Bold, Inclusive Conversations™:
Addressing Race & Racism in the Workplace

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Written & Edited by:
Luiza de Melo Dreasher, Ph.D., Caroline Belden, Brittany J. Harris
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Introduction: Three Questions

Race is one of the most complex concepts in modern society. It has changed throughout history and very likely will continue to be *"formed, transformed, destroyed, and re-formed"* as our understanding evolves (Omi and Winant, 2001, 14).

Likewise, as our understanding of race evolves, so must our understanding of equity in the context of the systemic racism we see in and outside the workplace. In order to move towards greater understanding, we must consider three questions:

- *How has our understanding of race evolved?*
- *How do we understand racism in the world today?*
- *How do we begin to have Bold, Inclusive Conversations™ in the workplace that honor the complexity and depth of this issue **and** move us towards equity?*

Understanding the Complexity of Race and Racism

In the age of exploration, the term "race" was associated with the notion that there were groups of people who had physical differences and similarities, which were used to determine who the "*true children of God were*". In fact, "[w]hen European explorers in the New World 'discovered' people who looked different than themselves, these 'natives' challenged then existing conceptions of the origins of the human species, and raised disturbing questions as to whether *all* could be considered in the same 'family of man' (Omi and Winant, 2001 11-12). Questioning the humanity of the racially distinct natives of the new world served to justify the horrific treatment they were subsequently afforded, which ranged from coercive labor and denial of political rights to extermination. This religious attempt to explain the meaning of race presupposed a worldview that distinguished the Europeans, the "*true children of God,*" from all others.

This practice of placing cultural groups within a hierarchy prevailed throughout the 19th century when scholars introduced yet another way of explaining race—one that stemmed not from a religious perspective but, instead, from a biological one. In this new construct, someone's race could be determined by skin color and other physical attributes. Social

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scientists, however, rejected this notion. Within the contemporary social science literature, the concept of race is shaped by much broader and complex social and political factors. It is no longer a considered a physical reality as much as it is a social construct that is defined and perpetuated by the way the social structures in our society affirm or deny one's humanity.

It is important to note that racial meanings have not only varied tremendously over time, but also between societies. In the United States, the white/non-white color binary was in place until relatively recently. This thinking was originated with Marvin Harris' principle of "hypo-descent" (1964). According to his principle, anyone who was known to have had a black ancestor was black. There was nothing in between—no terminology for or acknowledgement of biracial or multiracial identity. In fact, according to Ana Brown (2015), a research analyst focusing on social and demographic trends at the Pew Research Center, the 1930 census provided those collecting data with the following instructions: "*A person of mixed White and Negro blood was to be returned as Negro, no matter how small the percentage of Negro blood.*"

In countries like Brazil, however, there are no sharply defined racial groupings. In fact, "one of the most striking consequences of the Brazilian system of racial identification is that parents and children, and even brothers and sisters, are frequently accepted as representatives of quite opposite racial types" (Harris, 1964, 57). Such malleable race categorization was inconceivable within the United State until 2000 when U.S. Americans were allowed, for the first time, to choose more than one race, "multiracial," to describe themselves in the census. Major revisions regarding "race" are being considered for the 2020 census.

As we add more complexity to our understanding of race and racial categorization, we will need to also expand our understanding of racism. It is only in understanding it fully, addressing the truth about it in all its complexity, that we can begin to break it down and rebuild a more equitable society.

## Understanding Racism and How It Is Perpetuated

One can hardly ignore the fact that racism has been and still is a reality in our society. The increasing number of racially-motivated hate crimes that have been reported,

particularly after the 2016 election (see Figure 1), the documented discriminatory lending practices that have disadvantaged black people, and even the stereotypical ways people of color are often portrayed in the media, are just a few reminders of its presence. Recent documentaries like *The 13th* and movies like *Mudbound* point to the historical and systemic reality of racism in this country—the ways in which it is embedded into our cultural DNA.

