

**THE CRITICAL LIBERATION OF
WHITE WOMEN:**

WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

White Privilege Conference

WPC 10

Memphis, TN

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Too often white women do not effectively partner and build coalitions in their work to dismantle racism and other forms of oppression. The dynamics of Internalized Dominance and Internalized Subordination result in unnecessary competition and conflict ~ wasting energy that could be directed to creating Liberation and social justice. In this highly interactive session participants will explore the current behaviors and attitudes of white women that create barriers to synergistic collaboration and identify the components of a critical liberation practice where they intentionally create partnerships that consistently model the core elements of social justice that they espouse in their work. Facilitators will provide a tool to identify the components of a critical liberation practice for white women for participants to expand and build upon. They will leave having identified a learning partner to promote accountability and continued learning.

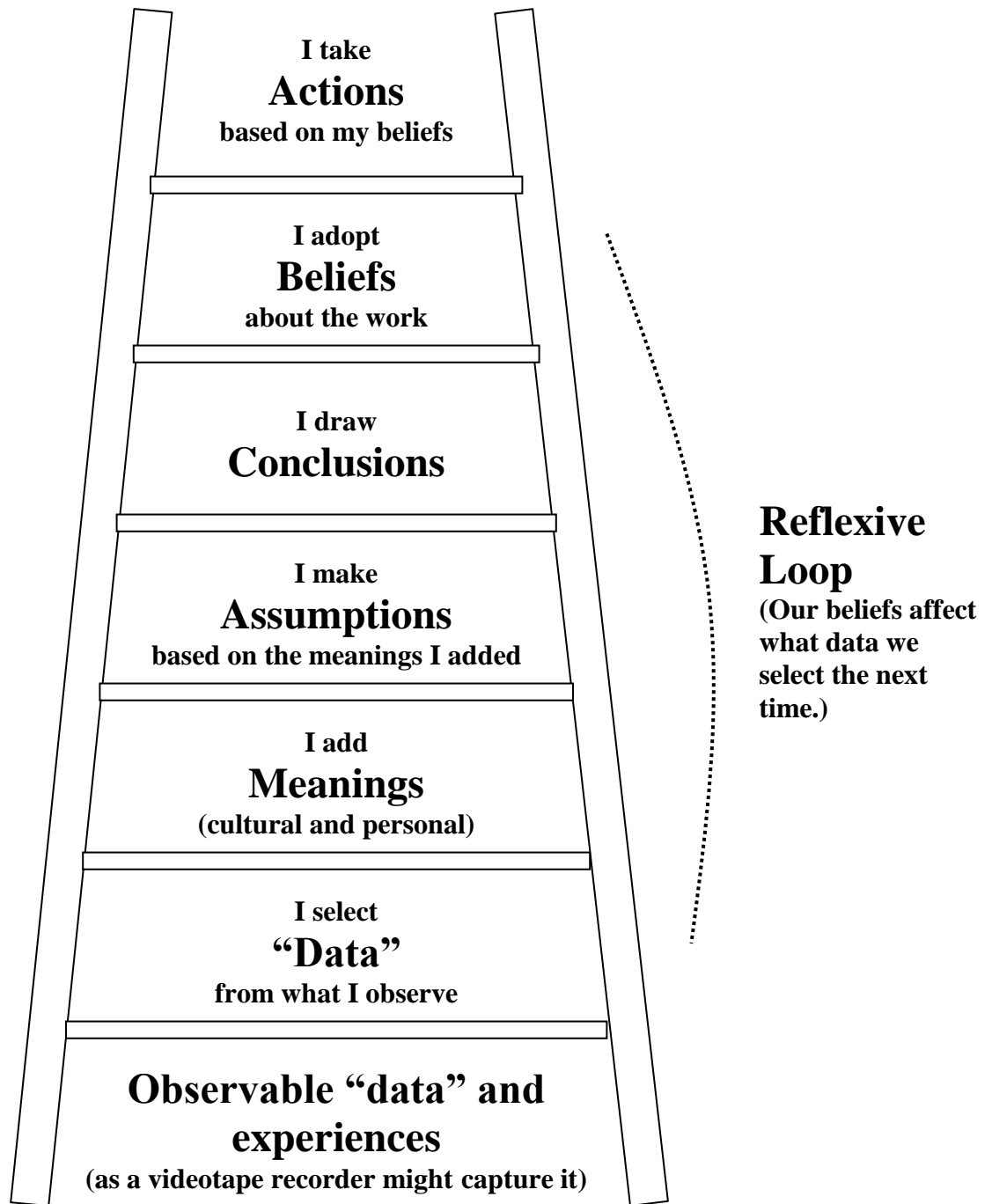
Learning Objectives:

