White Allyship; being an effective ally for people of colour

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This session

- reflect on experience of being a White Ally, in an Higher Education context
- consider the difference between being an effective White Ally and being a White Saviour.
- training and resources available
- think about how they can make a difference regardless of their role and remit within their institutions.
My reflections

+ Not something which can be learned through ‘training’ although training supports those with an Allies Mindset
+ Be prepared to reflect – a lot!
+ Also be prepared to listen – a lot!
+ Know you will never know everything – but keep reading and learning
+ Confidence being prepared to challenge
+ Understand and use your white privilege (and be able to explain it to others)
+ Always push for race equality – put it on every agenda
+ Use social media

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Understanding White Privilege

“White privilege is not the assumption that everything a white person has accomplished is unearned; most white people who have reached a high level of success worked extremely hard to get there. Instead, white privilege should be viewed as a built-in advantage….”

Teaching Tolerance 2018
Understanding White Privilege

…“an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day … An invisible, weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank cheques…. I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group”

Peggy McIntosh ‘White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack’ Peace & Freedom Magazine July/Aug 1989
Understanding White Privilege

An absence of structural discrimination, an absence of your race being viewed as a problem first and foremost, an absence of ‘less likely to succeed because of my race’. It is an absence of funny looks directed at you because you’re believed to be in the wrong place, an absence of cultural expectations, an absence of violence enacted on your ancestors because of the colour of their skin, an absence of a lifetime of subtle marginalisation and othering – exclusion from the narrative of being human. Describing and defining this absence means to some extent upsetting the centring of whiteness, and reminding white people that their experience is not the norm for the rest of us.”

Eddo-Lodge, Reni, 2017 p 44
White Saviour

White saviour refers to western people going in to “fix” the problems of struggling nations or people of colour without understanding their history, needs, or the region’s current state of affairs.

Resources and Guidance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White Supremacy</th>
<th>White Indifference</th>
<th>White Awareness</th>
<th>White Allyship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepts, and in some cases promotes, theories designed to justify white</td>
<td>Passionate defender of western universalism, academic freedom and the right to</td>
<td>Belief that racism is real and that it is a product of ‘prejudice plus power’</td>
<td>Racism is a complex interaction between structural, ideological, institutional and behavioural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominance and racial hierarchy typically associated with ‘scientific</td>
<td>offend.</td>
<td>Characterised by a desire to critically reflect.</td>
<td>processes, but it can be overcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racism’.</td>
<td>Belief in meritocracy but also recognises that some (deserving) disadvantaged</td>
<td>Functions like a mental illness that only white people have (Katz) hence focus on ‘discovering’</td>
<td>Characterised by the desire to take responsibility for change, which is not restricted to behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear/loathing/exotisation of the non-white other which may be overt or</td>
<td>disadvantaged people need help.</td>
<td>unconscious bias and cognitive distortions.</td>
<td>alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>covert.</td>
<td>Characterised by a refusal to take a serious look at racism and views anti-</td>
<td>Desire to engage with ‘black issues and people, but only in limited spaces (committees, training events)</td>
<td>Focus on paradigm shifts and concrete interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Characterised by the ‘white gaze’.</td>
<td>racist initiatives as ideological endeavours linked to culture wars and political</td>
<td>This may be as a result of feeling guilty of historic racism and/or a desire to make some amends.</td>
<td>Dynamic and creative solutions through co-creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that we live in a meritocracy.</td>
<td>correctness.</td>
<td>White privilege is recognised and becomes a source of shame and embarrassment.</td>
<td>Rejection of deficit models and acceptance of the link between white privilege and educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncritical/favourable view of empire and colonialism - the white man’s</td>
<td>Self-concept is based on being rational and moral, which results in avoidance of</td>
<td>Most activity however restricted to self-development and deployment of politically correct language.</td>
<td>outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burden.</td>
<td>responsibility for discriminatory behaviour!</td>
<td>Onus on white people to overcome unconscious bias.</td>
<td>Share power, privilege, risk and vulnerability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscribes to scientific racism.</td>
<td>Willing to ‘tolerate’/fetishize/pity the ‘non-white’ other.</td>
<td>Onus on white to build sustained partnerships with black people.</td>
<td>Actively divesting from histories, systems and structures that reproduce racism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black underachievement is seen to be due to their dysfunctionality/pathology.</td>
<td>Happy to make tokenistic gestures, but total refusal to accept one’s own</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness and its proxies’ function as badges of honour.</td>
<td>complicity in the (re)production of racism.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White privilege is rationalised as the natural order.</td>
<td>Whiteness is denied, so it functions as an absent/invisible/mythical norm</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onus on black People to accept their place.</td>
<td>leaving white privilege intact.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Onus on Black People to build up their ‘resilience’.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: *The term ‘black’ here is used to denote all those people who are positioned outside of whiteness and as a result experience racial disadvantage. The degree of racial disadvantage will vary, and therefore the term ‘black’ is used here to signify the ranging nature of the term itself.*
ALLY CONTINUUM

APATHETIC
NO UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES

AWARE
KNOWS BASIC CONCEPTS, NOT ACTIVE ON BEHALF OF SELF OR OTHERS

ACTIVE
WELL-INFORMED, SHARING AND SEEKING DIVERSITY WHEN ASKED/PROMPTED

ADVOCATE
COMMITTED, ROUTINELY AND PROACTIVELY CHAMPIONING INCLUSION
WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE ALLY?

