

Learning How to be Anti-Racist 9/2/20

Slides and materials from the discussion held on 9/2/20

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

- 1) Please change your name in Zoom to include your pronouns.
- 2) Prepare to get uncomfortable and lean into that.
- 3) Use the “raise hand” feature if you would like to speak next.
- 4) Assume good intentions when others are speaking and take a breath before responding.
- 5) Use “I” statements and speak from your own experiences.

TERF

Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism/Feminist

- *Emerged as a response to Third-wave feminism's more inclusive, intersectional approach to gender inequality*
- *Is characterized primarily by discrimination against transgender individuals*

SWERF

Sex Worker Exclusionary Radical Feminism/Feminist

[Source – Fem Magazine article](#)

- *Emerged as a response to Third-wave feminism's more inclusive, intersectional approach to gender inequality*
- *Is characterized primarily by discrimination against individuals engaged in sex work*

Nancy Moricette

Guest Speaker - Recap

- Disrupting White Dominance
- Triggers
- Biases
- Actor/Ally/Accomplice

Disrupting White Dominance

- What we're doing here
- Substitute "dominance" with "supremacy" or "majority"
- Must learn to identify it first
- Break patterns within yourself and when you witness them

Triggers

“An incident that threatens an individual’s self-concept, challenges their belief system or activates a previous negative experience.”

– Ramapo for Children

- Nancy’s Point: a fight or flight response is activated when someone is presented with information that challenges their beliefs
 - think “white fragility”

Biases

- **Cultural Bias**
 - Biases held by one culture for another culture
- **Structural Bias**
 - Biases held at the structural (or “systemic”) level – think “systemic racism”
- **Institutional Bias**
 - Biases held at the organizational level
- **Interpersonal Bias**
 - Biases on the individual level between individuals

Try substituting “bias” with “prejudice”. Everyone has them. But put power behind a bias (think structural/institutional), and you create an “ism” (i.e. racism, sexism, ableism, etc.).

Actor/Ally/Accomplice

- **Actor**
 - Actions do not disrupt the status quo
 - Think “performative allyship”
- **Ally**
 - Is a verb – “act as an ally”
 - Disruptor and educator in white dominated spaces
- **Accomplice**
 - Actions directly challenge institutionalized racism, colonization, and white supremacy by blocking or impeding racist people, policies, and structures
 - Actions are informed by, directed by, and coordinated with Black, Brown, First Nations/Indigenous Peoples, and/or People of Color leaders

14 CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

[White Supremacy Culture Characteristics - Source](#)

- **Perfectionism**
- **Sense of Urgency**
- **Defensiveness**
- **Either/Or Thinking**

From [*Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*](#), by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

14 CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

[White Supremacy Culture Characteristics - Source](#)

- **Worship of the Written Word**
- **Objectivity**
- **Right to Comfort**
- **Fear of Open Conflict**

From [*Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*](#), by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

14 CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

[White Supremacy Culture Characteristics - Source](#)

- **Quantity Over Quality**
- **Progress is Bigger, More**
- **Individualism**

From [*Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*](#), by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

14 CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

[White Supremacy Culture Characteristics - Source](#)

- **Only One Right Way**
- **Paternalism**
- **Power Hoarding**

From [*Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*](#), by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

WORSHIP OF THE WRITTEN WORD

- If it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist
- The organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared
- Those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission

WORSHIP OF THE WRITTEN WORD

What it Looks Like

- Not honoring verbal or unofficial agreements
- Requiring written “proof” of wrongdoing or a crime
- Requiring that “proof” to be submitted by a certain caliber of person in order to be legitimate
 - Statement written by a judge versus an unhoused person
 - Analysis written by a PhD. Candidate versus someone with a high school diploma
- Dismissing oral histories as legends
- Demanding that new or foreign concepts be supported by formal research and theory
- Not considering anything but “proper” English as legitimate

WORSHIP OF THE WRITTEN WORD

Antidotes

- Take the time to analyze how people inside and outside the organization get and share information
- Figure out which things need to be written down and come up with alternative ways to document what is happening
- Work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization (for example, the ability to build relationships with those who are important to the organization's mission)

