

Starting a Local CTTT Community

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Phone calls, email and online networks surely have their place in the work of Coming to the Table, but there is nothing like meeting in person to build the kind of community our work requires.

- **Before you get started**

- Review the [CTTT website](#), especially the “[About Us](#)” pages. Don’t miss our [Approach](#) and our [Values](#).
- If you have time, and depending on how much exposure you’ve had to CTTT already, download and read or review the following materials from the [Resources](#) page of our website:
 - Transforming Historical Harms
 - Healing Together: Addressing Slavery in Our Families’ Histories
 - Confronting Slavery in Your Family’s History
 - Revisiting the History of Enslavement: A Curriculum Guide for Engagement and Transformation
 - A Collection of Stories (from the [Stories](#) page)

- **Find others who might be interested.**

- Post a message on our [Facebook](#) page.
- Post something on the [Community Network](#). Community Network members can also search for other members by city and/or state. Once logged in, go to the top navigation bar and click on Members, then click on Advanced Search (below the words “All Members,” and to the right of the search field), then scroll down the page to the City, State field. If you enter a state, use the two letter abbreviation.
- Post something on the CTTT listserv. If you are not already a member of the listserv and would like to join, contact me at office@comingtothetable.org
- Talk to family members, friends and colleagues
- Ask at meetings such as genealogical societies, anti-racism groups, faith communities, history societies, museums, events that draw like-minded people (film screenings)
- Public speaking often draws people out of the woodwork. Share your story. Give a talk at a local church, library, or

community event (or any other opportunity you can find!) about your family's connection to slavery or your interest in working with others to heal from the legacy of slavery. Tell them about Coming to the Table, and let them know you'd like to meet others who are interested in this work. Share and collect contact information. Follow-up with everyone who seems interested.

- Depending on location and need for funding, host someone from CTTT to give a presentation in your community
- Host a film screening of [Traces of the Trade](#), [Moving Midway](#), [Meeting David Wilson](#), [Shared History](#), [Loyalties](#), [Family Name](#). The film you use may depend on your location.
- Host a [Gather at the Table](#) book reading/signing with Tom DeWolf and Sharon Morgan (see their website for info about their schedule and how to contact them)
- Share CTTT brochures. Contact me at office@comingtothetable.org.
- Don't worry about numbers. Start small. Focus more on connecting well and racial balance.
- Try to find a partner who is a racial counterpart and who you get along well with, and work together.
- **Once you have connected with one or more people who are or may be interested**
 - Focus on building trust and connection
 - Try to listen as much as you share, and look for people who can listen as well as share
 - Use story sharing to encourage connection-building. Share your personal and family stories related to slavery, its legacies and aftermaths, and racism.
 - Use the Touchstones for establishing group norms and guidelines. Listening without interruption, criticism or judgement, sharing time equally (more or less), and confidentiality are really important.
 - Keep an eye on "racial" balance. A group that is much more than half European American is less likely to feel and be safe and welcoming to African Americans. And a group without European Americans at the table is just more of the "same ol' same ol'."

- Take time to share your stories over multiple meetings. This is crucial for building connections, safety and trust between you. People are more likely to stick around for the challenging conversations once they have heard one another's stories and seen one another's humanity through those stories.
- Use some of the videos on our website and [YouTube channel](#) to inspire more story sharing, or films, books, community events, etc.
- Intellectual or academic discussions have their place, and can be important, but engaging in them without warm and respectful relationships, built through sharing stories, can stir up defensiveness, distance, mistrust, competition, etc. and can be counterproductive to connection and healing.
- Talk about taking some sort of action as a group. Are you ready? Do you have good relationships? Do you need more time to build community? Would working on something together help you build community? What kind of action would you like to engage in?
- To grow your group in numbers, see 2.b. and 2.c. above
- Relationship to the national CTTT organization
 - We don't yet have an official status for local groups, or an official policy about relationship between local groups and the national organization, but we're working on it
 - We do have a policy about use of the CTTT name. Once you have a group, if you want or need a name to call yourselves, we recommend that you not use CTTT in your name. Some examples: NLPS, WTTT.
 - We can't process donations and reimbursements for local activity.
- A few final reminders. Connections are at the heart of this work. Start small. Build warm relationships. Grow from there. Ask for support from the CTTT Community. Contact me for support at office@comingtothetable.org

