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Training module on the intersection of art and storytelling in  
undoing internalised racism in non-formal youth education and training



# Undoing Internalised Racism

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# About this manual

be human



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA  
MINISTRY FOR GOZO  
AND PLANNING

## Allegories on racism manifestation

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This module explores how *the intersection of art and storytelling* can address and undo internalised racism within non-formal youth education. It starts by exploring how *performance art* serves as a crucial medium for activism, challenging traditional art forms while addressing issues of race and racism. So, performance art confronts, resists, and mobilises against racial oppression through various art forms, such as music, dance, theatre and/or storytelling. Performance art acts as a transformative healing practice for racialised youth affected by racial trauma, fostering both self-awareness, and belongingness. Then, the module continues by exploring how *theatre of the oppressed* serves as a powerful medium for self-expression, healing, and empowerment within the Black communities, addressing complex issues of race and racism. And the module explores how *the intersection of identity and creativity* fosters participatory spaces for processing racialised trauma and reclaiming narratives. The Black identity influences creative expression, shaping how the Black youth navigate the systems of racism. Creativity serves as a critical force for the Black communities to reclaim their own life stories and challenge distorted narratives. Whereas self-expression acts as a powerful tool for confronting racism and for affirming the Black identity. Creative self-expression is hence a defiant act of reclamation; it transforms internalised pains into artistic expressions that celebrate African heritage. The module continues by exploring how *personal stories and narratives* challenge stereotypes and foster community solidarity.

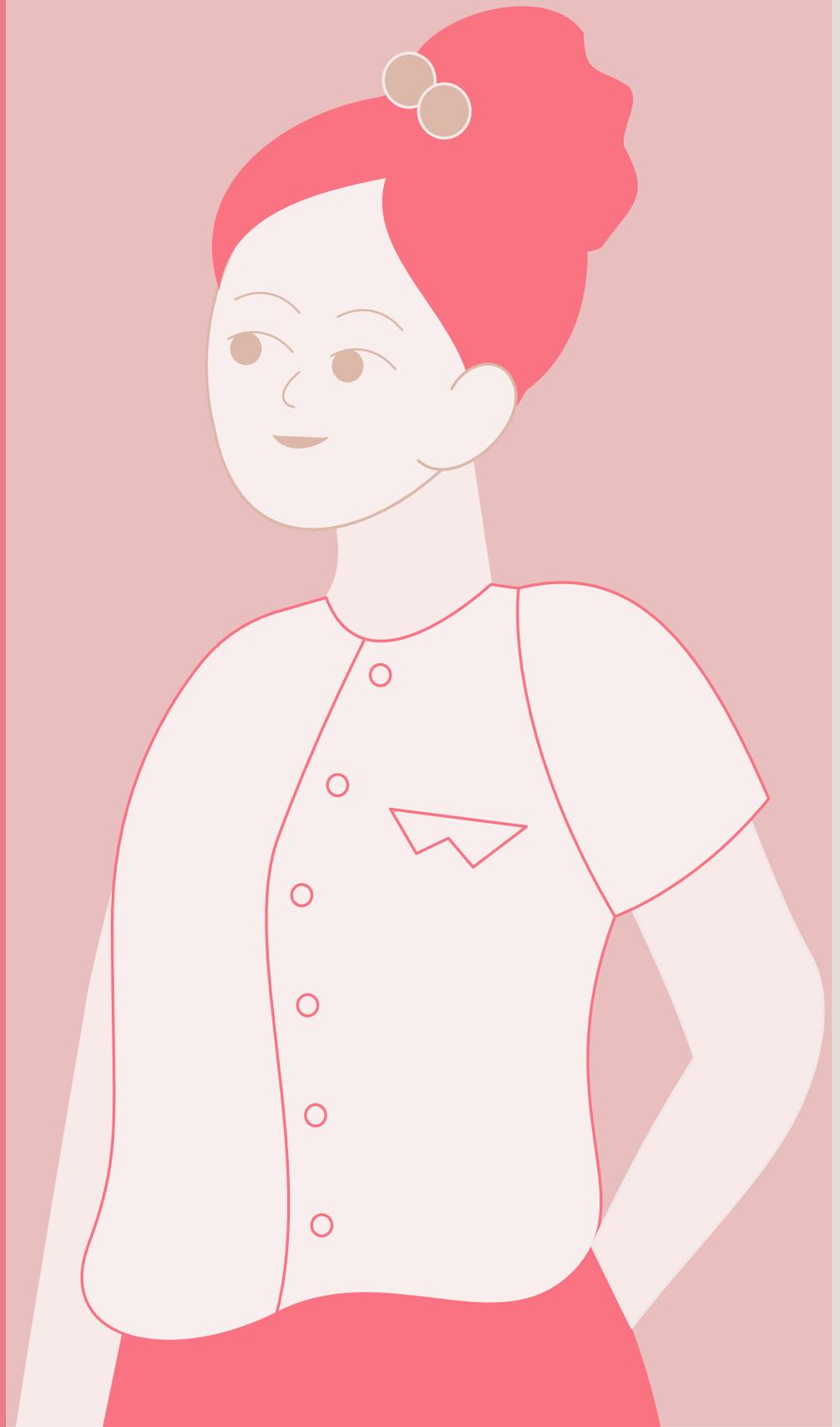
Storytelling serves as a dynamic process for healing racial trauma, allowing racialised youth to reclaim their narratives and foster mental health resilience. Sharing personal stories validates the Black experience and facilitates emotional processing. Thus, storytelling externalises racialised trauma, empowering the Black youth to view racism as a societal issue rather than a personal failing. It enables the Black youth to reconstruct their identities and confront the stock stories within brave spaces where they feel respected and/or protected while sharing their truths. These counter-spaces challenge negative perceptions and enhance both psychological wellbeing and critical consciousness in Black youth. And the module concludes by exploring how *podcasting* is a powerful medium for confronting and undoing internalised racism. Podcasting offers a unique platform for racialised youth to share their stories, deconstruct stock stories, and affirm their lived experiences and cultural richness. The intimate nature of podcasting allows for vulnerability and the exploration of complex emotions. Podcasting preserves anonymity, helping Black youth confront internal struggles without external pressures. The act of recording allows racialised youth to confront internalised struggles. It serves as a transitional object, helping listeners feel connected and validated in their experiences.

# Manual glossary

- **Activism:** Refers to the practice of taking direct, intentional action to promote, defend or advance the human rights that are at risk, threatened or violated, at either the individual, family, school, community, national, regional and international level.
- **African diaspora:** Refers to all people of African descent who live outside of the African continent, irrespective of their citizenship or nationality.
- **An activist:** Refers to anyone who actively campaigns by reacting to injustice, gender or racial violence, gender or racial discrimination, or systemic racism with the goal to prevent, respond to, and counteract them.
- **An anti-racist:** Refers to someone who is supporting an anti-racist policy through their actions or expressing an anti-racist idea. Anti-racism involves actively challenging racist policies and practices through words, actions, or behaviours. This is different from being non-racist, which refers to personally refraining from racially prejudiced attitudes or behaviours.
- **Collective healing:** Refers to the process where healing happens not just individually, but within a community; through shared storytelling, support, and solidarity.
- **Counter-narratives:** Refer to strategically constructed counter storylines that are projected and nurtured through counter messaging with clear intentions to undermine the appeal of racist narratives of racially prejudiced White people through media-based counter-narratives campaigns.
- **Double consciousness:** Refers to the internal conflict and self-perception experienced by racialised individuals or groups, who see themselves through their own eyes but also through the eyes of a Eurocentric, racially prejudiced society.
- **Griot culture:** refers to the tradition of West African storytellers, historians, and musicians who preserve and transmit history, genealogy, and cultural knowledge through oral storytelling and music.
- **Internalised racism:** Refers to a racialised individual's negative view of themselves based on the perceived inferiority of their racial background. Racialised individuals internalise racism when they accept and absorb negative racial stereotypes about themselves and believe in the superiority of the beauty, cultural norms, traditions of White people.
- **Intersectionality:** Refers to complex, cumulative ways in which different aspects of a person's social or cultural identities, such as race, gender, sex, or ability, combined create unique, overlapping systems of discrimination and exclusion.
- **Mental health:** Refers to our overall emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It influences how we think, feel and act and thus, a fundamental part of our daily life. Mental health exists on a spectrum and, it can fluctuate over time due to various factors such as life experiences, social stressors, surrounding, relationships, or health.
- **Microaggressions:** Refers to everyday verbal and/or nonverbal insults, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to individuals solely based on their gender, race, or skin colour.
- **Personal storytelling:** Refers to the act of sharing one's personal experiences, challenges, growth, and triumphs with others to foster connection, empathy, and a sense of shared experience.
- **Racial identity:** Refers to a social construct that refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a particular racial group, and a sense of self related to an individual's racial group membership, including race-associated attitudes or behaviours.
- **Racialised trauma:** Refers to mental and emotional injury caused by repeated encounters with race-based incidents, whether occurring directly between individuals or groups, or indirectly as a witnessing police brutality.
- **Racial oppression:** Refers to a complex and pervasive system of social, economic, and political injustice where White people systematically subordinates, disempowers, and exploits racialised individuals.
- **Racial prejudices:** Refer to prejudgements based on untrue beliefs of a hostile nature formed beforehand formed by White people without any knowledge nor actual experience about racialised individuals.
- **Racial socialisation:** Refers to a process by which racialised individuals learn about race, racism, and their racial group and develop a racial identity. How racialised individuals acquire attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs related to their race and how it shapes their identity, rights and opportunities.
- **Racism:** Refers to a system of oppression based on race, which involves a combination of racial prejudices, racial discrimination, and power. It creates and perpetuates racial inequities among racial groups and is embedded in the historical, cultural, institutional, structural and interpersonal fabric of society.
- **Racist narratives:** Refer to strategically constructed storylines that are projected and nurtured through messaging by racially prejudiced White people in their attempts to impose how the racialised individuals should behave, look like or act, and ultimately guide policies and public discourse in a manner that is conducive to white supremacy and Eurocentric views.
- **Rainbow of desire:** Refers to a set of therapeutic Theatre of the Oppressed techniques designed to explore internalised oppression and emotional conflict
- **Theatre of the oppressed:** Refers to a participatory theatre method created by Augusto Boal that uses drama as a rehearsal for real-life action against oppression. It transforms spectators into "spectators."
- **Trauma-informed practice:** Refers to an approach that recognises the prevalence of trauma, especially in marginalised communities, and prioritises emotional safety, choice, and empowerment.

# CHAPTER-1

## Performance art, confronting the legacy of racism



## 1.1. Performance art, liveliness activism

Performance art as a form of activism emerged as an avant-garde movement challenging the traditional art forms and conventions, by focusing on the use of body, live action and audience participation in social movements. Moving beyond the static confines of the museum and gallery walls, performance art leverages the powers of the human body and the sound to confront, resist, inspire, empower, celebrate, and mobilise in the real-time. From disruptive protest anthems of the 20th-century to the street performances and protest anthems that echo through the contemporary racial justice movements, performance art provides a unique, empowering and compelling language for shared solace, dissent, resistance, resilience and solidarity. Performance art, such as *music, dance, theatre, storytelling, and/or drumming*, they all have been used to embody the experiences of the Black people and evoke Black empowerment and critical consciousness within the Black communities to confront racial oppression. The sound of *music* possesses this unique ability to stir emotions, strengthen a sense of collective Black identity and distil the complex issues of race and racism into visible shareable racial issues. Black artists have been releasing the songs that confront *police brutality, systemic racism and racial profiling*, using their own voices and lyrics to call out racial oppression. It is the kind of performance art that serves as a rallying cry, and a source of resistance and resilience: the backbones of social movements.

At *the Civil Rights Movement*, freedom songs were sung at protest marches, in jails, at mass meetings to foster courage. Songs like *"We Shall Overcome"* then became the meaning of resilience and hope. Artists like *"Nina Simone"* used their platforms to channel the rage and the sorrow of the time, with her *"Mississippi Goddam"* serving as a raw, and searing indictment of racial segregation and violence. *The Vietnam War* saw the musicians giving a voice to a generation's disillusionment. Artists like *"Marvin Gaye"* used songs to confront the war and its impact on the Black people, with *"What's Going On"* questioning the state of the war, while *"What's Happening Brother"* was told from the perspective of the Black soldier returning home from the Vietnam war, grappling with the challenges of readjusting to civilian life and finding a job in the turmoil of racial segregation and police violence. During *the Anti-Apartheid and Pan-Africanist Movements*, music become such a vital medium of self-expression, resistance and resilience against racial segregation, and colonialism. Artists like *"Miriam Makeba"* and *"Hugh Masekela"* used their voice to channel the rage and sorrow of apartheid, galvanising national and

international support for the anti-apartheid movement. While artists like *"Fela Kuti"* and *"Bob Marley"* used their talents and voice to challenge colonialism while promoting African pride, self-determination, and advocating for the liberation of the African people and repatriation to Africa.

### 1.1.1. Music that confronted racial oppression

Long before protest anthems defined activism, there was the *Blues*. Born in the racially oppressive landscapes of the post-slavery American South, the Blues is more than just a Black music form, *it is the foundational expression of Black resilience and resistance, which celebrates the African history, culture and heritage while emphasising both the struggles and the triumphs of Black people*. Emerging from field hollers (*the form of vocal work song traditionally sung by enslaved Black people, to accompany their work and express emotions*), work songs, and spirituals, the Blues gave voice to a people systematically denied one, documenting the harsh realities of their existence while asserting their humanity, wit, and their own will to survive. The *Blues* is the bedrock of nearly all the popular music and the original protest music, a raw testament to the struggle for freedom, identity, liberty, cultural pride and dignity. But activism of the Blues is often not found in overt, declarative statements but is woven into its very fabric. That is, in its lyrical themes, its emotional honesty and the cathartic power of its live performance. In an era when direct confrontation with racial segregation was legally lethal, the *Blues* became and remains a coded language, a living force for the Black communities. Blues musicians chronicled the daily indignities, and the profound injustices of segregation, transforming personal pain into a collective narrative.

*Blues, the first Black music genre to both document and subtly confront racial segregation and oppression. The songs on sharecropping, gruelling labour, and economic exploitation were central to the Blues. By singing about these lived experiences, the Blues artists validated the suffering of the Black people and fostered a sense of a shared consciousness since systemic racism and racial segregation were recurring themes.*

Though beyond chronicling the hardship, the *Blues* was a powerful assertion of selfhood and a demand for personal freedom. In a society that sought to dehumanise the Black people, the Blues artists celebrated the full spectrum of the Black experience. The Blues did not shy away from themes of sorrow, heartbreak, and/or despair. By openly expressing these emotions, the Blues

provided a sense of relief and affirmed Black people's humanity. The raw, and unfiltered emotion in the voice of the Blues was itself an act of defiance against a society that demanded Black people to suppress their emotions and feelings. The *Bluesman* traveling from town to town with only his guitar, became then a powerful symbol of freedom and autonomy in celebration of personal liberty. While a life of hardship, Bluesman represented the rejection of the static, oppressive life of a sharecropper. The themes of travel, railroad, and open road found in countless Blues songs are metaphors for this quest for self-determination and for personal liberty. Blues' rich wit, humour, irony, and its double entendre, was a lyrical cleverness of intellectual resistance, allowing singers to comment on the authorities, race, racism, social dynamics in a more coded way that could only be decoded by Black people while going over the heads of White people.

*The legacy of Blues lives in its influence on all the contemporary music genres. From Jazz, Soul, and R&B, to Hip-Hop, all of these music genres are deeply indebted to the Blues. From the civil rights anthems to the urban realities depicted in Hip-Hop, the through line is the tradition of speaking truth to power, a tradition that began with the raw and honest cry of the Blues. And all began with the transition of the Blues into Jazz.*

Born from the crucible of Black experience, rooted in the sorrow of the Blues and the spirit of the enslaved Black people, *Jazz* became a defiant expression of freedom, the Black identity and of resistance. From its very inception, *Jazz* has been more than just a music genre, it has been a vital form of social, and political protest and resistance. Its core tenets of improvisation, collective conversation and individual expression have made Jazz the uniquely suited soundtrack for the struggle for the civil rights, racial justice and global peace. The improvisational nature of *Jazz* is a metaphor for freedom, liberty and cultural diplomacy. Jazz is about spontaneous co-creation and individual expression within a collective and breaking cultural divides. For Black people whose freedom, rights were systematically denied, the act of improvisation, and creating their musical path in the real-time, was a profound statement of self-determination. And this freedom principle was central to the avant-garde and the free jazz movements of the 60s, where the *Black Jazz artists* used their compositions to express Black consciousness and confront racial oppression head-on through raw and fearless commentaries in parallel with the racial and political upheavals of the era.

## 1.2. Performance art, healing racial trauma

Performance art harnesses the healing power within the individual and helps bring them into contact communication with themselves and one another. When we engage in performance art, it evokes the feelings of inspiration, and belongingness. So, interacting with and engaging in performance art strengthens self-awareness and self-esteem and opens up possibilities for personal growth and transformation. Performance art helps to process and express the lived experiences of racism and find meaning for them. Through interaction, engagement, and creativity, performance art allows the victim of racism to reconnect with their true selves which is the source of healing internalised racial trauma. Over the past decade, there has been increased recognition of the healing potential of the arts in fostering good mental and physical well-being (Stuckey. H. L. & Nobel. J., 2010). *Music* has been widely studied and shown to reducing anxiety, ease pain, calm brain activity, and support immune function. *Movement-based expression (such as dance and drumming)* can relieve stress, improve our body image, and enhance quality of life through both emotional and physical expression. *Expressive writing* about racial trauma leads to better mental and physical health, improved immune response, better sleep, reduced emotional depression, and anxiety.

