty-five years, at Goddard College, the University of Vermont and St. Michael's Colleges, and is community facilitator with the Vermont Peace and Justice Center's Racial Justice project. She is currently serving at the Equity Scholar in Residence at U32 Middle-High School in Montpelier, Vermont as part of an [II action-research project](#). Shelley has participated in restorative practice training through The International Institute for Restorative Practices, The Insight Prison Project, STRONGHOLD, and the North Dakota Study Group. She holds a BA in liberal studies and MA in History from Goddard College, and a Doctorate in Education in Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Vermont.

### Research Associates/Interviewers

#### **Jordan Laney**

Jordan is an Appalachian culture scholar, and a facilitator & educator focused on building resilient rural communities. Her work has included documenting the erasure of Black and women Appalachian musicians, supporting first generation Appalachian college students, and evaluating educational programs with the Virginia Tech Department of Engineering Education. Jordan teaches in the Department of Religion and Culture at Virginia Tech, and in the Appalachian Studies program at Appalachian State University, and Jordan has been honored for her teaching, scholarship, writing and social justice advocacy. Jordan earned her MA in Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University, and PhD in Cultural and Political Theory at Virginia Tech.

#### **Janet Thompson**

Janet Thompson is a psychologist, educator, scholar and researcher. She served on the faculty and as internship coordinator in the graduate program in counseling at the University of New Hampshire, and as a faculty member at Union Institute and University and Lesley University. Janet practiced as a mental health counselor for over thirty years, including in leadership, frontline service, and crisis response for a

regional hospital behavioral health unit. Janet's teaching and research has included work with adult development, socio-cultural contexts for counseling, women, culture and change, grief and stress. Janet holds a doctorate in Educational Studies from Lesley University, and an MA in Counseling from the University of New Hampshire.

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**If you are ready to schedule an interview, please select the date and time that works best for you here: <https://calendly.com/d/gprx-mhwg/multi-racial-relationships-project-interviews>**

**If these options do not work for you please let us know and we will gladly find a time that works for your schedule.**