

Let me give you a word on the philosophy of reform. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all absorbing, and for the time being putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what people will submit to, and you have found the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue until they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

Frederick Douglass
Letter to an abolitionist associate, 1849

guidelines

Keep it here.

Exercise good judgment and respect if people share things that are obviously not meant to go any further.
Avoid sharing who said what.

Show respect.

Show respect for yourself as well as for others.
Challenge statements and behavior without putting down the person.

We don't have to agree.

When we disagree, challenge the statement or the behavior instead of the person.
Avoid using blame, shame, and guilt on ourselves or others.

Step up / step back.

Fully participate and be sure to give everyone else a chance to talk.
Listen to others and avoid interrupting.

Speak for yourself and from your experience.

Use "I" statements.

Take risks and encourage others to take risks too.

Take advantage of this opportunity to talk to each other.
Feel free to be open and spontaneous with your ideas, even if they seem incomplete or contradictory.
Use this opportunity to test new ideas, however brilliant or wacky they might be.

Express feelings – emotions are good.

There are no stupid questions.

All questions are valid.
Ask questions yourself and support others when they ask.

Understand the value of discomfort.

It is when we are uncomfortable that we have the biggest chance to learn something. This is especially true for those of us who are used to being in control. Those of us with power and privilege tend to have less experience with discomfort, and sometimes feel that being comfortable is our right.
Use this time as an opportunity to see what our discomfort can teach us.

Help create a shared experience of learning.

assumptions

1. **Growing up in the USA, we have absorbed considerable misinformation** about people who are 'different' from us and our families. Because racism, sexism, classism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia (as well as other forms of oppression) are so widespread, we have been imprinted with negative beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes about groups of people we barely know. This began to happen when we were young before we could recognize misinformation or object. Now that we are older, we have a responsibility to think for ourselves.
2. **Dismantling racism, sexism, heterosexism, and unlearning the oppressive attitudes will take a lifetime.** Most of us have been struggling with these issues for years and years already. None of us are beginners and none of us have perfect clarity. This work is a journey; there is no endpoint.
3. **Racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression have damaged us all.** People in the target groups are oppressed and people in the dominant group are hurt. Hurt and oppression are not the same, but we have all been damaged.
4. **Individuals and organizations can and do grow and change.** Change which happens quickly is usually cosmetic and temporary. Meaningful change comes after resistance, denial and pain have all been worked through.
5. **Racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and all the 'isms' are connected.** While they are connected, they are not the same and cannot be compared one to the other. We may have more experience with one 'ism' than with others; we may feel that one is more important than others. But we will not be able to dismantle one without understanding the connection between them.
6. We cannot dismantle racism in a system that exploits people for private profit. **If we want to dismantle racism, then we must be about building a movement for social and economic justice.**
7. While single individuals can inspire change, **working together as an organized whole, in groups, communities, and organizations, makes change happen.**
8. **How we do our work is as important as the work we do.** Social justice organizations which mistreat, exploit, or otherwise oppress people while working towards a justice mission will not be successful in the long run. We must honor our values at every level of the organization.

active listening

When you are the one listening:

1. Listen with undivided, supportive and focused attention. Anything your partner says is OK. Ask questions when you need to get something clear or don't understand something. The purpose is to help your partner get clear, not to communicate.
2. Help your partner stay on time and on the subject. Do not interrupt with your own comments or stories. Do keep the speaker focused on the question at hand in the limited time allowed.
3. Do whatever you normally do when you are listening to someone with focused attention, unless you discover it is distracting to the person talking. Some people like to make eye contact, some like to say 'yeah' and give encouragement that way, some like to nod or lightly touch the other person. Do whatever is appropriate for you.

When it is your turn to talk:

1. Use all the time you're allowed whether you think you need it or not, but don't go over.
2. Say whatever you want about the topic. It's your experience and you deserve to be listened to.
3. If you feel awkward, or don't know what to say next, that's OK. Just laugh or explain that you don't know what to say. Check out how you're feeling and talk about that.

a (very partial) historical roadmap of oppression in the U.S.

If you are a citizen of the United States, part of the legacy you have inherited is the historical, systematic, and pervasive way in which oppression has been constructed here in this country. Here is a small sampling of U.S. laws, court decisions, and other acts which lay some of the groundwork. Many thanks to Sharon Martinas and the Challenging White Supremacy Workshop for much of the information included here.

- 1637 New England colonists massacre 500 Native Americans in Pequot war, the first massacre of indigenous people by English colonists.
- 1662 Virginia enacts law stating that if an “Englishman” begets a child of a “Negro woman,” the child will take on the woman’s status, i.e. that of a slave; this law makes slavery hereditary.
- 1712 “Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes and slaves” in South Carolina – “whereas, the plantations . . . of this province cannot be well managed . . . without the labor of Negroes and other slaves, [who] . . . are of barbarous, wild, savage natures, and such as renders them wholly unqualified to be governed by the laws . . . of this province; that such other laws and orders, should in this province be made . . . as may restrain the disorders, rapines and inhumanity, to which they are naturally prone and inclined. . . .”
- 1776 The Declaration of Independence is signed, stating that “all men are created equal . . . with certain inalienable rights . . . Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” while excluding Africans, Native Americans, and all women.
- 1787 in the U.S. Constitution – for the purposes of taxation and representation, Negro slaves were counted as 3/5 of a person, “. . . adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other persons.”
- 1790 Naturalization Law of 1790 specifies that only free white immigrants are eligible for naturalized citizenship. First generation immigrants from Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South American and Africa are expressly denied civil rights, the right to vote, and the right to own land. This Act is not completely wiped off the books until the McCarran Walter Act of 1952.
- 1795 Treaty of Greenville, which Indian leaders are forced to sign, cedes most of the Ohio Valley to the U.S. government.

- 1830 “Act prohibiting the teaching of slaves to read” in North Carolina and other states – “whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds and to produce insurrection and rebellion, to the manifest injury of the citizens of this state . . . ,” such teaching was illegal and severely punished.
- 1830 Indian Removal Act authorized the president to “negotiate” and exchange lands . . . which actually meant . . . seize Indian land and remove Native Americans from their ancestral and sacred lands; territory of Oklahoma set aside as “Indian Territory.”
- 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed between U.S. and Mexico, which promises to protect the lands, language and culture of the Mexicans living in ceded territory (future states of California, Texas, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, parts of Colorado and Wyoming). Congress substitutes a “Protocol” which requires Mexicans to prove in U.S. courts that they have ‘legitimate’ title to their own lands; the “Protocol” becomes the legal basis for the massive U.S. land theft from Mexicans in conquered territories.
- 1850 Foreign Miners Tax in California requires Chinese and Latin American gold miners to pay a special tax on their holdings not required of European American miners.
- 1850 California legislature passes an act legalizing indentured servitude of children under guise of apprenticeship; children can be taken from parents, given food, clothing and shelter in exchange for “learning a trade” with no pay.
- 1854 California law (People v. Hall) – “No black, or mulatto person, or Indian shall be allowed to give evidence for or against a white person.”
- 1862 Homestead Act allots 160 acres of western (i.e. Indian) land to “anyone” who could pay \$1.25 an acre and cultivate it for 5 years; within 10 years, 85,000,000 acres of Indian lands had been sold to European homesteaders.
- 1873 US Supreme Court opinion in regards to a woman’s application for a license to practice law – “(T)he civil law, as well as nature herself, has always recognized a wide difference in the respective spheres and destinies of man and woman. Man is, or should be, woman’s protector and defender. The natural and proper timidity and delicacy which belongs to the female sex unfits it for many of the occupations of civil life . . . that a married woman is incapable, without her husband’s consent, of making contracts which shall be binding . . . This very incapacity . . . rendering a married woman incompetent fully to perform the duties and trust that belong to the office of an attorney . . . The paramount

destiny and mission of woman is to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the Law of the Creator.”

- 1876 California constitution – “. . . necessary regulations for the protection of the State . . . from the burdens and evils arising from the presence of aliens, who are or may become vagrants, paupers, mendicants, criminals, or invalids afflicted with contagious or infectious diseases . . .,” “no corporation . . . shall employ . . . any Chinese or Mongolian,” “no Chinese shall be employed on any state or other public work . . . except in punishment for a crime.”

- 1887 Dawes Act terminates tribal ownership of lands by partitioning reservations and assigning each Indian a 160-acre allotment for farming. “Surplus” reservation land is opened up to homesteaders.

- 1887 Hayes Tilden Compromise removes federal troops from the South, leaving Blacks totally unprotected from white violence and setting stage for 50 years of intense repression, denial of political, civil, and education rights that African Americans had struggled for and to some extent won during Reconstruction after the Civil War.

- 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act passed by Congress to keep Chinese immigrant workers from coming to the U.S., the first time a nationality had been barred expressly by name.

- 1886 Apache warrior Geronimo surrenders to the U.S. army, marking the defeat of Southwest Indian nations.

- 1893 Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii is overthrown by U.S. planter colonists in a bloodless revolution. The Republic of Hawaii is established with Stanford Dole (Dole Pineapple) as president.

- 1896 Supreme Court declares in Plessy v. Ferguson that separate but “equal” facilities are constitutional.

- 1898 U.S. defeats Spain and acquires Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Phillipines. Cuba, which had already declared her independence from Spain, becomes a virtual colony of the U.S.

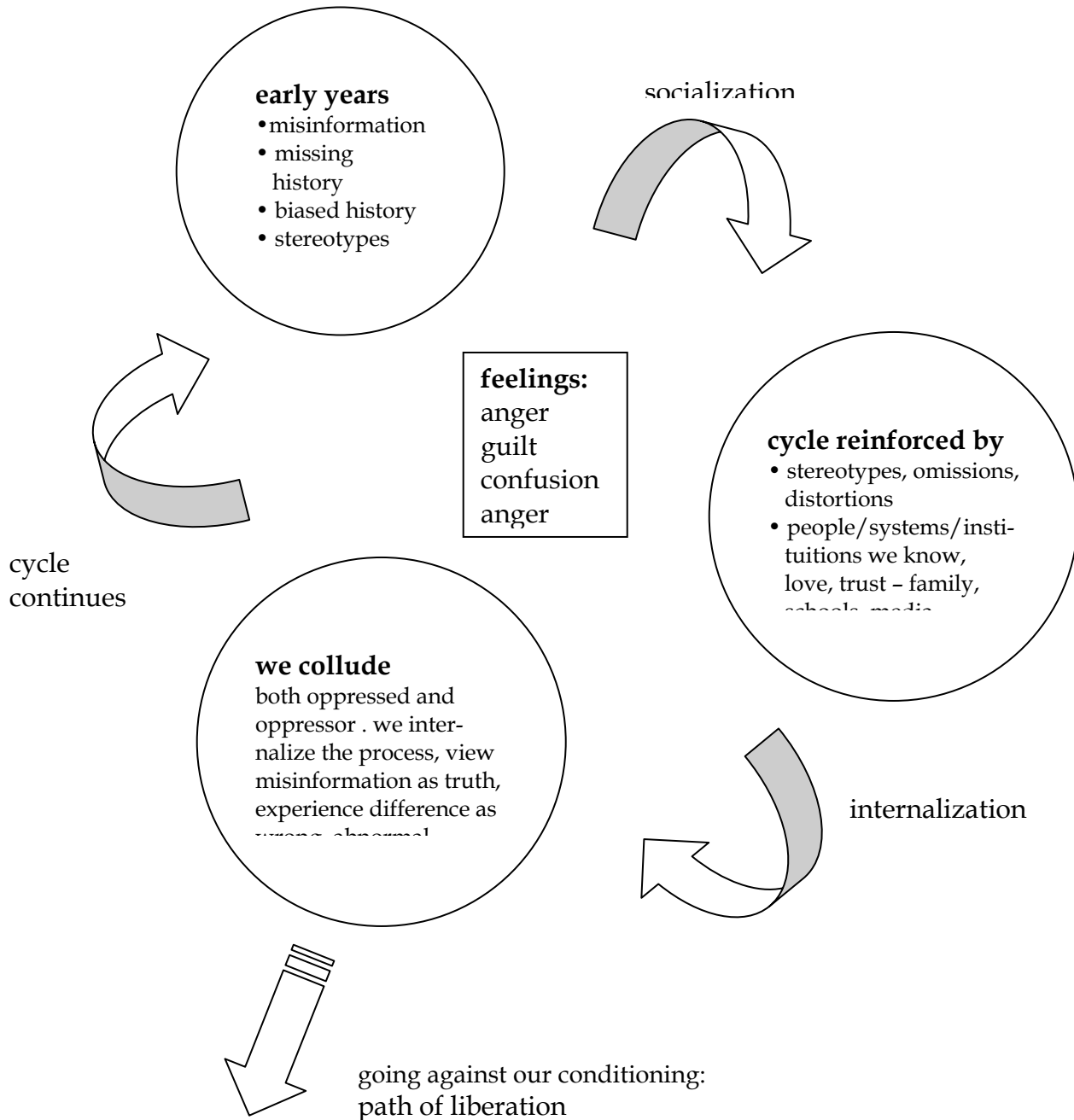
- 1917 Congress enacts another immigration act creating an Asiatic Barred Zone, a “line in the sand” in Asia effectively cutting off all immigration from India.

- 1924 Johnson Reed Immigration Act sets restrictive quotas on immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

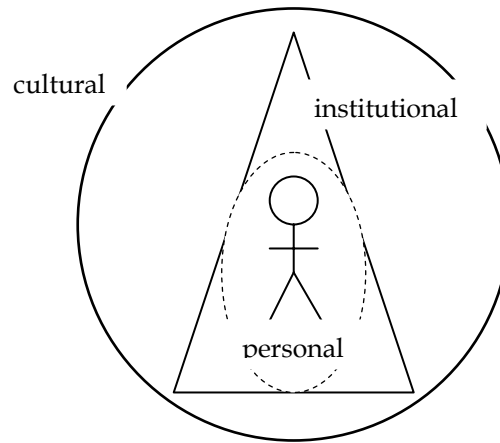
- 1944 Supreme Court opinion upheld Roosevelt's Executive Order authorizing relocation and detention of all people of Japanese ancestry, including U.S. citizens, in "war relocation centers" regardless of "loyalty" to U.S. (during World War II).
- 1947 Taft Hartley Act seriously restricts the right to organize and requires a loyalty oath aimed at the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which had organized large numbers of workers of color.
- 1954 U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service sets up Operation Wetback to round up and deport "illegal" Mexicans living in the U.S.
- Until the 1960s, children with disabilities were not allowed public school educations.
- 1964 Democratic Party refuses to seat the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in place of the segregationist Mississippi Democrats at the Party's convention in Atlanta.
- 1969-72 Raids on Black Panther Party offices, assassinations of leading Panthers, imprisonment of hundreds of others, resulting in destruction of Black Panther Party.
- pre 1970s Chicago statute (example of U.S. 'Ugly laws') - No one "diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed, so as to be an unsightly object, may step out in public."
- 1973 Federal and state police and FBI launch a military assault on American Indian Movement activists and traditional Indians of the Lakota Nation at Wounded Knee. Leonard Peltier is convicted on false charges of murdering an FBI agent and sentenced to 2 consecutive life sentences.
- mid-1980's The Heritage Foundation organizes the National Association of Scholars and finances college campus right wing groups to attack students and faculty struggling for more inclusive curriculum; the right wing group labels educational equality efforts as "political correctness."
- 1988 Texas courtroom - Judge reduced terms of sentence for convicted murderer because the two murder victims were "queer," and "I don't much care for queers . . ."
- 1990 Supreme Court decision attacks the religious freedom of Native Americans by ruling that states have the right to pass laws forcing Native American Church members to risk prison in order to practice their religion.

- 1990 Congress passes a comprehensive new immigration law, which includes “employer sanctions” for knowingly hiring a worker without papers, discouraging employers from taking job applications from Asian Americans or Latinos.
- 1991 KKK leader David Duke wins 55% of the white vote in Louisiana in his run for governor (massive Black turnout prevents his election); supporters tell a CBS reporter they are voting for Duke not because they believe he has changed but because they know he hasn't.

cycle of oppression



three expressions of racism



CULTURAL: The ways in which the dominant culture is founded upon and then defines and shapes norms, values, beliefs and standards to advantage white people and oppress people of color. The ways in which the dominant culture defines reality to advantage white people and oppress people of color. The norms, values, or standards assumed by the dominant society that perpetuate racism. Examples: thin, blond, white women as the basis for our society's standard of beauty; women on welfare assumed to be black or brown and portrayed as irresponsible while white collar fraud in the business community is costing the US hundreds of billions of dollars a year, requiring people to speak English historically (American Indians) and today (people from Central and South America) as a way of deliberately destroying community and culture.

INSTITUTIONAL: The ways in which the structures, systems, policies, and procedures of institutions in the U.S. are founded upon and then promote, reproduce, and perpetuate advantages for white people and the oppression of people of color. The ways in which institutions legislate and structure reality to advantage white people and oppress people of color. The ways in which institutions -- Housing, Government, Education, Media, Business, Health Care, Criminal Justice, Employment, Labor, Politics, Church - perpetuate racism. Examples: people of color under-represented and misrepresented on television, racially biased standardized tests used to determine who will be admitted to higher education programs and institutions, historic and ongoing breaking of treaties with indigenous Native American communities, reliance on low-paying illegal immigrant labor by farms and factories.

PERSONAL: The ways in which we perpetuate and/or assume the idea that white people are inherently better and/or people of color are inherently inferior on an individual basis. Examples: calling someone a racist name, making a racist assumption.

the four faces of racism

v adapted from Joan Olsson, Cultural Bridges

CONSTRUCTED RACIST OPPRESSION (affecting People of Color)

- historically constructed and systemic (not just personal or individual)
- penetrates every aspect of our personal, institutional, and cultural life
- includes prejudice against people of color in attitudes, feelings, and behaviors
- includes exclusion, discrimination against, suspicion, fear or hatred of people of color
- sees a person of color only as a member of a group, not as an individual
- includes low expectations by white people for children and adults of color
- people of color have fewer options, choices

INTERNALIZED RACIST OPPRESSION (affecting People of Color)

- as people of color, we carry internalized negative messages about ourselves and other people of color
- we believe there is something wrong with being a person of color
- we have lowered self-esteem, sense of inferiority, wrongness
- we have lowered expectations, limited sense of potential for self
- we have very limited choices: either 'act in' (white) or 'act out' (disrupt)
- we have a sense of limited possibility (limited by oppression and prejudice)
- cycles through generations

GRANTED WHITE PRIVILEGE (for white people)

- "an invisible knapsack of special provisions and blank checks" (Peggy McIntosh)
- the default; "to be white in America is not to have to think about it" (Robert Terry)
- expect to be seen as an individual; what we do never reflects on the white race
- we can choose to avoid the impact of racism without penalty
- we live in a world where our worth and personhood are continually validated
- although hurt by racism, we can live just fine without ever having to deal with it

INTERNALIZED WHITE SUPREMACY (affecting white people)

- my world view is the universal world view; our standards and norms are universal
- my achievements have to do with me, not with my membership in the white group
- I have a right to be comfortable and if I am not, then someone else is to blame
- I can feel that I personally earned, through work and merit, any/all of my success
- equate acts of unfairness experienced by white people with systemic racism experienced by people of color
- I have many choices, as I should; everyone else has those same choices
- I am not responsible for what happened before, nor do I have to know anything about it; I have a right to be ignorant
- I see work on racism as the responsibility of POC and only in interests of POC

racism defined

Prejudice

An attitude based on limited information, often on stereotypes. Prejudice is usually, but not always, negative; positive and negative prejudices alike, especially when directed toward oppressed people, are damaging because they deny the individuality of the person. In some cases, the prejudices of oppressed people (“you can’t trust the police”) are necessary for survival. No one is free of prejudice.

