

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.



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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



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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



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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



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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.

<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=White%20savior>



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Resources and Guidance



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White Supremacy



- Accepts, and in some cases promotes, theories designed to justify white dominance and racial hierarchy typically associated with 'scientific racism'.
- Fear/loathing/exoticisation of the non-white other which may be overt or covert.
- Characterised by the 'white gaze'.
- Belief that we live in a meritocracy.
- Uncritical/favourable view of empire and colonialism - the white man's burden.
- Subscribes to scientific racism.
- *Black underachievement is seen to be due to their dysfunctionality/pathology.
- Whiteness and its proxies' function as badges of honour
- White privilege is rationalised as the natural order.
- Onus on black People to accept their place.

White Indifference



- Passionate defender of western universalism, academic freedom and the right to offend.
- Belief in meritocracy but also recognises that some (deserving) disadvantaged people need help.
- Characterised by a refusal to take a serious look at racism and views anti-racist initiatives as ideological endeavours linked to culture wars and political correctness.
- Self-concept is based on being rational and moral, which results in avoidance of responsibility for discriminatory behaviour!
- Willing to 'tolerate'/'fetishize'/'pity the 'non-white' other.
- Happy to make tokenistic gestures, but total refusal to accept one's own complicity in the (re)production of racism.
- Whiteness is denied, so it functions as an absent/invisible/mythical norm leaving white privilege intact.
- Onus on Black People to build up their 'resilience'.

White Awareness



- Belief that racism is real and that it is a product of 'prejudice plus power'
- Characterised by a desire to critically reflect.
- Functions like a mental illness that only white people have (Katz) hence focus on 'discovering' unconscious bias and cognitive distortions.
- Desire to engage with 'black issues and people, but only in limited spaces (committees, training events)
- This may be as a result of feeling guilty of historic racism and/or a desire to make some amends.
- White privilege is recognised and becomes a source of shame and embarrassment.
- Most activity however restricted to self-development and deployment of politically correct language.
- Onus on white people to overcome unconscious bias.

White Allyship



- Racism is a complex interaction between structural, ideological, institutional and behavioural processes, but it can be overcome.
- Characterised by the desire to take responsibility for change, which is not restricted to behaviour alone.
- Focus on paradigm shifts and concrete interventions
- Dynamic and creative solutions through co-creation.
- Rejection of deficit models and acceptance of the link between white privilege and educational outcomes.
- Share power, privilege, risk and vulnerability.
- Actively divesting from histories, systems and structures that reproduce racism.
- Onus on white to build sustained partnerships with black people.

ALLY CONTINUUM



Reid 2019



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WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE ALLY?

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



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.



Get comfortable

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



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



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



Lobby for change

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



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.



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.



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.

Learn . Listen . Check yourself . Take action . Be brave .

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.



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What can you do?

- + Consider the guidance in the resources
 - + Read
 - + Listen
 - + Join groups
 - + Develop confidence to challenge
 - + Go to a workshop



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