*Racial trauma is unique in that it is intergenerational among racialised communities. However, racial trauma is systematically ignored, rendered invisible, and/or denied altogether by White societal structures, leaving the racialised individuals suffering in silence, and/or feeling isolated and invalidated. Racial trauma manifests from the overt acts of racism to the invisible daily microaggressions with profound psychological effects that lead to mental distress, such as anxiety, depression, hypervigilance, to a diminished sense of self-worth.*

In this struggle of the silent wounds of racism, performance art emerges as a powerful and transformative healing practice that forges the pathways to healing racial trauma. And merging its expressive power with its participatory nature, performance art is such an essential healing practice for the racialised individuals and communities to both process and heal the psychological, and the emotional injuries inflicted by racism. By moving beyond the western colonised mental health and therapeutic practices, performance art creates collective and safe spaces for reclaiming positive racial identity which fosters resilience and turns the emotional pain of racism into a catalyst for personal

transformation. And therefore, performance art can, in various ways, be used to address Black mental health experiences. Using accessible and engaging art formats, *such as street performance, theatre, storytelling, poetry, dance, and drumming*, performance art turns the emotional pains of racism into personal artistic expressions. The kind of artistic expressions that empower the Black communities to address the internalised wounds of racial trauma. Hence, engaging in performance art is transformative experience, allowing the victims of racism to release the emotional pains of racism in more self-constructive and healing manners.

*For example, the raw, rhythmic power of spoken words and emotional expression in Black theatre, storytelling, and poetry provide safe spaces for resilience, belongingness, and for releasing emotional pain and grief. They allow the victims of racism to engage with the difficult emotional wounds of racism in a shared, inclusive and supportive space. Whereas the power of dance, drumming and movement has long been a form of self-expression and as a means of healing within the Black communities. Dance, drumming, movements are powerful ways to release emotional pains, reclaim agency over Black people's mental health and wellbeing and deeply connect with their Black identity, cultural roots and heritage.*

And thus, performance art intervention in healing racial trauma is not just about interacting with, and engaging in the art for the sake of art, but about strategically deploying the artistic expression and the participatory nature of performance art to disrupt the effects of racial trauma, decolonise mental health and to empower Black people. It is the kind of performance art that creates safe spaces and platforms that empower racialised individuals and communities to seize control of their emotions and stories, and reclaim their narrative through counter-storytelling, theatre, or street performances.

### 1.2.1. Black art in confronting racial trauma

Black art is the art created by Black artists to advocate for, raise awareness of a sense of shared racial identity and struggle, solidarity, and empowerment among the Black people and Black communities, providing a means of self-expression and Black representation. Black art serves as a powerful medium for Blackness education and Black empowerment. It is used by Black artists to make the complex issues of race and racism more communicable and digestible to a Black audience. Black art is a medium for protest, resistance,

activism, and dissent that allows the Black artists to express their opposition to systemic racial oppression. But above all, Black art is by far an enduring antidote to racial trauma. A powerful tool for both healing and empowering the victims of racism, and, facilitating them to process, and express complex emotions, and build resilience in the face of racism.

*Black authors and artists such as Ta-Nehisi Coates, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Jericho Brown, Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, August Wilson, and Chinua Achebe have used Black literature, theatre and poetry to explore the depths of racial trauma and the Black identity, providing the language and validation for Black people while offering pathways for resilience and love in the face of racism.*

Black art centres and amplifies the voice, stories, experiences and perspectives of Black people historically silenced, misrepresented and rendered invisible in Western art. Black art serves as a form of cultural diplomacy which fosters cross-cultural understanding and dialogue, and promotes racial diversity, inclusion and justice. Black art exposes the ways in which racially prejudiced depictions and racist narratives are both socially and culturally constructed, rooted in histories of colonialism, slavery and white supremacy. *For example, both street art and graffiti emerged among Black artists as forms of resistance and social commentary to counter, confront and appeal to racially prejudiced depiction of the Black identity in the Western art and culture and to counteract racist narratives that undermined the Black experience.* From their roots in the marginalised and racialised communities to global recognition, street art and graffiti have challenged and continue to challenge racial oppression and to reclaim public spaces in response to social and racial issues affecting Black communities (*such as poverty, racism, police brutality*).

*Graffiti originated in the late 60s and 70s in the Bronx, New York, in the Black and Latino communities as a form of tagging (leaving one's mark on urban landscapes). The early graffiti writers used tags to assert their identity and resistance in the face of marginalisation, racial oppression, police brutality and racial erasure. Tagging crews formed around shared styles and territories, creating a sense of community and belonging.*

The birth and rise of hip-hop culture and breakdancing in 1975 and the 80s further popularised graffiti as an art form and means of self-expression for

the urban Black youth. Graffiti became an integral part of hip-hop's visual identity, alongside rapping, DJing, and breakdancing. Thus, Black Street art and graffiti create alternative narratives that celebrate the contributions of the Black people to art and use counter-stories to challenge racist narratives while confronting racial trauma.

### 1.3. Intersection of identity and creativity

The intersection of identity and creativity evokes a solid and dynamic front in the battle against racial trauma. It shapes a humanising and creative space where suppressed personal stories and collective narratives are reclaimed, and the trauma of racism is processed, confronted, healed. **Racial identity** is a social construct that refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a racial group, and a sense of self related to individual's racial group membership, including race-associated attitudes and/or behaviour. **Creativity** is the ability to generate ideas and solutions, and express oneself in unique ways, which is a crucial element of **creative expression**. Creativity is shaped by more than just individual know-how; it is also deeply influenced by social contexts and identities. When multiple aspects of a person's identity intersect (*race, sex, gender*), affect the challenges faced and the perspectives gained in different social contexts. And when these overlapping experiences are tapped in, it leads to a more adaptive thinking and richer creative expression. And hence, the racial and gender minority individuals who live on the margins of these intersections use their creativity not only for expression and reclaiming their own identities, stories, and experiences, but also as a tool for resistance and empowerment that facilitates them to navigate the complex issues of race and racism. This intersection highlights how diverse, racialised, overlapping lived experiences generate unique contributions into the creative field.

*Creativity has historically served as a critical force for Black communities to reclaim their own stories and identity while countering distorted and racist narratives perpetuated by the White cultural norms. The Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and the 70s, for instance, was a pivotal moment where Black artists, writers, and musicians used their work to celebrate Black culture, history, identity and experience, fostering a sense of pride and solidarity. Whereas the Black Lives Matter Movement has inspired a global art, music and poetry force that documents the struggle for racial justice and commemorates victims of police brutality. These movements shift the narrative and demand accountability.*

Understanding how intersectional identities influence creativity is important in the anti-racist education within youth work practice, where racialised youth are in the process of shaping both their own sense of self and their creative voice. By validating the racialised, overlapping lived experiences, youth work establishes the humanising spaces that nurture creativity among racialised youth as a response to navigating the complex issues of race and racism. It means not only inviting racial diversity into creative spaces, but also actively challenging the barriers that limit racialised youth meaningful participation. It means facilitating racialised youth to reclaim their identity and narratives, challenge racial oppression, and foster practices for healing from the deep-seated racial trauma wounds inflicted by systemic nature of racism. Systemic racism imposes a singular narrative, and a negative identity upon racialised youth which oftentimes leads to internalised racism, psychological distress, and a fractured sense of self. And therefore, creativity shapes an antidote for racial trauma within the racialised youth, offering a space for self-definition, resistance, and affirmation of their Black identity and cultural heritage.

*Creative expression is such a vital tool for processing racial trauma and fostering resilience, allowing racialised youth to give a voice to emotions and the experiences of racism that are often too difficult to articulate in other ways. It facilitates them to explore their own lived experiences with racism, transforming emotional pains into statements of survival and resilience. It is the process of creative healing that creates safe spaces for shared experiences and community resilience.*

Black artists explore how their racial identity intersects with other aspects of their identity, such as gender, sexuality, and class, to create a more nuanced and complex understanding of their experiences. *For example, the work of Black women artists highlights the unique struggles and the triumphs of Black women, who face both racism and sexism.* By bringing an intersectional lens to their creative practice, they challenge monolithic representations of Black communities and shed light on diverse, layered nature of Black identity.

#### 1.3.1. Self-expression as resistance

In confronting the legacy of racism, self-expression emerges as a powerful, and multifaceted form of resistance. From the melodies of the protest songs to the bold strokes of a paintbrush on street art, creative self-expression is a defiant act of self-affirmation, and a tool for confronting the legacy of

racism. By reclaiming, asserting their identity and narratives, Black people, and Black communities challenge the very foundations of racial oppression and forge paths toward liberation. Racism inflicts psychological wounds that foster internalised oppression and the fractured sense of self. In the context of racial oppression, self-expression is an act of psychological reclamation. It provides the self-defined space for confronting the legacy of racism and transforming anger into artistic expressions that celebrate African heritage. Hence, the act of self-expression, be it through writing, music, dance, poetry, visual art, can be a deeply therapeutic process for those experiencing racial trauma, facilitating the externalisation of internal turmoil and transformation of painful experiences into statements of resilience and resistance.

*Self-expression confronts racist narratives by offering an authentic and nuanced representation of the Black identity and experience. When Black people tell their own stories, they dismantle racial stereotypes that fuel prejudice and racial discrimination. And this rewriting of the narrative has been central to the anti-racist movements throughout history. Harlem Renaissance, for example, saw the flourishing of Black art, literature and music that celebrated the Black culture, heritage, and intellect, directly challenging racist caricatures prevalent in Western societies. Whereas Black Arts Movement was a conscious effort to create art that reflected the true Black identity and Black experience.*

Today, the Black artists, authors and musicians continue this legacy. Through their artworks, they explore the complexities of the Black identity and Black experience and shed light on the realities of systemic racism. And thus, self-expression, as the form of anti-racist resistance, manifests in a multitude of ways. **Visual arts** such as murals, paintings, photography and/or sculpture are used to protest police brutality, advocate for racial justice, and celebrate the beauty and diversity of the Black identity. **Music and literature** use the power of words to expose the psychological and the social impacts of racial injustice. **Black fashion** has become the site of resistance, where African styles are used to celebrate the African heritage and to make powerful statements of self-love and Black pride while challenging the Eurocentric beauty standards. Hence, while self-expression is a deeply personal act, its own power in confronting the legacy of racism is magnified when it becomes a collective endeavour.

*Racial justice movements have been fuelled by the chorus of racialised individuals' voices rising to demand change. When racialised individuals*

*share their own stories through self-expression, they build communities, foster solidarity, and shape the foundations for resistance. This collective self-expression is not only a source of resilience, but it is also a powerful force for shifting public consciousness and challenging the status quo.*

For racialised youth, it is a way to process pain, reclaim identity, and cultivate self-esteem, resilience, solidarity. When racialised youth engage in creative self-expression, such as in storytelling, theatre or in the new media, such as podcasting and digital storytelling, they are not only resisting erasure, but they are also actively shaping, reclaiming narratives rooted in Black pride.

### 1.3.2. Personal stories as healers

In confronting racial trauma, personal stories emerge as a vital multifaceted healing process through storytelling. Personal stories offer a path towards individual and collective healing, putting a voice to the emotional wounds of racism, where storytelling becomes a transformative process for reclaiming the narrative and fostering resilience. And therefore, personal stories play a very crucial role in healing racial trauma, facilitating racialised individuals to process their lived experiences, confront internalised oppression, and build a more empowered sense of self. And indeed, personal stories are central to *narrative therapy (a therapeutic approach that focuses on the stories people tell about their lives)*. *Reclaiming and rewriting the narrative: for many Black people, their stories are often shaped by a Eurocentric cultural narrative that invalidates or denies their experiences of racism. Thus, sharing their life stories in supportive environments facilitates the validation of the Black experience, which is a critical first step in healing from racial trauma. Externalising racial trauma: instead of seeing them as the problem, with storytelling, Black people get to view racial trauma as something separate from their own Black identity, and thus, racism is seen as the issue, as the problem.* This shift in perspectives is incredibly empowering, reducing feelings of shame, self-doubt and self-blame, and strengthening the stories of resilience, resistance and survival.

*Storytelling is a practice rooted in African cultures, serving as a more continued way to pass down history, values, and a sense of identity. For the racialised individuals healing from racial trauma, connecting with the stories of their ancestors can be a profound source of strength and resilience. It reminds them that they are part of a larger community that has a long history of survival and resistance. Sharing personal stories in*

*a group setting fosters a sense of collective healing. Hearing that others have had similar experiences can reduce feelings of isolation and create a strong sense of community and belonging. This shared understanding is an antidote to the invalidation experienced in White society.*

The healing power of personal stories extends beyond the individual to fuel a broader social change. As racialised individuals heal and reclaim their own narratives, they are empowered to become advocates for racial justice, and challenge the Eurocentric cultural narratives. When personal stories of racial trauma are shared publicly, they challenge the “stock stories” that the White societies oftentimes tell about race and racism, the narratives that downplay the existence of systemic racism and promote the white supremacist, and colour-blind ideologies. Hence, personal accounts by racialised individuals make the realities of racism visible and harder to ignore, fostering a deeper understanding in White societies. While community-based interventions that facilitate racialised youth to put thoughts, feelings, emotions into expressive forms, when dealing with the internalised shame, self-doubt and self-blame, serve as the catalysts for dialogue, and anti-racist education and activism. By making their experiences visible and shareable, the racialised youth get to see racial trauma as something that happened to them, rather than something they are. This storytelling does not have to be verbal. Art-based narratives, such as visual journals, photo-essays, and body-based storytelling in dance, offer equally powerful forms of expression. And therefore, regardless of the form, narrative expression facilitates the racialised individuals to externalise pain, reclaim identity and affirm their own humanity in the face of racism. By telling their life stories, they reframe their own identities not as victims, but as survivors and the creators of their own fate, which fosters resilience.

## 1.4. Street performance, undoing racism

By using their bodies as sites of protest, intervention, and resistance, Black artists enact resistance that is both vulnerable, and deeply personal. Such performances challenge the separation between art and activism, asserting that both creative expression and resisting racial oppression are intimately intertwined, mutually reinforcing. That is, when the Black artists engage in street performances, they confront racism, racist stereotypes, and both the exclusion of Black stories and Black experiences from art institutions. Hence, by infiltrating, and disrupting the spaces and the discourses of power, Black performance art reveals the absurdities, the contradictions, and injustices of

the status quo and imagines alternative possibilities for Black communities. When Black artists engage in street performance, such as *Candombe* and *Capoeira*, they create a sense of a shared struggle, resistance, and solidarity among the Black communities fighting against racial oppression, by building alliances across racial, gender, and cultural differences. And by inviting the audience to co-create performances and engage in dialogue and reflection during a *Candombe* and/or *Capoeira* performance, such street performances foster both a sense of collective resilience and responsibility that serve as the basis for Black empowerment, activism and resistance beyond the moment of the performance itself.

### 1.4.1. Capoeira, confronting the legacy of racism

From the clandestine circles of the enslaved Afro-Brazilians to vibrant global fame, *Capoeira* is more than a martial art; it is a unique form of performance art and a dynamic expression of Black resistance, cultural pride and resilience. So, *Capoeira*'s blend of dance, acrobatics and music has organically evolved into a powerful form of Black activism. Through both its historical and cultural legacy, and pedagogical method, and community-driven initiative, *Capoeira* serves as a living testament to the power of Black creative expression in the contemporary fight for racial justice and equality. Developed by the enslaved Africans in Brazil, it was a tool for survival, a means of self-defence disguised as a dance to deceive their captors. And thus, this history of resistance is the soul of *Capoeira* and the base of its use as a form of Black activism. Movements of *Capoeira*, *the fluid evasions*, *the sudden kicks*, and *the constant motion*, are the physical manifestation of resilience and adaptation in the face of racial oppression. *The Ginga*, the fundamental swaying motion, represents a state of constant readiness and the refusal to be a stationary target. This historical narrative is not just recounted; it is embodied and transmitted through the practice of *Capoeira*, instilling in its practitioners a deep understanding of Black struggle and the importance of collective action and resistance.

*Capoeira* was a vital means of preserving the African culture, spirituality, and identity in the face of forced assimilation among the Afro-Brazilians. Its songs, movements, and instruments carried the stories, traditions, and the sense of belonging for a people deliberately stripped of their African heritage. *Capoeira* emerged as a powerful tool for anti-racist activism, celebrating Afro-Brazilian heritage while confronting racial oppression. For its practitioners, particularly those of the African diaspora, *Capoeira*

is a way to connect with their African roots and assert their own cultural identity in face of systemic racism. And thus, the spirit of Black resistance, Black empowerment and resilience embedded within Capoeira continues to fuel contemporary racial justice movements around the world.

At the abolition of slavery *Capoeira* and its practitioners were outlawed in Brazil, extremely persecuted for decades. Capoeira was seen as a threat to social order, which solidified its status as the art of the marginalised and as a symbol of defiance against state control. Capoeira continues to challenge the historical marginalisation of the Afro-Brazilians, celebrate its historical roots, and actively reclaim narratives of Black power, resilience, and cultural pride. As a tool for both the pedagogy and empowerment of the oppressed, the transmission of *Capoeira* from *Mestre (the master)* to *the students* is a key element in confronting the legacy of racism, a pedagogy empowerment that extends far beyond its physical techniques. *The songs sung in the Roda, often in the call-and-response format, are oral histories, narrating the tales of slavery, freedom fighters, and of racial oppression.* This musical and body dialogue serves as an empowering tool for Blackness education that fosters critical consciousness among Capoeira's participants.

- **The Roda:** The circle in which Capoeira is played, is a powerful metaphor for liberation and community. It is a space where participants interact, support each other through music and song, and learn to navigate conflict and cooperation. This sense of collective belonging is particularly empowering for racialised individuals who may feel disenfranchised in White society.
- **Personal growth and self-Esteem:** The physical, mental, emotional and spiritual discipline of Capoeira cultivates self-confidence, self-acceptance, resilience, a sense of belonging, and discipline. For the racialised individuals from disadvantaged communities, this is transformative, providing a positive outlet and a pathway for personal empowerment and development.
- **Movement as expression:** The fluid, deceptive, and often acrobatic movements of Capoeira embody the adaptive, wit and strategic nature of resistance. They show how performance art can conceal power and transform vulnerability into strength.

