

# Training Structure & Ground Rules for Participation

## Radical Genealogy / June 2025

*Comrades Education's Board of Directors, with the support of Advisory Council Members of Color Betty Burkes, Bonnie Duran, and Katrina Messenger, have structured this training in the following ways to support the learning and growth of our participants.*

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### **Identity-based caucusing:**

We hold some of our courses, including this one, as identity based caucuses. Racial caucusing is a [well established practice in the field of anti-racism education](#), designed not to take the place of multiracial dialogue and action, but to supplement it and create greater capacity for cross-racial solidarity. The impetus for white people to caucus with one another often comes directly from people of color who have requested that white people take responsibility for educating ourselves and our communities about racism. *If you'd like more information about how Comrades Education approaches caucus work, please write to us at: [info@comrades.education](mailto:info@comrades.education).*

### **Live session caucus for this training:**

Live sessions of *Radical Genealogy* are being held as a caucus for people with European ancestry, white and mixed race alike, who want to use genealogical research tools to connect this ancestry to broader patterns of racism, capitalism, colonialism, traditional culture, and political resistance (as a way to help cultivate a rooted, political identity that can drive their efforts for collective liberation). Adopted participants are also welcome to work with their adopted family line, birth ancestry, or both. Folks of color who do not have European ancestry (or do not wish to focus on their European ancestry) are welcome to register and access course material via recordings.

*Please note: live session attendance is not mandatory to participate in the training.* Anyone who wants to work with our curriculum is welcome to sign up, and everyone who registers will have access to session recordings, which can be used as a supplement or as the primary mode of interaction with the training. We encourage those with time conflicts (or conflicting summer plans) to still register and get access to all the resources of the training.

### **What we mean by European ancestry:**

We recognize that both whiteness and the exact boundaries of Europe are socially constructed and have changed over time. Not all people who are today considered white come from places that are considered part of Europe, and some folks' racial classification is itself tentative or partial.

For the purpose of this training, we are using the term “European ancestry” to mean: the diverse ancestry of those who have come to be classified as white, which is predominantly from the part of the world that is today defined as “Europe.”

**Holding space for multiracial and white participants with European ancestry:**

We recognize that holding a caucus for both white people and multiracial people with white ancestry is a large and complex container. Again, we want to stress that the purpose of the training is for folks of European ancestry to focus together on the genealogical study of this shared ancestral line. It is this shared experience of inherited “white” identity that is the commonality of the training caucus, not the exact racial classification of the individual participants. To help hold this container, multiracial participants will have the option to be in breakout room groups during both sessions with other participants who share this identity (as described below).

**Multiracial, Jewish, and Queer breakout room options:**

In each of our two sessions we will have periods where we enter into breakout rooms to process training material and relate it to our own experiences. Multiracial, Jewish and LGBTQ registrants for the training will have the option of participating in breakout rooms during each session with other participants who share their identity.

Over time, we have found that participants with these three identities can benefit from the option of an identity-specific breakout space, given the fact that Jewish and multiracial folks have a distinctively different relationship to European ancestry than our other participants, and queer/LGBTQ folks often have unique and/or challenging relationship to family, due to social prejudice and marginalization historically and today. We recognize that there are others with unique relationships to the curriculum who could benefit from separate spaces. However, given limited administrative capacity and past participant feedback we’ve received, Comrades Education focuses on these three particular breakout options. *(Note: At times, there may not be enough members of a particular identity group attending a particular live session to hold that breakout option in that session).*

**Training content tied to facilitator’s personal genealogical research experience:**

David Dean, the training facilitator, will be sharing many examples from his journey of genealogical research on his own family tree. His ancestry comes from the British Isles and the early waves of settlers in North America. While there will be a significant amount of training content related to a broad array of European ethnic, settler, and immigrant group experiences, there will also be a disproportionate number of research examples derived from David’s study of his own ancestry as case studies in the genealogical approach David is outlining for the training.

**US-based orientation of training content:**

Comrades Education is a US-based organization and the genealogical education offered in this training is primarily tailored to people with European ancestors who were settlers and immigrants to the United States. While those with European ancestry not tied to a US-context

can certainly get value from training content, some translating between the work of the training and your own genealogical study will be necessary.

**Research skills offered are not exhaustive:**

It is also important to note that the family history research skills offered are not exhaustive and some of participants' questions may remain unanswered. The training is meant to give participants a group of core research skills, offer a framework for anti-racist identity development as Euro-descendant people through genealogical study, and serve as a jumping off point for further research and learning.

**Additional notes:**

While the research skills we share in this training will be useful no matter how you are doing your ancestry research, some focus will be given to the tools on ancestry.com.

Finally, we believe it is important for participants entering into this work to have consciousness that genealogical study is significantly harder for Black people who are descendants of those who were enslaved. Under this institution, families were violently separated on a regular basis and enslaved people never had their names recorded on censuses at any point in US history. As we come together to study our European ancestry in this training, we should be aware that our processes of interacting with this subject are not the same as everyone else's.

