Shakti Butler, PhD

Filmmaker and Racial Equity Educator
Shakti Butler has decades of experience as a catalyst for racial equity.

Shakti Butler, PhD is a master at inviting people to see themselves as indelibly connected to each other and the world we live in. Dr. Butler is a multiracial African-American woman (African, Arawak Indian, and Russian-Jewish) whose work as a creative and visionary bridge builder has challenged and inspired learning for over two decades.

Butler is an inspirational facilitator, trainer and lecturer. Her work emerges from years of self-exploration and her commitment to social justice. Dr. Butler’s services are sought after by schools, universities, public and private organizations, and faith-based institutions.

Learn more about Shakti Butler and see footage of her here: http://world-trust.org/dr-shakti-butler/

Using film & dialogue, she invites people to grapple with both the intellectual and emotional complexities of social justice issues.

Dr. Butler shares her holistic framework for conveying the interconnection between internal and external/structural components of racial inequity, and revealing how self-perpetuating systems reinforce disparities in institutions. This framing, along with the use of Butler’s films, set the context for constructive conversation. Butler inspires a collective will and develops deeper, cohesive understanding that can be directly applied to analysis, healing and action.

A warm and compassionate person, Butler uses her ability to listen deeply while asking critical questions that support self-directed learning in others. Her speaking and teaching styles enrich people’s abilities to expand their capacities for building community, an important first step in effecting change. Group dialogue, self-inquiry, reflection and whole body learning by participants are some of the strategies she employs.

Butler is the producer and director of groundbreaking documentaries including The Way Home: Women all about Race in America, Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible, and her latest film Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity. This latest film uses a critical mass of stories to illuminate the larger frame of structural/systemic racial inequity. See clips of her films here: http://world-trust.org/films.

Dr. Butler is the President and Founder of World Trust Educational Services. She received her doctorate from the California Institute of Integral Studies in the School of Transformative Learning and Change. She holds an MA in Guidance and Counseling from Bank Street College of New York and graduated magna cum laude from City College of New York.
Impact in a Spectrum of Institutions:
What People are Saying about Shakti Butler…

“The participants raved about both the content and the conditions that Dr. Butler created for the exploration and analysis of these often-taboo topics.”
- Melanie Tervalon, MD, Children's Hospital, Oakland

“Dr. Butler was without a doubt the highlight for us this year. We now have a deeper understanding of ourselves and the people we serve, and it has already had a big impact on our everyday work.”
- Lessy Benedith, Director, St. Vincent DePaul Society

-"Dr. Butler has a way of educating her audience that is powerful, engaging, and even enchanting. She asks people to think critically but to forgive and to confront confidently. She encourages shifts in paradigms without judgement, rather with intellectual and emotional awareness. We learned that building social justice within our industry requires critical and consistent analysis of a system rather than isolated cogs in the wheel of diversity initiatives.
- Anne Burnett, Director of Programs, Nature Bridge

“...speaking life, wisdom, truth, and love. Someone SO authentic and spiritually present.”
- Joyce Walker, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Winona State University

“... breaks down distance between audience and subject in a way that bridges intellect and heart.”
- Janice R. Welsch, Professor Emerita, Western Illinois University

“The entire freshman class gave her a standing ovation!”
- Joy Kluttz, Director of Intercultural & International Life, Carleton College

“We were able to get partners to come together and bring Shakti to George Mason University. Her presence created opportunities for conversations that we need to be having on this campus. Shakti tells the truth in ways people can hear it. It doesn't mean they don't get uncomfortable or even triggered. It means those things don't interfere with the message getting through. Two weeks later, people are still talking about her, which is what we hoped for.”
- Marquita T. Chamblee, Ph.D. Director, Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Multicultural Education

"Shakti Butler understands herself as a facilitator. She began by centering the group in its values, recalling us to our best selves. By the time we watched her excellent film, the group was prepared to be open to new ways of thinking, higher levels of hope, and greater depths of trust. While I experienced a sense of confession and awareness of complicity in a larger system of oppression, I did not leave with the paralysis of guilt. Rather, through talking with my small group of humble, creative, and soulful white people, I left the day hopeful.”
- Rev. Jake Morrill, Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church, Tennessee

“Dr. Butler’s keynote was fun, energetic, thought provoking and easily accessible. She has the ability to engage everyone in the audience. They were excited, crying, thinking/processing and still talking long after the keynote was over. It was what we needed at the conference -- a balanced diet of intelligence, community, youthful energy, love and action.”
- Eddie Moore, Jr., Founder, White Privilege Conference
Workshops & Presentations with Shakti Butler

Shakti Butler is skilled at addressing the unique needs of her varied clients. Clients ranging from UC Berkeley to the City of Seattle, from the YWCA to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America have hired her to:

- Break down barriers, initiate communication to deal with "the elephant in the room"
- Create a more welcoming, culturally conscious campus, congregation, or community
- Initiate efforts to address, transform and build efforts for racial justice
- Deepen the framing of racial justice
- Build leadership skills
- Build the collective will for change

In addition to the workshops below, shorter presentations and keynotes that introduce concepts and begin the conversation are also available in person or via Skype.

**Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity**

**Film Screening and Dialogue Event**

2.0 - 2.5 hours

At this event is designed as a catalyst for transformative learning about systemic inequity. Shakti Butler uses music or other modalities to build community among audience members, she then braids segments of the film *Cracking the Codes: The System of Inequity* with facilitated audience dialogue. This event is both challenging and uplifting, and is suitable for racial equity advocates as well as those who are new to the topic.

Completed in October, 2012 and adopted for use by over 500 institutions, *Cracking the Codes* asks that we understand and talk about the causes and consequences of systemic inequity. YES Magazine calls *Cracking the Codes* "the most dignified and evidenced response possible to the blithe assertion that we now live in a “post-racial” America." The film illuminates a system that perpetuates structural inequity using moving personal accounts from 23 leaders in the equity movement including: Amer Ahmed, Joy DeGruy, Ise Lyfe, Peggy McIntosh, Hugh Vasquez and Tim Wise. "Cracking the Codes is designed to address and deepen the national conversation on race in this country, “ said Shakti Butler, PhD, director of the film and founder of World Trust Educational Services. “The current conversation is not only shallow, but actually harmful. We continue to primarily focus only on individuals, when institutional and structural inequities are pressing. We live in a time when we cannot afford to squander our national treasure — the minds and hearts of all people."

**A Bold Dream: Creating a World That Works for Everyone**

3.0 hr - 1 day

This workshop supports participants to reframe and deepen the national conversation on race. Through multi-media, dialogue, case studies and other participatory methods, Shakti Butler guides participants to seek new questions that foster collective engagement and that build leadership skills that can illuminate pathways towards healing, equity and a more sustainable future. A multicultural future requires that we move towards collective impact that is imbued with understanding, equity and wisdom. To that end, participants will gain a practical framework for understanding and deconstructing systemic racial inequities, for creating positive dialogue and for building skills that enable dialogue to continue after the workshop.
**A Deeper Understanding of the System: History, Race, Power and Economics**  
*2.0 - 4.0 hours*  
Internal biases and external structures inform a system that continues to churn out racial disparities in the United States. This session speaks to the role of history, power and economics in inequity and provides an analytical road map to current day structural inequities. In order to envision, create and embrace a future that move towards equity --- a world in which everyone can thrive--- we must challenge ourselves individually and collectively. Through the use of film and dialogue, participants will reflect, inquire and engage with one another. Delving into the system in this participatory way can help support participants to speak more fully to the challenges that impact both the marginalized and mainstream.

**Irresistible Justice: Cultivating Joy as a Radical Act for Social Change**  
*2.0 - 4.0 hours*  
This session uses clips from *Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity* as a catalyst for transformative learning, and fosters a deeper understanding of the parts we all play in perpetuating the systemic dance of racialization. A holistic framework that conveys the interconnection between internal/personal and external/structural components of racial inequity frames the analysis and dialogue in this session.

In order to manifest human rights and dignity for all, it is necessary that we seek union between the head and heart. It is the head that can recognize, analyze and strategize to overcome disparities. It is the heart that obliterates fear. We will use dialogue as a unique tool to create union between the head and heart. It is through this union that we can infuse our actions with our deepest held values, the key to avoiding burn-out and sustaining joy in our work. Joy, rather than fear, in conjunction with systemic framing becomes a radical act towards promoting justice.

Other Topics include:

- Fear: The Internal Engine of Oppression  
- Connecting the Head and Heart: An Inner Journey on Behalf of Social Justice and Change  
- Managing Paradox: Women, Race & The Way Home
Films by Shakti Butler

CRACKING THE CODES: The System of Racial Inequity

Cracking the Codes asks America to talk about the causes and consequences of systemic inequity. The film features moving stories from 23 racial justice leaders including Amer Ahmed, Joy DeGruy, Peggy McIntosh and Tim Wise. The film is supported by racial equity learning modules and community film/dialogue events in metro areas throughout the U.S.

In the U.S., race – more than any other demographic factor – determines levels of individual educational achievement, health and life expectancy, possibility of incarceration, and wealth. This film reveals a self-perpetuating system of inequity in which personal bias plays out in external structures: institutions, policy and law. The film is designed for dialogue that moves viewers from the emotional impact of the film to transformative learning and engagement. Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity works to disentangle internal beliefs within, as it builds skills to recognize and address the external drivers of inequity.

The film contains three sections that correspond to World Trust's framing of the self-perpetuating system of racial inequity:
Section 1: History, Identity and Culture
Section 2: Personal Bias, Privilege and Internalized Racism
Section 3: Interpersonal Relationships, Institutional and Structural Bias

For footage and more information: www.crackingthecodes.org
For racial equity learning modules: www.racialequitytools.org/REL

Praise for Cracking the Codes
"Cracking the Codes asks viewers to understand the costs of systemic racial inequity. Building a world that works for everyone isn’t just the right thing to do, it’s the only way to fulfill the American Dream.
This unconventional film project challenges us to do just that."
- Van Jones
Co-Founder, Rebuild the Dream