*The mestres* often act as the community leaders and/or the mentors, guiding

their students to not only perfect their physical art but also to understand its social and political dimensions. This can range from explicit discussions on contemporary issues of race and racism to more subtle lessons of respect, discipline, and community responsibility inherent in *Capoeira*.

### 1.4.2. Candombe, undoing the legacy of racism

A powerful and vibrant cultural expression, *Candombe* is the heartbeat of the Afro-Uruguayan cultural identity and experience. Candombe is a deeply rooted social, political, cultural performance art encompassing music, dance, drumming and the Black community life that tells the history, experiences and stories of Black resistance, Black identity, pride, culture and resilience. After the abolition of slavery, people of African descent in Montevideo, Uruguay were forced to live in the most undesirable neighbourhoods of Montevideo, such as the *Barrio Sur and Palermo*. *In these riverside neighbourhoods with the closed off houses and narrow streets, strong cultural ties were forged, and the tradition of Candombe emerged.* And the Candombe's infectious rhythm, a conversation between three distinct drums, that echoes the calling to the Black ancestors, has since become a very important reclamation of the once lost Black art, culture, and activism. And in 2009, *Candombe legacy* on Afro-Uruguayan culture and art was recognised internationally when the UNESCO inscribed *Candombe* as an Intangible Cultural Heritage.

*Candombe* origin is traced back to the arrival of the enslaved Africans in Uruguay, primarily from the Congo and Angola, in the 18th and 19th centuries. Candombe is defined as the dancing and drumming practices of the Afro-descendant population. *Candombe* started as a traditional means of communication, spiritual expression, and community building, offering a more profound sense of the Black identity and a form of cultural resistance against oppressive conditions of slavery. Initially repressed by the Slave captors who feared its potential for insurrection, *Candombe* was once on the verge of extinction. But over time, it has evolved from the marginalised practice into the celebrated symbol of Afro-Uruguayan national identity, embraced by people of all backgrounds.

The musical foundation of Candombe is *cuera de tambores (a conversation of drums)*. It is an ensemble of drummers playing the barrel-shaped drums of different sizes, each with a specific role in creating the complex polyrhythmic structure of Candombe:

- **Chico:** The smallest and highest-pitched drum, the chico serves as the metronome of the group. It plays a steady, repetitive rhythm that provides the rhythmic key that holds the entire ensemble together.
- **Repique:** The mid-sized drum, the repique is the improviser and the soloist. It engages in a rhythmic dialogue with the other drums, adding syncopated accents and flourishes that give Candombe its dynamic and energetic feel.
- **Piano:** The largest and lowest-pitched drum, the piano provides the melodic and rhythmic bass of the cuerda. It plays a foundational rhythm that complements the chico and provides the harmonic floor over which the repique improvises.

This interplay is not just musical and art, it is also a conversation between drums, a dynamic call and response that is the soul of Candombe rhythm. In the 1960s, a new genre called *Candombe Beat* emerged, fusing Candombe's traditional rhythm with the elements of jazz, rock, and bossa nova, which has influenced generations of Uruguay and Argentine artists.

## 1.5. Arts that undo internalised racism

Performance arts, in their raw and confrontational immediacy, serve as the most powerful mediums for dismantling and undoing the insidious grip of internalised racism. By leveraging the body, live presence, and the potential for the participants interaction, performance arts create the unique, creative, and interactive safe spaces for confronting, de-constructing, and ultimately undoing subconscious absorption of negative racial stereotypes and biases. Performance arts distinguish themselves through their use of the participants and artists' bodies as the primary medium. For racialised individuals, victims of internalised racism, this very act of placing their own bodies at the centre of creative self-expression is a powerful way to reclaim their identity, sense of self-esteem, and cultural pride. In society that has historically objectified, stereotyped, brutalised non-white bodies, racialised individuals deliberate and directed use of their own bodily self-expression challenges these racist narratives. And by taking control of their own representations, they actively defy the racial stereotypes that fuel internalised racism. The vulnerability and the endurance displayed in performance arts serve to externalise the internal struggle against racial trauma among the racialised individuals, the psychological manifestation of internalisation. By physically enacting their

emotional pain and resilience, the victims of internalised racism transform personal battles into shared performances.

*Performance arts, through their emphasis on the body, liveness, and the potential for direct engagement, create the dynamic spaces for dialogue, and for shared experiences. For the artist, it is a form of self-expression, reclamation, and empowerment. For the audience, it is an invitation to confront uncomfortable truths, challenge their own internalised biases, and participate in a collective experience of understanding and potential transformation. By bringing the internal struggles of internalised racism into a shared, public space, performance arts foster a sense of solidarity and contribute to both personal and collective liberation.*

For Black people, this creative, live self-expression empowers them to break down feelings of isolation and a sense of low self-esteem associated with internalised racism. *For example, by engaging in the performance arts, such as theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dance, or drumming workshops in youth work, Black youth are prompted to confront racialised trauma and break the cycle of internalised racism.* During these kind of workshops, Black youth get to re-embrace their Blackness, confront the reality of being Black in Europe, and discuss the importance of not only empowering themselves, but also working with their Black communities to empower their peers. Participating in theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dance or drumming workshops in youth work create the much needed safe spaces for Black youth to vent about the difficulties with racial trauma, within the places where they feel a sense of connectedness with, and belongingness to the workshops' participants.

*Psychologically, the Black youth who participate in such workshops are affirmed by their peers for being Black in Europe, which contributes to a sense of confidence and pride in their Blackness and encourages them to embrace and celebrate Black history, cultural heritage, traditions and values. By engagement in performance arts, the Black youth strengthen resilience against assimilation into the White cultural norms and for dismantling anti-Black attitudes they had been indoctrinated into.*

That is, when the Black youth co-create and/or are exposed to performance arts, they get to experience both the psychological and the social benefits of performance arts, such as *recreating positive racial socialisation, recultivating positive racial identity, and reclaiming Black consciousness.*

### 1.5.1. Recreating positive racial socialisation

Engaging in performance arts, *such as participating in theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dance or drumming workshops in youth work that celebrate diverse racial identities, the Black youth participate in a positive racial socialisation.* And this positive racial socialisation nurtures a generation of the Black youth proud of their Blackness and equipped to navigate, confront, and challenge the issues of race and racism. For the Black youth, the concept of racism is often characterised by racial gaslighting, when the agents of socialisation suppress their own lived experiences of racism. And therefore, the process of accepting and affirming their Blackness by engaging in performance arts is vital to counteracting racial gaslighting. That is, participating in theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dance, or drumming workshops in youth work that celebrates the Black identity contributes to the increased, critical awareness of what it means to be Black in Europe. And at its very basic level, the simple act of seeing other Black youth coming together to celebrate their Blackness through theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dancing or drumming workshops, contributes to the real Black experience in Europe.

*Performance art, in its capacity to dismantle, undo internalised racism, holds immense potential for recreating positive racial socialisation. This involves both actively shaping and affirming a strong and positive racial identity in the racialised individuals, particularly in racialised youth, by presenting diverse, empowered, and celebrated representations of their marginalised racial group. Through engaging, embodied experiences, performance art counteracts the negative societal messaging and instils pride, resilience, and a sense of belonging among racialised individuals.*

Performance arts, with their unique blend of embodiment, narrative, and direct engagement, are thus and particularly effective mediums for positive racial socialisation in many ways:

- *Embodied affirmation and representation: performance art places diverse genders, races, and bodies at the very centre of the counter-narrative. Witnessing the racialised performers embodying strength, joy, complexity, and beauty directly counter the limited, and negative representation of racialised individuals in mainstream media.*
- *Challenging “Othering”:* when the racialised performers embody and celebrate their racialised identity, it moves their own identity from being “Othered” to being normalised, celebrated in the space of performance.

- *Storytelling and cultural transmission: racialised performers transform historical narratives, and ancestral stories into living experiences. Rather than simply reading about Black history for instance, audiences witness it, feel it, and connect with it on an emotional level, showcasing the triumphs, heritage, resilience, and contributions of Black people in Europe, often overlooked in Eurocentric historical and cultural accounts.*
- *Collective experience and emotional engagement: attending a piece of performance art on race and racism strengthens bonds and a sense of belongingness among racialised communities. While it fosters empathy by providing immersive insights into the racialised experiences and perspectives, which promote cross-cultural appreciation.*

### 1.5.2. Recultivating positive racial identity

Performance arts create dynamic, transformative spaces for the re-cultivation of a positive racial identity. For the Black youth, the concept of race is often characterised by negative salience, which often contributes to the anti-Black identity. When the Black youth have been miseducated and have internalised negative racial stereotypes and the biases about being Black to the point of developing a sense of hatred towards themselves and/or other Black people. Hence, engaging in the performance arts, *such as participating in theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dance, and drumming workshops in youth work that both celebrate and affirm Black identity, Black youth get unique opportunities to recultivate positive Black identity and reclaim their Blackness.* They engage in the active process of unlearning the negative messages and stereotypes imposed upon them by White cultural norms while relearning, embracing, and celebrating Black identity, culture and heritage.

*Recultivating positive Black identity, is the very journey of healing racial trauma and break the cycle of internalised racism that involves:*

- *Deconstruction: identifying and challenging internalised racism, racial trauma, and negative self-perceptions.*
- *Reclamation: reconnecting with cultural histories, traditions, and ancestral knowledge that may have been suppressed, ignored, or lost.*
- *Affirmation: building a strong, positive sense of self that is rooted in pride and self-worth.*

*For Black people and Black communities grappling with the psychological wounds of systemic racism, performance art becomes a live, breathing space for reclamation, celebration, and profound self-recognition.*

Performance art happens in the here and now, creating a unique energetic exchange between artist and audience. Performance art transforms the body from a site of oppression into a site of resilience, resistance, and liberation. *When the Black youth participate in theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dance, or drumming workshops in youth work that celebrate, reclaim, and affirm Black identity, it contributes to a sense of Black pride and belongingness.* The shared experience of seeing Black culture celebrated and the Black struggles articulated breaks down isolation that racism fosters in Black communities.

*For a moment, such theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dance, drumming workshops, become a sanctuary where the marginalised, Black identity is centred and honoured. The raw, unfiltered nature of such live workshop performances evoke deep emotional responses that facilitate the release of suppressed pains of racism and the blossoming of collective Black joy and pride, which are the essential components of positive Black identity.*

Such creative, and engaging youth work workshops bring about, shape and establish a live affirmation that overrides ingrained negative messages and actively builds positive neural pathways for Black joy and pride.

### 1.5.3. Reclaiming Black consciousness

Performance art does not only contribute to the awakening and reclamation of Black consciousness, but it is an active and living practice of it. Through the deliberate and powerful use of the body, and direct confrontation with race, and racism, Black performance art creates spaces for psychological liberation. *Participating in theatre, storytelling, podcasting, dance, drumming workshops in youth work that celebrate and affirm the Black experience, the Black youth confront internalised oppression while actively building the more proud, self-aware, and liberated Black identity.* Reclaiming Black consciousness, means that Black youth are proud of their Blackness, have a sense of comfort with and pride in themselves as Black people. And this greater sense of comfort, pride, self-acceptance is accompanied by a shift from victimhood to self-efficacy attitudes rooted in the psychological and social benefits of positive racial socialisation and positive racial identity.

*Black consciousness* is a philosophical and political movement aimed at liberating Black people from the psychological bondage of internalised racism. Its core aspects are the eradication of internalised inferiority and the assertion of a positive, proud, self-defined Black identity. *It affirms that the first step in the struggle against systemic racial oppression and racism is a mental and spiritual one: the Black people must reclaim their physiological resilience, their narrative, their heritage, and their intrinsic worth, and see themselves as the agents of their own liberation.*

Performance art, with its emphasis on the live, present, and confrontational body expression, is thus uniquely positioned to enact the principle of Black consciousness. When the Black art moves from the confines of museum and gallery walls to the streets, it becomes a powerful act of Black reclamation. By performing acts of resistance and Blackness celebration in public spaces, the Black artists assert the right of the Black bodies to exist freely and visibly, challenging the racial stereotypes and prejudices that White society uses to police Black representation in art, culture and public life. Black performance art transforms the stage, public space and street into sites of Black awakening and radical self-definition that lead to Black empowerment and liberation.

*By centring the Black body and the Black experience, Black performance art moves beyond the anti-racist discourses to providing an embodied, and immediate inner power to challenge racial oppression and cultivate a more proud, self-reliant Black identity.*

*In a world that has historically objectified, violated, attempted to erase, police, and control Blackness (the Black identity, the Black beauty, and the Black experience), Black performance art reclaims the Black identity, the Black body and the Black experience as the primary sources of power, resilience, and resistance within the Black communities.*

And by consciously inhabiting and controlling their own bodies on stage, the Black artists defy racist caricatures and present a multifaceted, and authentic Blackness. They physically depict, process and express the intergenerational racialised trauma of slavery, colonialism, racial oppression, and of systemic racial violence. And therefore, they foster spaces that celebrate Blackness as the identity of beauty, pride, strength and resilience.

# CHAPTER-2

## Liberation, empowerment of the oppressed



## 2.1. Empowerment and critical consciousness

Empowerment is not just a destination but a journey, one that begins with critical self-reflection and continues through both individual and collective actions. In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968)*, Paulo Freire argues that true liberation begins when individuals critically reflect on their own lived experiences and recognise the social structures that shape their oppression. *“It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation.”* And hence, this process of critical consciousness is essential for the racialised individuals who oftentimes internalise societal narratives of inferiority, prejudices, and shame, to break the cycle of internalised racism. These internalised narratives can, often manifest as self-doubt, anxiety or as disconnection from one’s racial identity and group that are embedded in the psychological wounds inflicted by racial trauma. Among the racialised youth, internalised racism is rooted in their miseducation and disempowerment. Disempowerment refers to the limitations to the racialised youth’s abilities to exert control over their life, identity and image. In the European context, disempowerment manifests in systemic racial discrimination in education, housing and employment, in the biased justice systems, and in disparities in accessing healthcare services, which all have negative impacts on racialised youth’s psychological and social wellbeing.

*Empowerment is a process through which the racialised youth develop the critical consciousness about and self-reflection on the issue of racial oppression and racism affecting them and their communities. That is, when the racialised youth gain self-definition and self-confidence in their own ability and skills to assert control over their life, identity, and image; to take action to improve their own sociopolitical situation and to identify and mobilise the resources to disrupt the cycle of internalised racism and heal from racial trauma.*

However, to disrupt the cycle of internalised racism and heal racial trauma, empowerment has to rely on critical self-reflection, self-definition and self-esteem, as well as resilience that contribute to resisting and counteracting racial oppression. As bell hooks puts it, *“True resistance begins with people confronting pain... and wanting to do something to change it” (Teaching to*

*Transgress, 1994)*. For the racialised youth, this means not only recognising the systems that oppress them but also unlearning the internalised racist narratives and undoing racialised trauma that keep them silent. Critical self-reflection becomes a radical act when it leads to self-definition; when the racialised youth begin to name their lived experiences of racism, claim their racial identities and heritage, and imagine new possibilities for themselves and their communities. Therefore, this process of empowerment is facilitated through learning spaces or creative practices; where the racialised youth can witness each other’s truths and build self-esteem, resilience, and solidarity. And therefore, empowerment is sustained when critical self-reflection and self-definition lead to action.

As racialised youth begin to understand the structural roots of their struggles, they are hence better equipped to challenge them, not just for themselves, but also for their own communities. And this shift from personal insight to collective responsibility reframes the healing from racialised trauma not as a return to the normalcy, but as a reimagination of what is possible when the racialised communities centre liberation. And therefore, empowerment is about education for liberation. When the racialised youth who have been operating under the system of racial oppression and racism, finding ways to release the sense of inferiority and of oppression, become their primary goal. And/or while the role of empowerment in unlearning the internalised racist narratives and undoing racial trauma is very significant, the racialised youth do not typically engage in actions until they have gained a critical consciousness, an awareness into the ways in which they are and/or have been racially disempowered, oppressed and marginalised. And thus, critical consciousness is a foundational aspect of empowerment.

*Critical consciousness refers to the capacity of the racialised youth to critically analyse their social, racial, and political conditions and to endorse racial equality and to take actions to change perceived racial oppression. Looking at this through the lens of the contemporary racial context in Europe, the racialised youth are oppressed and discriminated against by virtue of their race and gender and they are unable to be as free and/or have equal opportunities and rights as their White youth peers.*

For instance, the Black youth who are victims of internalised racism often accept this situation as fated, and perhaps as unalterable. And they might even fear freedom because freedom carries the risk or potential for conflicts with the perceived Eurocentric cultural norms. And since these Black youth are the victims of the psychological wounds and pains inflicted by racial oppression and racism, they have a thirst of acceptance from their White youth peers. And therefore, to fit into the White scenes, they act, think, and behave in a manner that lessens the value of the Black people, Black culture, and Black heritage. However, in this racialised context, White youth are not free either. They too live in fear of freedom and liberty and they too destroy their own humanity by their the violent oppression and suppression of their fellow Black youth peers. Hence, critical consciousness consists of: **1. Group identification:** the extent to which a Black youth identifies with other Black people through shared experiences; has pride in Black culture, Black history, Black heritage; and has feelings of a shared fate with other Black people. **2. Group consciousness:** the extent to which a Black youth understands that various racial groups have different levels of status and power in society. And **3. Self and collective efficacy:** the beliefs that a Black youth is capable of effecting desired changes in their own life.

While the role of critical consciousness in overcoming internalised racism is significant, for the Black youth who are victims of internalised racism, they cannot gain a critical consciousness until they are re-exposed to positive racial socialisation and regain a positive Black identity. And therefore, both positive Black identity and positive racial socialisation are the foundational aspects of regaining a critical consciousness. Beginning in their childhood, the Black youth are exposed to the different kinds and/or forms of racially prejudiced narratives that influence the development of their Black identity. These narratives tend to assign a level of superiority to Eurocentric beauty, intellect, and cultural norms, while portraying Black beauty, Black intellect, Black cultural norms as inferior. Black youth receive messages of inferiority when they hear racist language at schools, in their own communities, and receive negative feedback about their bodies, intellect and hair texture and styles from their White peers. Hence, in the process of internalised racism, Black youth ascribe positive traits to the White people and associate Black people with negative traits. Thus, to break the cycle of internalised racism, and undo racial trauma, they have to unlearn these behaviours.