AAVE

African American Vernacular English

From @diversifyournarrative

- Typically **incorrectly** perceived as “bad English”, “ghetto language,” and/or coined as “blaccent.”
- Is a **fully developed dialect** of the English language, similar to the various dialects found in the South, Midwest, and Northeast regions of the United States.
- Like any other dialect, it is bound by its own **rules** of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Origins of AAVE

From @diversifyournarrative

AAVE developed alongside the **U.S.' history of chattel enslavement**. When Black people were stripped from their home countries in Africa and forcibly taken to the U.S., they were **purposefully separated from others who spoke their language**, in order to prevent uprisings.

Origins of AAVE

From @diversifyournarrative

AAVE developed as a result of enslaved people acquiring some English from those who enslaved them, as they were **not allowed to receive an education**. These pieces of British English, coupled with the influence from pan-African languages, converged to create AAVE.

Significance to the Black Community

From @diversifyournarrative

AAVE is an extremely significant aspect of Black culture. Its unique mannerisms and vocabulary is **reflective** of Black history in the U.S.

Stigmatization of AAVE is rooted in **racism** and **classism**, as it implies that the dialects of English spoken by the white majority are the “correct” way of speaking.

Significance to the Black Community

From @diversifyournarrative

Black students are often forced to **unlearn** AAVE in academic settings, and they are taught that their use of AAVE reflects that they are uneducated.

This is not true. Forcing Black individuals to speak in a way that is comfortable for the white majority erases their culture and forces them into the box of “white respectability.”

Learn More

From @diversifyournarrative

We must **unlearn our associations** of AAVE with “the ghetto,” poverty, gang violence, and a lack of education when it is used by Black people, and or **dismissal** of these associations when non-Black folx use the same language.

This post adheres to the Anglicist Hypothesis in regards to how AAVE came to be. **The Creolist Hypothesis** is also a valid analysis of AAVE.

To learn more about the Creolist Hypothesis:

- *The Creole Origins Hypothesis* by John R. Rickford

OBJECTIVITY

- The belief that there is such a thing as being objective
- The belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process
- Invalidating people who show emotion
- Requiring people to think in a linear fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways
- Impatience with any thinking that does not appear logical to those with power

OBJECTIVITY

What it Looks Like

- Relying on research, technology, and the law to find equality
 - Each of these were created by humans who hold biases
- Telling someone not to cry
 - Because emotions are not objective
- Standardized Testing
- Reliance on the written word

OBJECTIVITY

Antidotes

- Realize that everybody has a world view and that everybody's world view affects the way they understand things
- Realize this means you too
- Push yourself to sit with discomfort when people are expressing themselves in ways which are not familiar to you
- Assume that everybody has a valid point and your job is to understand what that point is

RIGHT TO COMFORT

- The belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing logic over emotion)
- Scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- Equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets people of color (claims of "reverse-racism" due to "white fragility")

RIGHT TO COMFORT

What it Looks Like

- White Fragility
- Respectability Politics
 - Tone Policing
- Spiritual Bypassing
 - Toxic Positivity
- “Can’t we all just get along?”

RIGHT TO COMFORT

*Justice will never come if we only do
the things that are comfortable.*

– Bryan Stevenson

RIGHT TO COMFORT

Antidotes

- Understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning
- Welcome it as much as you can
- Deepen your political analysis of racism and oppression so you have a strong understanding of how your personal experience and feelings fit into a larger picture
- Don't take everything personally

RESPECTABILITY POLITICS

[Source – The Root article](#)

- When minority and/or marginalized groups are told (or teach themselves) that in order to receive better treatment from the group in power, they must behave better.
- The concept is not new. The term originated in Professor Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's 1993 book *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*

Examples of Respectability Politics

[Source – The Root article](#)

- Bill Cosby's "[Pound Cake Speech](#)"
- Deciding how protestors should behave
- Not taking someone seriously because of how they dress, wear their makeup, style their hair, or present information
- Tone Policing
- Delegitimizing or punishing someone for "promiscuous" or "partying" behavior

Why It's Wrong

[Source – The Root article](#)

The idea that "better behavior equals better treatment" –

- 1) Shifts responsibility away from perpetrators and places it on the victims. Instead of requiring those doing the harm to change, it asks that those being harmed to change in order to stop being harmed.
- 2) Provides a false sense of security for those who believe in it. Believing that acting a certain way can and will prevent harm is dangerous.