Figure 1: Hate Incidents Within 10 Days of the Election

HATE INCIDENT MOTIVATION
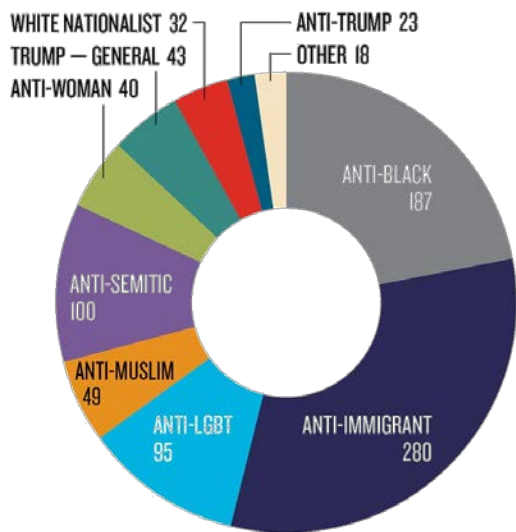
(Source: SCLC, 2016)

So, what exactly is racism? Racism can be defined as a system of advantages based on race (Tatum, 2001). Those with the "right" race are afforded opportunities and rewards that are unavailable to other individuals and groups in society. These opportunities and rewards range from educational access to housing loans to representation in the workplace and leadership to the right to be stopped by police without worrying for your safety. Racism affects everyone in our society, not just those who land on the black/white binary, as the ample evidence of anti-Asian and anti-Latino sentiment we have seen lately proves.

Most of the information we internalize about individuals who are different from ourselves (be it racially, religiously, socioeconomically, or any other dimension of difference) does not come from first-hand experience. This is a problem because this second-hand information is often distorted, incomplete, and shaped by cultural stereotypes (Tatum, 2001). In *Defining Racism: Can We Talk?*, Tatum (2001) describes a research project where preschoolers between the ages of three and four were asked to draw a picture of

an "Indian." Most of the drawings had specific elements in common: all the Indians wore feathers, they all carried a weapon (either a knife or a tomahawk), and all of them appeared "violent." All the children in this study were white, did not live near a reservation, nor had they had significant interactions with Native Americans. When probed, the preschoolers indicated that cartoons and movies had been their primary source of information. While we can hardly describe a group of three-year-olds as prejudiced, we cannot ignore the reality that, for most of us, the stereotypical images we acquire as children "become the foundation for the adult prejudices so many of us have" (Tatum, 2001). Even more alarming is the fact that these distorted images, acquired early on in our lives, often through indirect socialization, go unchallenged for most of our adult lives.

Certainly, we should not blame the preschoolers in Tatum's study for their prejudicial tendencies. However, it is critical for us to understand that prejudice is an integral part of our socialization. As Tatum (2001) explains, "We are not at fault for the stereotypes, distortions, and omissions that shaped our thinking as we grew up." Nonetheless, we are not relieved from our social responsibilities to interrupt this cycle of oppression. As adults, we still need to look into our own behaviors and ask ourselves: *Are we perpetuating and reinforcing the prejudicial messages we received as children, or are we seeking to challenge them? What are we standing for: equity or oppression?* It is also worth mentioning that *all individuals*, regardless of their racial affiliation, are capable of holding hateful attitudes and behaving in discriminatory ways. Without a question, all of us need to be held accountable for our racist acts.

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>
> *What are we standing for: equity or oppression?*

Scholars have argued that it is not enough to think about racism in terms of an expression of prejudice alone (Wellman, 1977). In other words, racism is not only a system of personal beliefs and actions, but it is also a system of cultural messages and institutional policies and practices that benefit some (e.g., it gives them access to better schools, better housing, better jobs, better health and heath care system), while also preventing others' access to those same benefits. Rothenberg (2001) argues that racism, sexism,

heterosexism, and class privilege are systems of advantage that provide those with the "right" race, sex, sexual orientation and class (or some combination of these identities) with opportunities and rewards.

These systems of advantage, combined with prejudiced beliefs and actions, constitute the broader scope of racism. It's not *just about what you believe*, and it's not even *just about how you act*. Racism includes how these systems perpetuate and reinforce a hierarchy that justifies the oppression of one group of people, the advantages of another, and any act or belief that polices that hierarchy.

We do not always participate in this system of advantages consciously. Many times, individuals receive these benefits without even being aware. Imagine you are white and relocated to a new town because of a job offer. Consider how you would be able to rent the apartment of your choosing – the same apartment that was denied to a black individual because of the landlord's discriminatory practices. As Tatum (2001) points out, even if you were not aware of the landlord's discriminatory behavior, the reality is that you, as a white person, still benefitted because the apartment was available to you.

This system of advantages and disadvantages will continue to be perpetuated if not acknowledged and addressed. Engaging in Bold, inclusive Conversations™ on Race is just one way that individuals can begin to address and interrupt systemic racism in the workplace and beyond.

Why Talk About Race in the Workplace?