## 2.2. Learning spaces and creative practices

Here, we will explore empowerment of the oppressed as a comprehensive methodological training approach for both unlearning the internalised racist narratives and undoing racial trauma. Empowerment of the oppressed is a combination of participatory anti-racist educational approaches delivered from *Paulo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed)* and *Augusto Boal (Theatre of the Oppressed)*. Even though both Freire and Boal's theories for facilitating the empowerment of the oppressed are limited since there appears to be a racial, sexual, and gender blindness throughout, they have made greater contributions to what is non-formal education today. And both theories offer critical ideas into the necessity of empowerment, critical consciousness and affirming to humanisation and the centrality of self-definition in social transformation and liberation. On the one hand, Freire contrasts oppression and liberation as the two polarities of human existential condition and thus, developing a critical consciousness is a necessity for both individual and collective liberation. On the other hand, Boal developed theatre workshops that aimed to empower the oppressed and meet their needs for interaction, dialogue, self-definition and action. If we look at the below context:

*Racialisation is both a social construct and a means of social control used in European societies to oppress the racialised individuals. This is the particular form of social control that differentially serves to restrict, define, police and regulate the rights, the liberty, the freedoms, and actions of Black people in Europe to the advantages and benefits of White people. That is, the systems of racial oppression in Europe toward the Black people must be preserved and perpetuated by Eurocentric societal control mechanisms to exploit the racially oppressed Black people and benefit the privileged White people.*

Freire theory provides a training methodology to enable racialised youth submerged in the victimhood of internalised racism to critically understand the psychological impact of both racial oppression and racism so that they can begin to heal and liberate themselves, to become free, autonomous human beings. And thus, the key for achieving this healing and this liberation is both the learning spaces and creative practices embedded in non-formal education. Though to contribute to unlearning internalised racist narratives

and to undoing racial trauma, such learning spaces and creative practices require anti-racist non-formal youth education constructed for and by the racialised youth, out of their own stories and lived experiences. And when creative practices are embedded within youth work as the learning space, they offer the possibilities to integrating the concepts of problematisation and conscientisation that helps the racialised youth become aware of the psychological impact of racial oppression and racism in their own lives. And therefore, such youth work facilitates the racialised youth to develop critical consciousness and self-definition necessary for taking action to disrupt the cycle of internalised racism and heal from racial trauma.

*Speaking straightforwardly out of their lived experiences with racism, remains the most underlying problem that undermines the racialised youth's attempts to unlearn internalised racist narratives and to undo racialised trauma. They are thus obliged to translate racial stereotypes and prejudices from White people **inn-ward**. Therefore, a key moment on the journey of disrupting the cycle of internalised racism and healing from racialised trauma is when the racialised youth question the systemic nature of racial oppression and racism and become aware of how both racial oppression and racism are socially constructed and/or how they could be counteracted.*

While Freire's theory creates the foundation of our training methodology, Boal's theory on dialogue, self-definition provides creative theatre workshops as participatory, dynamic approaches for self-expression, communication, overcoming differences and confronting emotional pains. So, creative theatre workshops become extraordinary tools for transforming internalised racist narratives and racialised trauma into dialogue. That is to say that, creative theatre workshops facilitate racialised youth to translate racial stereotypes and prejudices from the White people **out-ward**. Boal's theatre workshops bring the racialised youth into an active relationship with their own stories and lived experiences through learning spaces and creative practices for action, not only during theatre workshops rehearsals, but also in their daily life. And thus, Empowerment of the Oppressed, as a youth work training methodology, is an arsenal of creative workshops and theatre techniques that seeks to motivate the racialised youth to restore the dialogue within themselves and create space for them to rehearse by telling their life stories and acting out their lived experiences. It begins with the idea that everyone

has the capacity to act in a theatre of their own lives; everybody is at once an actor and a spectator.

*This points out that, by simply addressing internalised racism and racial trauma from a passive perspective, the racialised youth are oftentimes limited to transfer their desire to speak out and take actions. But through creative workshops, storytelling, and theatre techniques, the racialised youth are thus facilitated to tell a life story and act onto a character they identify with the most and then find the ways to become aware of their circumstances and express emotional pains. That is, as spectators, the racialised youth are freed and liberated from their chains; they act and become protagonists.*

### 2.2.1. Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed provides a framework for undoing internalised racism. It defines the problem as *the oppressed (the victims of racism)* psychologically *housing* their oppressor, leading them to adopt the oppressor's negative views of themselves. The solution, as Freire argues, is not simply being taught that racism is bad, but a liberatory process of critical consciousness. In this framework, *the knowledge* is a gift bestowed by those who deem to know (*the oppressors*) upon those who are told they know nothing (*the oppressed*). And this directly mirrors the mechanism of internalising racism. *The racist society is the teacher. It deposits a constant stream of messages that non-white individuals are inferior, less beautiful, less intelligent. The racialised individual is the receptacle. Through media, racial stereotypes and microaggressions, the racialised individual passively receives and stores these deposits. Internalisation occurs. And the racialised individual comes to believe these deposits are true. This manifests as self-doubt, shame, colourism, or the racialised individual rejecting their racial identity and cultural heritage. They have internalised the image of the oppressor.*

*Problematisation and conscientisation. To undo this, Freire proposes a problem-posing education. Not a passive education, but a liberatory process of critical consciousness in a dialogue among equals. Instead of passively receiving information and being taught that racism is bad, racialised youth critically analyse their own reality and lived experience to find solutions among themselves and change that reality and that lived experience.*

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed is grounded in the belief that education should be a liberatory process, one that enables individuals to critically examine their world and act to transform it. And *central to this process is the concept of critical consciousness: the ability to perceive racial, social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality*. Rather than positioning workshop's facilitators as experts and participants as passive learners, Freire's model encourages a horizontal relationship where the knowledge is co-created. By engaging in structured dialogue about their life stories and lived experiences, racialised youth can begin to identify the many systems of racial oppression and racism that shape their realities and experiences and recognise their own capacity to resist and reshape them. The goal is not only to understand the systems of racial oppression and racism but to develop a critical consciousness and self-definition to challenge them. This is the key to unlearning internalised racist narratives and undoing racialised trauma.

*Confronting the problem!* Instead of accepting Eurocentric standards and cultural norms, racialised youth work together in workshops to tell their life stories and to embrace their own lived experiences. A problem-posing dialogue about racism would then not be a lecture on its history, it would address the questions like, *"When have you been made to feel inferior because of your race?"* Or *"Where did we learn our standards of beauty and intelligence?"* And This dialogue leads to *critical consciousness!* The moment when racialised youth stop seeing their self-doubt as a personal failing and then recognises it as a consequence of a racist system. And the shame of not being beautiful, or intelligent enough is transformed into anger at the racist system that imposes such a sense of inferiority.

But critical consciousness is not the end goal. It must lead to the continuous cycle of both reflection and action. *Reflection: the racialised youth critically identify the Eurocentric standards, views, and/or cultural norms that lead to internalised racism (e.g., Black youth feel pressure to straighten their hair to be seen as professional).* *Action: the racialised youth decide on the concrete action to challenge this (e.g., creating Black art that celebrates Black hair, or challenging such discriminatory workplace policies).* Racialised youth are no longer passive objects receiving the deposits of racism. They become active subjects, and the self-defined agents capable of changing their own reality and lived experiences. By collectively dismantling the *"oppressor within,"* the

racialised youth reclaim their racial identity, freeing themselves from the psychological bondage of internalised racism.

### 2.2.2. Theatre of the Oppressed

Theatre of the Oppressed, the influential methodology created by Augusto Boal, provides an embodied toolkit for both unlearning the internalised racist narratives and for undoing racialised trauma. And theatre of the oppressed achieves this by moving beyond dialogue and discussion and into action, creating *"a rehearsal space for reality"* where the racialised youth can actively identify, express, confront and transform negative stereotypes and racial biases they have absorbed from Eurocentric society. Augusto Boal's theatre techniques embedded in Theatre of the oppressed are therefore designed to externalise these internalised racist narratives, making them visible and, therefore, changeable. Theatre of the Oppressed transforms the burden of racialised trauma into a more tangible socio-psychological problem that can be collectively analysed, expressed, rehearsed, and overcome. It establishes the learning spaces and creative practices where racialised youth can stop being passive victims of internalised racism and slaves of racial trauma and become active protagonists in the story of their own liberation.

*Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques are thus built on Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, transforming critical dialogue into embodied action. Boal believed that theatre should not be a spectacle for passive consumption but a rehearsal for real life space where people can explore, confront, and transform oppressive dynamics they face. In Theatre of the Oppressed, participants become "spectators," active creators of meaning who use theatrical tools to reflect on their own experiences and imagine alternatives.*

This is especially impactful for the racialised youth, who oftentimes struggle to find the language to articulate their life stories and lived experiences in the traditional educational and therapeutic settings. Through movement, gesture, and improvisation, the racialised youth tap into the body's capacity to hold and release trauma. Thus, Theatre of the Oppressed creates learning spaces and creative practices where the racialised youth can safely explore the psychological wounds and the emotional pains inflicted by racism, test strategies for resilience and resistance, and experience the healing powers of collective action. Hence, Theatre of the Oppressed becomes a vital tool not

only for critical consciousness but also for empowerment. Empowerment through the creative theatre workshops is rooted in the radical pedagogies of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, the two practitioners who believed that transformation begins when the oppressed become conscious of their own reality and take action to change it. Their theories offer not only a critique of oppression or racism but also a methodology for transformation; one that is participatory, reflective and grounded in life stories and lived experiences.

## 2.3. Theatre of the Oppressed techniques

Theatre of the Oppressed is not a single method, rather a dynamic system of techniques developed by Augusto Boal to activate critical reflection and social transformation through performance. And hence, these techniques are designed to dismantle the traditional divide between the actor and the audience, turning the passive spectators into active participants, *spectators*, who engage with the real-life issues in a safe, creative space. Key techniques such as *Image Theatre* (using the frozen images to explore power dynamics), *Forum Theatre* (rehearsing the interventions in oppressive scenarios), *Invisible Theatre* (performing in public spaces to provoke dialogue), are adaptable to a wide range of workshop's contexts. These methods not only foster critical awareness but also facilitate empowerment and build solidarity.

### 2.3.1. Image theatre, rehearsing for resistance

This is often the first step in confronting internalised racism. Image theatre is a non-verbal technique where the workshop participants use their bodies to create the "sculptures" or the frozen images of a concept or an experience. *How it works:* The facilitator can ask a group to create a "real image" of what being submerged in internalised racism feels like. The participants might so sculpt themselves into postures of cowering, hiding, and/or trying to scrub their skin. This act of externalising the deeply emotional wounds and pains of racism is profoundly validating in healing racial trauma. *Undoing internalised racism:* After creating the "real image," the group then creates an "ideal image," the sculpture of what liberation from being submerged in internalised racism looks like (e.g., standing tall, relaxed, proud). And finally, the group moves to explore the "transitional images," or the steps needed to get from *the real image* to *the ideal image*. This non-verbal process allows the participants to bypass the limitations of the language and physically and psychologically experience and embark on a pathway to change and healing.

### 2.3.2. Forum theatre, rehearsing for liberation

This is the most well-known technique. A short play or "a scene" is created and performed, showing the protagonist (*the racialised youth*) experiencing a moment of racial oppression, and/or racism: *the self-oppression of being submerged in internalised racism*. The play ends badly for the protagonist, leaving internalised racism undone. *How it works:* The scene is performed once, and then a facilitator (the Joker) starts it again. This time, any workshop participant, now a "spect-actor", can yell "Stop!" and take the place of the protagonist to try a different tactic. And the other actors improvise, staying in character to maintain the oppressive dynamic. *Undoing internalised racism:* this directly combats the powerlessness that racial trauma fosters. *Scenario:* A scene shows the racialised youth experiencing racial stereotypes, fumbling a presentation because they have internalised the beliefs that they "do not belong." *Intervention:* A spect-actor can yell "Stop!" and take the racialised youth place, rehearsing a different approach, using a grounding technique, directly challenging a racial stereotype, and/or affirming their racial identity. The *rehearsal* builds a *muscle memory* for resilience and resistance and thus, proving that other outcomes are possible. It transforms the workshop into a space of empowerment, where the racialised youth can practice resistance before they can apply it into real life.

### 2.3.3. Invisible theatre, making the invisible visible

Invisible theatre takes performance into public spaces without announcing it as theatre. The goal is to provoke dialogue and raise awareness about racial oppression that is often rendered invisible by staging scenes of oppression in everyday settings, such as at bus, at café, or at park, where unsuspecting bystanders become part of the experience. Invisible theatre can use public, unrevealed performance to highlight the nature of invisible racism, such as microaggressions and subtle racism that racialised youth face daily. By re-enacting realistic, everyday situations of invisible racism, the performance brings social awareness, and both enables public discourse and collective reflection afterward. And thus, the power of invisible theatre lies in its ability to disrupt the "normal" flow of public life and expose the often-invisible dynamics of racial oppression, racism. For racialised youth, participating in invisible theatre is an act of reclaiming and affirming their identity, space and visibility. It facilitates them to confront Eurocentric social and cultural norms and challenge the silence that often surrounds their life stories and lived experiences.

### 2.3.4. Rainbow of desire, undoing the cops in the head

Rainbow of Desire is a set of therapeutic theatre techniques that helps undo internalised racism and racialised trauma. The participants use image-based exercises to externalise emotional pains, to visualise internal struggles, and to examine how Eurocentric social and cultural norms and pressures shape their self-perception. This set of theatre techniques is vital in dealing with racialised trauma. It recognises that the primary “oppressor” is sometimes not an external person but a belief system, “the cycle of internalised racism” that the racialised youth carry inside them, what Boal called the “cops in the head.” *How it works:* A protagonist describes an internal conflict related to their internalised racism and racial trauma (e.g., *A part of me wants my Black hair naturally, but another part tells me that I will look unprofessional and be rejected*). *Undoing internalised racism:* The facilitator asks other spect-actors to come on stage to physically embody these conflicting “desires” or “voices.” The protagonist can now see their own internal battle played out in front of them, and can dialogue with, confront, and negotiate with these internalised beliefs and the racial trauma they inflict, robbing them of their abstract, all-powerful hold. And therefore, by giving the “cops in the head” (the internalised beliefs and racial trauma they inflict) a physical form, they can be unmasked, understood, expressed, confronted, and ultimately dismissed.

## 2.4. Designing interactive theatre workshops

Interactive theatre workshops are tailored and co-created workshop learning activities that foster participation and critical reflection. And thus, designing interactive theatre workshops is rooted in the methodologies of Freire and Boal and it therefore requires more than a set of theatre workshops exercises. It demands a thoughtful and intentional process that centres the life stories and lived experiences of the workshops’ participants. These workshops are thus not about performance for an audience, but about creating a space for reflection, resistance, resilience, and rehearsal for real-life transformation. And hence, at the core of this design process is the principle of co-creation. Facilitators are collaborators who guide the participants through a process of discovery. The workshop structure is therefore flexible, providing the space for the participants to shape the content based on their realities.

Table-1. Designing interactive theatre workshops

Determining the name of the workshop	
Determining the training methodology	<i>What type of training approach?</i> Defining the type of learning we want to use.
Determining the learning activity type	<i>What type of learning activity?</i> Defining the type of workshop learning activity we want to use.
Determining workshop's goals and context	<i>What is the purpose?</i> Defining what we want the participants to explore and/or achieve. Is it raising awareness about the issues of racial oppression and invisible (such as microaggressions and internalised racism), developing specific skills (such as critical consciousness or bystander intervention), or facilitating empowerment and building community resilience, resistance, and solidarity?
Defining the workshop's targeted audience	<i>Who are the participants?</i> Considering their age, background, prior experience with theatre, and their relationship to the workshop's theme. This informs the complexity of workshop learning activities (exercises) and the sensitivity needed in facilitation.
Determining workshop's learning objectives	<i>What are the workshop's objectives?</i> Describing measurable statements towards learning outcomes that capture the knowledge, skills and attitudes the participants should exhibit as a result of their participation in the workshop learning activities
Determining workshop's learning outcomes	<i>What are the workshop's immediate outcomes?</i> Describing measurable statements that capture the knowledge, skills and attitudes the participants can apply as a result of their participation in workshop learning activities.
Determining workshop's instructions	<p><i>What are the workshop's instructions?</i> Outlining the tasks or the processes that participants engage with or involved in to master the workshop's learning objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Warm-up and trust-building:</i> Physical and relational games that foster connection and prepare the body and mind for creative work.</li> <li>• <i>Exploration of themes:</i> Using Image Theatre or storytelling prompts to surface issues relevant to participants' lives, such as identity, discrimination, or internalised oppression.</li> <li>• <i>Theatrical intervention:</i> Techniques like Forum Theatre or Rainbow of Desire are introduced to deepen reflection and explore strategies for change.</li> </ul>

Determining workshop's debriefing	<p><b>Collective reflection!</b> The participants and the facilitators discuss what emerged, what was felt, and what can be taken forward into daily life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Reflection Questions:</i> What did you learn? What strategies felt most effective? How might you apply what you learnt in your life or work practices?</li> <li>• <i>Documenting learnings:</i> Recording key themes, participant insights, and moments of transformation. And considering how the theatre workshop fits into a broader arc of community or educational work.</li> <li>• <i>Planning follow-up:</i> Offering workshop resources to participants for ongoing support. Considering follow-up sessions where participants can apply learnings in their youth work or practices.</li> <li>• <i>Closing the workshop:</i> Ending with a simple group activity, such as a group image of "solidarity" or "resistance," or a go-around where each participant shares one word about their learning experience.</li> </ul>
Determining workshop's logistics	Determining the materials needed for each task or each process to be carried out, including workshop debriefing.
Determining workshop's required time	Determining the time needed for each task or each process to be completed, including workshop debriefing.
Determining workshop's Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of such theatre workshops requires responsiveness to the racial and political weight of the context. Facilitators should be prepared to create safe spaces for vulnerability and healing. And when power, privilege, internalised racial oppression, and racialised trauma show up in the room, a facilitator should be equipped, prepared to intervene with consideration and respect.</li> <li>• The facilitators should be equipped with tools for emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and trauma sensitivity. Many racialised youth carry the weight of systemic racism and racial trauma. So, theatre can surface these wounds, and while this can be healing, it must be handled within safe, and sensitive learning spaces and creative practices.</li> </ul>
Determining workshop's adjustments	Describing how this workshop activity can be adapted to different racialised groups and/or racial oppression contexts.

## 2.5. Theatre, undoing internalised racism

Interactive theatre, particularly methods from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, is a dynamic and creative tool for undoing internalised racism and confronting racial trauma. Interactive theatre is thus not just a dynamic, creative tool, but also a pedagogical practice that can effectively counteract systemic racial oppression by making visible the structures, the behaviours, and the internalised racist narratives that sustain it. Thus, interactive theatre moves the internalised struggle from a private, psychological burden into a public, physical, and solvable problem. And interactive theatre workshops facilitate the participants to embody the oppressive racist system, and then actively rehearse the ways to overcome them. Internalised racism involves subconsciously absorbing the negative Eurocentric messages about one's own race, one's culture and racial group, leading to self-doubt, shame, and internalising stereotypes. And therefore, interactive theatre workshops help bring these internalising stereotypes out into the open, where participants move from passive awareness to critical consciousness.

*Throughout this chapter, we explored how techniques such as Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre, and Rainbow of Desire create spaces where the racialised youth can reflect on their own lived experiences, challenge internalised racism, confront racial trauma, and rehearse strategies for resistance. In addition to being creative, interactive, and expressive, these theatre methods empower the racialised youth to copy with racism. And they facilitate them to confront racism in its many forms: overt, subtle, systemic, and internalised.*

What makes interactive theatre particularly effective within anti-racist youth work education is its capacity to shift the perspective. *In Image Theatre, for example, the participants use their bodies to create silent sculptures or frozen images representing the emotions associated with internalised racism. Seeing these emotions physically embodied facilitates the participants to view them more objectively and to recognise them in others, breaking hence the sense of isolation and self-doubt. In Forum Theatre, the participants are invited to step into the shoes of others, to test interventions, and to witness the consequences of action and inaction. This process cultivates critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the oppressive dynamics (Boal, 2002). In Rainbow of Desire, the participants confront the cops in the head (the internalised voices of racism and racial trauma) and then begin to dismantle them through both collective*

reflection and performance (Boal, 1995; Forgasz & Berry, 2012). Hence, when these interactive theatre workshops are properly embedded in anti-racist youth work education, empower racialised youth to break down feelings of isolation and a self-doubt associated with internalised racism.

*By engaging in the Interactive Theatre, such as Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, or Rainbow of Desire workshops in youth work, racialised youth are prompted to confront the racialised trauma and break the cycle of internalised racism.*

*For example, during Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, and Rainbow of Desire workshops, the Black youth are engaged in spaces that facilitate them to reembrace their Blackness, to confront the reality of being Black in Europe, and discuss the importance of not only empowering themselves, but also working with their Black communities to empower their peers. Hence, these interactive theatre workshops in youth work creates the much-needed safe spaces for Black youth to vent about the difficulties with racial trauma, within the places where they feel a sense of belongingness and connectedness with other workshops' participants.*

Psychologically, Black youth who participate in such workshops are affirmed by their peers for being Black, which contributes to a sense of confidence and pride in their Blackness and encourages them to embrace and celebrate Black history, cultural heritage, traditions, and/or values. By engagement in interactive theatre, Black youth strengthen resilience against assimilation into Eurocentric cultural norms and for dismantling anti-Black attitudes they had been indoctrinated into. That is, when the Black youth co-create and are exposed to interactive theatre, they experience its psychological and social benefits, such as *recreating positive racial socialisation, recultivating positive racial identity, and reclaiming Black consciousness.*

### 2.5.1. Recreating positive racial socialisation

Engaging in interactive theatre workshops in youth work, where diverse racial identities and lived experiences are celebrated, Black youth participate in positive racial socialisation. They are nurtured to be proud of their Blackness and equipped with critical consciousness to navigate, confront, the issues of race and racism. This process of accepting, affirming their Blackness is vital for Black youth to counteract racial gaslighting in different ways. *Embodied affirmation and representation: interactive theatre workshops place diverse*

*racial identities and the diverse lived experiences of racism at the centre of undoing internalised racism and confronting racial trauma. Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, and/or Rainbow of Desire workshops in youth work directly counter biased, Eurocentric representations of Black people. Challenging "Othering": when Black youth embody and celebrate Blackness during Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, and/or Rainbow of Desire workshops, it moves the Black identity from being "Othered" to being normalised, and thus celebrated in the space where they feel a sense of belongingness and connectedness.*

### 2.5.2. Recultivating positive racial identity

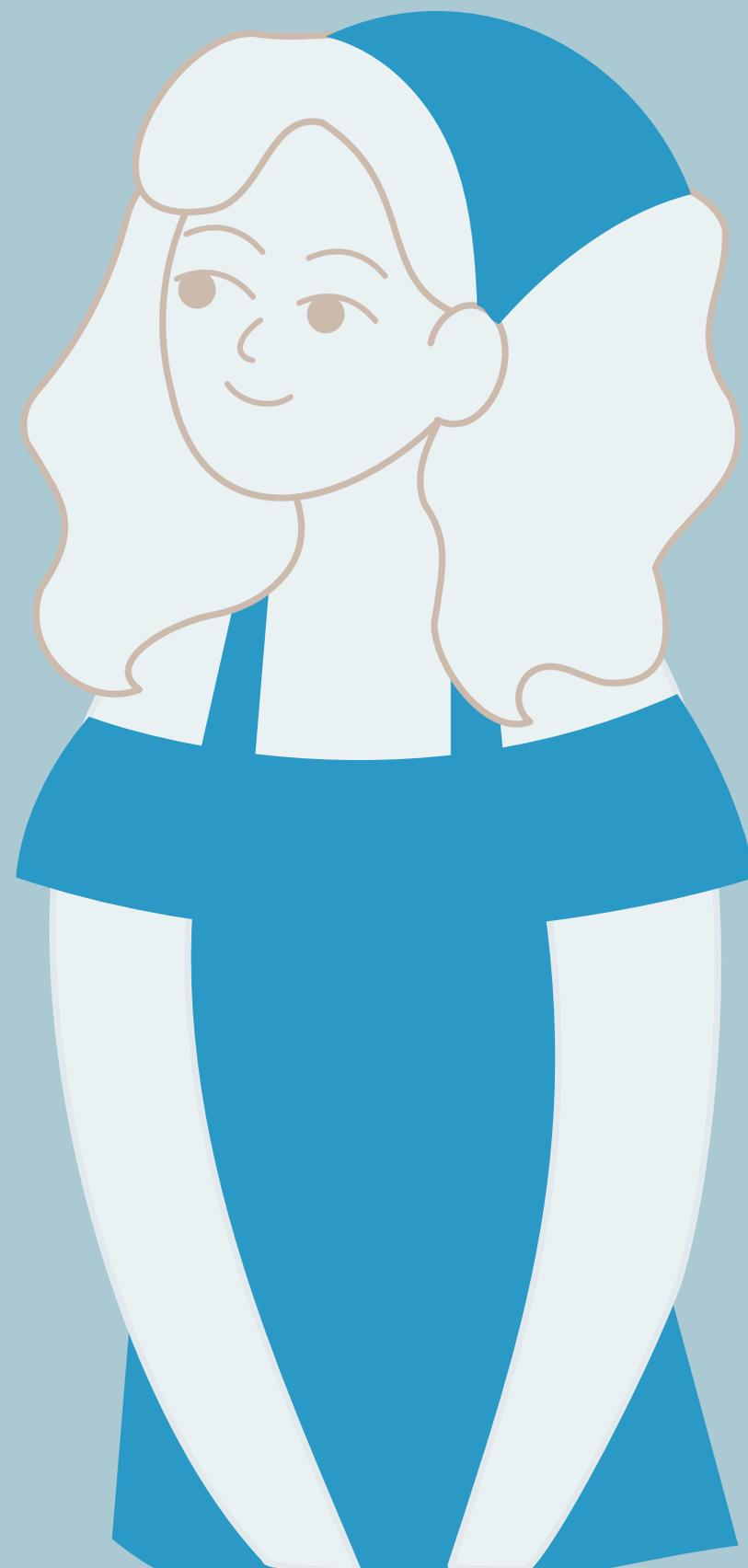
Engaging in interactive theatre workshops in youth work, where diverse racial identities and lived experiences are celebrated, the Black youth are hence facilitated to recultivate positive racial identity and reclaim their Blackness. They engage in an active process of unlearning the negative messages and racial stereotypes imposed upon them by Eurocentric cultural norms while relearning, embracing, celebrating Black identity and Black cultural heritage. *Deconstruction: Image Theatre, Forum Theatre or Rainbow of Desire workshops in youth work, facilitate the Black youth to identify and to confront the internalised stereotypes, racialised trauma, and negative self-perceptions. Affirmation: participating in Image Theatre, Forum Theatre and/or Rainbow of Desire workshops in youth work facilitates the Black youth to build a strong, positive sense of self that is rooted in Black pride and self-worth. And hence, for the Black youth grappling with the psychological weight of systemic racism, interactive theatre workshops become the rehearsing space for reclamation, celebration, and profound self-recognition.*

### 2.5.3. Reclaiming Black consciousness

Engaging in interactive theatre workshops in youth work, where diverse racial identities, and life stories, and/or lived experiences are celebrated, the Black youth are nurtured to reclaim Black consciousness. Through the deliberate, and direct confrontation with internalised stereotypes, racialised trauma and negative self-perceptions, interactive theatre workshops create safe spaces for psychological liberation. The Black youth engage in an active process of confronting internalised racism while actively building a proud, self-aware, and liberated Black identity. So, reclaiming Black consciousness, means that the Black youth are proud of their Blackness, have a sense of comfort with and pride in themselves as Black people. Hence, *Black consciousness* liberates Black youth from the psychological bondage of racism.

# CHAPTER-3

## Storytelling, deconstructing the stock stories



### 3.1. Storytelling, embracing cultural heritage

Black communities have such a long tradition of storytelling, the method of expressing feelings, and sharing life stories: a response to lived experiences. In Africa, storytelling traditionally took place as part of family or community gatherings to communicate life stories, moral lessons, pass along communal knowledge, provide counsel, impart wisdom, or praise God (Tuwe K., 2016). As such, life stories shared during these gatherings can, in some ways, be viewed as the roots that kept the community's cultural heritage and identity alive. And thus, throughout the African diaspora, this tradition of storytelling continued after the onset of the slave trade as a means to preserve the African identity, cultural heritage and history but also as a subversive tactic. Since all the enslaved Black people were not allowed to read and/or write, storytelling became a tool used to empower themselves to bear witness to what they were experiencing and to strengthen community resilience and solidarity, to overcome the hardships of slavery.

*Storytelling is not only an African cultural tradition, but also a radical act of resistance and emotional healing. Through the ongoing telling of life stories, Black people continued the tradition of using spoken words to convey empowerment messages relaying themes from all aspects of the Black experience, particularly those related to defiance, resistance and making sense of racial oppression. And in the same spirit as the African ancestors before them, these same themes are brought to life through stories of contemporary Black storytellers in different genres, such as in art, music, poetry, and literature.*

Storytelling brings the value of embracing and appreciating Black cultural heritage, especially in terms of developing a strong sense of self and a core Black identity. **Heritage** can be defined as the history and the achievements of one's racial, cultural group (Küver, 2017). And therefore, the appreciation of Black cultural heritage through the recognition of Black history and Black experience is a crucial element of Black empowerment. This is because our values, our beliefs, and the essence of who we are oftentimes transmitted through storytelling. And therefore, as humans, we are shaped to connect with other humans through storytelling. Hence, embracing and appreciating our cultural heritage provides a sense of belongingness and connection to

our ancestors, as well as to the members of our family and community. And with this connection, Black youth would be able to draw on the strength, resilience, resistance, and other positive attributes they see in their Black communities as they forge their own way forward in the face of adversities and of life challenges. Without an understanding of historical context, it is difficult for Black youth to build a framework upon which to base their life. And thus, creating brave spaces for them to tell their life stories can help them build this framework by facilitating them to create their own narratives as they challenge racially prejudiced messages about the Black communities and the Black culture.

*Storytelling allows racialised, and oppressed communities to articulate their lived realities in ways that disrupt the Eurocentric narratives. Stories from the racialised, marginalised voices serve as counter-narratives that expose the hidden racially prejudiced depictions of mainstream discourse and challenge the unconscious racial biases embedded in law, education, employment and media. These stories are not just personal, they are political. They validate experiences that are oftentimes dismissed and create space for empathy, recognition, and solidarity (R. Delgado, 1989).*

For example, graphic life writing, like through autobiographical storytelling, especially visual media such as picture books and comics, can empower the racialised youth to embrace and appreciate their cultural heritage. Research shows that when the racialised youth see their identities reflected in stories told by people who share their backgrounds, it reshapes their understanding of self and their place in the world (E. Marshall, 2016). These narratives offer alternative maps of the racialised experience, helping the racialised youth navigate their own identities with pride rather than shame. And hence, when the racialised youth are given the tools to tell their own stories, they begin to reframe their identities not through the lens of deficit or stigma, but through strength, resilience, and creativity. And thus, storytelling becomes a space for emotional release, racial identity reconstruction, and collective affirmation. It allows the racialised youth to name their pains, reclaim their heritage, and imagine futures rooted in justice, pride, and belongingness. In this way, storytelling is not only a method of expression, but also a practice of embracing cultural heritage, a source of empowerment and emotional healing among the racialised youth.

## 3.2. Storytelling, reclaiming a racialised identity

Through structured narrative practices, racialised youth can reframe their experiences and reconstruct a sense of self to reclaim and to affirm their identity. One of the most powerful techniques in this process is the use of *counter-narratives*. These counter-narratives or stories directly confront stereotypes, resist misrepresentation, and assert the complexity of the lived experiences of the racialised youth that are oftentimes silenced or distorted in the mainstream discourse. Counter-storytelling is a method of exposing and of analysing the “*stock stories*” of racial privilege while affirming the traditions of cultural survival and resistance (Delgado & Stefancic, 1996). So, facilitating counter-narratives means creating brave, supportive spaces where racialised youth can speak their truths, be heard without judgment, and collectively imagine more just and inclusive futures. Another powerful technique is “*the Hero’s Journey*”, a narrative structure that can be used to guide the racialised youth through the stages of struggle, transformation, and return. This technique serves as a metaphor for personal growth and racial identity reconstruction, particularly in therapeutic and/or educational contexts (Peter Bray, 2023).

*The Hero’s Journey enables participants to reframe their lived experiences, from encountered obstacles, to gathering inner strengths and ultimately transforming through the journey. But not as passive recipients of hardship, rather as active protagonists navigating meaningful transformation. This storytelling approach can help racialised youth to make sense of adversity, recognise their inner strength, and envision empowered futures grounded in resilience, resistance, and self-awareness.*

In reclaiming racialised identity, storytelling is not a one-size-fits-all practice, it is hence important to explore its different formats and techniques. For the racialised youth, the method of storytelling can be just as important as the story itself. Different techniques offer different pathways to reclaim identity, process racial trauma, and build emotional resilience. And thus, whether through digital media, shared group narratives, or embodied experiences, storytelling becomes a dynamic and adaptable tool for emotional resilience and empowerment. Hence, the following approaches can offer diverse entry points for racialised youth to explore, reclaim and express their racialised

identities in ways that are creative, affirming, and transformative.

### 2.2.1. Digital storytelling

Digital storytelling has become a primary engine for reclaiming the identity among the racialised youth, effectively merging the African traditions of storytelling (*the griot culture*) with the immediacy and the reach of modern technology. In the digital realm, racialised identity reclamation moves from just “*telling a life story*”, to the act of “*digital counter-storytelling*.” It allows the Black creators, for example, to bypass the traditional media gatekeepers (*those who often peddle Eurocentric and/or stereotypical narratives*) and curate a Black identity rooted in pride, complexity, and futurism. And hence, digital storytelling combines traditional narrative with multimedia elements such as images, video, sound, and texts. It allows the racialised youth to craft short, personal stories using accessible digital tools, which fosters creativity, and a sense of ownership over their narratives. And while traditional history books often contain gaps where the Black stories were erased, digital storytelling is used to “*hack*” history and insert these missing narratives back into the record. The racialised youth often remix cultural references, family histories, and/or personal reflections into powerful digital artefacts that affirm who they are and where they come from.

*On social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, Black youth often employ “signifyin” to create an in-group dynamic where the Black identity is affirmed through shared humour and witty wordplay, protecting their Black culture from outsiders in these public forums. They document the “mundane magic” of the Black experience, proving that Black existence is complete and worthy without the need for political resistance.*

### 2.2.2. Collective storytelling

To reclaim an identity that has been historically fragmented by colonisation, slavery, racial oppression and systemic erasure, the collective nature of the story is essential among the racialised youth in reclaiming their identities. This shifts the focus from a solitary struggle to a shared, communal truth. Collective storytelling works to dismantle the Eurocentric narratives (*widely accepted version of history that centres whiteness and marginalises Blackness*) through counter-storytelling. And therefore, collective storytelling is used to raise awareness of the danger of the single story by aggregating various racialised individuals’ perspectives and life stories to create a “*polyphonic*”

(*many-voiced*) reality that makes the single story impossible to maintain. For instance, historically, the Black people were often written about (*as the objects of labour, law, or sociology*), and therefore, collective storytelling allows the Black communities to shift from being the observed to being the observer and the author. And thus reclaiming agency over how they are defined.

