*Guidelines for Engaging in Conversations About Race* **by Ijeoma Oluo and Jamie Jin Lewis**

- Listen to understand, not to respond.
- Lean into discomfort. The work of addressing injustice is sometimes uncomfortable, especially aspects we've never had to think about before. Trust that the reward will outweigh discomfort.
- Name race and racism. Avoid using coded or vague language. Use the words you know to talk about racism specifically.
- Flow in, flow out. Monitor how much space you're taking up in a conversation. If you tend to be the first one to speak up, challenge yourself to listen to others first. If you usually hang back in a conversation, challenge yourself to speak your truth.
- Speak from the "I" perspective; avoid generalizations.
- What's said here, stays here. What's learned here, leaves here. This is a space to build trust and deepen relationships. If you feel an urge to gossip about something you heard, challenge yourself to think about why that story feels so thorny and how you might address that underlying issue in a constructive way.
- Remember, this is not a debate. We are talking about people's lived experiences and real pain that people are feeling and your goal should not be to be declared the "winner."
- Think about your goal for the conversation and state it at the beginning, so that everyone in the conversation will be on the same page and you'll have a touchpoint to bring the conversation back to if things get off track.
- Remember that people of color are often speaking from a lifetime of painful experiences around race, and therefore their emotional response in the conversation may not be one that white people will fully understand, but that doesn't make those responses any less valid.
- Seek growth, not closure.

Norms as discussed by IDEA:
- New England schools will be represented in the review of BlackAt posts.
- Remember, we are amplifying the voices of black students, and we can't let fragility get in the way of that.
- This is not meant to point fingers at anyone. As stated in the previous norms, we are speaking from the "I" perspective. No one should be asked to discuss or defend what is shared.
- You also shouldn't take comfort in your school not being mentioned--no institution is absolved from the issues we are discussing. We need to assume that these are happening at your school as well.
- Defensiveness, right to comfort, fear of open conflict, etc… are characteristics of white supremacy culture. Put these feelings aside.
- If you are feeling fragile or guilty, remember this session is optional.

15 Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture
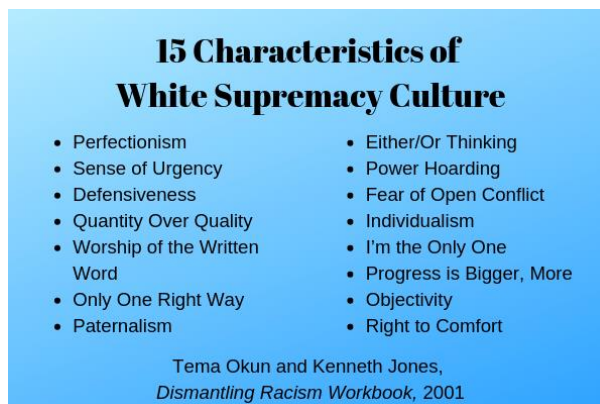
> "**White supremacy culture** is the idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions."

"Because we all live in a white supremacy culture, these characteristics show up in the attitudes and behaviors of all of us – **people of color and white people.**"
From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*

Breakout Room #1 Notes

Open Mic:
- Anonymous message: person did not feel comfortable sharing because another colleague who has inflicted prejudice was also in the breakout room

How to be a better ally discussion:
- Question posed to the group by an attendee: How do you deal with exhaustion? It can be exhausting to do the work and not offend someone in the room. "You get tired before the work starts." "No one is going to listen to me anyway."
  - Invisible exhaustion was a term shared to described shared sentiments around this question
  - This might also be the first time when/where someone is listening to how white supremacy culture is manifesting in a policy/ in a conversation. How do you approach that conversation?
- Resources
  - Lawrence Alexander's Linked In for implicit bias and EDI trainings: Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Board Member, VISIONS, Inc
  - Faustina Cuevas: Diversity and Inclusion training: https://faustinacuevas.com/speaker/
- Sentiments were shared about comments made by BIPOC colleagues who are new to the field being disregarded and how problematic this is
- When someone says something problematic- ask questions such as why/how to get to the heart of the matter
- Sometimes it does not feel comfortable/safe to speak up in a particular space. Affinity groups can be helpful to find community
- Take what you learn from these IDEA community conversations back to your offices and to your communities. Don't stop at the reflection phase: for example, research and suggest training on anti-bias application reading. Step in and comfort the person who was dismissed in any capacity and hold other people accountable. Learn but also act. Don't just stop at learning; act whenever you can do so in a safe environment.
- Explain to other members of your team how diversity benefits the whole

Breakout Room #2 Notes

Speaking from the "I" perspective
Share tangible action steps that offices have taken to address racism and inequalities at schools and college campuses.