Educate yourself
Do not expect to be taught or shown. Take it upon yourself to use the tools around you to learn and answer your questions. Read key academic and government backed reports on BAME inclusion.

Engage with the wider community
Engage in collaboration with other institutions and business that share similar values to learn from each other to change the global landscape.

Recognise your privilege
Many of us have privilege that are not afforded to everyone. Men, white people, heterosexual people, able-bodied, those from a comfortable socio-economic background, for example are granted benefits and advantages which are not available to people outside these groups.

Lobby for change
Use your position of power to challenge systems and processes within your institution which may be unintentionally biased against BAME people.

Get comfortable
Employees from all ethnicities in the workplace often report that their employers and colleagues are generally not comfortable talking about race.

Don’t be a by-stander
People in privileged positions have the power to call out unacceptable behaviour towards minority ethnic individuals without responses or assumptions being made based on their own ethnicity.

Recognise the diversity in the BAME community
Grouping all BAME people together as one homogeneous group prevents us from appreciating important variances between and within ethnic groups.

Help illuminate career paths
While some employers have clear induction processes in place, many focus on the factual elements of any given role — such as what needs to be done, for whom and by when — rather than qualitative guidance on how to succeed in an organisation.

Show up and be visible
Attend events, seminars and conferences aimed at promoting BAME inclusion. As the purpose of these events tend to be to educate and inform. Share what you have learnt with peers and colleagues.

Mentor and sponsor
Long-standing appraisal systems can often overlook skills, expertise or potential that may be more prevalent among minority ethnic employees, whilst overvaluing other qualities that may be more traditional, but have less applicability to the modern workplace.

An ally is any person that actively promotes and aspires to advice the culture and inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that can benefit people as a whole.

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BE A RACE EQUALITY ALLY. Poster by Prof. Bhavik Patel (@bavikanipatel). Free to distribute Modified content from TraversSmith report
1. Read, Read, Read
Learn more about racism and white supremacy. Reading (or watching or listening) can answer questions and give you the space to work out your own racial identity.

2. Listen
Be present with educators, students and families of color. Actively listen. What concerns do they have? Chances are they see issues inside the school that you don’t.

3. Avoid Making Conversations About You
If a colleague of color comes to you with a concern, ask yourself, “Am I using my privilege to amplify the concerns of educators of color in my building, or am I drowning them out?”

4. Connect
Find or build a group of people for accountability. Focus on generating conversations with white colleagues, and make sure you are staying accountable to people of color.

5. Use Your Power and Take Action
Look for inequities: Are people being left out? Does your HoD treat people unfairly? If you notice something, speak up and take action. Lift some of the burden from your colleagues of color.

https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2020/what-white-colleagues-need-to-understand

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Advice for being an ally

Dr Muna Abdi shares some of the ways you can show up and stand up as an ally. Follow her on Twitter @Muna_Abdi_Phd

1. Own your privilege
   Recognise the power, privilege and resources you have and think about how you can use it to support the work of those who are ‘othered’.

2. Talk about the uncomfortable
   And that sometimes means talking about how you are complicit in an oppressive system. Don’t talk about other people’s trauma, you cannot know it... but you can talk about the effects of a system.

3. Be strategic in your activism
   Being an ally is more than just joining protests and marches... it is using your institutional power to change structures and systems. If you are in a position to do so, do so. Actions Speak Louder

4. Figure out WHERE and HOW you can do the most good
   Everyone can do something. Whether it is pushing out messages on Twitter and on Facebook or meeting with institutional leads to push for change. The cacophony of all of us doing work together will lead to systemic change.

5. Start where you are
   Take concrete steps- small ones, like steps on a ladder. Ask people what they need....Stand/sit with those who’ve been doing the work longer than you... Listen...Ask more questions...then talk.
6 Ask yourself: what do I want the future to look like?
   We need to spend more time thinking/talking about potential solutions.

7 Do your research
   You can't be an effective ally if you don't know what the issues are. And you can't help deconstruct systems without first understanding how they were built. Read. Listen. Read. Listen. Read.

8 Resist the white saviour complex
   Your role is not to "fix" communities of colour. It is not your job to swoop down and take action on their behalf without knowing what the community needs to begin with. It might be easy to succumb to the desire to do things that seem good for others because they make you feel good, but it's important to resist that urge and re-examine how to help.

9 Start with your own circle
   Call out friends and family on their racism and microaggressions, even (especially) when it's uncomfortable. They'll likely be more open to listening to you, and it will give you the opportunity to effect real change.

10 Be brave
   These things are not always comfortable. But commit to pushing past the point of comfort to take effective and impactful action to change things...even if that action is messy or risks the loss of your own privileged/powerful status.

Race Equity/Race Literacy workshops

+ Face to face workshops
  + Chance to reflect with colleagues
  + Build a network
  + Enhance understanding

+ history, drivers for change, understanding racism, critical race theory, white privilege approaches to race equality in HE.

+ lived experiences of BAME students: data tells us, understanding and approaching differential outcomes and experience, creating inclusive curricula.

+ lived experience of BAME staff: data, the workforce, tackling racial bullying and harassment and creating an inclusive workplace culture.
What can you do?

✚ Consider the guidance in the resources
  ◆ Read
  ◆ Listen
  ◆ Join groups
  ◆ Develop confidence to challenge
  ◆ Go to a workshop
References

+ Advance HE 2020 https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/programmes-events/calendar/introduction-race-equality-higher-education-online
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