**Collective storytelling** involves co-creating narratives in a group setting. This technique emphasises shared experience, empathy, and community-building. It allows participants to see their life stories reflected in others, and therefore reducing the feelings of isolation while reinforcing a sense of belongingness. Collective storytelling can take the form of story circles, collaborative writing and/or group performances. It is hence effective in building resilience and creating solidarity among the racialised youth who experience marginalisation, as it validates their experiences and fosters mutual support and respect.

In a way, collective storytelling reinforces the Southern African philosophy of Ubuntu "*I am because we are*" and therefore, "*My story is true because our story is true.*" Systemic gaslighting often makes racialised individuals doubt their experiences of racism. Hence, when life stories are shared collectively, patterns emerge that validate the individual pain as a systemic reality, not a personal failing. And thus, this shared experience of collective storytelling asserts humanity, creativity, and resilience in the face of racial oppression and racism.

### 2.2.3. Experiential storytelling

Experiential storytelling transforms the racial identity reclamation from an intellectual exercise (*reading or telling life story*) to an experiential exercise (*telling and feeling life story*). While traditional storytelling asks, "*What happened?*", Experiential storytelling asks, "*What does it feel like to be inside that memory?*" For the Black identity, which has often been intellectually debated but physically policed, this shift is very critical. It moves the site of resistance from the page and the voice to the body, the voice, and the environment. It is storytelling *Through the Body*. This approach is grounded in the understanding that racialised trauma is not just a historical fact but a physiological reality. Instead of just recounting a story of racial oppression, a somatic storyteller might use breath, rhythm and/or communal movement

to externalise the racial trauma stuck in the body and the mind. In Playback Theatre for example, an audience member tells a story of a microaggression or racial trauma, and actors immediately "play it back" through movement and sound. And this validates the teller's internal reality, turning a private, often doubted experience into an undeniable, shared physical truth.

**Experiential storytelling** engages the body, senses, and environment in the storytelling process. It includes methods such as role-play, movement, and immersive theatre. This approach is rooted in embodied learning, closely aligned with Theatre of the Oppressed. Experiential storytelling allows the racialised youth to "*rehearse*" real-life scenarios, confront racial trauma and internalised narratives to explore alternative outcomes. It transforms storytelling into a lived, felt experience, one that can unlock deep emotional insight and catalyse personal transformation.

But experiential storytelling is not just about a racial identity reclamation, it is also about spatial reclamation. This form of storytelling treats place as the primary narrator. It for example asserts that the Black identity cannot be fully reclaimed until the spaces occupied by Black bodies and the Black experience are redefined and reclaimed by the Black people.

## 3.3. Creating brave spaces for storytelling

In the current sociopolitical climate, it seems that the Black life is not valued. Systemic racism goes unchecked in most segments of society while reports of racially motivated hate crimes continue to flood society. And exposure to these race-based incidents and the sense of devaluing that often follows leave so many Black youth feeling upset, or worse, with a sense of self-doubt and racial trauma. And how the Black youth cope with this racialised trauma varies. Some may seek to avoid their own feelings and become emotionally numb. While others live in constant fear that something bad might happen to them and/or to their loved ones. Regardless of the Black youth's specific coping response, being consumed with a lot of unpleasant emotions such as fear, frustration, disappointment, shame, anger often leave them feeling disempowered and overwhelmed. And therefore, creating brave spaces for storytelling is thus the one environment that can help them manage these feelings because brave spaces provide a sense of empowerment, resilience, belongingness, confrontation, and control.

*Creating brave spaces for storytelling* means establishing environments where Black youth feel socially, physically, emotionally, and psychologically respected and protected. Creating a space for Black identity reclamation and affirmation requires more than just “safety”, it requires a container strong enough to hold historical weight, pain, racial trauma, internalised stereotypes, Black joy, and future pride. It requires moving away from “A Safe Space” (which implies comfort and absence of conflicts) to “A Brave Space” (which acknowledges that reclaiming Black identity is inherently risky and uncomfortable work).

When reclaiming and affirming the Black identity, the storytellers are often unearthing painful truths and racial trauma or confronting internalised anti-Blackness. In this context, safety is thus not always possible, but Bravery is. *A safe space promises: “You will not be hurt or triggered here.” A brave space promises: “If you are hurt or triggered, we have the tools and the community resilience to support you and heal together.” Thus, a brave space relies on the agreement: “the participants agree to controversy with civility, acknowledging that silence is oftentimes a survival mechanism that needs to be unlearned.”*

And the specific type of brave space we are referring to is the counterspace. Counterspaces are the sites where deficit notions of Black people can be challenged and where a positive climate can be established and maintained (Solórzano et al., 2000). Essentially, counter-spaces are places in which Black youth enhance their own sense of psychological wellbeing and community resilience because they are freely able to express their frustrations with the single Eurocentric narrative while they are supported by their Black youth peers. These include increased critical consciousness, greater cultural pride, a more positive sense of self, and adaptive coping (Case & Hunter, 2012).

*For example, a study of Black students found that participation in counter-spaces had a positive impact on their physical, and interpersonal wellness. It increased confidence for networking, greater academic success, personal validation, and opportunities to think critically about race and their Black experiences (Terry et al., 2014). Thus, creating brave spaces for storytelling offers a sense of belongingness and mattering, which increases Black youth’s sense of wellbeing and offers them protection against negative emotional and psychological reactions to prejudices, discrimination and racism.*

The brave spaces for storytelling play a crucial role in positive Black identity development and in healing from racial trauma, emphasising strengths and resources that may be drawn upon from within the Black community. Brave spaces for storytelling focus on what it means to be Black, with the goal of articulating the depth, the richness and the variety of traditions among Black people throughout the African diaspora; and focus on countering the false, monolithic Eurocentric views of the Black community. Hence, a brave space is a space where vulnerability is met with empathy, where every voice is valued. Brave space cultivates environments that support self-definition, active listening, and validation of the lived experiences while allowing the participants to set boundaries around what they choose to share. It also serves as a door opener to enable access to new perspectives, values, and ways of thinking but only when participants feel seen and heard in their full humanity (Joanna Sell, 2017). Creating brave storytelling spaces include:

- **Establishing agreements:** Co-created guidelines that define respectful behaviours and confidentiality.
- **Using grounding and check-in activities:** To help participants feel present and emotionally prepared.
- **Providing opt-in participation:** Ensuring no one is pressured to share more than they are comfortable with.
- **Offering multiple modes of expression:** Including writing, drawing, movement, or digital media to accommodate different comfort levels and communication styles.

When such the brave space is created, storytelling becomes more than a method and process of self-expression, it becomes a sanctuary. It allows the racialised youth to explore their identities, share their truths, and connect with their peers in ways that affirm their worth and dignity.

### 3.4. Storytelling and mental health resilience

Storytelling is not only a form of self-expression, but also a therapeutic process that can significantly impact the mental health and emotional resilience of racialised youth. In European societies where systemic racism and exclusion are persistent, the ability of racialised youth to tell their life stories becomes a powerful countermeasure to their own silence, marginalisation, racial trauma and internalised stigma. In manuals “Gendered Racism Manifestation” and

"Internalised Racism Manifestation", we have shown that racism, whether structural, interpersonal, and/or internalised, has profound effects on the mental health of racialised youth, contributing to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and/or identity confusion. And these psychological effects are often compounded by the lack of culturally responsive mental healthcare, services and support systems such as established brave spaces for emotional expression. When the racialised youth are invited to share their life stories in brave spaces, they begin to externalise emotional pains inflicted by racism, make sense of racialised trauma, and affirm their racial identities in critically conscious and empowering ways that build mental health resilience.

*Storytelling is one of the most effective cognitive tools that the racialised individuals have for building their mental health resilience. When racial trauma and/or severe stress inflicted by racism occurs, it often fragments racialised individuals' memory and sense of self. Storytelling acts as the "glue" that puts the pieces back together through "narrative coherence." In contexts of internalised racism, storytelling moves a racialised individual from being a passive victim of racialised trauma to an active narrator of their life stories. Storytelling reflects inner landscapes of marginalised individuals, offering both healing and clarity (James Baldwin).*

Racial trauma is oftentimes stored in the brain as sensory fragments, a smell, a sound, or a flash of image without a timestamp. This causes the brain to feel like racial trauma is happening now (*flashbacks*). Personal storytelling forces the brain to organise these fragments into a beginning, middle, and end, a process of narrative coherence. **Narrative coherence** entails a logical, consistent flow of a life story, where all its elements; its events, characters, themes, and its context, are connected to create a unified, understandable whole. Thus, by placing a racialised traumatic event into a timeline (*into a life story*), the brain creates distance. It signals to *the amygdala (a danger centre of the brain)* that the event is over. It moves the experience from "*the current threat*" to "*a past memory*", which contributes to building the mental health resilience. And hence, personal storytelling practices help racialised youth recognise that their struggles are not isolated and/or individual, but part of broader social patterns. This shift, *from self-blame to systemic awareness*, is crucial for building mental health resilience. It allows the racialised youth to move from silence to voice, from fragmentation to coherence, and from isolation to connection and belongingness.

While speaking out against racism can be empowering, we recognise that doing so can be overwhelming, especially when one feels as though one does not have the tools, skills and the brave spaces necessary to speak out. Storytelling provides the tools, skills, and brave spaces that facilitate the racialised youth to process and externalise the emotional pains and weight of racism. By narrating their own life stories, they draw strength from their cultural roots, community resilience, and lived wisdom. Their stories become mirrors and bridges, mirrors that reflect their worth, and bridges that connect them with others with shared experiences, resources often overlooked in mainstream mental health education. This narrative process not only facilitates racialised youth to make sense of the emotional pains inflicted by racism but also empowers them to reclaim authorship over their life stories. By transforming racialised trauma into stories of survival and strength, racialised youth begin to rewrite the scripts imposed upon them by Eurocentric standards. They are no longer defined by silence and stigma, but by the courage to speak, the power to imagine, and the right to be seen, which is the meaning of mental health resilience.

### 3.5. Storytelling, undoing internalised racism

Within youth mental health education, there is a tendency to focus on the psychological impact of racism and its severe emotional consequences on, among Black youth, such as depression, anxiety, guilt, shame, humiliation and self-alienation (*Carter, 2007*). Yet, while such emotional consequences of racism are difficult, and sometimes even traumatic, another and perhaps even more devastating consequence of racism is that when it is internalised, racism can make its victim respond in manners that perpetuate limitations to resources and power.

*For instance, surplus powerlessness along with the learned helplessness, avoidance, and conformity to Eurocentric cultural standards and norms are all behaviours that contribute to racist views and policies going unchallenged and being seen as the norm.*

*Surplus powerlessness is internalised belief that change cannot occur, resulting in apathy and an unwillingness to advocate for more control and to assume responsibilities (Lord & Hutchison, 1993).*

**Surplus powerlessness** among Black youth has devastating effects of allowing racism to go unchecked, even when there is a chance to lessen it and/or hold those in positions of power accountable (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996).

Moreover, **surplus powerlessness** leads to feelings of anxiety, guilt, and self-disappointment when the Black youth want to confront racism but do not know how to (Sue et al., 2019). Failing to act when they hear racist jokes, or when they notice disparate access to resources are just a few of the ways many Black youth exhibit surplus powerlessness on an everyday basis.

Internalised racism is rooted in such psychological disappointment, where the individuals from marginalised, racialised groups absorb and adopt the negative beliefs, stereotypes or values of Eurocentric cultural standards and norms. This internalisation of racist narratives lead to self-doubt, shame and a fragmented sense of identity; especially among racialised youth navigating racist systems that often devaluing their existence.

And therefore, **storytelling** offers racialised youth powerful tools, skills, and the brave spaces for confronting, unlearning, and for undoing the internalised racist narratives and the racial trauma associated with them, by exposing the subtle and the overt ways in which internalised racism manifests in their daily lives.

In counter-storytelling, the racialised youth get to name the forces that have shaped their self-perception and reclaim narratives of pride, resistance, and cultural affirmation. It enables them to challenge internalised narratives of inferiority while constructing their own life stories that reflect their own lived realities, strengths and aspirations. Moreover, storytelling helps externalise internalised emotional wounds and pain inflicted by racism. When racialised youth articulate their own experiences, whether through spoken word, digital media, and/or theatre, they begin to see their own struggles not as personal failings but as responses to systemic racism.

**Storytelling** is thus both a powerful and an essential tool for undoing internalised racism by deconstructing stock stories. It works by providing the method, tools, skills, and brave spaces for deconstructing harmful,

racist narratives absorbed from a racist society and replacing them with authentic, empowering, and healing truths.

And the process of undoing internalised racism through storytelling involves two key steps: **Identifying and deconstructing stock stories** and **Creating and affirming counter-stories**.

**Identifying and deconstructing stock stories:** These are the Eurocentric, mainstream narratives that perpetuate racism (such as colour-blindness, or stereotypes about the Black people's intelligence, beauty and worth). Hence, internalised racism is the consequence of accepting these "stock stories" as truth. So, the first step in undoing internalised racism through storytelling, is to recognise these narratives as both external, and socially constructed lies, not internal truths.

**Creating and affirming counter-stories:** A counter-story is a narrative by the Black people that challenges and refutes "the stock stories" (the Eurocentric, and mainstream narratives that perpetuate racism). So, by telling or narrating their own life stories or listening to the life stories of their peers, Black youth build news, authentic narratives.

And this "re-authoring" process centres the Black youth's lived experiences, resilience, cultural richness, and humanity, directly contradicting devaluing Eurocentric messages and narratives that perpetuate racism.

And psychologically, the Black youth who participate in such storytelling workshops are affirmed by their peers for being Black, which contributes to a sense of confidence and pride in their Blackness and encourages them to embrace and celebrate Black history, cultural heritage, traditions, values. They strengthen resilience against assimilation into Eurocentric cultural norms and dismantling anti-Black attitudes they had been indoctrinated into.

That is, when the Black youth co-create or are exposed to storytelling, they experience its psychological and social benefits such as **recreating positive racial socialisation**, **recultivating positive racial identity**, and **reclaiming Black consciousness**. And to learn more, see **Chapter 1.5. Performance art, undoing internalised racism**.

# CHAPTER-4

## Podcasting, confronting internalised racism



## 4.1. Storytelling techniques for podcast

Podcasting is uniquely suited for confronting internalised racism because it is an intimate medium that brings to life the voices of racialised communities whose life stories are often extracted, misrepresented, silenced, erased, or rendered invisible, or commodified. The podcast's voice travels directly into the listener's ear, creating a private, internal dialogue space that allows for the vulnerability that is required to raise awareness of, confront, dismantle deep-seated shame and self-doubt. Unlike video, which triggers one's self-consciousness about appearance (*for example, a site of internalised shame and self-doubt about Black hair, skin, and/or body*), podcast focuses purely on internal narratives and raising awareness of, confronting, and dismantling internalised narratives. Practically, internalised racism manifests as a *"double consciousness"*, *the authentic self vs. the policed self* (*or the voice that says, "do not be too loud", "fix your hair," "fix body, or voices"*). Podcasting literally separates this internal conflict and self-perception.

*Individually, in small groups or as a collective, racialised youth can take a microphone and express their internal struggles through various sound devices. This creative, playful approach of podcasting allows racialised youth to appropriate a language to express, raise awareness of, confront, and dismantle internalised racist narratives. It creates a separate space-time, placing listening at the centre. Hence, podcasting is a participatory audiovisual tool conducive to exchange, debate, and recognise the other's life story. And thus, the sound of a life story is a tool that is increasingly appealing to both youth and adults.*

Beyond its evocative power for dismantling a double consciousness, podcast is particularly well suited to conveying the sensitive, and complex life stories while preserving the anonymity of those who wish to remain anonymous. Podcasting can hence facilitate racialised youth to open up, tell their own life stories while remaining hidden from the Eurocentric cultural pressures. This anonymity helps to overcome silence, fears, and self-doubt. And thus, ethical podcasting begins with consent, care, and co-creation, and this also means that storytellers and facilitators should continually examine their own position, biases, and/or power. And this is because podcasting is not just a method of storytelling, but also a method of interpretation. Thus, podcasting allows the racialised youth to reframe racial trauma, assert a racial identity, dismantle the double consciousness, and engage in more meaning-making

conversations beyond the constraints of the traditional academic discourse. So, effective podcasting techniques honour the storyteller's agency, while protecting their mental health resilience. Techniques for podcasting include:

- **First-person narration:** Centres the storyteller's voice and experience, creating a sense of immediacy and authenticity. It allows the storyteller to define their own life story and speak directly to the listener.
- **Nonlinear structure:** Stories do not have to follow a beginning-middle-end format. Nonlinear storytelling reflects the complexity of memory, racial trauma, and racial identity, especially for those whose lives do not fit Eurocentric narratives.
- **Dialogic storytelling:** Conversations between peers, mentors, or community members that model collective reflection and solidarity.

## 4.2. When planning, designing podcast

Podcast is planned, and designed to build authentic relationships, fostering critical consciousness and empowerment, while creating brave spaces where the racialised youth can see themselves not as subjects of racial oppression, but as authors of their own life stories and change. Planning and designing a podcast to confront internalised racism requires a different architectural approach than the standard chat cast. And hence, this required architectural approach is not just about producing the contents that raise awareness of, and confront internalised racism, but also designing the counter-narratives and establishing space for healing. And because this storytelling technique involves unearthing the deep-seated self-oppression, the planning phase must prioritise safety, self-definition, and healing.

### 4.2.1. Planning a podcast

Planning is the foundation of any successful podcasts. It involves clarifying the purpose, the audience, and the message of the podcast. The first step in podcast planning is thus identifying the *"why"* behind the podcast: *Is it to share personal stories? Raise awareness? Or Build solidarity?* The second step is defining who the podcast is for and, crucially, who it is not for.

- **Defining theme and goals:** Centring issues matter most to podcast participants, and outlining how those issues are connected to their lived experiences. *For example, this podcast is a sanctuary for Black youth to confront and dismantle "Eurocentric narratives" living in their*

heads and reclaim their authentic voice and Blackness.