- Share and examine the current experience of white women as allies and social justice educators working to dismantle racism and other forms of oppression
- Explore the barriers and dysfunctional dynamics that white women create that undermine our work as white allies
- Identify the components of a critical liberation practice for white women
- Practice how to intervene and shift unproductive dynamics among white women allies
- Identify a learning partner to promote accountability and continued learning about use of self within the context of a critical liberation practice

Community Learning Guidelines

1. BE OPEN AND HONEST
2. PARTICIPATE FULLY (AT YOUR OWN COMFORT LEVEL)
3. SPEAK FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: USE “I” STATEMENTS TO SHARE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS
4. LISTEN RESPECTFULLY
5. SHARE AIR TIME; ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO PARTICIPATE
6. BE FULLY PRESENT
7. BE OPEN TO NEW AND DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES
8. TAKE RISKS: LEAN INTO DISCOMFORT
9. RESPECT AND MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY
10. NOTICE AND NAME GROUP DYNAMICS IN THE MOMENT
11. NAME IF YOU FEEL TRIGGERED
12. TRUST THAT THROUGH DIALOGUE WE WILL REACH DEEPER LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE
13. EMBRACE THIS OPPORTUNITY AND HAVE FUN!!!

The Ladder of Inference *



* Senge, Peter M.; Kleiner, Art; Roberts, Charlotte; Ross, Richard B.; Smith, Bryan J. The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization. New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1994.

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Patterns of Behaviors, Attitudes, and Feelings Create Divisiveness

Below is a list of behaviors we have observed in ourselves or have been shared by other White Women that keep us from coming together...supporting each other in creating Liberation.

Notice where you do and don't resonate with the list of patterns below. Place an X by those behaviors, attitudes and feelings that you recognize in yourself.

White Women among White Women:

1. _____ If confronted on white privilege and racist attitudes/behaviors, I focus on sexism, and other subordinated group identities
2. _____ If it gets too hard, I withdraw, shut down or claim that I am not feeling "safe" as a way to avoid doing the work
3. _____ I focus primarily on the Individual level, and not the Group level: they don't like me, I'm not likable or competent...I'm a bad person
4. _____ It takes vigilance/is exhausting to track self and interrupt racist attitudes, thoughts and behaviors ~ easier to not pay attention
5. _____ I often work alone, or as the only white woman on staff
6. _____ I distance myself from white women –and judge them as “ they don't get it”
7. _____ I challenge, compete and/or critique other white women, don't relate or admit how I am just like them
8. _____ I do not seek out support, advice, or feedback from other white women
9. _____ I do not have honest, authentic dialogue with white women about my attitudes, feelings, and behaviors about race ~ the internalized dominance I carry; I don't often share “here's where I'm struggling, and where I get stuck”
10. _____ I stay in the teacher, expert, or trainer roles with other white women
11. _____ I compete with other white women to be seen as the good one, #1 ~ I know more than you, I'm a better anti-racist than you; I've been doing this work for X number of years..... you can't teach me anything...
12. _____ I often feel like a fraud ~ who am I to do this work when I have so many racist attitudes and behaviors.... feelings of guilt/shame...they'll find me out
13. _____ I judge other white women as boring...prefer to engage with people of color

14. _____ I don't invest much time and energy into relationships with white women ~ out of old wounds from past experiences with mother, sisters, middle school girls, when competing for boys'/girls' attention, other...
15. _____ I overly focus on others for approval and acceptance to fill inner void from sexist socialization, internalized sexism...
16. _____ I've bought into the white male/dominant culture myth that there can be only 1 winner
17. _____ I compare myself to other white women allies...I'm not good enough, they know more than I do, they're better than me...
18. _____ I'm often afraid to hold other white allies accountable in my family, professional life, community... afraid of losing love, professional power/approval, friendships, relational power and influence...