Examples: Women are emotional. Asians are good at math.

Oppression

The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group. Rita Hardiman and Bailey Jackson state that oppression exists when the following 4 conditions are found:

1. the oppressor group has the power to define reality for themselves and others,
2. the target groups take in and internalize the negative messages about them and end up cooperating with the oppressors (thinking and acting like them),
3. genocide, harassment, and discrimination are systematic and institutionalized, so that individuals are not necessary to keep it going, and,
4. members of both the oppressor and target groups are socialized to play their roles as normal and correct.

Oppression = Power + Prejudice

Social and Institutional Power

- access to resources
- the ability to influence others
- access to decision-makers to get what you want done
- the ability to define reality for yourself and others

System

- a set of things that together make a whole
- an established way of doing something, such that things get done that way regularly and are assumed to be the ‘normal’ way things get done
- runs by itself; does not require planning or initiative by a person or group

Advantage

- a leg up, a gain, a benefit

White Supremacy

The idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

Race

1. There is no such thing as race from a scientific or biological point of view.
2. Even though this is true, race is a powerful political, social, and economic force. Race is essentially a political construct, in other words it was constructed for political purposes.
3. The term 'white' was constructed to unite certain European groups living in the U.S. who were fighting each other and at the same time were a numerical minority in comparison to the numbers of African slaves and Native peoples.
4. In order to justify the idea of a white race, every institution in this country was used to prove that race exists and to promote the idea that the white race is at the top and all other races are below, with the black race on the bottom. All institutions were used to promote the idea of white supremacy.
5. All Europeans did not and do not become white at the same time (Irish, Italians, Jews). Becoming white involves giving up pieces of your original culture in order to get the advantages and privileges of being in the white group.
6. This process continues today.

Racism

Racism = social and institutional power + race prejudice

Racism = a system of advantage based on race

Racism = a system of oppression based on race

Racism = a white supremacy system

Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the major institutions of society. By this definition, only white people can be racist in our society, because only white people as a group have that power.

how oppression operates

In order for oppression to flourish, we must collude or cooperate. As Frederick Douglass points out “Find out what people will submit to, and you have found the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them . . .”

In order for oppression (racism in this case) to flourish, we must:

forget / pretend – the oppressed must forget what has happened to them historically and what is happening to them in their day to day lives in order to get through their lives and their day; the dominant group must never identify as white or as benefiting from white privilege; the dominant group must ‘forget’ about their membership in the white group; the dominant group must pretend that everything is OK now, that the problem was in the past

lie – the oppressed must stop speaking the truth about their experience, both to themselves (to survive internally) and to others (to survive in the world); the dominant group must lie to themselves and each other about their role in oppression, positioning themselves as blameless, passive (I didn’t cause it), individual and not part of a bigger system, while ignoring the internal racist conditioning and tapes (I am not racist, I’m a good white person)

stop feeling – the oppressed must cut themselves off from their feelings, become numb in order to survive, or feel that it is personal (I am bad or at fault); the dominant group must also cut themselves off from their feelings, insist on being ‘rational and ‘logical’ and never stop to feel the cost as oppressors; the dominant group must avoid feeling, because to begin feeling means to begin feeling guilt or shame

lose voice – the oppressed must internalize the oppression, feel bad about themselves and their situation so that they are no longer able to speak to it or about it, distrust their voice and the truth they have to speak; when the oppressed do speak out, they are labeled as ‘aggressive,’ ‘overly sensitive,’ ‘angry,’ and discounted; the dominant group becomes afraid to speak out because of the social pressure against it, the threat of losing family and friends, and separating themselves from the white group

make power invisible – the oppressed must begin to identify more with the dominant group than with their own group and as a result lose a sense of their collective power; the dominant group must assume their right to power along with the myth that power is individual and everyone who works hard can have the same power they do; or the dominant group must act as if they don’t have power as white people and deny the power that they get just by belonging to the white group

internalized racist oppression

Internalized Racist Oppression (IRO) is the internalization by People of Color (POC) of the images, stereotypes, prejudices, and myths promoted by the racist system about POC in this country. Our thoughts and feelings about ourselves, people of our own racial group, or other POC are based on the racist messages we receive from the broader system. For many People of Color in our communities, internalized racist oppression manifests itself as:

Self-Doubt

Inferiority Complex

Self-Hate

the process of oppression

When one looks at the history of oppression of People of Color in this country, we find that oppression uses recurring methods. Though we are talking historically, all of these methods are still being used in the continuing process of oppression.

Violence and the Threat of Violence

Change in Behavior

Destruction of Culture

Division, Separation, Isolation

the impact of IRO in our communities

Internalized Racist Oppression impacts members of communities of color in various ways. Some of the things community organizers and educators encounter when working in these communities are:

Low Self Esteem

Powerlessness

Hopelessness

Apathy

Addictive Behavior

Abusive and Violent Relationships

Conflict Between Racial Groups

Mediocrity

ladder of empowerment for people of color

EMPOWERMENT

community of resistance
collective action
challenging
investigation
self-awareness
exclusion / immersion
rage / depression
not white

INTERNALIZED RACIST OPPRESSION

white culture

v This piece on white supremacy culture is written by Tema Okun and builds on the work of many people, including (but not limited to) Andrea Ayzazian, Bree Carlson, Beverly Daniel Tatum, Dueker, Nancy Emond, Jonn Lunsford, Sharon Martinas, Joan Olsson, David Rogers, James Williams, Sally Yee, as well as the work of Grassroots Leadership, Equity Institute Inc, the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, the Challenging White Supremacy workshop, the Lillie Allen Institute, the Western States Center, and the contributions of hundreds of participants in the DR process.

* These sections are based on the work of Daniel Buford, whose extensive research on white supremacy culture is reflected in his teaching at the People's Institute Workshops.

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture that show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. They are damaging to both people of color and to white people. Organizations that are people of color led or a majority people of color can also demonstrate damaging characteristics of white supremacy culture.

perfectionism

- little appreciation expressed among people for the work that others are doing; appreciation that is expressed usually directed to those who get most of the credit anyway
- more common is to point out either how the person or work is inadequate
- or even more common, to talk to others about the inadequacies of a person or their work without ever talking directly to them
- mistakes are seen as personal, i.e. they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are - mistakes
- making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong
- little time, energy, or money put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice, in other words little or no learning from mistakes
- tendency to identify what's wrong; little ability to identify, name, and appreciate what's right
- often internally felt, in other words the perfectionist fails to appreciate her own good work, more often pointing out his faults or 'failures,' focusing on inadequacies and mistakes rather than learning from them; the person works with a harsh and constant inner critic

antidotes: develop a culture of appreciation, where the organization takes time to make sure that people's work and efforts are appreciated; develop a learning organization, where it is expected that everyone will make mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning; create an environment

where people can recognize that mistakes sometimes lead to positive results; separate the person from the mistake; when offering feedback, always speak to the things that went well before offering criticism; ask people to offer specific suggestions for how to do things differently when offering criticism; realize that being your own worst critic does not actually improve the work, often contributes to low morale among the group, and does not help you or the group to realize the benefit of learning from mistakes

sense of urgency

- continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)
- reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

antidotes: realistic workplans; leadership which understands that things take longer than anyone expects; discuss and plan for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time; learn from past experience how long things take; write realistic funding proposals with realistic time frames; be clear about how you will make good decisions in an atmosphere of urgency; realize that rushing decisions takes more time in the long run because inevitably people who didn't get a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings will at best resent and at worst undermine the decision because they were left unheard

defensiveness

- the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it
- because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude)
- people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, making it very difficult to raise these ideas
- a lot of energy in the organization is spent trying to make sure that people's feelings aren't getting hurt or working around defensive people
- white people spend energy defending against charges of racism instead of examining how racism might actually be happening
- the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture

antidotes: understand that structure cannot in and of itself facilitate or prevent abuse; understand the link between defensiveness and fear (of losing power, losing face, losing comfort, losing privilege); work on your own

defensiveness; name defensiveness as a problem when it is one; give people credit for being able to handle more than you think; discuss the ways in which defensiveness or resistance to new ideas gets in the way of the mission

quantity over quality

- all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals
- things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
- little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value
- discomfort with emotion and feelings
- no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people's need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)

antidotes: include process or quality goals in your planning; make sure your organization has a values statement which expresses the ways in which you want to do your work; make sure this is a living document and that people are using it in their day to day work; look for ways to measure process goals (for example if you have a goal of inclusivity, think about ways you can measure whether or not you have achieved that goal); learn to recognize those times when you need to get off the agenda in order to address people's underlying concerns

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

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); make sure anything written can be clearly understood (avoid academic language, 'buzz' words, etc.)

only one right way

- the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it
- when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who 'know' the right way)
- similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good

antidotes: accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; once the group has made a decision about which way will be taken, honor that decision and see what you and the organization will learn from taking that way, even and especially if it is not the way you would have chosen; work on developing the ability to notice when people do things differently and how those different ways might improve your approach; look for the tendency for a group or a person to keep pushing the same point over and over out of a belief that there is only one right way and then name it; when working with communities from a different culture than yours or your organization's, be clear that you have some learning to do about the communities' ways of doing; never assume that you or your organization know what's best for the community in isolation from meaningful relationships with that community

paternalism

- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does
- those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them

antidotes: make sure that everyone knows and understands who makes what decisions in the organization; make sure everyone knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in the organization; include people who are affected by decisions in the decision-making

either/or thinking*

- things are either/or – good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us
- closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict
- no sense that things can be both/and
- results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education
- creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people feel they have to

make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources

- often used by those with a clear agenda or goal to push those who are still thinking or reflecting to make a choice between 'a' or 'b' without acknowledging a need for time and creativity to come up with more options

antidotes: notice when people use 'either/or' language and push to come up with more than two alternatives; notice when people are simplifying complex issues, particularly when the stakes seem high or an urgent decision needs to be made; slow it down and encourage people to do a deeper analysis; when people are faced with an urgent decision, take a break and give people some breathing room to think creatively; avoid making decisions under extreme pressure

power hoarding

- little, if any, value around sharing power
- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

antidotes: include power sharing in your organization's values statement; discuss what good leadership looks like and make sure people understand that a good leader develops the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and challenges to your leadership can be healthy and productive; make sure the organization is focused on the mission

fear of open conflict

- people in power are scared of expressed 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

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 those

issues; once a conflict is resolved, take the opportunity to revisit it and see how it might have been handled differently

individualism*

- little experience or comfort working as part of a team
- people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone
- accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve
- desire for individual recognition and credit
- leads to isolation
- competition more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate
- creates a lack of accountability, as the organization values those who can get things done on their own without needing supervision or guidance

antidotes: include teamwork as an important value in your values statement; make sure the organization is working towards shared goals and people understand how working together will improve performance; evaluate people's ability to work in a team as well as their ability to get the job done; make sure that credit is given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals; create a culture where people bring problems to the group; use staff meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities

i'm the only one

- connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, 'I' have to do it
- little or no ability to delegate work to others

antidotes: evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals

progress is bigger, more*

- observed in how we define success (success is always bigger, more)
- progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people (regardless of how well they are serving them)
- gives no value, not even negative value, to its cost, for example, increased accountability to funders as the budget grows, ways in which those we serve may be exploited, excluded, or underserved as we focus on how many we are serving instead of quality of service or values created by the ways in which we serve

antidotes: create Seventh Generation thinking by asking how the actions of the group now will affect people seven generations from now; make sure that any cost/benefit analysis includes all the costs, not just the financial ones, for example the cost in morale, the cost in credibility, the cost in the use of resources; include process goals in your planning, for example make sure that your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do; ask those you work with and for to evaluate your performance

objectivity*

- the belief that there is such a thing as being objective or 'neutral'
- 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 (logical) fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways
- impatience with any thinking that does not appear 'logical'

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

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

One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multi-cultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly multi-cultural organization.

the impact of IWS in our communities

Internalized White Supremacy impacts white people and the dominant white culture in many ways. Some of these include:

Resistance to change

Avoiding conflict

Paternalism / Caretaking

Ignorance and misinformation

Scapegoating / Blaming / Labeling

Self-Righteousness / Anger

Continued oppression

Resistance to acknowledging / correcting past

Idolizing the individual

Defensiveness

Assumption of normalcy / superiority

ladder of empowerment for white people

WHITE ANTI-RACIST ALLY

community of resistance
collective action
taking responsibility / self-righteousness white can do right / especially me
opening up / acknowledgement Houston, we've got a problem
guilt and shame white is not right, I'm bad
denial and defensiveness I am not the problem
be like me white is right and we're all the same
what are you? first contact

I'm normal

INTERNALIZED WHITE SUPREMACY

white people's resistance

Tactics of Resistance

√ from Paul Kivel's *Uprooting Racism*, 1996, pp. 40-46

Tactic	What it is	What it sounds like
Denial	denial of existence of oppression; denial of responsibility for it	Discrimination is a thing of the past. It's a level playing field. It's not my fault; I'm not responsible.
Minimization	playing down the damage	Racism isn't a big problem anymore. It's not that bad.
Blame	justifying oppression, blaming the victims of oppression for it	Look at the way they act. If they weren't so angry . . . Women are too emotional.
Lack of intent	claims the damage is unintentional	I didn't mean it like that. It was only a joke.
It's over now	the oppression was in the past and is no longer an issue	Slavery was over a long time ago. Feminism has gone too far.
Competing victimization	claiming that targets of oppression have so much power that we are threatened	Women really have all the power. We just want our rights too. They're taking away our jobs. White people are under attack.

Sources of Resistance

√ from Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, and Thomas *Educating for a Change*, 1991, p. 134

Our identity and relation to power: we may feel guilt or anxiety for being a member of the dominant group (a man when sexism is the issue; a white person when racism is the issue). We may be afraid to speak out because we'll be seen as a troublemaker and become isolated when we belong to the target group.

Our discomfort with the content and perspective: the implications of what we're learning may be very threatening to us if we belong to the dominant group or may not be critical or threatening enough if we belong to the target group.

Our discomfort with the process: those of us used to doing things a certain way may get impatient or frustrated when the process is unfamiliar, slow, or too 'touchy feely.' We may assume that the way we respond to the process is the way everyone responds to the process, whether or not that is true. Some of us feel we have a 'right' to be included, while others never expect to be fully included.

Our fear about losing: taking in and/or acting on the information presented may mean loss – of family, of friends, of a job. A white person who opens up to how racism is playing out in their family or community may risk losing important relationships if they decide to speak or act. A person of color who decides to work in coalition with white people may risk losing important relationships as a result.

Our fear of critical thinking: many of us tend to hear critical thinking as criticism. For example, the suggestion that we could do better on race issues in our organization is heard as criticism that we're doing a bad job. This can be particularly difficult when we have a lot of personal investment in the organization or community.

Distancing Behaviors

v from Edler's unpublished paper *Distancing behaviors among white groups dealing with racism*

The behavior

The 'where are the others' game

This 'ism' isn't the only problem game

What it is

a demand that members of the oppressed group be present for dominant group members to understand themselves or commit to analysis or action (when we don't demand the presence of poor people or politicians to analyze or act on poverty or policy-making)

the suggestion that there is little reason to concentrate on a particular 'ism' when there are others just as serious

The behavior	What it is
The 'distinguished lecturer' game	a tendency to talk about the problem without taking any action; a competition over who has the best analysis; a concentration by dominant group members on the problems of the target group without any consideration for the problems of the dominant group
The 'instant solution' game	the proposal that 'love' is the solution, or 'changing the schools' is the solution, or a focus on one strategy which makes good sense but remains centered in how things should be rather than how they are
The 'find the racist' game	when one or a few members of the group target another group member for inappropriate comments or ideas, leaving those doing the 'accusing' feeling righteous but actually closing down any opportunity for meaningful discussion
The 'target expert' game	asking those from the target group to answer questions and represent the entire group with their answers
The 'geography' game	claiming the real problems are 'in the South,' or somewhere else; or claiming, for example, that racism isn't a problem for you because there were no people of color in your community growing up (when the schools, government institutions, media, houses of worship, and other institutions in your community support racist thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors regardless of whether people of color are present)

anti-racist organizational development

This information is designed to help you begin to analyze your organization in relationship to your organization's anti-racist vision. This is an evaluation tool. This evaluation tool is designed for organizations that are either all white or which include both white people and people of color (POC).

Because racism is reflected in every institution and organization in the U.S., it is also present in progressive, social change groups. The structures and cultures of non-profits and grassroots organizations reproduce white privilege and racial oppression found in the wider society. Fortunately, organizations, like individuals evolve, change and grow. Groups can transform themselves into anti-racist groups.

We are presenting four stages of organizational development. All organizations have characteristics from each of the stages. No organization fits any stage precisely, although you will find that one stage may be dominant. Whatever the dominant characteristics of your organization, it is impossible for an organization at the All White Club stage to move directly into becoming an Anti-Racist Organization. Any transition requires moving through the elements of one stage to the next.

the All White Club

All White Clubs are non-profits that, without trying, find themselves with an all white organization. These are not groups that have intentionally excluded people of color (POC). In fact, many times they have developed recruitment plans to get more POC involved in their group. However, when POC join the group, they are essentially asked to fit into the existing culture. Many leave after a frustrating period of trying to be heard. After years of trying, the Club cannot figure out why they do not have more POC in their group; they begin to blame POC for not being interested in the group's important issue or work, or they just give up. They do not understand that without analyzing and changing the organizational culture, norms, and power relations, they will always be an all white club. While they are good people, they have no analysis of racism or of power and no accountability to POC or communities of color.

The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization

The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization is committed to eliminating discrimination in hiring and promotions. The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization sets clear affirmative action goals, clear and unambiguous job qualifications and criteria, a percentage of POC who need to be in a candidate pool for a new job, and a bias-reduced interview process. Staff and board are encouraged to reduce and/or eliminate their prejudice and the organization may conduct prejudice reduction workshops toward this end. There may be one or two POC in leadership positions. For POC, coming into the 'Token' Organization feels like little more than tokenism. The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization is still basically a white club except it now includes structural and legal means to bring people of color in.

The Multi-Cultural Organization

The Multi-Cultural Organization reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, products or services, and its politics. It actively recruits and welcomes POC and celebrates having a diverse staff and board. It is committed to reducing prejudice within the group and offers programs that help members learn more about the diverse cultures that make up the organization. White people in the organization tend to feel good about the commitment to diversity. Like the previous two, however, POC are still asked to join the dominant culture and fit in.

The Anti-Racist Organization

Based on an analysis of the history of racism and power in this country, this organization supports the development of anti-racist white allies and empowered people of color through the organization's culture, norms, policies and procedures.

The Anti-Racist Organization integrates this commitment into the program, helping white people work together and challenge each other around issues of racism, share power with POC, take leadership from and be accountable to POC, feel comfortable with being uncomfortable while understanding that we are all learning all the time. The Anti-Racist Organization helps POC become more empowered through taking leadership, sharing in the power, transforming the organizational norms and culture, challenging white allies and other POC, sharing in decisions about how the organization's money and resources will be

spent, what work gets done as well as how it gets done, the setting of priorities, and allows POC to make the same mistakes as white people. The organization does this by forming white and POC caucuses, providing training and encouraging discussions about racism, white privilege, power, and accountability, setting clear standards for inclusion at all levels of the organization, reviewing the mission, vision, policies, procedures, board agreements, etc. to insure that the commitment to end racism is a consistent theme, helping people to understand the links between the oppressions, and devoting organizational time and resources to building relationships across race and other barriers.

characteristics of the All White Club

- decisions:** made by white people (often men);
made in private in ways that people can't see or really know
- budget:** developed, controlled, and understood by (one or two) white people (often men)
- money from:** select foundations, wealthy or middle-class college-educated white donors, often a small number of very large donors
- power and pay:** white people in decision-making positions, paid very well; people of color (and/or women) in administrative or service positions paying low wages, few if any benefits, and little job security; people at bottom have very little power
- accountability to:** funders, a few white people on board or staff
- culture:** top down, paternalistic, authoritarian, often secretive; people act friendly with each other (nicely, nicely); emphasis on getting things done efficiently, success measured by how much is accomplished; little if any value placed on teamwork or quality of relationships; little if any attention paid to process, or how work gets done; training is not available, if skills do not meet the organization's norm, people are fired or moved out of the organization; no discussion of power analysis or oppression issues, conflict is avoided at all costs, people who raise issues that make people uncomfortable are considered troublemakers or hard to work with; leaders assume "we are all the same"; very suspicious/uncomfortable/accusatory when racism is named
- located:** in white community; decorations reflect a predominantly white culture
- members:** white people, with token number of POC if any; members have no real decision-making power
- programs:** little or no political analysis about problem; not about building power, about helping with no power analysis; designed to help people who have little or no participation in the decision-making; emphasis is on serving or "helping" those in need
- people of color:** don't stay; example: the photo taken each year of people in the organization shows one person of color and that person is always changing, while the white staff remain pretty much the same

questions: How do you know your organization (if it is at this stage) is ready to bring in people of color? Will people of color have a successful and empowering experience in your organization? How do you know? What have you done to prepare?

characteristics of the Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization

decisions:	made by white people; decisions made in private and often in unclear ways
budget:	developed, controlled, and understood by (one or two) white people
money from:	foundations; wealthy or middle-class college-educated white donors
power and pay:	white people in decision-making positions are paid relatively well; people of color (and/or women) in administrative or service positions that pay less well; few, if any benefits for anyone; sometimes one or two People of Color in token positions of power, with high turnover or low levels of real authority; people at bottom have no power, not included in decision-making
accountable to:	funders and board or staff
culture:	still top down, although inclusivity is stressed; those in power assume their standards and ways of doing things are neutral and most desirable (and form the basis for what is considered "qualified"); emphasis on getting things done efficiently, usually at the expense of inclusive process; people expected to be highly motivated "self-starters" requiring little supervision; some training may be provided; no power analysis, conflict avoided, emphasis on everyone "getting along"; any discussion of race limited to prejudice reduction; those in power assume "we are all the same"; white people in organization unaware of privilege
located:	in white community; decorations reflect some cultural diversity
members:	white people and people of color, with only a token ability to participate in decision-making; people of color are only aware of the organization because it is providing a direct service and see it as another government agency
programs:	intent is to be inclusive, no or very little analysis about root causes of issues/problems; people in programs appreciated until they speak out or organize for power; designed to help low-income people who have little or no participation in the decision-making; little value around power sharing
people of color:	don't stay; although there may be more people of color in this organization than in the all white club, they still do not stay long,

while the white staff tend to remain

questions: How do you know your organization (if it is at this stage) is ready to bring in people of color? In other words, will people of color have a successful and empowering experience in your organization? How do you know? What have you done to prepare?

characteristics of the Multicultural Organization

- decisions:** made by diverse group of board and staff, with token attempts to involve those targeted by mission in decision-making
- budget:** developed, controlled, and understood by (one or two) white people
- money from:** foundations, wealthy or middle-class college-educated people, mostly white, with some donations from POC and lower-income people
- power and pay:** white people in decision-making positions at the top of the pay scale; people of color (and/or women) in administrative or service positions at a lower pay scale; sometimes one or two people of color in positions of power, particularly if their work style emulates those of white people in power positions; training to upgrade skills is offered; people of color may not be at equal levels of power with white people in the organization, but the level of respect is present
- accountable to:** funders, board and staff, with token attempts to report to those targeted by mission
- culture:** organization looks inclusive with a visibly diverse board and staff; actively celebrates diversity; focuses on reducing prejudice but is uncomfortable naming racism; continues to assume dominant culture ways of doing things most desirable; assumes a level playing field; emphasizes belief in equality but still no power analysis; workaholicism desired and rewarded; still uncomfortable with conflict
- location:** physically accessible to people of color; decorations reflect a commitment to multi-culturalism
- members:** from diverse communities and populations; token encouragement to participate in decision-making
- programs:** designed to build power until people speak up and out; some attempt to understand issue/problem in relation to big picture; some participation by those served in program planning; constituency may have only token representation in the organization
- people of color:** are found at all levels in program and administrative positions. POC on the staff and board often feel included and valued in this

organization.

characteristics of the Anti-Racist Organization

- decisions:** made by diverse group; people of color hold power and are in significant leadership positions; questions about power and who makes decisions are lifted out and pro-actively answered so that everyone in the organization understands how power is distributed and how decisions are made
- budget:** developed, controlled, and understood by people of color as well as white people at all levels of the organization
- money:** comes from the community most affected by the problem(s) being addressed and is supplemented by foundation grants and donations from allies (those concerned but not directly affected)
- power and pay:** people of color in decision-making positions that pay a decent wage comparable to the wages of white people in the organization; administrative and service positions perceived as stepping stone to positions of more power (if desired) and/or these positions reflect some decision-making power and authority; training and other mentoring help provided to those without necessary skills; resources and time devoted to anti-racism training; use of caucuses to deepen understanding of how race may be playing out in organization and to develop vision, goals; leaders are involving people in the organization in thinking about how to distribute power in the organization and how the structure of the organization reinforces the mission, goals, and values of the organization
- accountable to:** communities targeted in mission
- culture:** organization actively recruits and mentors people of color; celebrates diversity, and has a power analysis about racism and other oppression issues; a diversity of work styles encouraged with active reflection about balancing what gets done with how it gets done; a willingness to name racism and address conflict; resources devoted to developing shared goals, teamwork, and sharing skills and knowledge (mentoring)
- location:** physically accessible to community served; decorations reflect a commitment to multi-culturalism and power sharing
- members:** from range of communities targeted by mission; encouraged to participate in decision-making; provided with training to enhance their skills and abilities to be successful in the organization and

their communities

programs:

designed to build and share power; designed to help people analyze and address root causes; people most affected by issues/problems centrally involved in program planning; opportunities for constituents to move into leadership roles in the organization

S T A G E S

of anti-racist organizational development

Once you've read about the characteristics of the different stages of development for organizations, assign a percentage to each stage according to the percentage you think your organization is in that stage. If you are doing this in a group, we recommend that each member of the group do it on their own first. Each person can then share their percentages with the group, along with their reasons for why they assigned the percentages they did. This discussion can lead to some rich discoveries about the organization. Keep in mind that the impressions of those people with less direct experience in the organization can be just as valuable as the impressions of those who work there day to day.

My organization's state of development is:

The Club _____ %

The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization _____ %

The Multicultural Organization _____ %

The Anti-Racist or Liberation Organization _____ %

My organization's dominant stage is _____.

Things I noticed:

Some goals for the future in terms of our organization's anti-racist development might include:

evaluating your organization

Whatever the make-up or leadership of your organization, you will need to evaluate your organization to:

- understand your organization's strengths and weaknesses and
- set realistic and meaningful goals for moving the organization toward becoming a strong Anti-Racist Organization.

Whatever evaluation tool you use, you should be assessing the following:

- the **vision** and/or level of consciousness about the organization's desire to be a social change organization/anti-racist organization
- the organization's **culture**: is it sustainable, does it honor the organization's values, is it truly inclusive? By culture, we mean the organization's values, beliefs, norms, and standards. This should include an assessment of what the organization says about its values, beliefs, norms, and standards and what the reality is in regards to values, beliefs, norms, and standards.
- the organization's **structure**:
 - the policies and procedures
 - power, accountability, and decision-making practices
- **fundraising** and **budget**: where does the money come from and who understands where the money is going? who does the organization feel most accountable to?
- external **program** work, including
 - degree of participation by people targeted or served in the program's planning and development
 - degree to which program builds people's leadership and power
 - quality of relationships created through program work
 - degree to which program deepens people's understanding of problem (political analysis)
 - degree to which issues, strategies, and tactics address racism and/or build strong anti-racist agenda
- **board** effectiveness and health
 - including communication methods and effectiveness
- **staff** effectiveness and health
 - quality of supervision

- communication methods and effectiveness

- perception by and **accountability** to community targeted in mission
- **understanding of root causes** of problems organization is set up to address
- understanding of how your organization's work **connects to racism**

These questions are designed to help your organization assess the characteristics listed on the previous page.

building a strong social change organization

EVALUATING YOUR ORGANIZATION 1

1. What is the level of desire to be a social change organization?
Who in the organization cares about it and what power do they have?
Do people understand what this means for the organization?
2. Who makes the decisions in the organization?
On paper? In reality?
How well do people understand how decisions get made?
Are people affected by the decisions involved in the decisions?
Do people with less power in the organization have any say in decisions?
3. Who develops the budget?
Who understands the budget?
4. Where does your organization's money come from?
Who raises the money?
Who knows where the money comes from?
How dependent is the organization on one or two people for raising money?
5. Who gets paid (in other words, who staffs the organization)?
How are these people chosen?
How much are they paid?
Who gets what kinds of benefits?
6. Who is the organization accountable to?
On paper? In reality?

7. What is the culture of the organization?

What are the values, stated or unstated? Do people in leadership positions support analysis of power and oppression issues?

8. Where is the organization physically located?

How accessible is it physically and psychologically to communities of color, to women, to gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender people, to low-income people, to less than college-educated people, to people with disabilities?

9. What is the health and effectiveness of the board?

- Do they understand their roles and responsibilities?
- Do they have real power in making things happen in the organization?
- Do they facilitate the work of the organization?
- Is there good communication among board members and between board and staff?

10. What is the health and effectiveness of the staff?

- Are people clear about their roles and responsibilities?
- Is there good communication among the staff?
- Are there clear lines of supervision and is supervision leading to empowerment and/or facilitating staff development?
- Are people clear about their own skill development?
- Are people clear about what is expected of them?
- Are people getting regular, positive, and constructive feedback about their job performance?

11. Who are the members (volunteers, etc.)?

What power do they have, if any? On paper, in reality?

In other words, what power do they use to influence the organization?

12. What is the cost to people of color for being in your organization (at all levels)?

- to women?
- to gay men/lesbians/bisexuals/transgender individuals?
- to low-income people?
- to people with less than a college education?
- to people with disabilities?

13. What is level of awareness of white privilege and power among white people in your organization?

- among men, heterosexuals, middle-class and wealthy people, college-educated people, to people who currently experience no disability?

14. What's the reputation of the organization in the African-American

community? in the Latino community? in other communities of color? in the white community? How do you know?

15. Who are the organization's programs for?
 - How involved are these people in the organization's planning and decision-making?
 - How well do these programs build power?
 - How well do these programs deepen people's understanding of the problem?
 - How well do these programs build relationships?

16. Does your organization have a clear vision for the future?
If so, who knows what it is?

17. What kind of training is offered for people trying to deal with oppression issues?

18. Do people of color and white people answer these questions the same?
 - Do men and women?
 - gay and straight people?
 - low-income and middle-income/wealthy people?
 - college-educated and less than college-educated people?
 - people with disabilities and people currently experiencing no disability?
 - How do you know?

19. Does your organization make money off of POC communities (in other words, do you write grant proposals to fund work you are going to do to help POC communities)?
Do these communities know about these funding proposals and do they have any say in how the money is spent?

20. Do people in your organization have a clear and unified understanding of the root causes of the problems your organization is set up to address?

21. Do people have a clear understanding of how your organization's work connects to racism?

building a strong social change organization

EVALUATING YOUR ORGANIZATION 2

These questions should help you begin to assess your organization in relationship to the 4 descriptors of institutional racism.

Are people of color in your organization:

- excluded
- exploited
- underserved
- oppressed?

How are people of color in your organization:

- excluded
- exploited
- underserved
- oppressed?

How do you know? (particularly if you answer 'no' to any of the questions)?

Do people of color and white people in your organization answer these questions the same?

building a strong social change organization

EVALUATING YOUR ORGANIZATION 3

moving towards a

Multicultural Organization and Workplace

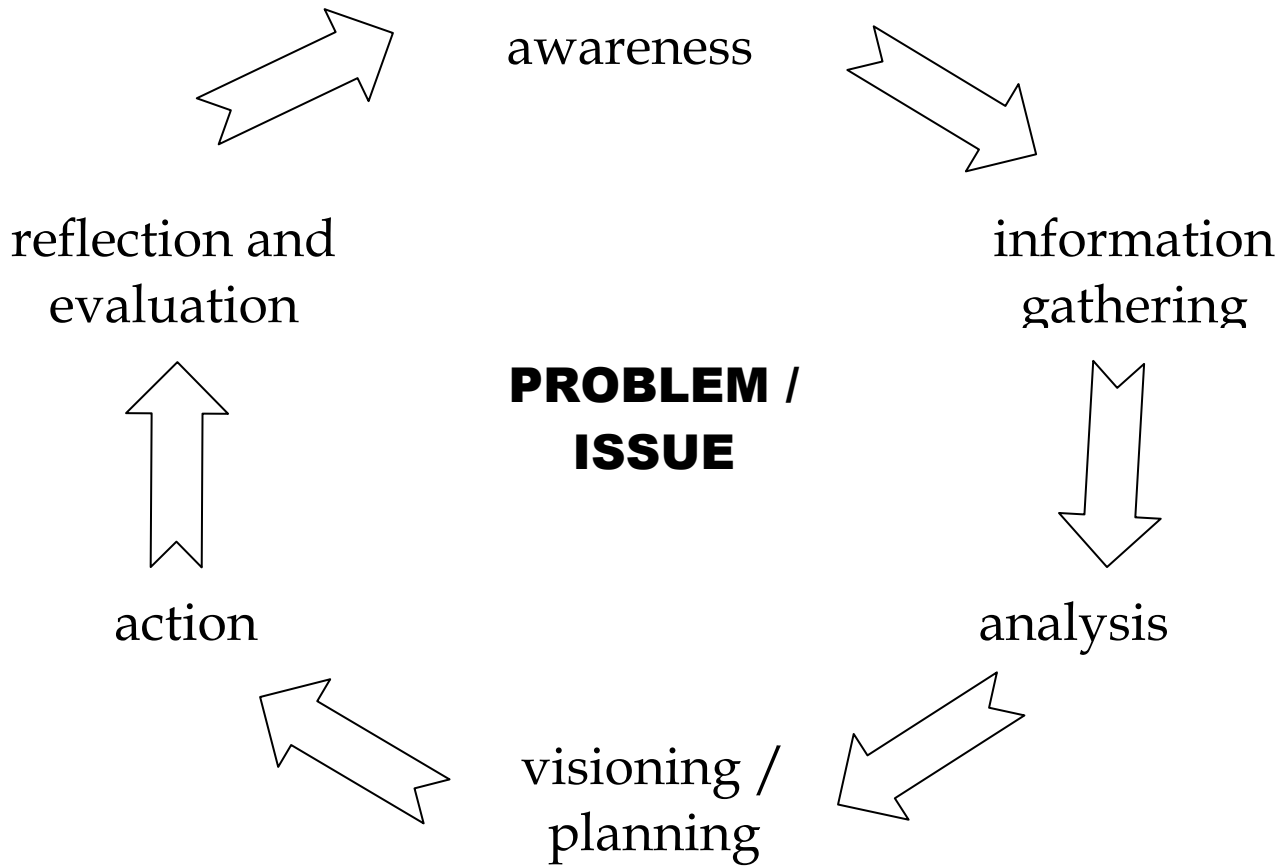
✓ adapted and enlarged by Andrea Ayvazian from original work by Bailey Jackson

- What is the ethnic background / racial make-up of the staff?
- If you drew an organizational chart showing the hierarchy that exists, where are the white women, the people of color, the out gay men or lesbians, the people with disabilities, etc.?
- What is the ethnic background / racial make-up of the Board of Directors?
- Does the organization follow the Christian calendar? (Are Christian holidays observed as holidays for everyone?)
- Are same-sex partners included on the health plan?
- What is the profile of the person(s) in top leadership role(s)? Has it changes in the last five, ten, fifteen, twenty years?
- Who in the organization makes the most money? Who makes the least?
- Is the workplace fully wheelchair accessible?
- Are there clear affirmative action goals for the organization? Does everyone in the organization know these goals?
- Are there clear affirmative action guidelines to follow when conducting a search for a position?
- Where/how/from whom is money raised?
- Are publications in more than one language?
- Are the signs around the workplace in more than one language?
- Who has access to what forms of technology?
- What images decorate the space?

- What magazines are placed in public meeting spaces and/or in the waiting area?
- What types of foods are served at group gatherings?
- Who considers the 'fun' days (group picnics, parties, dinners, etc.) fun?
- What is the retention rate for people of color in the organization?
- Do the white people in the organization value working in a diverse setting? How is this evident?
- Is there a safe forum for people to listen to how they may have unknowingly excluded or slighted their colleagues (white women, gay men and lesbians, men and women of color, etc.)?
- Has anyone in the organization ever been penalized in any way for their racist or sexist behavior? Has anyone ever been rewarded in any way for their anti-racist or anti-sexist behavior?
- Is there a commitment to ongoing discussion and/or training on issues of oppression and empowerment on the staff level?
- Is there a commitment to ongoing discussion and/or training on issues of oppression and empowerment on the Board level?
- Who receives the most air time in meetings? Who seems to be the quietest in meetings?
- Have any people of color ever been interviewed by an all-white search committee? Have any women ever been interviewed by an all-male search committee?
- Do any men in the organization have a woman as their supervisor? Do any white people have a person of color as their supervisor?
- How is the agenda set for staff meetings?
- Are flexible work hours available?
- What support is given for parents?
- What is the maternity leave policy? Is it identical for all women in the organization?

- What is the paternity leave policy?
- Is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a holiday?
- Who travels for the organization? Who is the 'face to the wider world' for the organization?
- What is the organization's policy for handling grievances?

effective problem solving



change team

The role of the change team is:

1. to **lead and organize the process** towards becoming an anti-racist social change organization
 - help move people into actively supporting (or at least avoid resisting) the changes necessary to move the organization towards that vision
 - help to resolve conflict
 - avoid becoming 'morality police' by including others in the work of the change team
2. to lead and organize a process to **evaluate** the organization as it is now
3. to lead a process to help the organization **vision** what it would look like as an anti-racist social change organization
4. lead to process to establish **specific, clear, and meaningful goals** for reaching the vision
5. **build community** and **move the organization to collective action**
 - help the organization think about how to integrate and/or educate those in the organization who have not been through a DR training
 - be in open communication with all members of the organization
6. insure the integration of the work of the change team with program work
7. **think like an organizer** in helping the organization move toward its goals
 - work with members of the organization to think strategically about how to reach the goals of the organization

caucuses

The role of caucuses is:

1. to provide **healing** and **support**
2. to **study** and **strategize**
3. to **resolve conflict** and **solve problems collectively**
4. to **plan, discuss, debate, draft recommendations for the change team** in order to help the organization move towards its goals of building an anti-racist social change organization

Note: People must go through a Dismantling Racism training to be eligible for joining the change team; everyone is invited to participate in the caucuses. If people come to the caucuses who have not participated in a workshop, then those leading the caucus need to be thoughtful about how to bring those people into the discussion (keep in mind they may not share the language, analysis, or ways of thinking of those who have been through a workshop)

How a Movement is Built

Adapted from "Divided no More: A Movement Approach to Education Reform" by Parker Palmer

Movements for social change emerge when:

Individuals refuse to act outwardly in contradiction to something they know to be true inwardly.

Groups emerge when these individuals find each other, begin to build community, and spread the word.

Collective Action happens when the group begins to translate individual problems into public organizing issues that address the root cause of the issue.

Movement Mentality

(thinking like an organizer)

Adapted from "Divided no More: A Movement Approach to Education Reform" by Parker Palmer

Our work within organizations must be approached as movement building work. Organizers, working to create organizational change with a movement mentality, must:

remember, resistance is only the place where things begin,

know that opposition merely validates the idea that change must come,

find sources of countervailing power outside of the organizational Structure,

nurture that power,

work together to translate individual problems into broader organizing issues,

create alternative rewards to sustain energy for working toward your vision,

work from a power, rather than a victim, analysis.

change team

Job Description

v adapted from James Williams, Grassroots Leadership's Barriers and Bridges program

Change team members are people who:

- really want to see positive change in the organization and/or community;
- bring enthusiasm and commitment to the process (they are role models and cheerleaders);
- have a certain degree of skill in helping make change happen;
- have some degree of leadership in their organization or community;
- are willing to see themselves as change agents;
- but understand that they can't do it alone. They must build a group or organization of people who will take over leadership of the process and in turn develop new leaders.

Their job is to develop a group of people who will work together to reach their goals. This involves working with others to:

- assess the present situation, define problems, and set goals for solving them;
- identify the values the group or organization brings to this work, i.e. making sure people are clear about how they want to be with each other as they work toward these goals;
- identify ways the group can reach out to new people, share power and develop new leadership, receive people as they are into the group, help people grow in their awareness of the issues, empower people, and get the work done;
- develop a strategy to accomplish their goals;
- insure that the strategy is carried out;
- evaluate and make changes in the strategy as needed.
- make sure that all contributions are appreciated and that everyone has a chance to grow and change throughout the process.

change team

Action Steps

v adapted by Grassroots Leadership's Barriers and Bridges program
from Judy H. Katz, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training*.

1. Identify the problem that you want to address. Who else sees this as a problem? Is it widely felt? The answers to these questions will give you an idea of how difficult or challenging it will be to make changes (the fewer people who see it as a challenge, the harder it will be to take it on).
2. Identify who needs to be involved in helping to shape the evaluation and help carry it out. Involve a larger group whose participation will help them understand the process and make it less threatening. Remember that some people will equate evaluation with criticism of the organization and as a result will resist the evaluation process. Think about whether you need to engage those people or work around them. This will depend on how much power and influence they have to affect the process.
3. State the specific goal or goals that will move your organization toward solving the problem. These goals need to be tangible. In other words, 'eliminate racism' is not a tangible goal while 'get the board to adopt by-laws specifying percentages based on race, gender, income, sexual identity, etc.' is. Talk about how the goal (or goals) is (are) in line with your organization's values and mission.
4. Identify who needs to be involved in helping to shape these goals. Avoid setting the goals by yourself; involve a larger group whose participation in setting the goals will raise their stake in achieving them.
5. Identify who in the organization shares a desire to reach these goals. How much power do they have to influence decision-makers (answer to number 2) in the organization? What is their self-interest?
6. Identify who in the organization is threatened by or opposed to these goals. How much power do they have to influence decision-makers (answer to number 2) in the organization? What is their self-interest?
7. Identify any additional risks or barriers you face.

8. Identify the specific strategy steps the change team and/or the organization will take to meet the goals. How will you involve allies and address challenges from those who are threatened or opposed? How will you include those who might otherwise oppose you. Who should be recruited onto the change team? Who will coordinate the efforts? When and how will people meet to work on these goals? Develop a timeline.

9. Build in evaluation and reflection. At what points will you revise your strategy? How will you build change team morale and relationships? How will you make sure the work of the change team is integrated into the organization (as opposed to becoming a 'fringe' or 'clique' activity)?

change agent dilemmas

1. The 'what about me?' syndrome

The change agent wants to work to create change, but s/he also feels her/his own unmet needs; a desire to be at the center.

2. The inclusion dilemma

The change agent struggles with the issue of how to include as many people as possible in the different stage of the change process.

3. Cognitive dissonance

The change agent experiences conflict between what s/he considers 'normal' and new information. For example, religious teaching that homosexuality is a sin vs. the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender liberation movement.

4. Fear

The fear of the dominant group: what will I lose? The fear of the target group: what will I lose? i.e. the fear that taking action will result in the loss of friends.

5. Where to start

Requires careful organizational analysis of who wants to work with the change agent and who feels threatened and what power each or all of these people have in the organization to enable or stop change efforts.

6. Resistance to change

People's resistance to change can come out as: "People here are satisfied (or happy)." "Don't be a troublemaker." "Who are you to suggest these changes?" "We'd like to change, but . . . it costs too much, it's hopeless, nothing will ever be different." "The alumni (or whatever group) won't like the change."

7. How far is this going to go?

Feelings that some change is all right but let's not go too far, particularly when those with power feel threatened or those who have internalized their experience are fearful of conflict that change might bring.

8. Despair

The change agent's own sense of discouragement and despair when it becomes clear that many in the organization don't really want things to change.

9. Targeting

The change agent is targeted for asking questions or taking action that 'rocks the boat.'

10. The "I have to do it myself" syndrome

The change agent feels all the responsibility for change rests on her or his shoulders and has a hard time delegating or letting other people get involved in a meaningful way.

change team checklist

v adapted from Andrea Ayvazian: Dismantling Racism: Workbook for Social Change Groups published by the Peace Development Fund.

Use this checklist about once every two or three months to make sure your change team is staying on track:

1. When did the change team last meet? Do you have plans to meet in the future?
2. Who is leading the change team? Is there someone who takes responsibility for making sure the team is meeting and getting work done? Has this responsibility changed hands, or has one person pretty much been responsible? How is this leadership pattern good or bad for the change team?
3. How would you describe the morale of the change team?
4. What are some of the strengths of the change team?
5. Where is the change team getting stuck?
6. Is the change team meeting resistance from others in the organization or community? If so, why and what can you do about it? When you look at your reasons, are you stuck in blaming others, in other words are you requiring other people to change before anything can get done? Or are you taking responsibility for addressing the problems that come up?
7. Is the change team finding the kind of support it needs in the organization or community? If not, why not and what can you do about it? Are you truly encouraging new people into the organization or community? Are you making them welcome and giving them a chance to grow?
8. Are you making time in your meetings for personal sharing and reflection? Or are your meetings all business and no fun?
9. Are you accomplishing your goals? If so, are you taking time to pat yourselves on the back and enjoy your success? If not, are you taking time to rethink your strategies?

organizational vaccination

v adapted from Joan Olsson, Cultural Bridges

Clarity from the beginning of any project or plan will prevent, or at least, minimize misunderstandings, conflicts, and crises. Spend the time necessary to vaccinate your organization by developing:

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- written, specific agreements which all parties understand and agree to

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

- regular, dependable, accessible
- 'lines' of communication that everyone understands

CLEAR DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

- clarity about how decisions are made (consensus, voting, etc.)
- clarity about who is responsible for making decisions (who decides what?)

CLEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

- specific and measurable goals and timelines
- meaningful goals which people share with enthusiasm
- clear accountability (who reports to whom?)

CLIMATE OF INCLUSION

- proactive and genuinely 'affirmative' actions and attitudes
- understanding of organizational need for diversity and power-sharing
- avoidance of 'cliques' or insider social groupings

REGULAR EVALUATION

- of both program and individuals
- evaluate strengths as well as weaknesses
- a learning environment (we learn from our mistakes)

CONFLICT RESOLUTION and GRIEVANCE PROCESSES

- agreed upon before the crisis

affirmative action

Considerations

v Considerations are from Andrea Ayvazian, based on Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman model of multicultural organizational development

When striving to become an Affirmative Action Organization, the following general guidelines need to be considered:

- The organization needs to develop clear, specific, and well-publicized affirmative action goals (numerical goals with a time-line).
- Members of a search committee need to be well briefed as to their role and responsibilities when beginning a job search. All members of a search committee need to understand the difference between 'process' and 'goal' affirmative action.
- Members of a search committee need to be given support and release time to engage in active recruitment for candidates of color.
- Search committees should write clear, objective, and precise criteria for a job opening. Later in the process, it will be important for candidates to be compared to the criteria, not to each other.
- Search committees may want to set a figure (i.e. 10%) to represent the minimum number of people of color in the overall candidate pool that is acceptable before the committee will proceed with the interviewing process.
- Search committees should be briefed about bias-reduced interviewing.
- Search committees need to know to whom in the organization they are accountable. They need to document every step of the process so they can discuss their final decision in light of the organization's affirmative action goals.

