

"I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group"

Building Solidarity for a Racial Justice

Understanding Systemic Racism to Build
Meaningful Partnerships

Presented by Common Vision in
Partnership with California Releaf



Why does Releaf see this training as important and necessary?

Goals For This Training

- Prepare Releaf Network members to work as allies in communities of color
- Foster an actively anti-racist organizational culture within the Releaf Network
- Lay the groundwork for an urban forestry coalition that is more reflective of California's population

Topics We Will Cover

- Basic Anti-Racism Vocabulary
- Racism in Individual, Social, Institutional, and Systemic Contexts
- White Privilege and How It Operates
- Intent Vs. Impact
- Common Stumbling Blocks re: Race and Racism
- Creating Anti-Racist Organizational Culture

Guidelines for Today's Training

- Amnesty
- Confidentiality
- Safety
- Arrive ready to examine/Removal of Defensiveness

Sexism, Classism, and other Isms

- Each of these “ism”s functions throughout society.
- Racism is of unique concern to the U.F. community

Universal

Individual

What's at stake?

**What is White
Privilege?**

Privilege:

“Being born on third base and believing you hit a triple”

By Kendall Clark – white privilege

- 1. a right, advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by white persons beyond the common advantage of all others; an exemption in many particular cases from certain burdens or liabilities

- 2. a privileged position; the possession of an advantage white persons enjoy over non-white persons

Some Examples From “Unpacking the Knapsack” By Peggy McIntosh

- Daily effects of white privilege- from a list of 50
- 1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time
- 2. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
- 3. I can turn on the television or open the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented
- 4. When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization”, I am shown the people of my color made it what it is
- 5. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability

- What is Racism?

- Racism= race prejudice
+ the misuse of power
(by people, social groups, and
institutions)

4 Levels of Racism

- Individual
- Social
- Institutional
- Systemic

Reverse racism – An example

[Aamer on Reverse Racism](#)

Intent vs. Impact

I am the expert of my intent- You are the expert of my impact

Intent

We understand ourselves by our intentions and motive. Do we sometimes excuse our behavior knowing that we “didn’t mean it like that”?

Impact

We understand others by their behavior –
We interpret behavior, make assumptions-
and come to conclusions

Intent and Impact

An Incredibly Typical Example

When an accusation of an racism is levied at an individual or a group of individuals, it is usually taken as a charge of deliberate foul play and is most often met with defensiveness.

Intent and Impact

Being considered fair-minded is extremely important to most, especially those who identify with being progressive or liberal, which makes it extremely difficult for them to not to personalize such perceived criticism.

One assumes that one's motives are under attack, instead of exploring the merit of the observation of inequity, likely providing a character resume in defense.

At this moment there is a counter accusation of character assassination, followed by lengthy explanations of one's true motives.

Intent and Impact

However, when an action is suspected of being racist, for example, what is under scrutiny is the net effect of the action, not its motive.

Intent and Impact

However, intent and impact are not the same thing. Good intentions do not mitigate negative effects.

In defense of the intent, the impact is rarely investigated, leaving the ones bringing forth the observation feeling frustrated

Intent and Impact

The one making the original accusation may not have been taking the net effect of the action in question personally. However, the sense of not being heard, silenced, or invalidated is taken personally. This only serves to escalate the situation.

Addressing Common Stumbling Blocks Re: Race and Racism

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2. “Opting out” of the “mainstream”, or doing social benefit work does not exempt anyone from the effects of white privilege and racism.

3. While often intertwined, Race and Class are not interchangeable. They are separate and different forms of oppression. They *can* multiply each other.

4. A humanist or “one-ness” approach doesn’t trump difference of experience

- Individual, universal, and social levels

Oneness

Humanism is the first step towards understanding and appreciating human potential. However, it is a first step in need of further refinement. While humanism affirms the central core of our humanity, its ambivalence towards differences makes it unresponsive to the particular needs of specific populations. Managing diversity requires a balance between the generic and the unique. It is likened to gardening. The person with the “green thumb” who loves plants in general is the most responsive to the specific needs of particular plants. The assumption that all plants can thrive in the same environment under the exact same conditions results in a stunted growth for some.

Oneness

Furthermore, a strictly humanistic approach runs the risk of ethnocentrism – projection of one’s own values onto others. The “people are just people” mindset usually translates into “everyone is just like me.” The pride that one takes in not noticing differences is easily misinterpreted by others as a protective emotional shield, unconscious use of privilege or the unwillingness to learn.

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6. The “Dangerous Minds” complex

7. Never expect a clean and neat way to “get beyond” this issue

8. Getting beyond a resentment of “political correctness”

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9. The goal is so much better than “not offending” people of color

Building Anti-Racist Organizational Culture

Create Organizational Standards and Statements

- It is Common Vision's policy that Fruit Tree Tour crew members, individually and collectively, demonstrate maximum respect in attitude and actions to all people of the many culturally and racially diverse communities visited during the tour.
- Common Vision is committed to cultivating a living and working environment that intentionally seeks to promote the coexistence of people of diverse background and identity based on mutual respect and integrity. Common Vision requires that the Fruit Tree Tour living and working environments on tour are free from discrimination on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

Know Your History

- Understand the history of systemic racism and how it has affected your stakeholders
- Continue examination of where your work intersects with the legacy of racism in America

Build Ally Culture

- Do not rely on people of color within the organization to create a culture of diversity
- Break Silence - always interrupt racism
- Continue the Conversation

“This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity—not just legal equity but human ability—not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and as a result.” - Lyndon B. Johnson