White Women among People of Color:

1. _____ I seek approval/validation from people of color ~ am I doing it right? Am I ok? I'm a good white person, right?
2. _____ I seek relationships with people of color, not white women allies
3. _____ I use people of color as confessors: Here's what I did/said/thought...is it ok? Meaning, am I ok?
4. _____ I struggle to develop an internal sense of what is just/right...use people of color as the measuring stick
5. _____ It is an ego boost for me to be included by men of color and women of color in their circles
6. _____ It is an ego boost for me to be seen as a "good one" by people of color
7. _____ If I'm confronted on white privilege and racist attitudes/behaviors, I focus on sexism, and other subordinated group identities
8. _____ If it gets too hard, I withdraw, shut down
9. _____ I often engage from the ends of the continuum: I know better than people of color OR people of color know better than me ~ arrogance or deep self doubt; inflated sense of superiority or deflated sense of self worth ~ no middle ground
10. _____ I avoid conflict with people of color; seek artificial harmony

11. _____ I am willing to maintain more superficial relationships with people of color rather than engage in honest, direct, authentic dialogue about our relationship
12. _____ I fear losing the relationships I have with people of color, and choose to avoid conflict and honest dialogue
13. _____ If I get feedback from people of color, I tend to personalize it and take it in at the individual level
14. _____ I primarily focus on the Individual level, not on the Group level: they don't like me, I'm not likable, competent...I'm a bad person
15. _____ I have greater comfort with men of color; or women of color
16. _____ I am less comfortable with women of color; or men of color
17. _____ I do not give feedback to people of color or hold them to same level of accountability as whites; fear of confronting people of color and being seen as/accused of coming out of racist attitudes
18. _____ What if People of Color can look past my anti-racist vocabulary and analysis and sense that I don't know how to treat them as equals?
19. _____ What if People of Color know about me what I don't dare know about myself?
20. _____ What if People of Color can see what I can't even voice about my fear?

**Increase your awareness of what is happening inside of you
and around you by using the skill:**

PANNING

Just as a movie camera “pans” the environment to see the whole picture, we need to continuously **PAN** all around us and inside of us as we increase our ability to notice the patterns of treatment and experiences of members of both dominant and subordinated groups.

Some guidelines for using the skill of PANNING:

PAN:

PAY

ATTENTION

Now

- Intentionally observe and notice behaviors, comments, feelings, patterns of treatment...
- Wonder: Is this an isolated incident or a possible pattern of experience?

*****AVOID falling into the trap of making a *SNAP JUDGMENT* ~ creating a “story” about what you see.**

- **PAN** the specific details and facts of what you see, feel, hear...
- Describe what you **PAN** without any assumptions, interpretations, conclusions, or prejudgments
- Notice the group memberships of people involved as you **PAN**, and describe the group memberships *if this information is useful to the discussion...*

Adapted from materials developed by Elsie Y. Cross Associates, Inc. 1994 Delyte Frost, et al ~ Tracking™

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Common Examples of Triggering Events

Directions: Use a 0-5 scale to rate how much of a “trigger” each of the following is for you when you are working to dismantle racism and create social justice/Liberation.

0 = no emotional reaction

1 = very mild level of emotional reaction

2 = low degree of emotional reaction

3 = moderate degree of emotional reaction

4 = medium-high degree pf emotional reaction

5 = high level of emotional reaction

A. When someone:

- 1. makes an offensive comment
- 2. demonstrates racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors
- 3. belittles my point or that of someone else
- 4. challenges the validity of the information or statistics being presented
- 5. criticizes my style, design, or approach
- 6. dominates the conversation and “airtime”
- 7. interrupts me or others
- 8. demonstrates domineering, threatening, or controlling behavior
- 9. refuses to participate in the discussion or the activity
- 10. tries to “bully” me or others
- 11. is arrogant and self-righteous
- 12. dismisses the conversation as “political correctness”
- 13. is “set in their ways” and unwilling to shift their perspectives
- 14. “coaches” people of color on how to act, think and feel
- 15. portrays themselves as the “victim” of “reverse discrimination”

- 16. proclaims that they are “a good one” or gives their “credentials”
- 17. demonstrates disruptive behavior including joking, side conversations, and snide or sarcastic comments
- 18. questions my competency as a social justice ally
- 19. challenges one of my comments or behaviors and labels it oppressive
- 20. is colluding with their own oppression
- 21. “rescues” whites
- 22. is experiencing and expressing deep emotions of pain, grief or anger
- 23. makes oppressive comments about members of their own race, gender, national group, sexual orientation, etc.
- 24. only engages in the conversation out of their subordinated/outsider identity
- 25. refuses to “own their privilege” as a member of a dominant/insider group
- 26. shifts the conversation away from their dominant group and back to their subordinated group
- 27. “does not get it” as a member of a dominant group and can not “make the connection” and use their membership in a subordinated group to understand this form of oppression
- 28. tries to derail the planned format and agenda
- 29. refuses to engage in any further dialogue
- 30. tries to work out their personal issues on me or others
- 31. projects their assumptions and feelings onto me or others

B. When I...

- 32. make a mistake
- 33. do or say something offensive or oppressive
- 34. can't figure out how to manage a situation

Intrapersonal “Roots” of Triggering Events

Directions: Think about a triggering event. What do you believe were the various factors or “roots” that contribute to your feeling triggered?

1. Current life issues and dynamics (fatigue, illness, crises, stressors, etc.)

2. Cumulative impact of past experiences: Does this situation remind you of past events?

3. Unresolved or unhealed past issues, traumas, and “wounds:” Does this person remind you of anyone? Does this situation remind you of past traumas?

4. Fears (check-off all that are related and add any others)
 - My personal issues will become the focus of the conversation: all eyes will be on
 - I will lose credibility and be seen as less competent if I cry and show emotion.
 - The conversation will “get out of control.”
 - People will get too emotional and I won’t have the skills to manage the situation.
 - I won’t know enough about the issue to engage in conversation.
 - If I challenge this issue I will be all alone without any support.
 - If I am too confrontational, then people will be mad at me, reject me, ostracize me, etc.
 - I will be seen as incompetent and “not good enough.”
 - They will see how prejudiced I really am.
 - I’ll let people down and disappoint them.
 - People won’t like me or approve of me.
 - “Things won’t change.”
 - I will make a mistake and be wrong.
 - People will be disappointed in me.
 - If I don’t handle this well, people will be hurt.

5. Needs (check-off all that are related and add any others)

- need to be in control
- need for power and authority
- need to change and “fix” others
- need to be right
- need for prestige and status
- need for recognition
- need to be seen as successful
- need to be liked
- need for approval
- need to be accepted, to belong and to be included
- need to be seen as competent
- need to be appreciated
- need to be seen as a “good one” by members of the subordinated group
- need to be perfect
- need for certainty and predictability
- need for everyone to feel satisfied and happy about the seminar

6. Biases, prejudices, assumptions

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Patterns of Behaviors, Attitudes, Feelings and Behaviors that Support Liberation

1. When I see a white woman taking the lead I can ask myself, “How can I support her leadership?”
2. If I track a white woman competing with another white woman I can ask myself, “How can I name the pattern and work to build collaboration?”
3. If I track undermining comments or actions from another white women to myself, “How can I confront and explore the root of the comments? How do I shift the energy towards working together and supporting each other in the work?”
4. Instead of coming out of the expert/teacher role, how can I share honestly about my attitudes, feelings, behaviors, where I get stuck ~ use self as instrument to connect with other white women?
5. Initiate honest dialogue with other white women about myself and the quality of our relationship
6. Seek out other white women and build authentic relationships
7. Seek feedback from other white women about individual behaviors, attitudes, feelings
8. Acknowledge what as white women we have learned from each other, appreciate and respect about each other
9. When another white woman is struggling, swirling in racist attitudes, feelings, behaviors ~ ask myself, “How do I relate to her...share how I am just like her...how do I stop myself from distancing myself; and instead share how I have shifted or have a different perspective?”
10. Actively seek coaching from other white women about how to show up as a full partner with white women, women of color and men of color...not arrogant or entitled or superior; and not withdrawn, deferring, or passive aggressive
11. Always stay aware of white privilege and Internalized Dominance and be mindful of your attitudes and behaviors and their impact on others
12. Track my attitudes, feelings and behaviors to minimize, avoid racial stereotypes, racist behaviors...
13. Strive for balance in my participation in groups: offering ideas, opinions, reactions while encouraging others' participation, respectful listening, share reactions and impact of comments from others, engage in authentic dialogue... be "one of many," a partner, a colleague ~ not better than or less than

