White Worries, White Fears

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Non-Profit Executive Undoing Racism Monthly Meeting
December 5, 2016
John Gentile

Norming the Space...

- Speak from the "I"

- Move Up, Move Back

- Expect and Accept a Lack of Closure

- The Learning Leaves, The Stories Stay

Aware Spaces: "Discomfortable in the Circumstance of Risk"

Encourages growth through transparency, accountability, and authenticity

Embraces conflict and discomfort

Promotes the courage to struggle in the search for new understanding

Objectives:

- To introduce the concept of white supremacy and white fragility and its manifestations
- To increase awareness and understanding of the meaning of white supremacy and white fragility
- To understand and challenge practices which marginalize, exclude or dehumanize others
- To learn strategic methods to disrupt white supremacy and white fragility

White Supremacy

Historically-based, institutionally-perpetuated political ideology and system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and people of color by white people and nations of Europe, for the purpose of maintaining, defending, and expanding a white system of wealth, power, and privilege.*

*Challenging White Supremacy Workshop:
http://www.cwsworkshop.org/about/6Glossary_of_Terms.PDF

White Dominant Cultural Norms

Perfectionism

Sense of Urgency

Defensiveness

Quantity over Quality

Worship of the Written Word

Only One Right Way

Paternalism

Either/Or Thinking

Power Hoarding

Fear of Open Conflict

Individualism

I'm the Only One

Progress is Bigger, More

Objectivity

Right to Comfort

Reflection on Cultures of Power

1. Who is in authority?

2. Who has credibility (whose words and ideas are listened to with most attention and respect)?

3. Who is treated with full respect?

4. Whose experience is valued?

5. Whose voices are heard?

6. Who has access to or is given important information?

7. Who talks most at meetings?

8. Whose ideas are given importance?

9. Who is assigned to or expected to take on background roles?

10. How is the space designed? Who has physical access?

11. What is on the walls?

12. What language(s) are used? Which are acceptable?

13. What music and food is available? Who provides it?

14. How much are different people paid? How are prices determined?

15. Who cleans up?

16. Who decides?

White Fragility

A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.*

*Robin DiAngelo: *White Fragility*, International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, Vol 3 (3) (2011) pp 54-70

• Suggesting that a white person's viewpoint comes from a racialized frame of reference (challenge to objectivity);

• People of color talking directly about their racial perspectives (challenge to white racial codes);

• People of color choosing not to protect the racial feelings of white people in regards to race (challenge to white racial expectations and need/entitlement to racial comfort);

• People of color not being willing to tell their stories or answer questions about their racial experiences (challenge to colonialist relations);

• A fellow white not providing agreement with one's interpretations (challenge to white solidarity);

• Receiving feedback that one's behavior had a racist impact (challenge to white liberalism);

• Suggesting that group membership is significant (challenge to individualism);

• An acknowledgment that access is unequal between racial groups (challenge to meritocracy);

• Being presented with a person of color in a position of leadership (challenge to white authority);

• Being presented with information about other racial groups through, for example, movies in which people of color drive the action but are not in stereotypical roles, or multicultural education (challenge to white centrality).

Triggers

Sustaining White Fragility

Segregation

Universalism and Individualism

Entitlement to Racial Comfort

Racial Arrogance

Racial Belonging

Psychic Freedom

Constant Messaging of Value

Exercise

When I have been complicit in white fragility or bore witness to it?

What caused the moment to happen?

How did it end? What came next?

Accountability

Relinquishing Power/Share Power

Unpack/Interrogate Privilege

Don't Show Up/Know What Spaces Need You and Which Don't

Shut up and Listen/Knowing When Your Voice is Necessary

Do Not Seek Rewards or Spotlight - Not A Savior

Continuing Education

Constant Engagement/Staying in the Room

Focusing on Your Shared Identities

Giving Credit Where it is Due

Don't Burn Out

"White people are trapped in a history they don't understand."

James Baldwin

Resources

White Fragility - Robin DiAngelo

Paying Attention to White Culture and Privilege: A Missing Link to Advancing Racial Equity - Gita Gulati-Partee, M.B.A., OpenSource Leadership Strategies, and Maggie Potapchuk, M.Ed., MP Associates

Element of White Middle Class Dominant Culture - Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun