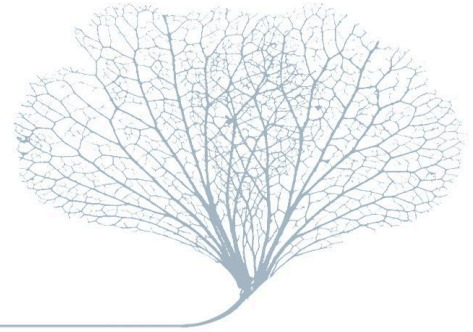


Confronting *the*

# Doctrine *of* Discovery



A GUIDE FOR HOSTING CIRCLES  
OF WITNESS AND RECKONING

## A Sample Agenda

*Adapt at will! We recommend a 2-hour gathering or longer.*

### OPEN YOUR EVENT WITH A POEM, SONG OR PRAYER. (3 MIN)

Take time to allow everyone to breathe, and become present and ready for a time of meaningful connection and reflection.

### ASK AN INTRODUCTORY QUESTION. (6 MIN)

Keep this short (1-2 min. each) to save energy for the discussion. You could ask “what drew you to attending this event?” or “What is one thing you are hoping to learn?” If people in the room don’t know each other, you can instead ask for basic introductions such as names, pronouns, places and communities.

### WATCH THE REPLAY. (1 HOUR)

We recommend that you pause the video for a few minutes after each speaker, for the group to sit together in silence, taking in what was just heard, or writing down key insights to remember.

### MOMENT OF SILENCE. (1 MIN)

Remind people to breathe, notice their bodies, and feel.

### DISCUSSION. (40-60 MIN)

You can use our proposed discussion questions below, and you can also add your own, or replace some of ours.

### CLOSING PRAYER & COMMITMENTS (8 MIN)

What feels like a good closing ritual for your group? Consider a prayer of lamentation from the Common Book of Prayer, and/or a moment for each person to make a commitment to the group.

# Discussion Questions

*We recommend that you choose three questions that seem most relevant and fruitful for your community to dig into, and give them as much time as needed. Then you can move on to other questions as time allows.*

What information, insights or stories impacted me the most?

What am I learning about the relationship between The Doctrine of Discovery, colonization and the climate crisis?

*History is not our fault, but it is our responsibility.* What would it mean for me, and for my community, to really take this moment seriously? What feels exciting about this, and what doubt or resistance comes up?

Where is my/our community on the path to engaging in acts of repair and healing? How might the perspectives offered by these speakers invite us into more focused commitment, nuanced understanding, or bolder acts of repair?

Who are the Indigenous and Black people and communities in my/our region who are strengthening their communities and confronting systems of oppression, and how can we back them in concrete, consensual, and effective ways?

What are all the ways that Catholic communities specifically can take action to turn the repudiation into meaningful change? What might that look like in our parish, school, organization, or community? (If you're not Catholic, what could this look like in your community?)

Where is my community on the path to embedding land justice into our current and future plans for our land and properties? If this isn't currently happening, could it? What kinds of steps, conversations, or research, might open up that possibility?

Within many religious traditions there are prayers and scriptures of lamentation. (Genesis 4:10: "And the Lord said [to Cain], 'What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!") What rituals of mourning, atonement, and commitment would support you and your group in moving towards wholeness and 'making it right'?

# Poems

## Trail of Tears: Our Removal

*Linda Hogan*

With lines unseen the land was broken.  
When surveyors came, we knew  
what the prophet had said was true,  
this land with unseen lines would be taken.

So, you who live there now,  
don't forget to love it, thank it  
the place that was once our forest,  
our ponds, our mosses,  
the swamplands with birds and more lowly creatures.

As for us, we walked into the military strength of hunger  
and war for that land we still dream.  
As the ferry crossed the distance,  
or as the walkers left behind their loved ones,  
think how we took with us our cats and kittens,  
the puppies we loved. We were innocent of what we faced,  
along the trail. We took clothing, dishes,  
thinking there would be something to start a new life,  
believing justice lived in the world,  
and the horses, so many,  
one by one stolen, taken by the many thieves

So have compassion for that land at least.

Every step we took was one away from the songs,  
old dances, memories, some of us dark and not speaking English,  
some of us white, or married to the dark, or children of translators  
the half-white, all of us watched by America, all of us  
longing for trees for shade, homing, rooting,  
even more for food along the hunger way.

You would think those of us born later  
would fight for justice, for peace,  
for the new land, its trees being taken.  
You would think  
the struggle would be over  
between the two worlds in this place  
that is now our knowledge,  
our new belonging, our being,  
and we'd never again care for the notion of maps  
or American wars, or the god of their sky,

thinking of those things we were forced to leave behind,  
living country, stolen home,  
the world measured inch by inch, mile by mile,  
hectares, all measurements, even the trail of our tears.

With all the new fierce light, heat, drought  
the missing water, you'd think  
in another red century, the old wisdom  
might exist if we considered enough  
that even before the new beliefs  
we were once whole,  
but now our bodies and minds remain  
the measured geography.

## Blessing for Courage

*by John O'Donohue*

When the light around lessens  
And your thoughts darken until  
Your body feels fear turn  
Cold as a stone inside,  
When you find yourself bereft  
Of any belief in yourself  
And all you unknowingly  
Leaned on has fallen,

When one voice commands  
Your whole heart,  
And it is raven dark,

Steady yourself and see  
That it is your own thinking  
That darkens your world.

Search and you will find  
A diamond-thought of light,

Know that you are not alone,  
And that this darkness has purpose;  
Gradually it will school your eyes,  
To find the one gift your life requires  
Hidden within this night-corner.

Invoke the learning  
Of every suffering  
You have suffered.

Close your eyes.  
Gather all the kindling  
About your heart  
To create one spark  
That is all you need  
To nourish the flame  
That will cleanse the dark  
Of its weight of festered fear.

A new confidence will come alive  
To urge you towards higher ground  
Where your imagination  
will learn to engage difficulty  
As its most rewarding threshold!

# Further Learning

## MORE ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Tela Troge: [The Shinnecock Kelp Farmers](#) | [The Niamuck Land Trust](#)

Pat McCabe: [Pat McCabe Website](#)

Çaca Yvaire: [Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust](#) | [Sentient Rains](#)

Michelle Schenandoah: [Indigenous Concepts Consulting](#) | [Rematriation](#)

## BOOKS & ARTICLES

[The Land is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery](#) by Sarah Augustine

[Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns and the Long African American Freedom Struggle](#) by Shannen Dee Williams