14. Track the impact of my comments and behaviors; ask for feedback about the impact
15. Offer my ideas and comments as possibilities, suggestions...not as absolutes or the best answer
16. If I disagree, dialogue about the differences and the pros/cons of all ideas without debating; work towards a deeper understanding of differences

Authentic Dialogue: Among Dominant Group Members

It is such a rare gift to engage in authentic dialogue with other members of a dominant group. Sharing the gifts of feedback, coaching and insights can help us “see ourselves in each other” and support our development as effective social justice change agents.

Directions ~ In your small group share and *relate* to each other using the following prompts:

1. Share an example of a specific situation when you spoke up and **ineffectively** engaged issues out of this dominant group membership: How did you feel? What did you do/say?
2. When are you at your worst as a change agent out of this dominant group membership?
3. What are some of your fears as you engage issues of social justice out of this dominant group membership? (see handout, *Individual Diagnostic Tip-sheet*)
4. What dominant group behaviors and attitudes within yourself hold you back?
5. When and where do you get stuck? Not show up very effective or competent out of this dominant group membership?
 - How do you feel when you are stuck and less effective?
6. What would feel supportive from other members of this dominant group? To help you continue to grow and develop skills as an ally?

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Directions ~ In your small group share and *relate* to each other using the following prompts:

1. Share an example of a specific situation when you spoke up and **effectively** engaged issues out of this dominant group membership: How did you feel? What did you do/say?
2. When are you at your best as a change agent out of this dominant group membership?
3. What are some of your fears as you engage issues of social justice out of this dominant group membership? (see handout, *Individual Diagnostic Tip-sheet*)
4. What dominant group behaviors and attitudes do you still notice within yourself?
5. When and where do you get stuck? Not show up very effective or competent out of this dominant group membership?
 - How do you feel when you are stuck and less effective?
6. What would feel supportive from other members of this dominant group? To help you continue to grow and develop skills as an ally?

Steps to Responding in Difficult Dialogues

1. Get grounded in positive intentions ~ The DESTINATION:

- Create a teachable moment
- Stir cognitive dissonance
- Demonstrate respect and dignity
- Leave them feeling whole...
- Plant seeds...Influence hearts and minds...
- Re-establish the boundaries for civil discourse
- Do no harm!

R.A.P.S. ~ Skills to Engage

R: RELATE to others, their comments

A: ASK questions to explore

P: PAN the environment, yourself ~ as data to diagnose; name your pain as an intervention

S: Share, use self-disclosure as your response

2. Relate to the person who made the comment (Reflectively)

- How are you just like this person? Were just like them? (search in other categories of difference)
- When have you said or done something similarly?
- When might you say or do something like this in the future?

3. R: RELATE to the person or their comment/behavior

- I relate to what you're saying, I...
- I have felt the same way...
- I remember a time when I...
- I did the exact same thing...
- How do others relate to that comment?
- Who can relate?
- What you're saying seems to relate to what so-and-so just said...

4. A: ASK about the specifics behind the person's comment or behavior

- Gives you time to center, better understand the comment, choose a response
- May help the person hear themselves and reflect on what they said, the impact...

5. A: ASK clarifying questions

- I want to make sure I understand your point...you think that...
- Are you saying that...
- Help me understand what you meant by that?
- I don't understand your point...
- What do you mean when you say...
- Come again? Or Can you repeat that?

6. A: ASK questions to gather more information

- Could you say more about that... Tell me more...
- Can you give us an example of what you're saying...
- Help me understand what you disagree with...find frustrating...
- Help me understand how you got to that conclusion?
- What has been your experience that led you to that conclusion?
- What readings or research are you referencing?