Goal vs. Process Affirmative Action

According to John Dovidio (Colgate University) and Samuel Gaertner (University of Delaware), “goal” and “process” affirmative action are two distinctly different approaches to the task of achieving equity in job searches and in the overall hiring process.

Process Affirmative Action focuses on making the process “fair” but does not focus on any specific outcome. Process Affirmative Action often involves considerable discussion of affirmative action issues but there is no stated numerical goal that the organization as a whole is striving to meet.

Process Affirmative Action often results in the following:

- white people are often hired,
- search committee members report that the process was fair,
- search committee members report high satisfaction with the overall process (the process is comfortable and popular).

Goal Affirmative Action focuses on a specific outcome. Not only is the outcome clearly stated, but precise steps are taken to enhance the likelihood that this outcome will be achieved. For example, a search committee that understands Goal Affirmative Action might decide that the organization should try to have 20% staff of color by a certain time (a twelve month period, or a two year period; the time period is specified). This would be a well-publicized organizational goal. At the close of the hiring process, the search committee would be accountable to the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, or some internal committee to explain their hiring process and their final decision in light of the organization’s affirmative action goals.

Goal Affirmative Action often results in the following:

- people of color are often hired,
- search committee members struggle over the issue of fairness,
- search committee members report low satisfaction with the overall process (the process is uncomfortable and unpopular).

bias-reduced interviewing

Over the years, numerous research studies have shown that bias creeps into the job interview process even when members of a search committee claim they bring no prejudices to the process. We all have prejudices, biases, and stereotypes in our mental files, and we carry this (mis)information with us all the time. Therefore, we need to plan the job interview process to make it as fair and unbiased as possible, recognizing that it will never be completely bias-free.

Creating a bias-reduced interview for a job candidate means removing the friendly small-talk that often comes with an interview. It means making the experience as similar from one candidate to the next as possible. Bias-reduced interviewing attempts to remove any hidden advantage a candidate may have because she/he is white, male, heterosexual, Christian, middle-class, or able-bodied.

The following steps can help create a bias-reduced interview process. However, these steps should only follow discussions about bias and bias reduction by the search committee, so everyone is clear about the role of bias in the interview process and the ways in which the committee is planning to reduce bias as a factor.

Steps for reducing bias:

1. Avoid having a search committee of all one kind of person. Be especially careful to avoid having an all white search committee interview a candidate of color or an all-male search committee interview a woman.
2. Plan the interview questions prior to the interview. Write them out. These scripted questions should then be asked in the same order by the same people each time someone is interviewed. If an important question comes up in the third or fourth interview and the candidate proceeds to respond to that question, the other candidates who have already been interviewed need to be called by the chair of the search committee and asked the same question with his/her responses record (taped or in notes) for the other search committee members to review.
3. Search committee members need to be clear, as do all candidates, that there should be no contact between the candidate and any members of the search committee other than during the interview.
4. Every interview needs to be conducted for the same length of time.

organizational inventory

v adapted from work done by Andrea Ayzavian, Beverly Daniel Tatum, James Edler, and Judy H. Katz

The intent of this exercise is to focus the group's attention on some straightforward and concrete steps that can be taken by an organization to promote our agenda of dismantling racism. Indicate, in the appropriate column, whether the organization as a whole has taken action on the items listed below:

yes no

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| v | v | The staff, board, and core volunteers have participated in some form of dismantling racism workshop. |
| v | v | The organization has an ongoing change team focusing on issues of dismantling racism and guiding the process for the group. |
| v | v | Focused work on dismantling racism is part of the work of the organization, not an extra task some staff add on to their workload. |
| v | v | The organization has or is building a (modest) library of resources on racism/racial justice; staff and board members are encouraged to borrow books and other literature. |
| v | v | The organization has a vision, mission, and/or values statement which includes a clear pledge to work toward the dismantling of all forms of oppression. |
| v | v | The organization supports work time being used for separate caucuses to meet - white people to work on their racism and internalized white supremacy, people of color to work on internalized oppression and issues of empowerment, both groups to work toward building an anti-racist organization. |
| v | v | In accordance with the community you serve, signs around the office are in two (or more) languages. |
| v | v | In accordance with the community you serve, the organization's newsletter or publications are in two (or more) languages. |
| v | v | When working with people who speak a language other than |

English, interpretation is integrated into the speaking and writing of the organization and not seen as an 'extra.'

yes no

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| v | v | The organization has sought out vendors and businesses from the community being served and/or that demonstrate a commitment to issues of diversity. |
| v | v | The organization as a whole as examined what holidays are celebrated and how, what days the office is open and closed, to insure that diverse cultures and traditions are acknowledged and respected. |
| v | v | The organization's expense budget reflects the group's commitment to combating racism by showing money devoted to staff attending workshops, for the purchase of books, the rental of films, etc. |
| v | v | The physical space the organization occupies reflects a commitment to diversity - in terms of posters, art work, decorations, etc., and the office is wheelchair accessible. |
| v | v | The organization has made a public statement that it is committed to working on issues of dismantling racism on an ongoing basis - even when struggling over these issues is tough, unfashionable, or demands risk-taking. |
| v | v | People with power in the organization have demonstrated an ability to share power, change the ways in which power has been used in the past, and step back or down when appropriate or necessary. |
| v | v | People with less power in the organization have demonstrated an ability to work together to make strategic and constructive changes in the organization's culture, policies, and practices. |
| v | v | The organization sees itself as a model for other organizations and is open about its process of struggle and change. |

barriers and bridges principles

These principles were developed by Grassroots Leadership's (Charlotte, NC) Barriers and Bridges program, a precursor and contributor to the Dismantling Racism process for which this workbook is designed. These principles speak to those assumptions and values which ground dismantling racism work.

1. We need an analysis of how oppression works. This is not simply about reducing prejudice. This is about radically changing the way we do things, about redistributing power.
2. There is a difference between appreciating diversity and recognizing oppression and abuse of power.
3. To build multi-cultural organizations, we have to build cross-cultural relationships one-on-one.
4. In order to do that, we have to be willing to do personal work, learn more about who we are, and change.
5. On the other hand, we can't build multi-cultural organizations alone; we have to build a strong team of people committed to the same goal.
6. We must be open to doing things differently, sometimes radically so, than we've done them in the past. We may have to redefine the very things we thought were basic.
7. We need to learn that points of resistance, both within ourselves and as exhibited by others, are the sources of greatest learning. We must recognize discomfort as a signal for learning rather than an excuse for withdrawal or defensiveness.
8. We need to acknowledge that we get out of this process what we put in. We must be open to learning even if it is not packaged in ways that we expect or in ways with which we feel comfortable. We must be actively engaged in the learning process.
9. In this work we must learn to seek to understand before turning to judgement. At the same time, we can expect, and we deserve, appropriate, loving, and just behavior.
10. Change is often experienced by those in power as moving too quickly and by those with less power as moving too slowly. Change does not need to be slow, but often is.

giving feedback

v adapted from Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, and Thomas,
Educating for a Change, 1991, Toronto, Ontario: Between the Lines, pp. 130-131

Critical feedback is about taking and offering a shared responsibility for learning for the whole group – what worked, what didn't, how the problem could have been approached in other ways. Critical feedback is not about judging skills, knowledge, and understanding or about hurting feelings. Our habit is to say what we like publicly and what we dislike privately and to someone else. This makes it very difficult to learn from our experience and mistakes. It also creates a climate of distrust. Critical feedback is a tool, which should be used strategically. Because we work in organizations that must think critically, we sometimes have difficulty knowing when critical thinking should be used and when it becomes important to offer support, regardless of the circumstances. Approval and affirmation are as important as criticism; both should be offered at appropriate times.

To give constructive feedback:

- **talk in the first person and avoid generalizing** – “I felt . . .” or “When I heard you say . . . , I had this reaction” show that you are speaking for yourself and avoiding general or global conclusions.
- **be specific.** Focus on the particular action or statement. Avoid saying things like “You always . . .” or “You keep on . . .” and give a specific incident or example.
- **challenge the idea or action, not the person.** Stick to the actions or behaviors that a person can do something about.
- **combine recognition of what worked with a challenge to improve.** Be as specific as possible about what worked and speak to the reasons it worked.
- **ask questions to clarify or probe the reasons.** Assume that people have a reason for what they do, and ask them to explain it so you can give more credible feedback.

- **identify the bridges.** It helps to acknowledge when you act or think in a similar way, saying things such as “I know that when I am in this situation, I tend to . . .” in a way that reminds the person that you’re on the same side. You may want to bridge by acknowledging differences – “I know my experience as a man is different, but it still may be useful to note that . . .” It can help to acknowledge that you’ve gotten stuck or had a similar problem and the issue at hand is helping you to reflect on what to do as a facilitator.

- **wherever possible, make specific suggestions for alternative approaches.** Questions like “Have you considered . . .” or “What would happen if we tried . . .” open up possibilities. Using ‘we’ suggests this issue is of interest to the whole group. Encourage a range of solutions to make the point there is more than one way to do it.

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