"Most of us, if we admit it, feel pretty stuck and helpless when it comes to addressing racism. It’s the social ‘third rail’ that we either avoid, collide with or both - without much guidance or support. Cracking the Codes is an important breakthrough in helping to turn this around. Part story telling, part toolbox, this project deftly portrays the complex interplay between the personal, institutional and systemic. Cracking the Codes helps us pull the lens back so we can see the landscape of racialization and racial inequity and how we as individuals are shaped by it. It will be an invaluable resource for anyone who has ever wondered how to get this conversation started - and keep it going."
- Makani Themba-Nixon
Executive Director, The Praxis Project

"The most dignified and evidenced response possible to the blithe assertion that we now live in a "post-racial" America."
- YES Magazine
MIRRORS OF PRIVILEGE: MAKING WHITENESS VISIBLE
This film features the experiences of white men and women who have worked to gain insight into what it means to challenge notions of racism and white supremacy. Participants talk about their learned and internalized sense of privilege. Their stories reveal what is often required to move through the stages of denial, defensiveness, guilt, fear, and shame into making a solid commitment to ending racial injustice. This film catalyzes powerful dialogue to support the learning, change and healing of all people who want to undo race-based oppression. 50 min DVD.

Praise for Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible:
“Mirrors of Privilege is a moving call, long-overdue, coming from the heart of white people working to restore their own humanity.”
- Van Jones, Co-founder Ella Baker Center for Human Rights & Green for All

“The majority of our faculty and staff are white. It is HUGE that the film features white people exclusively. To have whites hearing other whites telling their stories about how they were raised, how they felt about people of color – it gives them ownership of the issue.”
- Gerald Denman, Exec. Director, Office of Diversity Affairs, Puyallup School District, WA

“A seminal work that signals a long awaited, desperately needed paradigm shift in how America, indeed the world, views race and privilege. This film provides us with an innovative tool.”
- Joy DeGruy-Leary, PhD, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Social Work, Portland State University, Author of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

“Shakti Butler has managed to engage white Americans in an honest discussion of race and privilege that has eluded this nation for three centuries. This is a film ALL Americans need to see.”
- Shauna Marshall, Academic Dean Hastings College of the Law

“Mirrors of Privilege addresses areas of white privilege, racial wounding and speaks to many of the emergent properties of what we’re all dealing with in ways that I’ve not seen other expressions do.”
- Nina Simons, Co-Executive Director, Bioneers

“This film goes beyond a basic awareness of racism to explore the subtle, rarely acknowledged roots of self-hatred and lack of understanding among even the most progressive people.”
- Gary Delgado, Former Executive Director, Applied Research Center
THE WAY HOME: Women Talk about Race in America
Over the course of eight months, sixty-four women representing a cross-section of cultures (Indigenous, African-American, Arab, Asian, European-American, Jewish, Latina, and Multiracial) came together to share their experience of racism in America. With uncommon courage, the women speak their hearts and minds about resistance, love, assimilation, standards of beauty, power, school experiences, and more. Their candid conversations offer rare access into multidimensional worlds invisible to outsiders.

Given their unique role as community builders and healers in our society, women include their emotional intelligence in describing what it is they experience. This gives women a unique perspective on what it will take to create a more equitable world. This groundbreaking film gives voice to the feminine perspective and allows us to hear how women address the issues that divide us.

92 minutes, DVD

Praise for The Way Home:
"Breathhtakingly frank, yet loving, conversations." - SF Weekly

“The response to our telecast of The Way Home was overwhelmingly positive, so much that we aired it twice more. This thought-provoking program is unique in that it shows women of different cultural affinities sharing their lives in a way rarely visualized on television… breaking new ground in ameliorating the history of distrust and misunderstanding amongst the people of this country and the world.”
- Ashley James, Station Manager KTOP/Channel 10, City of Oakland

"The Way Home was an essential element of ethnic studies curricula while I was an undergrad. It illuminated issues of race and power in the United States in a powerful and unique way. The film was part of what influenced my decision, as a young person, to spend my career working to advance social and racial justice – which I have now been doing for the past 15 years.”
- Vanessa Daniel, Executive Director, Groundswell Fund

“The Way Home is a fountain of healing truths… living proof that there are no important issues facing humanity that we can afford to tackle without the centrality of women's leadership.”
- Victor Lewis, Cast Member of The Color of Fear, Co-chair of the National Organization for Men Against Sexism
LIGHT IN THE SHADOWS

Light in the Shadows is a frank conversation about race among 10 women who participated in the ground-breaking film *The Way Home*. These American women of Indigenous, African, Arab, European, Jewish, Asian, Latina and Mixed Race descent use authentic dialogue to open a critical door of consciousness. What lies behind it is a perspective on race that is often unseen/unnoticed within the dominant culture. With clear language, open hearts and a willingness to engage—even when it gets hard—these women travel over roads that demonstrate why valuable discourse on race is so laden with emotion, distrust and misunderstanding.

*Light in the Shadow* is a springboard for critical self-inquiry and inter-ethnic dialogue.
45 minutes, DVD

“Thank you for this film and the discussion guide. I feel like a layer of denial was cracked open and that real progress can now be made.”
- Marcia Lovelace, Librarian, Tehiyah Day School