Existing Local and Regional CTTT Groups

A year or so ago I wrote up this information about places which have CTTT Community members meeting regularly, or are actively working to get started, and a few suggestions for how you might find others to join with you.

Puget Sound/Seattle Metro

A group of six women, three African American, three white (including me), have been meeting roughly once every month or two for almost two years. We met one another through various CTTT events and local slavery-related film screenings. Meetings were largely unstructured to begin with. We met at one another's homes, sharing food, stories and dialogue, then became more structured as the group agreed to start sharing their stories related to slavery and its legacy in a more organized way.

In 2010, we named ourselves New Legacy Puget Sound (NLPS), and applied for and received a contract with CTTT to offer a six-week class called "Healing Together: Addressing Slavery in Our Families' Histories." NLPS members designed the course, developed an application process, created a simple, inexpensive website (www.newlegacypugetsound.org), and began advertising for the class primarily through email, using personal contacts with organizations and individuals in the community.

Ten people were accepted into the class – five who descended from enslaved people (some of whom also descended from enslavers), and five who descended from enslavers (and not from enslaved people). The purpose of the class was to support participants in researching family connections to slavery, exploring the meaning those connections have for them today, and healing. There were elements of history (support for genealogical research, and information about the history of slavery), connection and healing (story sharing and dialogue), and action (a culminating public event to share and celebrate the experience with the wider community). The public event included a beautiful 25 minute video made by class members, comments by class members, a Q&A period, and a community meal. Around 50 people attended the event, and the crowd seemed quite moved by all that was shared. All ten

participants want to continue meeting on a monthly basis, and NLPS plans to support those meetings as well as offer another class in the fall for new participants.

More information about the class is available in the free guide “Healing Together: Addressing Slavery in Our Families’ Histories,” downloadable from our Resources page. Limited hard copies are available – contact office@comingtothetable.org.

Eastern Shore of Virginia

Art Carter has been leading community dialogues related to slavery and its legacies for a few years. In September 2010 he and interested others began to meet at least monthly, and occasionally more often, in one another's homes. They call themselves Eastern Shore Coming to the Table and practice deep listening across differences of age, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, life experience, political affiliations, etc. Three identify as African American, one as multiethnic and three as European American. They share stories related to the aftermaths and legacies of enslavement (slavery) and talk about projects of racial reconciliation, restorative justice and transformational healing they'd like to see locally. They say that the sharing has deepened the relationships with one another and feels more and more like the beloved community that we desire for all.

Mid-Atlantic

Art Carter and Phoebe Kilby have also organized retreats for people from the mid-Atlantic states, mostly meeting in Richmond, but more recently elsewhere in VA.

Oakland/Bay Area, CA

Holly Fulton has been using the CTTT Community Network, listserv, and informal local networking to find CTTT-friendly people in the Bay Area. She recently organized a talk at the Attitudinal Healing Connection (AHC; www.ahc-oakland.org/) in Oakland for two CTTT Community members who were in the area working on a CTTT-related book project. She collected contact information from those who attended, and began working with Toni Battle, who was very interested in partnering with her to develop CTTT work locally. At the invitation of Aeshah and Kokomon Clottey, the directors of AHC, Holly and Toni will use that

venue for monthly CTTT gatherings. The mission and work of AHC is very compatible with CTTT, including an emphasis on racial healing.

Northeast/NY Metro

An initial meeting of people from Boston to NYC happened in CT. Meetings have continued in NYC. There are a few people in Boston who would like to get a group going there.