- **Defining the audience:** Who is the podcast for? Is it for peers, allies, educators, or the broader communities? *For example, explicitly stating that the podcast centres the Black experience. While everyone can listen to it, the gaze is not on explaining systemic racism to white people. The gaze is inward, speaking to the Black youth.*
- **Outlining the format:** Will it be monologues, interviews, roundtable discussions, or hybrid model? *For example, monologues are good for teaching (raising awareness of and confronting internalised racism). Interview and roundtable discussions are good for centring the collective Black experience (showing Black youth that they are not alone).*
- **Creating episodes plan:** Drafting content calendar or episode structure helps maintain focus and consistency.

### 4.2.2. Designing a podcast

Designing podcast involves shaping both its identity and tone. This includes both the auditory and visual elements that define the listener's experience. To raise awareness of, and confront internalised racism and undo racialised trauma, the structure of the podcast needs to be at the same time predictable, organised, and safe.

Table-2. Structure of a podcast

SEGMENTS	TIME	PURPOSE	AUDIO CUE
Setting the mood	00:00 - 02:00	Entering the brave space. Starting with music that reflects the Black experience.	Warm, ambient audio, or low-fidelity beat.
The checking in	02:00 - 05:00	Somatic grounding. Where are we holding tension today?	Smooth minimal vocals.
Confrontation	05:00 - 20:00	Core topic (e.g., the Eurocentric myth of Blackness). Confronting the internalised lie.	Clear, dry vocals.
The healing	20:00 - 40:00	Reframing the narrative. How do we hold this differently?	Uplifting but grounded vocals.
The Release	40:00 - End	Closing with an affirmation of Blackness or with an instruction to put the burden down.	Return to the "Threshold" music.

## 4.3. Skills for creating, publishing podcast

While storytelling gives podcasting its soul, technical skills give it structure and reach. For the racialised youth, learning the technical side of podcasting is not just about mastering all the tools, but also gaining control over how their life stories are shaped, shared, narrated and preserved. Technical fluency enables autonomy, creativity, and sustainability in the storytelling creation process. Podcast creation and publication involve three stages, each requiring specific skills:

### 1. RECORDING

The goal here is "Signal-to-Noise Ratio." We want as much of *the voice (Signal)* and as little of *the room/hiss (Noise)* as possible.

- **Microphone technique:** Involved skills focus on controlling the distance between mouth and microphone. Knowing how to practically position and use a microphone to ensure voice clarity and reduce background noise.
- **Gain staging:** Involved skills focus on setting the input levels correctly in order to not record *too quietly (hiss)* or *too loudly (distortion)*. The voice should peak around -12dB to -6dB on the digital meters while recording. This leaves headroom for emotional outbursts or laughter *without clipping (distorting)*.
- **Acoustic treatment:** Involved skills focus on dampening room *Reverb (echo)*. That is, choosing quiet, acoustically soft spaces for recording (*such as a room with cushions*), that absorb sound waves, preventing them from bouncing off hard walls.
- **Audio recording software:** Involved skills focus on constructing the voice-sound structure. It requires a *DAW (Digital Audio Workstation)*, such as Audacity, Adobe Audition, Reaper, or Hindenburg specifically designed for storytelling.

### 2. EDITING

The goal is cutting, layering, cleaning audio, allowing the storyteller to shape their narrative rhythm, to remove distractions, and to add emphasis.

- **Non-destructive editing:** Involved skills focus on cutting audio without permanently deleting the original file. Using "*Ripple Edit*" (*where closing a gap automatically pulls the rest of the timeline*)

forward) to maintain the rhythm of speech.

- **Multi-track layering:** Involved skills focus on managing multiple audio lanes (*Voice, Sound Effect, Music Bed*). Executing the Tri-layer sound design in tracks: *Track 1: Voice (Mono)*. *Track 2: Ambient Room Tone (Stereo)*. *Track 3: Musical Score (Stereo)*. Adding music, ambient sounds, or effects enhance emotional tone and listener engagement.
- **Balancing audio levels and polishing:** Involved skills focus on ensuring that voices, music, effects are clear and harmonious. These include cutting and boosting specific frequencies:
  - **Compression:** reducing the dynamic range (*making the quiet parts louder and the loud parts quieter*). This keeps the voice steady and intelligible even if the listener is in a noisy place.
  - **Noise reduction:** Using spectral repair tools to remove mouth clicks, lip smacks, and excessive breaths. In intimate audio, these sounds are magnified and can induce listening irritations that break connection.
  - **Loudness Standards (LUFS):** Mastering the final file to the industry standard volume. Podcasts should be mastered to **-16 LUFS (Stereo)** or **-19 LUFS (Mono)**. If a podcast is too quiet, the listeners might skip it; if it is too loud, podcasts hosting platforms will crush the audio quality.
  - **ID3 Tagging:** Embedding metadata into the audio file. Ensuring the artwork, episode title, and description are embedded in the file itself, so if a listener downloads it, the info travels with the file.

### 3. PUBLISHING

Publishing is the final step, but also the beginning of the podcast's life in the real world. It involves choosing podcast hosting platforms and promoting the podcast to reach its intended audience.

- **Exporting audio format:** MP3 is the most common audio format for podcast distribution. Embedding metadata into the MP3 Audio File: Podcast titles, descriptions, and tags help the listeners find the podcast and understand its content.
- **Choosing the hosting platform:** MP3 audio files are compatible with podcast hosting platforms, such Anchor, Spotify, or Apple Podcasts.

- **Promotion and engagement:** Sharing episodes on social media, collaborating with other creators, and inviting listener feedback builds community and reach.
- **Establishing sustainability:** How will the podcast be maintained? Will there be a release schedule? Who will manage the platform and listener engagement?

## 4.4. Psychological impact of podcasting

The psychological impact of podcasting in terms of raising awareness of and confronting internalised racism is profound because it operates on two simultaneous levels: *the expressive (for the creator, host and the participants)* and *the receptive (for the listener)*. Whereas unlike *writing (which is cognitive)* or *video (which is performative)*, *audio* is somatic. Audio engages the nervous system directly through vibration, tone and rhythm. When racialised youth use podcasting to challenging racism, affirm their racial identity, and reclaim their own narratives, the impact extends far beyond social and psychological wellbeing. The act of shaping and sharing life stories, especially in racialised youth's own voices, have profound psychological and social impacts that contribute to mental health resilience, positive racial identity development and community connection. So, podcasting creates a brave space to process and express complex emotions. It allows reflection on personal experiences, cultural, racial identity, and social injustice in ways that are both creative and freeing. It fosters self-awareness, pride, and resilience, particularly when the racialised youth hear the voices of their peers who share similar struggles.

*Podcasting disrupts the internalised racist narratives. By engaging with content that affirms their worth and complexity, racialised youth begin to unlearn racist narratives and replace them with pride, solidarity, and self-acceptance. Listening to others speak openly about their journeys help to undo feelings of isolation, shame, and self-doubt. It reminds racialised youth that they are not alone, that their lived experiences are shared, valid, and worthy of being heard.*

For the creators, the host, and the participants from marginalised, racialised communities, the act of recording a podcast is a psychological intervention in itself. It forces them to confront both the *"Silenced Self"* and the *"Double Consciousness."* When recording a podcast, Black youth temporarily suspend

the “White Gaze.” They are speaking into a void, and to an invisible audience. And thus, it allows their brains to integrate the fragmented self, merging “the racialised self” and “the cultural self” into one cohesive voice. The Black youth stop performing a racialised identity and then start inhabiting it. Internalised racism thrives on secrecy (e.g., *I think I am not beautiful enough because of my natural hair and/or skin colour*). Speaking the shame and the self-doubt out loud into a microphone is a form of exposure therapy. The first time a Black youth gets to say: “my natural hair and/or skin colour minimises my self-confidence”, then *the brain fears*. However, hearing the other Black youth establishing validation and speaking their own shame or self-doubt out loud into the same microphone, then *the brain rewires*. The shame and self-doubt lose their “charge” and become just neutral facts of history.

*Racism treats Black youth as objects of history. Podcasting forces Black youth to be the subject, the narrator, the editor, and the authority of their own lived experiences. This rebuilds self-efficacy. Whereas the act of editing their own podcasts is particularly powerful, they are literally cutting the narrative, deciding what matters and/or what doesn't. They are proving to themselves that they have agency over their own story.*

For the audience, or the listeners from marginalised, racialised communities, the podcast acts as a “transitional object”, a safe container for both exploring and engaging with one own internalised racist narratives. Internalised racism isolates the racialised youth (e.g., *I am the only one who feels like my natural hair, and/or skin colour minimises my self-confidence*). When the listener hears the podcast host and/or the participants describing personal feelings of racial trauma, it triggers both a sense of collectiveness and belongingness. It moves shame and self-doubt from “an internal problem” (something is wrong with me) to “a societal problem” (something is happening to us). And thus, this elevated reduction in shame and/or self-doubt allows the cognitive work of healing racial trauma to begin. Many Black youth grow up without models for how to process and cope with racial trauma in a healthy manner (older generations often focused on survival or silence). Through the intimacy and privacy of a podcast, a listener can try on new thoughts without public risk, such as learning how to be vulnerable, and angry without being destructive. This is an *imaginary rehearsal*. It lowers the barrier to action. When they act, the listeners have mentally rehearsed the scenario many times. And thus, their actions becomes more productive in undoing internalised racism.

## 4.5. Podcasting, undoing internalised racism

Internalised racism is the result of a lifetime of repetitive, subtle and pervasive messaging. And hence, one cannot undo years of racial oppression with just a single podcast. One undoes it through a serial, more intimate and repetitive practice of hearing real-life truth and creating counter-stories. Black youth are often subjected to the *White Gaze*, their intellect and physical appearance (*hair, skin tone, style*) are oftentimes scrutinised before their words are heard. This triggers hence Black youth’s own internalised hyper-awareness (*Do I look presentable?*). But podcasting is acousmatic (*a sound without a visible origin*). By removing the visual element, both the host and the participants are freed from the immediate policing of the Black body by the Eurocentric cultural standards and norms. One can record in any state of physical unreadiness, and yet still speak with authenticity and authority. This reclaims the mind as the primary seat of life story.

The listener gets to connect with the interiority of the speaker, but not the exteriority. This bypasses biases of Eurocentric cultural standards and norms.

*Internalised racism thrives on the belief: “I am the only one who feels this way; there must be something wrong with me.” This is the shame-spiral. Unlike a speech given to a crowd, a podcast is oftentimes consumed alone and through headphones. This creates a parasocial relationship, the one-sided but deeply felt bond of trust.*

*When a Black host or Black participant confesses a moment of internalised racism (e.g., I feel embarrassed by my loud Black family in front of my white colleagues), the Black listener feels it as a private confession. It validates their own secret shame or self-doubt without exposing them publicly.*

To be a responsible creator or host, one must be aware of this psychological risk. After publishing a deeply personal life story shared by a Black participant, the participant may experience a spike in racial trauma or regret (“I shared too much,” and/or “I look weak”). This is the internalised racial trauma fighting back. Hence, if the storytelling is not well processed, it can just be a re-living of the internalised racism for podcast participants. And thus, the responsible creator and/or host focuses on encouraging the podcast participants to share

the life story of growth and resilience, not just the life story of the wounds inflicted by racism (*sharing more from the scars, but not only about a race-based event itself*).

This is because the process of undoing internalised racism through podcasting involves two steps: *Deconstructing stock stories* and *Affirming counter-stories*.

1. **Deconstructing stock stories:** These are the Eurocentric, mainstream narratives that perpetuate racism (*e.g., colour-blindness, or stereotypes about Black people's intellect, body, beauty, and worth*). Internalised racism is the consequence of accepting these "*stock stories*" as truth. The first step in undoing internalised racism in podcasting is to recognise these narratives as external, and socially constructed lies, not internal truths.
2. **Affirming counter-stories:** A counter-story is a narrative by Black people that challenges and refutes *the stock stories (the Eurocentric, mainstream narratives that perpetuate racism)*. So, by narrating their own life story or listening to the life stories of their peers, Black youth build news, authentic narratives. This "*re-authoring*" process centres the Black youth's lived experiences, resilience, and cultural richness, directly contradicting and devaluing the Eurocentric messages of racism.

Psychologically, the Black youth who participate in the podcasting workshops are affirmed by their peers for being Black. Thus, this contributes to a sense of self-confidence, belongingness, mattering, and pride in their Blackness. It encourages them to embrace, and celebrate Black history, cultural heritage, traditions, and values. Black youth strengthen resilience against assimilation into the Eurocentric cultural norms and dismantle the anti-Black attitude they had been indoctrinated into. Thus, they experience the psychological benefits of podcasting such as *recreating positive racial socialisation, recultivating positive racial identity, and reclaiming Black consciousness*.

### 5.5.1. Recreating positive racial socialisation

Engaging in *podcasting workshops in youth work that celebrate diverse racial identities*, the Black youth participate in positive racial socialisation. For Black youth, the concept of racism is oftentimes characterised by racial gaslighting,

when the agents of socialisation suppress their lived experiences of racism. Hence, the process of accepting and affirming their Blackness by engaging in podcasting workshops is vital to counteracting racial gaslighting. That is, podcasting workshops contributes to the increased, critical awareness of what it means to be Black in Europe. And hence, at its very basic level, the simple act of listening to other Black youth speaking out to celebrate their Blackness, highlights the real Black experience.

### 5.5.2. Recultivating positive racial identity

Podcasting workshops create a dynamic, and transformative space for the re-cultivation of a positive racial identity. For many Black youth, the concept of race is oftentimes characterised by negative salience. This often contributes to anti-Black attitudes, when the Black youth have been miseducated and internalised racial stereotypes and biases about being Black to the point of developing a sense of hatred toward themselves and the Black communities in general. And therefore, engaging in *podcasting workshops in youth work that celebrate and affirm Black identity*, the Black youth recultivate a positive racial identity and reclaim their Blackness. They engage in the active process of unlearning the internalised racist narratives imposed upon them by the Eurocentric, mainstream narratives that perpetuate racism while relearning, embracing, and celebrating Black identity and cultural heritage.

### 5.5.3. Reclaiming Black consciousness

Podcasting workshops do not just highlight Black consciousness, they are an active, living practice of it. Through the deliberate, powerful use of the Black voice, life story, and direct confrontation with internalised racism and racial trauma, podcasting workshops create brave spaces for psychological liberation. So, participating in *podcasting workshops in youth work that affirm Blackness*, the Black youth confront internalised oppression while actively building a more proud, self-aware, liberated Black identity. Reclaiming Black consciousness, means that the Black youth are proud of their Blackness, and have a sense of comfort with and pride in themselves as Black people. This greater sense of comfort, pride, self-acceptance is accompanied by a shift from victimhood to self-efficacy attitudes rooted in the psychological and social benefits of positive racial socialisation and positive racial identity.

# CHAPTER-5

## Workshops on undoing internalised racism



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## UNDOING INTERNALISED RACISM

## RECLAIMING THE BLACK IDENTITY

## 5.1. Designing interactive theatre workshops

Learning activity	Experiential and collaborative learning
Training methodology	Reflecting on experience workshop activities
Goal of the activity	This workshop integrates reflecting on experience activities to capture the motivation, imagination and energy of the workshop participants. It encourages participants to look back on their own personal and/or professional experience in a way that prepares them for new learning and exchange. The workshop identifies the past experiences that the facilitator wants to invoke and does it in engaging ways. A simple and adaptable activity is to have participants break into small groups and answer workshop questions by reflecting on their past experiences or the lived experiences of the targeted groups they work for or with.
Targeted audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Racialised youth, queer youth, youth educators involved in anti-racist education or youth work, or youth workers in organisations for people of African descent.</i></li> </ul>
Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to analyse systems of oppression and power imbalance affecting racialised youth and translate them into interactive theatre ideas.</i></li> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to collaboratively design participatory theatre workshops that encourage dialogue, reflection, and collective engagement.</i></li> </ul>
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can analyse systems of oppression and power imbalance affecting racialised youth and translate them into interactive theatre ideas.</i></li> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can design participatory theatre workshop structures that encourage dialogue, reflection, and collective engagement.</i></li> </ul>
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin with an introduction to theatre of the oppressed methodology, reminding participants that interactive theatre is not about acting skills, but about dialogue, participation, and social transformation.</li> <li>2. Divide participants into small groups of 4 or 6 persons per group. Give each small group flip charts and <i>handout 2.4 (See chapter 2.4. of this manual).</i></li> <li>3. Ask each small group to design a short interactive theatre workshop by using <i>handout 2.4</i> and define: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Context and problem: identify a form of oppression or internalised belief racialised youth experience.</i></li> <li>b. <i>Target group: define who the workshop is for and why.</i></li> <li>c. <i>Learning aspect: clarify what awareness or critical reflection the workshop aims to contribute to.</i></li> <li>d. <i>Theatre method: on interactive theatre technique (image theatre, forum theatre, or rainbow of desire).</i></li> <li>e. <i>Participation approach: describe how participants will actively engage rather than observe.</i></li> <li>f. <i>Facilitator role: define how the facilitator supports dialogue without imposing solutions.</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Invite each small group to present their workshop plan and design. After each group's presentation, invite clarifying questions and collective feedback.</li> </ol>

Debriefing	<p>1. Before concluding the workshop, invite participants to reflect on these questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What was one key moment of your workshop (e.g. an image, a scene, or an intervention) and explain how it invites participation?</i></li> <li><i>How did you address the systems of racial or gender oppression and power imbalance across the workshop's planning and design?</i></li> <li><i>What challenges might arise when facilitating interactive theatre on racial and gender oppression?</i></li> <li><i>How did your interactive theatre workshops support empowerment rather than prescribe solutions?</i></li> </ol>
Training logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart papers, stick-notes, projector, and markers.</li> <li>• Facilitator's presentation and the activity's handout.</li> </ul>
Required time	<p><b>90 Minutes:</b> As a facilitator you should expect to spend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>15 Minutes for introduction to interactive theatre and instructions.</i></li> <li>• <i>50 Minutes for participants to complete their tasks in small groups.</i></li> <li>• <i>25 Minutes for reflection and discussion during debriefing.</i></li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity requires creating a safe space for the participants to share deep emotions linked to racial trauma. As it often happens, for most racialised youth, this might be their first time in such an emotionally engaging environment. This is due to the fact that racialised trauma has a lasting impact on how racialised youth see themselves, others, and the world.</li> <li>• Black youth in Europe for example, are raised in a white society that constantly floods them with stereotypes about Blackness, Black culture, Black body. And because of this flood of negative messaging that depicts Black people as unintelligent, criminal, drug dealers, prone to violence; it is difficult to be Black in Europe and escape being affected by racial trauma to some extent throughout the course of life.</li> </ul>
Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity can be adapted to different racialised groups and/or racial oppression contexts in which the training takes place.</li> <li>• This activity works best with small groups, 16-24 participants.</li> </ul>