Why It's Wrong

[Source – The Root article](#)

The idea that "better behavior equals better treatment" –

3) Does not work.

- Black people are killed by cops no matter how they present themselves
- Women experience sexism no matter how they present themselves
- "Peaceful protests" rarely result in meaningful action

TONE POLICING

[Source – Feminism in India article](#)

- Is a tactic used by those who have privilege to silence those who do not by **focusing on the tone of what is being said** rather than what is actually being said.
- It is used to **silence, derail, or disengage** from a conversation by controlling the people participating and the conditions under which the conversation is happening.
- Activists and protestors are often **told to be civil**.

Examples of Tone Policing

[Source – Feminism in India article](#)

- “I wish you would say that in a nicer way.”
- “Your language is hateful and divisive.”
- “This isn’t the time or place to express your emotions.”
- “You cannot speak to me in that tone.”
- “You’d have a lot more people on your side if you weren’t so rude.”
- “Your tone is unprofessional and aggressive.”
- “Don’t use provocative language.”
- “Calm down.”
- “Focus on the positive.”

Why It's Wrong

[Source – Feminism in India article](#)

- Tone policing **racializes and genders emotions** and reinforces **stereotypes** like “men cannot be emotional” and “black women are angry”.
- It **suppresses the voices** of the **marginalized**.
- It **preserves privilege** of the people who want to avoid conversations that make them feel uncomfortable – about **power** and **dominance**.
- It prevents you from **acknowledging** your mistakes, **educating** yourself, and **uplifting others**.

Unlearn this Reaction

[Source – Feminism in India article](#)

- Tone policing hinges on the idea that **emotion** and **reason** cannot coexist. The assumption that reasonable discussions cannot involve emotions is wrong.
- When you are tone policing someone, you are implying that your **feelings** matter more than their **lived experiences**.
- Someone's argument does not become **less valid** if not presented in a "**polite**" way.
- Remember: When you are tone policing someone, you are **actively derailing** the conversation and being **compliant** in the **bigotry**.
- It's time we **check our privilege** and amplify the voices of the **marginalized**.

SPIRITUAL BYPASSING

[Source – Wikipedia article](#)

- *A tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, and unfinished developmental tasks.*
 - John Welwood

Examples of Spiritual Bypassing

- “Good vibes only”
- “You create your own reality”
- “Everything happens for a reason”
- “Rise above your anger”
- Toxic Positivity – when positivity is used to cover up pain or invalidate someone’s emotions
- Exaggerated detachment
- Emotional repression
- Overly tolerant compassion
- Anger-phobia

Why It's Wrong

When related to race – it's a form of Gaslighting.

By engaging in Spiritual Bypassing, one is directly complicit in oppression and dismisses and represses the pain of oppressed people's experiences.

It is used to avoid taking responsibility for dismantling the systems in place.

"I don't want your Love and Light if it doesn't come with Solidarity and Action." – Rachel Elizabeth Cargle

FEAR OF OPEN CONFLICT

- People in power are scared of conflict and try to ignore it or run from it
- When someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem
- Emphasis on being polite
- Equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

FEAR OF OPEN CONFLICT

Antidotes

- Role play ways to handle conflict before conflict happens
- Distinguish between being polite and raising hard issues
- Don't require those who raise hard issues to raise them in acceptable ways, especially if you are using the ways in which issues are raised as an excuse not to address the issues being raised
- Once a conflict is resolved, take the opportunity to revisit it and see how it might have been handled differently

ACTION ITEM #1

Read [this article](#) on having conversations about racism.

ACTION ITEM #2

Finish your second book.

- Be prepared to discuss it next week.