When I think about some of the awakenings that the COVID pandemic has offered, one of the biggest is that we are all connected – humans and non-human beings alike. After witnessing the murder of George Floyd, I was in pain. I was mad. I was ashamed. I was complicit. Like for so many others, his murder started a journey of self-learning about what I had overlooked all these years about the inequities of social justice that not only exists in the U.S. and other countries, but how I have unconsciously perpetuated racism myself.

I have lived overseas for the last 15 years. I continue to live overseas and am currently live in Mozambique. For me, racism overseas looks more like colonialism. I have worked and lived with American expats, as well as expats from other developed countries. Yet, the nuanced racist ways we spoke about our experiences about the country seemed to be more acceptable because they were guised under that of sharing our differences in local culture, behavior, and values. However, I had always felt a bit of unease and tension during these discussions. Underlying the conversations and thoughts was a tinge of privilege and entitlement, of inferiority of the local group, and the belief that our Western, more developed, ideologies were superior.

I wasn’t the only one who felt this way. Many others had felt this unease in the diplomatic community. We needed a place to explore these unspoken, but deeply felt sentiments. Using the fundamentals that I had learned in Lori and Leon’s level 1 course of *Circles of Resilience*, I felt called to create a BIPOC Community Circle to discuss some of the racial tensions that have been seen and felt, but often not spoken, in the overseas diplomatic communities.

Because of the incredibly difficult and nuanced aspects of talking about race, the triggering points were a huge unknown. The setting of intentions and creating a container in which to have this conversation made it a ‘safe’ place where no one had to teach or preach anything – and feeling heard was everything. Having never held a Circle with these sensitive topics, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I turned to my own experience during my time with Lori and Leon during *Circles of Resilience I* to tune into the needed questions, how to open and transition into Council, what guidelines needed to be articulated, and then lastly allowing for an intimate closing that acknowledged the vulnerability and courage of the group.

Being with Lori and Leon during our Circles of Resilience Workshop helped me to open myself up to be present and vulnerable to other people’s pain. I could not have had the courage to hold such a Council without their guidance, support, and authenticity. Here are some comments from those who attended the BIPOC Council:

*“It was sacred and an honor to be a part of the circle, listen, share and to know how much we had in common.”*

*“I wasn’t quite sure what to expect, but I’m so glad I joined. I really loved just taking the time to sit still and reflect on your questions (what do I value right now, I am xx and xx, etc). I have felt so much of the “and” in the last year. Feeling sad over racist events in the last year, but also still experiencing joy. It was nice to also hear the thoughts of fellow mission members, nice to know there are allies in our community.”*

*“Very grateful for your efforts to create meaningful dialogue and connections around these difficult issues. It was good to hear from others and absorb the different perspectives.”*