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**Ground Rules for Live Session Participation & Interaction on Circle (our online student platform)**

- Please respect the caucus we have created for this training. *See above.*
- Treat all participants and facilitators with courtesy and respect. Be respectful of everyone's privacy, do not share the recordings with anyone outside the course, and use discretion if you share anecdotes, reflections, or experiences voiced by other course participants outside of this class setting.
- Share from your personal experiences and do your best to honor the experience and wisdom that others bring. Work to suspend judgment, and bring curiosity instead.
- Refrain from offering unsolicited advice or criticism. *This is especially important in unmediated break out room discussions, and also applies to use of the chat during live sessions as well as your interactions with one another on Circle.*
- Respect time limitations when sharing and do your best to ensure that everyone who wants to speak has time to do so. *This is especially important in break out rooms.*

- As a course participant, we ask you to thoughtfully and heartfully do the work of this course, and refrain from disrupting the experience of others. To this end, please follow the guidance of the facilitators. *This includes staying on topic during break out room discussions.*
- Do not use whole group discussion time, the live chat feature, break out room discussion time, or the Circle platform to process or deliver criticism or feedback on how the course is being offered or facilitated. We value this feedback, but for the sake of everyone participating in this work, give feedback on content and facilitation outside of live sessions.
  - *You'll have the opportunity to offer feedback in the course survey, which will be sent to you right after our final session. If you want to contact us directly, please write to us at [info@comrades.education](mailto:info@comrades.education)*
- This course is offered to registered attendees only. No money is required to register, but everyone who attends a live session must be a registered participant in the course.
- Sharing your zoom login with someone who is not registered as a participant in the course is grounds for having that login revoked.
  - *We recognize that some groups are attending live sessions together, and that you will use one participant login to do this. This arrangement is perfectly valid.*
- If you are acting in a way that violates these ground rules, the facilitators may take action to ensure that all participants who have shown up to do the work of the class are able to do this work unimpeded.
  - *Taking action can include: redirecting the participant who has gone out of bounds; muting the participant; dropping the participant from the call and revoking their individual login for group sessions.*

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## **Self-Awareness, Self Care, and Compassion**

At Comrades Education, we have found that offering curriculum tied to ancestry can, at times, bring up a lot of emotion in participants.

Ancestry is personal. It not only includes making connections with deep history and past generations, it includes our relationship with our own families, our childhood experiences, and our feelings of connection or disconnection within society. Identity itself is an extremely charged issue in society today, with different people having very strong feelings about "right" and "wrong" ways of doing things, and on top of this, many people carry personal wounds and traumas related to the marginalized parts of the identities we hold.

Our goal in this training is always to maximize learning, healing and growth while minimizing discomfort and/or offense. However, in order to have a positive experience together, we ask that participants take significant responsibility for their own emotional experiences in the following ways:

- Understand that no training can leave everyone fulfilled in every way or meet all of the needs and desires that each participant may have. Please grab hold of what feels resonant, and make an effort not to dwell on the things that do not.
- Please reflect ahead of time on what pain could arise for you in a training that focuses on ancestry and identity, and ensure that you have the outside support and personal capacity for self-care to tend to any difficult emotions if they arise.
- Triggers and/or strong, negative emotions should not be directed towards other participants or training leaders.
- By agreeing to the ground rules outlined here, you commit to approaching participants, facilitators, and training content with kindness, humility, curiosity, and respect.

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## **Intellectual Property**

- While we hope that participants will share about what they've learned in informal settings, Comrades Education maintains intellectual property rights over our name, the name of our online programming, and the content of the curriculum we develop.
- Training participants agree not to use our organizational name, the exact name of our programming, and/or to recreate or offer any part of Comrades Education's curriculum as their own.

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## **Accessibility and Technical Requirements for Participation**

- Comrades Education does our best to make online programming accessible to anyone who wishes to participate (including sliding scale registration fees with no-payment options), however, we are a small organization, with limited staff, and we cannot guarantee that all materials or processes will be equally accessible to all people.
- Participants in our online programming will need to be comfortable using email, and will need to be able to use the Zoom platform interface on a personal device in order to attend live sessions.
- Full participation in live sessions will require a high speed internet connection and a digital device that is compatible with the latest version of Zoom (see [this article](#) for more information, and/or reach out to [Zoom support](#) directly to ensure you will be able to use

the platform on your device, with your connection). Audio-only participation requires use of a cell phone.

- Zoom's live transcription feature will be enabled during all live sessions. You can read about that feature [here](#).
- We offer a variety of homework study materials (video, audio, written, etc), in part to ensure that different learning styles are accommodated. We don't expect all homework materials to work equally for all people, and are limited in our ability to adapt specific materials. However, if you have accessibility requests regarding specific homework materials, please email us! We will do our best to oblige. :)
- We ask that accessibility requests be made outside of live sessions (in the same manner that feedback on programming is made outside of live sessions), so that live session time can focus on interactions related to the content of the training.
- To correspond with our team, please write to: [info@comrades.education](mailto:info@comrades.education) – Thank you!

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*If you would like to read more about our organizational mission and oversight, you can do so on our [About](#) page. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to: [info@comrades.education](mailto:info@comrades.education)*