Capstone submission: Ayanda Nyoka and Wilhelm Verwoerd

Principle: Safety

We use the metaphor of deep waters to convey the feeling of being unsafe often associated with conversations on racial transformation at a historically white university grappling with its legacy of exclusion. Within this context, feeling unsafe may differ between individuals racialised as white and those racialised as black. For example, white individuals often fear judgment or experience feelings of guilt and shame related to historical privileges rooted in racial discrimination.

To create safety, we encourage participants to embrace discomfort rather than avoid it. Our learning journeys are designed to help them become aware of their emotions and, through body-based activities, build their capacity to stay engaged in the face of discomfort, thus opening themselves to change. These activities are informed by neuroscience, which emphasizes the connection between our thoughts, feelings, and the nervous system.

Some of the body-based activities we have introduced are:

- **Mindful Eating Rituals**: At the start of each session, a platter of fresh and dried fruits is placed at the center, and participants are invited to practice mindful eating. This ritual encourages slow, deep breathing while eating, fostering presence and connection to the body and community, which contributes to a sense of safety.
- **Nature Walks**: Connecting with nature through activities like paired walks in tranquil outdoor settings promotes safety and community. Walking with someone from a different racial group in nature helps release endorphins, regulating the nervous system while encouraging connection with the "other."
- **Deep Breathing**: At the beginning and end of each session, participants are guided to identify areas of tension in their bodies where they feel anxiety. Through focused deep breathing, they become more aware of their discomfort (in-breath) and practice gently releasing it (out-breath).
- **Shaking and Dancing**: Drawing from James Gordon's work on Healing Trauma, we incorporate shaking and dancing to help participants release tension and engage the body's nervous system. This trauma-informed activity is lighthearted and fun, using music to help participants relax and engage in the moment.

This course has reinforced the importance of safety, especially in light of historical trauma and social identities shaped by oppression. It has deepened our understanding of neuroscience in relation to trauma

and social identity threats. Moving forward, we will continue to build on these practices, empowering participants to develop physiological resilience and engage in courageous, sustained dialogue on racial transformation.