

Freedom Land Diversity Training Curriculum for Counseling

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Sometimes I wonder if the word cultural diversity is just something politically correct to say. Particularly when we still live in a society where it hard for people to fathom and appreciate the differences of other people from different ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. The thought of another person being treated differently for the mere fact they do not look, dress, act, or live the way you live sadden me deeply.

I have spent a large portion of my academic career ensuring students who are training to become professional counselors get this on a deeper level of understanding. One of the ways I have chosen to do this is by bringing into my classroom various means to teach the diversity concepts. I really want my students to feel and understand firsthand what it mean to be treated different.

Learning can be very rewarding yet at times fragile when you are looking through life through the souls of other people trying to grasp what it is like to live life as they do. When the only thing that might be separating being you is the pigmentation of your skin.

The counseling profession has been said to be a very European westernized way of treating mental illness. Yet people from all walks of life are plagued with emotional challenges. Historically, the paradigm most therapists operated from was "one size fit all". It did not take long to discover this was not a practical approach when working effectively with the culturally different clients.

One of the things I do to supplement the textbook is use a movie where people are in the heart of battling on daily basis with oppression, sexism, racism, discrimination, and macroaggressions. Students in my classes have thoroughly enjoyed being able to have open and honest dialogue about challenges of the culturally differences through the lens of a movie. This helps to create a safe atmosphere to engage in healthy conversations about topics overall can be heavy and emotionally draining.

The goal is to avoid at all cost creating a climate where students in the class feel they are being blamed for what happen to various races of people. I have found movies as an excellent avenue to shift the atmosphere in the room to a more positive, and productive conversation. I will admit there have been times when conversations have gotten a bit heated. That is why, it is important when you are discussing potential volatile subjects such as racism and discrimination you create a classroom that is conducive for this type of discussion. I found having classrooms are extremely helpful for example (1) One person cannot speak for an entire group, (2) Speak with respect there will be no name calling, or use of profanity, (3) Students have the right to pass if they feel at the time they are not able to make a comment, and (4) Students are required to use the I statement when they are speaking- I feel like_____. These are just a few you can incorporate. Also, provide your students the opportunity to add their own rules if they have them. This will allow the students to feel like they are part of the classroom community.

This article is design to expose the readers to a curriculum I developed to teach cultural diversity by using the movie Freedom Land. The movie is derived from Richard Price novel Freedom Land. The movie depicts the story line of a distraught white woman entering the emergency accusing a black man kidnapped her child. The accusation exploded the community in racial powder keg.

The students have found this movie to be very intense and filled with many of today’s current racial ills in our society. Even though, the film was release in 2006. This movie makes for an exciting class room discussion around racial issues. Students are able to draw on their textbook, lectures, and articles knowledge to complete their assignment. The students are provide with the curriculum within the text of this article. They are placed in small groups to answer the questions which are assigned to their groups. Each group has to develop a class presentation to present all their questions to entire class. The questions requires the students to think very critically prior to providing an answer.

Below is the curriculum guide I used in my class. I hope you find it helpful.

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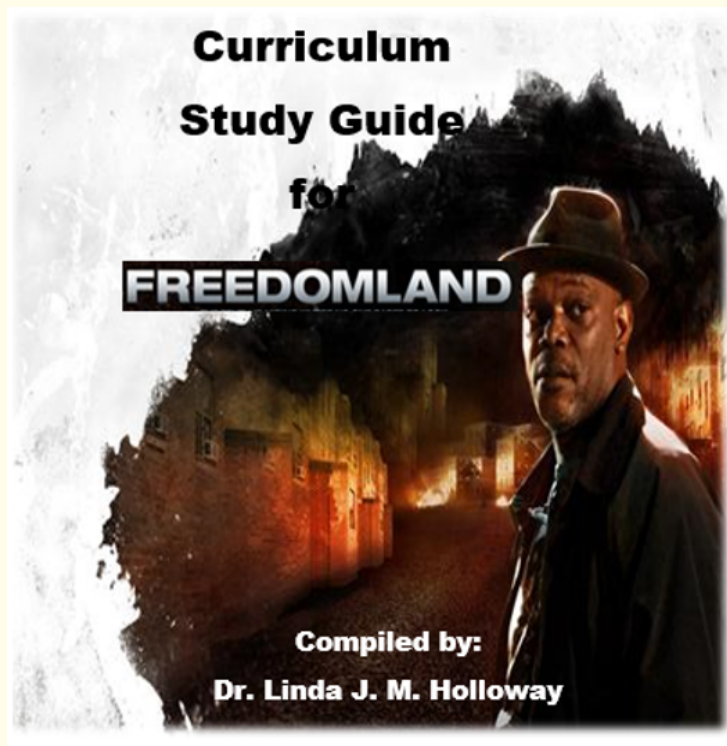


