

StirFry Seminars & Consulting

FEBRUARY 2015

HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL TOWN HALL MEETING

(Now that we've, hopefully, learned how *not* to have one!)

Part One

When the mayor of Ferguson declared that there was no race problem in their town, despite the killing of Michael Brown by Deputy Darren Wilson, as well as deep racial divisions between the city government, law enforcement and black residents, I knew it was going to be all downhill from that moment on. Sadly, I was right. Weeks later, after continuous protests and daily confrontations with police and residents, the mayor finally declared that there would be a town hall meeting to find a way to calm things down and to allow residents to voice their concerns. He set up some guidelines that would eventually be his downfall and further polarize the city. Here are some of the reasons why the town hall meeting failed and also some ways it could have succeeded:

Panels are distancing and often not representative of the community. In the case of Ferguson, the panel was comprised of almost all white men. The use of tables immediately gave the impression of "them versus us." Get rid of all the tables. Have everyone sitting together in the audience. Request that there be no uniforms and invite everyone to bring their families. In short, make the main objective equal voices and provide the opportunity for all involved to speak. Now, how do you assure that hundreds of people have equal time to speak? Simple-everyone pairs up with someone they don't know and who is different from themselves. Now what? Read on....

Hire a professional Diversity Facilitator/Mediator who understands diversity issues, can create a safe container for community discussions, and has mediation experience to deal with any conflicts that might arise. Once everyone is paired up, have them share their real name, what it means and where it came from, their ethnicity and their favorite ice cream. After both have shared, allow time for the pairs to talk to each other.

Before you begin the next exercise, provide questions on a card that encourage curiosity and caring instead of adversarial and defensive statements, as they are discouraging and create distrust. StirFry Seminars has created "The Art of Mindful Inquiry" cards, which are available for purchase, with the following questions and statements: 1) "What I heard you say was..." 2) "Tell me more about..." 3) "What angered you about what happened?" 4) "What hurt you about what happened?" 5) "What's familiar about what happened?" 6) "What do you need/want?"

Now, you can have the pairs play the Assumptions Game. Each participant thinks of three assumptions that they've made about the person in front of them. Then each person shares one of their assumptions and checks to see if it is true or not. Each person only shares one assumption at a time until they have both finished their lists. The listener can respond or ask any questions that might come up, such as, "Tell me why you thought that." Or, "I can't believe you said that!" The objective is to have everyone 'check out' their assumptions instead of holding them in and making judgments that 'stereotype' someone or keeps them from getting to know who someone really is.

This is Part One of a two-part series on how to have a successful town hall meeting. In the coming months, StirFry Seminars will be conducting Town Hall Community Gatherings all over the country in an effort to create a national conversation on race. Don't you think it's time we have this conversation, not just because someone has been shot, but because we need to find a way to generate a more authentic and honest relationship, to face our fears of each other and to embrace our differences as a community and as a nation? James Baldwin once said

"If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don't see."

Lee Mun Wah

MASTERING DIVERSITY & FACILITATION

WORKSHOP: APRIL 17-19, 2015

FRIDAY 2PM-9PM; SATURDAY 8AM-6PM; SUNDAY 8AM-2PM

FACILITATOR: LEE MUN WAH

Too often we are afraid to begin a conversation about race and racism because we have had a bad experience or feel that we will say something wrong or hurtful. This workshop is particularly exciting and satisfying because it allows everyone the opportunity to practice talking to someone who is different from themselves in a compassionate and honest way. Participants will learn that they are not alone in their fears and that all of us lack a "model" of how to begin this type of conversation. The most important ingredient is our sincerity and our willingness to learn and understand each other.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: 510.204.8840 EXT. 103 OR WWW.STIRFRYSEMINARS.COM/BTC

FOR A LIMITED TIME!

Book a Film Showing of Lee Mun Wah's latest film, *If These Halls Could Talk*, and get a free copy of the documentary and accompanying film guide. Value: \$1,100! Contact Melissa Sweeney, Director, for more information: melissa@stirfryseminars.com.



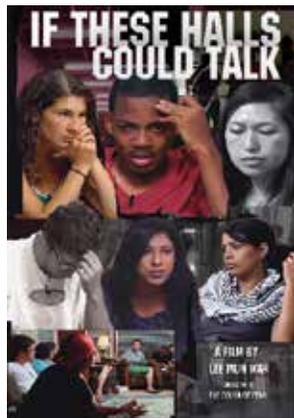
Description: During the hot summer of 2010, Director Lee Mun Wah brought together eleven college students to discuss what it is like on campuses across the country today. The students shared the frustration and anguish of trying to be understood and acknowledged on campus where the faculty and students are predominantly white. Their stories are starkly emotional and raw, filled with incredible tenderness, courage and pain. The issues that they challenge us to look at are equally provocative, begging to be heard and confronted.

ON DEMAND DIGITAL STREAMING
RENTALS OF STIRFRY FILMS!!
www.diversitytrainingfilms.com

For the first time, StirFry is making our films available online/ on demand for students & individuals via digitally streamed video. Here, you can view films such as *The Color of Fear*, *Last Chance for Eden* and *Stolen Ground* from the comfort of your own home for a small rental fee; rentals provide a link to the films online, good for 24-hours of viewing.

Please note StirFry Seminars' Copyright and Use Agreement prior to purchase. (If instead, you prefer to own a dvd copy of our diversity training films, you can purchase them on the Stirfry Seminars & Consulting website at www.stirfryseminars.com.) For questions, contact us at: products@stirfryseminars.com or call 510-204-8840 x100.

STIRFRY DIVERSITY
FALL SALE



Get **20% off**, for a limited time, on all regularly-priced diversity training materials (including Lee Mun Wah's newest film *If These Halls Could Talk*!) Enter coupon code **NEWS20** upon online checkout at www.stirfryseminars.com/store.
*** Some restrictions apply.**
Expires March 6, 2015

StirFry Calendar of Upcoming Events

February 10, 2015 San Bruno, CA	If These Halls Could Talk Film Showing & Diversity Dialogue Not Open to the Public
February 16, 2015 Atlanta, GA	The World Is All Around Us: Keynote for Social Justice Week Some Events Open to the Public
February 18 & 19, 2015 Hebron, KY	If These Halls Could Talk Film Showing & Diversity Dialogue and Keynote, "The World is All Around Us" and Workshop, "An Unfinished Conversation" • Some Events Open to the Public
February 25, 2015 Portland, OR	Creating Community in a Diverse Educational Environment Workshop; If These Halls Could Talk- Film Showing & Diversity Dialogue • Some Events Open to the Public

** Held at the Quan Yin Training Center, 2311 8th Street, Berkeley, CA

For StirFry's complete Calendar of Upcoming Events, please visit www.stirfryseminars.com/events

Contact Us: 510.204.8840 Trainings, Films & Diversity Products, ext. 103 • www.stirfryseminars.com • www.diversitytrainingfilms.com