Consider:
 a) acknowledging the ways that you have contributed to white supremacy culture.
 b) sharing what you are personally committed to doing on your journey toward becoming anti-racist.
c) sharing practices, policies, and procedures that you personally commit to improving to ensure Black colleagues are no longer harmed.

- I need to do self-work in the journey to become anti-racist
  - Work on my ego to best show up to conversations, to be the most helpful, productive in moving forward.
  - Not feel like I need to or can solve racism in higher ed.
  - What I can do that is right in front of me? Commit to reading social media posts, diversify social media feeds and authors, join IDEA
- Stop letting those uncomfortable moments pass- Say something, do something
- Separate intent from impact, how to better recognize when I cause this, becoming more comfortable with being uncomfortable.

- Looking at the Instagram posts, someone could have stepped in to avoid the BIPOC person leaving the office.
- I need to allow myself to mess up because when you mess up you learn. You then become better for the future.
- An administration that leans on policy for a decision instead of looking out for the BIPOC person's well-being is ultimately adding to white supremacy culture and racism.
- As a black woman, I need to work on identifying ways that I add to the existence of white supremacy and learn how I can push back, without looking angry. I know I have "I'm the only" one thinkings, and I do not delegate tasks.

Breakout Room #3 Notes

- Sessions such as these have reaffirmed the trauma that BIPOC folx, specifically Black folx face
- I have felt a sense of otherization and a lived experience of the Women of Color graphic in an organization
- I have experienced a generational difference of identities in the past (over 15 years ago); first as an admission counselor and then as racial/ethnic; In more recent times, it is more parallel
- I echo the above sentiment in my work as a professional of five years in the field
- I have navigated a balancing act of identity and antiracist work in my professional and personal life and the challenge that comes with that
- I am asking for clarification, and an example, on the concept of sense of urgency
    - Response: this may align with performative allyship
- Advice for being a better ally to your Black colleagues:
    - I value and recognize the importance of inclusive hiring practices in the workplace
    - I have made a personal obligation to calling out racist behavior and comments with confidence
    - I have made a personal obligation not to be self-congratulating and performative or do things for clout, especially as it relates to social media responsibility at my institution; I recognize the difference between action steps vs. empty thoughts
    - How can I be supportive of BIPOC folx but without it becoming a teaching moment or by putting the burden on those who align with that identity?

Advice for being a better ally to your Black colleagues

- Listen, listen, listen.
- Stop policing their tone.
- Pay attention to who has "a seat at the table" and be willing to give up your seat when it's clear that there is not enough representation.
- Recruit, hire, promote, and support Black professionals.
- Hold your peers and supervisors accountable.
- Report racism when you see it, even if it seems "small."
- Ask your colleagues how they would like to be supported.
- Identify colleagues by their name and pronounce it correctly.
- Demand that your institution invests in high quality diversity, equity, and inclusion training.
- Be willing to share what you earn--racial pay gaps will not be addressed through secrecy.
- Continue to educate yourself--do not rely on your Black colleagues to educate you.
- Check your privilege, embrace it/own it, and use it to create change. Check your biases.
- Lastly:
    - Sign up for the CASL (College Access and Success Listserv) listserv: https://www.neacac.org/neacac-college-access-and-success-listserv
        - This was built out of the Coming Together Conference Planning. We noted the need to acknowledge more access and there wasn't really a space to create those conversations about inclusion, equity, and access
    - Anti-Racism Resource Document created by IDEA: https://docs.google.com/document/d/15SRfX3jeNQiP6nYqWFmBG1R7i8X999c72N77si1mnNA/edit?usp=sharing
    - Encouragement to participate/volunteer for the subcommittee of IDEA on inclusive policies and procedures