Figure 1

Freedom land



Figure 2

“In Search of the Truth”

Just when you think you know the world you live in, you suddenly discovered things are certainly not the way they appear to be. A young mother, Brenda Martin, 27 years of age accused a black male of abducting her four (4) year old son Cody Martin and life takes a turn of events not only for her, but the entire community. Review the movie very carefully through a culturally diverse pair of lens and be prepared to discuss the many dynamics which comes into play.

Freedom land

Critical debriefing questions: Group 1

1. Please make a list of as many stereotypes, racial, and prejudice incidents you witness throughout the movie. Be prepared to explain what impact they had during the movie and even in our current society today.
2. Having watched several scenes of this emotionally impactful movie, please list three (3) critical incidents that had the most impact on you and explain why. Based on the critical incidents you discussed, express in your own words whether these types of issues are still current challenges for us in today's society. Please be prepared to give example(s) and ways we can deal with these issues in our society today.
3. What do you think motivated the mother (Brenda Martin) to say her vehicle was hijacked by a Black male who took her child?

Please explain your answer in detail. Also provide examples of situations you know that have taken place in our society of this magnitude. What theoretical frameworks support this ideology?

4. What are your thoughts and emotions when you discovered that the Detective Council has a son in prison? How does this explain his character and his willingness to help others? Do you see him any differently than you did prior to understanding this aspect about his life why, or why not?
5. When Detective Council made the statement he felt responsible for his son being in prison, what motivated him to say this? How would you as a therapist respond to him as your client making this kind of statement?
6. What impact did Detective Council have on his son Jason when he witnesses him crying? What do you think triggered this type of emotion in Detective Council? Do you think this was a healthy moment for both him and his son? What impact if any do you think it had on his son? Please explain.
7. What stage of racial identity would you say Cody's mother (Brenda Martin) was in? Please explain your answer in detail according to the white racial identity model.
8. Which character did you like the most? Explain why.
9. Which character did you like the least? Explain why.
10. Brenda Martin is seeking counseling and you are the therapist. Put together a treatment plan as to how you will assist her. Please role play your session.
11. Overall how would you describe Brenda Martin's relationship with her son Cody? What parenting advice would you provide her; why or why not?
12. What impact if any do think Breda Martin's relationship with her family played in the woman she had become?
13. What role did drugs play in her life?
14. Billy has sought you out for counseling. What would your treatment plan be and why? Please be prepared to role play your counseling session.
15. You have been selected by a National Board of Diversity Counselors as a therapist to write a letter to Cody's mother. What sort of things would you discuss and why?
16. Overall, what was your impression of the movie? Please explain in details.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Note: Please be sure when you are answering your questions to refer to the information you read in your textbooks, multicultural readings, and other counseling classes.

Good luck!