D2

S1

## UNDOING INTERNALISED RACISM

## RECLAIMING THE BLACK IDENTITY

## 5.2. Forum theatre, rehearsing for liberation

Learning activity	Experiential and collaborative learning
Training methodology	Experimenting and practicing workshop activities
Goal of the activity	This workshop integrates experimenting and practicing activities to encourage the workshop participants to use knowledge in a practical way. It provides participants the opportunities to practice and involve themselves in skills and attitudes development. The workshop provides participants a safe environment in which to try out new things before putting them into practice in the "real world." The workshop identifies skills that a facilitator wants participants to acquire and provides ways for these skills to be practiced in a useful way. A simple and adaptable activity is role plays as participants are divided into small groups.
Targeted audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Racialised youth, queer youth, youth educators involved in anti-racist education or youth work, or youth workers in organisations for people of African descent.</i></li> </ul>
Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to interpret internalised racism and racialised trauma to reframe and reclaim the Black identity through Forum Theatre.</i></li> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to experiment with and interpret alternative actions that undo internalised racism and racial trauma through collective performance.</i></li> </ul>
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can interpret internalised racism and racialised trauma to reframe and reclaim the Black identity through Forum Theatre.</i></li> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can experiment with and interpret alternative actions that challenge racialisation and power relations through collective performance.</i></li> </ul>
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Divide participants into small groups of 4 or 6 persons per group. Each small group will have to create a short scene (<i>at least 5 minutes</i>):             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Ask each group to start by reflecting on how internalised racism and racialised trauma affect the mental health of racialised youth (e.g., anxiety disorders, mood disorders, eating disorders, or risk-taking behaviours)</i></li> <li>b. <i>Ask each group to create an intervention; a short scene that depicts a situation of internalised racism: a protagonist facing racial trauma, with unresolved emotions (e.g., feelings of hopelessness, identity diffusion, anger, self-doubt, frustration, fear, or social avoidance).</i></li> <li>c. <i>Ask each group to rehearse and prepare how to present its intervention to the large group without proposing a any solutions.</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>2. After the intervention is presented, explain the rules of Forum Theatre:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>The scene will be replayed.</i></li> <li>b. <i>Any participant may stop the scene.</i></li> <li>c. <i>Participants can replace the protagonist and propose a different action or reaction.</i></li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<p>3. Replay the scene! Invite participants to intervene by stepping into the protagonist's role and testing alternative actions or reactions.</p> <p>4. After each intervention, hold briefly discussions: <i>What changed? Did the intervention shift power relations? What resistance appeared?</i></p> <p>5. Continue the forum theatre process until all groups' interventions are explored.</p>
Debriefing	<p>1. Before concluding the workshop, invite participants to reflect on these questions:</p> <p>b. <i>How did it feel to watch and/or participate in the scenes?</i></p> <p>c. <i>How did it feel to step into the protagonist's role or to be stopped in the scene?</i></p> <p>d. <i>Which interventions felt more empowering or realistic, and why?</i></p> <p>e. <i>What did this exercise help you understand about action, power, and choice?</i></p> <p>f. <i>How can this method support to undo internalised racism in real-life situations?</i></p>
Training logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart papers, stick-notes, projector, and markers.</li> <li>• Facilitator's presentation and the activity's handout.</li> </ul>
Required time	<p><b>90 Minutes:</b> As a facilitator you should expect to spend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>15 Minutes for introduction to Forum Theatre and instructions.</i></li> <li>• <i>50 Minutes for participants to complete their tasks in small groups.</i></li> <li>• <i>25 Minutes for reflection and discussion during debriefing.</i></li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity requires creating a safe space for the participants to share deep emotions linked to racial trauma. As it often happens, for most racialised youth, this might be their first time in such an emotionally engaging environment. This is due to the fact that racialised trauma has a lasting impact on how racialised youth see themselves, others, and the world.</li> <li>• Black youth in Europe for example, are raised in a white society that constantly floods them with stereotypes about Blackness, Black culture, Black body. And because of this flood of negative messaging that depict Black people as unintelligent, criminal, drug dealers, prone to violence; it is difficult to be Black in Europe and escape being affected by racial trauma to some extent throughout the course of life.</li> </ul>
Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity can be adapted to different racialised groups and/or racial oppression contexts in which the training takes place.</li> <li>• This activity works best with small groups, 16-24 participants.</li> </ul>

D2

S2

## UNDOING INTERNALISED RACISM

## RECLAIMING THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

## 5.3. Rainbow of desire, undoing the cops in the head

Learning activity	Experiential and collaborative learning
Training methodology	Reflecting on experience workshop activities
Goal of the activity	This workshop integrates reflecting on experience activities to capture the motivation, imagination and energy of the workshop participants. It encourages participants to look back on their own personal and/or professional experience in a way that prepares them for new learning and exchange. The workshop identifies the past experiences that the facilitator wants to invoke and does it in engaging ways. A simple and adaptable activity is to have participants break into small groups and answer workshop questions by reflecting on their past experiences or the lived experiences of the targeted groups they work for or with.
Targeted audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Racialised youth, queer youth, youth educators involved in anti-racist education or youth work, or youth workers in organisations for people of African descent.</i></li> </ul>
Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to engage in positive racial socialisation to interpret internalised oppressive beliefs shaped by internalised racism.</i></li> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to externalise, reflect on, and undo internalised oppressive beliefs through embodied image-based theatre techniques.</i></li> </ul>
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can engage in positive racial socialisation to interpret the internalised oppressive beliefs shaped by internalised racism.</i></li> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can externalise, reflect on, and undo internalised oppressive beliefs through embodied image-based theatre techniques.</i></li> </ul>
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Divide participants into smaller groups of 6 persons. Ask each group to share experiences of internalised oppressive beliefs: <i>hopelessness, self-doubt, self-loathing, identity diffusion, self-alienation, social avoidance.</i></li> <li>2. Ask each small group to choose just one experience and create at least five still body images representing the protagonist's internalised oppressive beliefs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Guide each group to create 5 still body images depicting the protagonist's internalised oppressive beliefs, such as hopelessness, self-doubt, self-loathing, identity diffusion, self-alienation, or social avoidance.</i></li> <li>b. <i>Ask 5 participants to embody each internalised oppressive belief, forming a "rainbow" of conflicting internal voices around the protagonist.</i></li> <li>c. <i>Ask each small groups: What does each image represent? What internalised beliefs are visible? Where might these beliefs originate from?</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Invite participants embodying the internalised oppressive beliefs to animate the images using posture, movement, sound, or short phrases expressing their role. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Ask the protagonist to step into the scene to experiment different ways of relating to the internalised oppressive beliefs and observe the effects of these interactions: which ones reinforce oppressive beliefs and which ones open possibilities for action?</i></li> </ol> </li> </ol>

Debriefing	<p>1. Before concluding the workshop, invite participants to reflect on these questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Which oppressive beliefs or narratives did you recognise in the scene?</i></li> <li><i>How did it feel to embody and/or observe these oppressive beliefs?</i></li> <li><i>What did this exercise reveal about how oppression operates internally?</i></li> <li><i>What alternative ways of relating to these voices felt more enabling?</i></li> <li><i>How can this awareness support to undo internalised racism and racialised trauma in everyday contexts?</i></li> </ol> <p>2. End the workshop with a collective group activity such as a group image of “solidarity” or “resistance.”</p>
Training logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart papers, stick-notes, projector, and markers.</li> <li>• Facilitator’s presentation and the activity’s handout.</li> </ul>
Required time	<p><b>90 Minutes:</b> As a facilitator you should expect to spend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>15 Minutes for the warm-up, splitting the group and giving instructions.</i></li> <li>• <i>50 Minutes for participants to complete their tasks in small groups.</i></li> <li>• <i>25 Minutes for reflection and discussion during debriefing.</i></li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity requires creating a safe space for the participants to share deep emotions linked to racial trauma. As it often happens, for most racialised youth, this might be their first time in such an emotionally engaging environment. This is due to the fact that racialised trauma has a lasting impact on how racialised youth see themselves, others, and the world.</li> <li>• Black youth in Europe for example, are raised in a white society that constantly floods them with stereotypes about Blackness, Black culture, Black body. And because of this flood of negative messaging that depict Black people as unintelligent, criminal, drug dealers, prone to violence; it is difficult to be Black in Europe and escape being affected by racial trauma to some extent throughout the course of life.</li> </ul>
Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity can be adapted to different racialised groups and/or racial oppression contexts in which the training takes place.</li> <li>• This activity works best with small groups, 16-24 participants.</li> </ul>

D3

S1

## UNDOING INTERNALISED RACISM

## RECLAIMING THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

## 5.4. Creating safe, brave spaces for storytelling

Learning activity	Experiential and collaborative learning
Training methodology	Planning for application workshop activities
Goal of the activity	This workshop integrates planning for application activities to provide a stimulus that prepares participants for and increases the likelihood of transfer of learning outside of the workshop. The workshop identifies, creates opportunities for workshop's participants to look toward their own local context and realities, and facilitates them to identify specific interventions to put the new learning into their youth work practices. Thus, at the end of the workshop, participants should have developed concrete post-training intervention necessary to respond to their local problem context as a means to transfer gained knowledge and skills.
Targeted audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Racialised youth, queer youth, youth educators involved in anti-racist education or youth work, or youth workers in organisations for people of African descent.</i></li> </ul>
Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to create and engage in brave storytelling spaces that respect the lived experiences, resilience, and identities of racialised youth.</i></li> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to share, listen, and honour counter-stories that confront internalised oppressive beliefs and affirm racialised identities.</i></li> </ul>
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can create and engage in brave storytelling spaces that respect the lived experiences, resilience, and identities of racialised youth.</i></li> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can share and honour counter-stories that the confront internalised oppressive beliefs and affirm racialised identities.</i></li> </ul>
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin by introducing the concept of safe and brave spaces, that storytelling requires a counterspace built on care (<i>safety</i>) and courage (<i>bravery</i>).</li> <li>2. Explain and set the ground rules for storytelling: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Voluntary sharing and the right to pass;</i></li> <li>b. <i>Confidentiality;</i></li> <li>c. <i>Respectful listening without interruption and/or judgement.</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Divide participants into small groups of 4 or 6 persons per group: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Ask each group to reflect on internalised oppressive beliefs and how storytelling can provide a space of affirmation, empowerment, belongingness, and confrontation.</i></li> <li>b. <i>Ask each group to create a story where a racialised youth chooses silence against race-based incidents due to identity diffusion, self-doubt, self-loathing, anger, or fear.</i></li> <li>c. <i>Then ask each group to create a counter-story that affirms that racialised youth identity and both challenges and confronts those internalised oppressive beliefs.</i></li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<p>4. Ask each small group to prepare to tell their story and counter-story in the big group. Remind them that the story and counter-story can be personal, fictional, or symbolic.</p> <p><i>a. Invite all groups to come back to the big group, and ask each small group to tell, to share both their story and counter-story.</i></p> <p><i>b. Encourage participants reflect on the set ground rules and to practice active listening without questions and/or feedback during the storytelling process.</i></p> <p><i>c. After each story, invite participants to reflect with one word or phrase that confronts internalised oppressive beliefs and the affirms racialised identities.</i></p>
Debriefing	<p>1. Before concluding the workshop, invite participants to reflect on these questions:</p> <p><i>a. Why does storytelling require a counterspace built on care (safety) and courage (bravery), and a clear set of ground rules?</i></p> <p><i>b. What helped you feel safe and brave enough to create and share your stories?</i></p> <p><i>c. How did it feel to be listened to without interruption and/or judgement?</i></p> <p><i>d. What differences did you notice between safety and bravery in this space?</i></p> <p><i>e. How can brave storytelling spaces support belonging, resistance, resilience, and collective strength?</i></p>
Training logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart papers, stick-notes, projector, and markers.</li> <li>• Facilitator's presentation and the activity's handout.</li> </ul>
Required time	<p><b>90 Minutes:</b> As a facilitator you should expect to spend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 Minutes for introducing a brave counterspace and setting ground rules.</li> <li>• 50 Minutes for participants to complete their tasks in small groups.</li> <li>• 25 Minutes for reflection and discussion during debriefing.</li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity requires creating a safe space for the participants to share deep emotions linked to racial trauma. As it often happens, for most racialised youth, this might be their first time in such an emotionally engaging environment. This is due to the fact that racialised trauma has a lasting impact on how racialised youth see themselves, others, and the world.</li> <li>• Black youth in Europe for example, are raised in a white society that constantly floods them with stereotypes about Blackness, Black culture, Black body. And because of this flood of negative messaging that depict Black people as unintelligent, criminal, drug dealers, prone to violence; it is difficult to be Black in Europe and escape being affected by racial trauma to some extent throughout the course of life.</li> </ul>
Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity can be adapted to different racialised groups and/or racial oppression contexts in which the training takes place.</li> <li>• This activity works best with small groups, 16-24 participants.</li> </ul>

D3

S2

## UNDOING INTERNALISED RACISM

## COUNTERACTING RACIST NARRATIVES

## 5.5. Planning, designing awareness raising podcasts

Learning activity	Experiential and collaborative learning
Training methodology	Planning for application workshop activities
Goal of the activity	This workshop integrates planning for application activities to provide a stimulus that prepares participants for and increases the likelihood of transfer of learning outside of the workshop. The workshop identifies, creates opportunities for workshop's participants to look toward their own local context and realities, and facilitates them to identify specific interventions to put the new learning into their youth work practices. Thus, at the end of the workshop, participants should have developed concrete post-training intervention necessary to respond to their local problem context as a means to transfer gained knowledge and skills.
Targeted audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Racialised youth, queer youth, youth educators involved in anti-racist education or youth work, or youth workers in organisations for people of African descent.</i></li> </ul>
Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to interpret internalised racist, homophobic, and sexist narratives that shape internalised racism and racial trauma.</i></li> <li>• <i>Empower participants with skills to plan and design counter-racist, homophobic, and sexist narratives using podcasting as a tool for storytelling.</i></li> </ul>
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can interpret internalised racist, homophobic, and sexist narratives that shape internalised racism and racial trauma.</i></li> <li>• <i>At the end of the workshop, participants can plan and design counter-racist, homophobic, and sexist narratives using podcasting as a tool for storytelling.</i></li> </ul>
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Divide participants into small groups of 6 persons per group. Give each small group three flip charts and <b>Handout 4.2.2.</b> (See Table-2, chapter 4.2. of this manual). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ask each group to brainstorm how internalising racist, homophobic, sexist narratives contribute to internalised racism and racial trauma among racialised youth.</li> <li>b. Ask each group to brainstorm on how podcast raises awareness of how internalising racist, homophobic, sexist narratives contribute to internalised racism, racial trauma.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Ask each small group to plan and design a podcast that raises awareness of internalised racism and racial trauma. Ask each group to use <b>Handout 4.2.2.</b> to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Define the theme, goal, audience, and message of their podcast.</li> <li>b. Design their podcast using the roundtable discussions format.</li> <li>c. Develop the podcast structure: outlining segments, time, purpose, and audio cue.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Ask each group to keep to their podcast's segments (<i>Setting the mood; The checking in; The confrontation; The healing; The release</i>) and start recording. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ask each group to use their phones record their podcast. Or the provided portable recorders and microphones to record their audio.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<p>4. Ask each group to export their podcast and prepare to share it in the big group.</p> <p><i>a. Encourage each group to listen to the audio after the recording to improve sound clarity and pay attention to Hiss, Distortion, and Reverb.</i></p> <p><i>b. After each podcast, invite participants to reflect on how podcast raises awareness of internalised racism and racial trauma among racialised youth.</i></p>
Debriefing	<p>1. Before concluding the workshop, invite participants to reflect on these questions:</p> <p><i>a. How can podcast encourage racialised youth to confront their “silenced self” and “double consciousness”?</i></p> <p><i>b. How can podcast act as a safe container for exploring, engaging with internalised racist narratives and racial trauma.</i></p> <p><i>c. How can podcasts move self-doubt from “an internal problem” (something is wrong with me) to “a societal problem” (something is happening to us).</i></p>
Training logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart papers, stick-notes, projector, and markers.</li> <li>• Facilitator’s presentation and the activity’s handout.</li> </ul>
Required time	<p><b>90 Minutes:</b> As a facilitator you should expect to spend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>15 Minutes for introduction to storytelling techniques for podcasting.</i></li> <li>• <i>50 Minutes for participants to complete their tasks in small groups.</i></li> <li>• <i>25 Minutes for reflection and discussion during debriefing.</i></li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity requires creating a safe space for the participants to share deep emotions linked to racial trauma. As it often happens, for most racialised youth, this might be their first time in such an emotionally engaging environment. This is due to the fact that racialised trauma has a lasting impact on how racialised youth see themselves, others, and the world.</li> <li>• Black youth in Europe for example, are raised in a white society that constantly floods them with stereotypes about Blackness, Black culture, Black body. And because of this flood of negative messaging that depict Black people as unintelligent, criminal, drug dealers, prone to violence; it is difficult to be Black in Europe and escape being affected by racial trauma to some extent throughout the course of life.</li> </ul>
Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity can be adapted to different racialised groups and/or racial oppression contexts in which the training takes place.</li> <li>• This activity works best with small groups, 16-24 participants.</li> </ul>

# Manual reference

be human



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA  
MINISTRY FOR GOZO  
AND PLANNING

## Allegories on racism manifestation

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