7. A: ASK questions to get them to reflect on their comment

- When was the first time you heard that?
- How do you think others could be impacted by your comment? Behavior?
- Why might others disagree with your comment?
- What if I gave you a convincing argument and data that was counter to your perspective? What might that mean for you?
- How do you think others will view you when you make similar comments?

8. A: ASK questions to explore their intention

- What were you hoping to communicate with that comment?
- Help me understand your intent when you said...
- What did you mean to say with that comment?
- What is underneath your comment/question?

9. Based on what you PAN, engage others in the conversation

- I notice that folks were laughing...I'm curious what that's about?
- I noticed how quiet everyone just got...I'm wondering what is going on for folks?
- It seems some people were impacted by that statement.
- I'm noticing you're speaking with a lot of energy and emotion...
- We've had some comments from this side of the room, what are your thoughts and reactions? (looking at the other side of the room)
- I'm wondering if people are feeling triggered right now?

- The energy in the discussion seemed to shift after...

10. Give the “benefit of the doubt” if you directly confront their comment

~ a face saving tactic

- I trust/know you didn't intend this... I
- You're probably not aware of the impact of your comment...

11. S: SHARE: “Put a Face on the Issue”

- Share a personal example or one you have heard from a credible source
- Invite others to share personal examples and stories ~ verbally; in writing
- Offer to share resources, articles so they can review different perspectives
- Offer to meet with them and talk about your life experiences on and off campus
- Ask them to talk with 2-3 other people in the near future to hear their experiences and stories

12. S: SHARE: Share about yourself ~ self-disclose with a story or example; your feelings in the moment; the impact of a comment or behavior, etc.

- My heart aches as you tell that story...
- As a ____, I... (tell a story, give an example)
- I'd like to share the impact of your comment...
- I'm noticing I'm feeling ____, anyone else?
- I notice I feel triggered right now....
- That's a trigger word/phrase for me...
- I need to stop a moment and talk about what just happened. I...

13. Diagnosing Dominant and Subordinated Group Dynamics

Use the following prompts to diagnose the potential dominant and subordinated group dynamics as you analyze a recent situation, case study, etc.

1. What are the various group memberships of the people involved, and which dominant and subordinated group memberships seem central to this situation?
2. What are the probable perspectives and feelings of each party?
3. How might unconscious attitudes, assumptions, and bias be playing out in this situation?
4. What are the possible dominant and subordinated group dynamics in the situation?
5. What organization issues are relevant in this situation, such as formal and informal policies, norms, organizational practices, etc.
6. What are the probable outcomes if this situation is left unaddressed? For members of subordinated groups? Members of dominant groups? For the team? For the organization?
7. Given your diagnosis, what and/or who should be the focus of a response and why?
8. What might be some effective ways to respond? And by whom?

14. Different Communication Styles

a. Direct

- I think that...I need...
- It's important that...We need to...

b. Pose possibilities

- It might be useful
- I'd suggest we consider
- One way to proceed could be....

c. Competing style

- State your thought or opinion right after another person, no connection
- I think...Well I think....My idea is to...this is how we should proceed...

d. Debating style

- Reference the other person's ideas in order to negate them or disagree with them

e. Connecting style

- Acknowledge what was said by others
- Connect your comment to theirs
- Build on what has been said, i.e., Connected to what you're saying; Building on that thought; Similar to what she said, I think; I like your idea and another way to go about this is...

f. Engaging style

- If a direct statement is made, ask a question to gather more information, deepen understanding, gain time to respond...
- Tell me more...
- Can you give me an example?
- What's your intended outcome? your intent behind that?
- How might that impact others?
- What's your thinking behind how that helps us meet our goal?

Strategies to Discuss and Leverage Differing Perspectives

• Facilitate each person/group sharing their perspective

- **Set-up the process:** I'd like us to slow the process down, and create space for everyone to voice their perspective, and to make sure we understand each other...before we begin to explore our differences.
- Invite someone to go 1st and ask the group to listen carefully since you will be asking someone to summarize what they heard

• Ensure others understand the differing perspective

- Can someone summarize what you heard?
- Check back with the person who 1st spoke: How close is that to what you were saying?