Figure 5

Freedom land

Critical debriefing questions: Group 2

1. What is it about the Brenda Martin (the mother) story that makes the detective Lorenzo Council suspicious and causes the Detective to wonder is there more to her story? Please explain.
2. List and explain the several strategists Detective Council employed to get Ms. Martin to explain exactly what happened the night she stated her son was abducted by a Black male from her vehicle. As a therapist, if you suspect there is more to your client's story than what they have currently provided you, what counseling techniques would you use to get your client to be open and honest about their situation? Explain.
3. What psychological implications did taking the mother to 'Freedom Land' have on the mother? What/ why do you think they decided to take her there in the first place?
4. When Detective Council made the statement he felt responsible for his son being in prison, what motivated him to say this? How would you as therapist respond to him as your client making this kind of statement?
5. What impact did Detective Council have on his son Jason when he witnesses him crying? What do you think triggered this type of emotion in Detective Council? Do you think this was a healthy moment for both him and his son? What impact if any do you think it had on his son? Please explain.
6. Overall, what was your impression of the movie? Please explain in details.
7. Which three character(s) did you like the most? Explain why.
8. Which three character(s) did you like the least? Explain why.
9. What stage of racial identity would you say Detective Council was in and why?
10. How do you think this case would have been handled differently if both the mother and child were black? Please provide supporting facts to support your answer.
11. How would you describe Brenda Martin's relationship with her brother (Danny)? What impact do you think this had on her, if any, why or why not?
12. Detective Council is seeking counseling and you are the therapist. Put together a treatment plan as to how you will assist her. Please role play your session.
13. How many children yearly are reported missing in America? What systems are in place to assist with missing children? Tell about three missing cases concerning children and tell how they were handled. What more do you think need to be done in this area?
14. Describe your perception of the relationship between the police force and the black community in the urban projects.
15. What were your thoughts about how the movie ended? Would you have liked to have seen a different ending, why or why not?
16. You have been selected by a National Board of Diversity Counselors as a therapist to write a letter to Detective Council. What sort of things would you discuss and why?

Note: Please be sure when you are answering your questions to refer to the information you read in your textbooks, multicultural readings, and other counseling classes.



Figure 6



Figure 7

Good luck!

Critical debriefing questions: Group 3

1. Historically the African-American community has experienced riots, but what was significant about this riot? What was some of the trigger points for the riot? How do theorists actually explain how riots take place etc.? How can you relate the riot to the many riots that have occurred previously in the African-American community (i.e. Watts riots, Rodney King, Katrina, etc.)? How are such events viewed by the larger society?
2. Immediately after the riot there is a scene with a young Black male with destructions displayed behind him and his community is burning. Thus, there is Cody, the missing child in the hospital, what do these scenes symbolizes? What is the real impact of this message?
3. The community comes together and creates a memorial for Cody and many letters are written, but the Detective Council picks up one of the notes and reads it. These are some very profound words.

"This child life was not in vain. He brought us all together under common bond of hurt and pain".....

What exactly are the implications of those words and what impact does that message have on our society today?
4. What are your thoughts and emotions when you discovered that the Detective Council has a son in prison? How does this explain his character and his willingness to help others? Do you see him any differently than you did prior to understanding this aspect about his life, why or why not?
5. When Detective Council made the statement he felt responsible for his son being in prison, what motivated him to say this? How would you as therapist respond to him as your client making this kind of statement?
6. What impact did Detective Council have on his son Jason when he witnesses him crying? What do you think trigger this type of emotion in Detective Council? Do you think this was a healthy for both him and his son? What impact of any do you think it had on his son? Please explain.
7. Overall, what was your impression of the movie? Please explain in details.
8. Which character did you like the most? Explain why.
9. Which character did you like the least? Explains why.
10. Danny (Brenda Martin brother) is seeking therapy. Please provide a treatment plan as to how you will assist him. Please be prepared to role play your counseling session.
11. What is your overall perception of Danny? How did he treat the suspect?
12. What role does police brutality place in the black community? Please describe three incidents where police brutality was a factor in the arrest of a black person.
13. Felicia has sought out your agency for counseling what type of treatment plan would you developed for her? Please be prepared to role play your answer.
14. Describe the relationship you perceived Felicia had with Billy? How would you describe his relationship with Brenda Martin?
15. Why do you think they name the movie Freedom Land? If you had the opportunity to rename the movie what would it be and why?
16. You have been selected by a National Board of Diversity Counselors as a therapist to write a letter to the black community. What sort of things would you discuss and why?

Note: Please be sure when you are answering your questions to refer to the information you read in your textbooks, multicultural readings, and other counseling classes.

Good luck!

Recommended Readings



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

1. Solomon Gary. "Real Therapy: How Movies Inspire You to Overcome Life's Problems". Aslan publishing Fairfield, CT (2001).
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