Thank you for attending the 2023 Inclusive Excellence Symposium. As a way of helping to continue the impactful conversations begun at this year’s event, we have created this Small Group Facilitation Guide. The intention of the Guide is to provide support for folks interested in expanding their learning within the community of their workplace through guided discussion and engaging with further resources. Should your area need in-person support for these ongoing conversations, please reach out to us and we will do our best to accommodate that need should capacity allow. In the meantime, we hope you will use this Guide to practice the values of Our Common Ground together and explore the impacts of this year’s incredible speakers on your individual and shared understanding of respect, justice, openness, innovation, integrity, and responsibility.

FACILITATION RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider the space in which this discussion will take place and how many people may be in attendance; how might you situate the room; will it be virtual or in-person; are there accommodation needs
- We recommend allowing for a discussion of at least 60 minutes if possible
- There is no need to include every question below in your conversation. You may discover new questions that arise or topics of connection that are not addressed in the questions offered here.
- Open the space with a sharing of names, pronouns if folks are comfortable, and a brief overview of some Group Aspirations (we have some recommended below, but feel free to create your own!).
- As the facilitator of the space, you are there to manage time and offer connections and structure. No one in the space is an expert in anything other than their own experiences, so no need to feel like you have “all the answers”.

GROUP ASPIRATIONS:

- Lead with love – recognize that we come to the space with the intention of learning together; no one here is trying to cause harm, but instead we intend to come together in a spirit of compassionate curiosity
- Low ego = High impact – while we will all have our own thoughts, experiences, and reactions in the space, the more we are able to decenter ourselves and recenter the collective, the higher impact we might have as a group learning together
- Move at the speed of trust – give ourselves grace as trust grows in the space; these conversations can be very vulnerable and there is no expectation to share beyond what feels comfortable
HIGHLIGHTS AND CONNECTIONS:
- D’Lo began his time with us by reading a Land Acknowledgement that is quite different from our UVM Land Acknowledgement; more than once during the presentation he referenced back to this statement, naming that our disconnect from each other is mirrored in our disconnect from the land, the waters, Mother Earth.
- Most of what D’Lo brought to the space were stories of his own experiences, often sharing vulnerable realities about painful life events and “taboo” topics. Humor was the vehicle for many of these stories. He spoke of comedy as a salve – a sacred role – where he gets to change the narrative and bring perspective to people.
- Similar to what Dr. Loretta Ross and Rabia Chaudry spoke to in their presentations, D’Lo leaned into the Our Common Ground value of integrity – “In order to be the best artist I could be [I had to] walk with integrity and walk with my truth on stage and be vulnerable.”
- When asked to consider the future and what we could do now that he might look back on and be grateful for, he said: “Thank the Gods we learned how to care for one another, that we learned out to truly listen.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
- D’Lo began his time with us by essentially doing a stand-up comedy set focused on his experiences as a BIPOC queer transman, including content on bathrooms and bodies and passing as a “man”. How did it feel to hear jokes about abuse? Bathrooms? Things we aren’t supposed to talk about, let alone joke about?
- D’Lo spoke of himself as an artist disruptor – in what ways are you a disruptor in your work? What systems might you have influence over that could use some disruption?
- A lot of what D’Lo spoke about was the ways normative gender roles and expectations limit our abilities to be our most whole and joyful selves, and that limitation means that we are less able to connect and work together toward change. In what ways do you experience your gender as limiting? Liberatory?
- Are there topics that should never be joked about? Who gets to decide? What divisions might comedy be able to bridge that other storytelling forms, like Rabia’s, might not?
- In your work at UVM, is humor ever useful in facilitating connection or finding collaboration across departments, divisions, or simply across difference?
FURTHER RESOURCES

- D’Lo’s website includes information about his performances, past and present: https://www.dlocokid.com/

- D’Lo referenced the impact of bathroom restrictions on transgender folks. The ACLU is currently tracking 451 anti-trans bills across the United States, including bathroom restrictions. Learn more by visiting their website: https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights

- If you believe in the power of the arts to change the world, please stay connected to UVM’s School of the Arts and check out their Calendar of Events!