- **Ask the group to identify the "common ground," where they heard similarities and agreement**
- **Ask the group to summarize the differing perspectives**
- **Invite the group to explore the differences with questions of curiosity**
 - Give them some possible prompts: Can you say more about...Can you talk about the reasons you feel so strongly...Can you say more about the outcomes you want...What's the intent behind your idea...How does your idea help meet our overall goals...
 - Facilitate the exploring of all the varying perspectives that have been raised
 - Consider taking notes on a chart of key points
- **Ask the group what additional similarities/common ground they notice after exploring the differing perspectives**
- **Continue dialoguing and exploring until consensus or a decision is reached**
- **How to Confront Repeated Inappropriate Behaviors...**
 - A. PAN/Describe and State what want shifted**
 - Describe the behavior
 - State what you want to be different
 - ...I'd appreciate it if you'd...I need you to...
 - B. Explore the IMPACT of the behavior**
 - State it: When you...the impact is...
 - ASK: What do you think the impact of your behavior is on others?
 - C. Give clear consequences if they continue this behavior**
 - If you choose to continue...I will...

Distinguishing Behaviors

Directions: Check-off all the DISTINGUISHING BEHAVIORS you plan to do as you go back to the work environment.

1. Pan (Pay Attention Now) to the comments and behaviors
2. Notice and talk about any patterns of differential treatment that subordinated groups experience
3. Speak up and intervene to stop unproductive or inappropriate actions
4. Support others when they question or challenge uninclusive or disrespectful behaviors or policies so they are not alone
5. Actively challenge negative stereotypes and assumptions and work to educate others
6. Continually learn more about the experiences of subordinated groups
7. Ask questions to *seek to understand* BEFORE disagreeing or defending my position
8. Initiate conversations and ask questions to deepen my understanding ~ ask about the **IMPACT** of experiences and treatment
9. Recognize and appreciate the distinguishing behaviors of others
10. Consider the impact of programs, policies and decisions on members of subordinated groups
11. In meetings ask the question, “How might this impact members of different subordinated groups?”
12. In meetings ask the question, “What perspectives and input might we be missing from different subordinated groups?”
13. Use “Connecting Language” instead of a debating style of communication: “I relate to what you’re saying...” “I haven’t experienced that, can you give me an example?” “I’ve never thought of that before, can you say more?” “To build on what you’re saying...” “Another way to look at that might be...”
14. Build authentic relationships with members of dominant and subordinated groups and work together to create greater respect and inclusion
15. Provide support, coaching, and mentoring to both dominant and subordinated group members

16. Recognize that subordinated group members have a far greater risk if they challenge and speak up
17. Use the privilege and access of my dominant groups to speak up and create greater inclusion
18. Recognize, appreciate and reward the extra, unpaid work that subordinated group members do to provide support to students and staff from subordinated groups
19. Recognize when subordinated group members might be reacting out of cumulative impact, and offer space and support to talk about their experiences and feelings
20. Talk with others who seem to be colluding, “going along to get along” ~ support them to consider the consequences of their actions
21. Support and coach members of subordinated groups to “unlearn” the negative stereotypes about their own group
22. Support and coach members of dominant groups to “unlearn” the negative stereotypes they have about subordinated groups as well as the “internalized dominance” they have ~ attitudes of superiority, entitlement, arrogance, etc.
23. Ask other dominant group members for feedback about the impact of your behavior. Ask them to coach you to improve your social justice skills and competencies
24. If you think your behavior might have negatively impacted someone else, talk to them about it and ask about the impact. Make amends and change your behavior as needed
25. Develop mentoring relationships where the dominant group member coaches the subordinated group member about the “unwritten rules” and norms of the dominant culture and strategies for success, and provides visibility and networking opportunities; and the subordinated group member coaches the dominant group member about Predictable behaviors, the impact of these individual actions and attitudes, and strategies to create a more inclusive, respectful workplace.

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Action Planning

Action Step	Support and resources needed	Timeline
Accountability Partner	Contact Information	Time/date to connect

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For Notes