Race is one of those topics that has long been considered taboo. Even among friends, these conversations can be particularly difficult and anxiety-provoking. Individuals often fear saying the wrong thing, being labeled a racist, or being perceived as insensitive or ignorant. No wonder saying nothing seems to be the default mode for many. Janine Truitt, Chief Innovation Officer of Talent Think Innovation, LLC, a business strategy and management consulting firm contends that:

"For most people, having a discussion about race relations is the equivalent to standing in a public place with twenty people where there is a remarkable stench, but no one wants to be the one to say aloud that the room stinks. Talking about race stinks, but it has to be done (2014).

Silence is not necessarily neutral and is oftentimes quite the opposite.

Considering all the recent events we have witnessed in our society, from fatal police shootings of unarmed black men to senseless mass killings, we walk into the workplace still carrying the emotions associated with these tragedies. Our organizations do not exist within a vacuum. What is happening in the external world has a direct impact on employees (Winters, 2017). Yet, employees are often unable to talk about them in an open manner.

This culture of silence around racial inequities and its impact is often reinforced because it has been ingrained into our collective psyches that the workplace is not an appropriate place for these conversations. However, silence is not necessarily neutral, and is oftentimes quite the opposite. Silence can be interpreted in different ways, including indifference or acquiescence. As a society, we need to have a better understanding of the impact these events can have on an individual's life and accept that "the weight of these issues follows us into our jobs every day, accumulating with each death, each tragedy. To leave the emotions these events provoke at the door is an unrealistic expectation" (Best, 2016).

Companies today seem to spend an impressive amount of time, money, and energy on diversity trainings where the focus rests on how the golden rule is now a platinum rule, the melting pot has evolved to a tossed salad (or another comparable metaphor), and highlighting the company's zero tolerance for discrimination. In other words, merely *raising awareness* of what employees need to know to work effectively across differences. These types of programs are indeed necessary and a good start; however, alone, they are insufficient.

Nowhere in the training curricula is the need for honest discussions on race relations and how to address the systemic advantages and disadvantages that are still in place both in our society and in the organization. Perhaps it seems like too big a job or too big a problem to address in the workplace. However, race and racism are at the root of many of the systemic, long-standing problems we see in the workplace. It's time we address it in a comprehensive and authentic way. While this may be uncomfortable for many, consider the tremendous impact that this kind of training could have on employees of color who regularly deal with insensitive jokes, racially-charged emails, or comments implying they were only hired so the company could reach numeric benchmarks. Moreover, consider the impact it could have in the long-term by correcting

current, persisting inequities that go beyond daily interactions like pay gaps, achievement gaps, leadership representation, etc.

More than ever, we need *brave* spaces where employees can come together to share their experiences and concerns, to share their stories, to discuss the events that are dominating their world outside the organization, and to understand each other's perspective. These conversations cannot happen as isolated events, but as the beginning of a journey for all within the organization. More importantly, those leading these conversations need skills. Becoming a skilled facilitator of Bold, Inclusive Conversations™, however, takes time, effort, and continued development.

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Engaging in Bold, Inclusive Conversations™ on Race

As mentioned above, addressing race in the workplace will, no doubt, be challenging. However, employers can no longer ignore the impact of racism on employees and on organizations as a whole. The feelings of stress and trauma that employees bring with them to the workplace will, most certainly, impact productivity and engagement. Allowing for these types of conversations to take place sends a signal that employers care about their employees' wellbeing and that the company is sensitive to the impact of race-related events on employees' lives.

In order to be effective, those charged with leading conversations around polarizing topics in the workplace need more than awareness and knowledge of the issues impacting employees' lives. They also need the skills to engage and facilitate dialogue around these challenging topics. As mentioned, these skills are developmental in nature and will require a significant amount of practice. In the book, *We Can't Talk About That at Work!*, Mary-Frances Winters (2017) outlines the steps individuals can take to prepare to lead conversations about race (or and any other polarizing topic) in an effective manner.

Know Yourself Before Trying to Understand Others

Before starting the process of facilitating historically polarizing conversations, it is imperative to keep a couple of things in mind. First, you need to understand the role that "culture" plays in framing your behavior. How far you stand from someone else, whether or not you maintain eye contact during a conversation, the

need to convey your message directly or indirectly, and even the amount of emotion you display during a conversation are all dictated by culture. Culture also colors your interpretation of the behavior of others. In other words, you need to be aware that you see the world through your own "tinted lenses" and that you have them "on" throughout your interactions with others.

In addition to understanding how culture impacts your worldview, you also need to come to these conversations with a heightened sense of self-understanding around how your own beliefs, values, prejudices, and privileges (in age, physical ability, education level, sexual orientation, language, etc.) impact the way you think, behave, and function. Starting this process *within* yourself allows you "to develop humility and to recognize that [our] perspective is not the only one (or necessarily the most valid one) and, thus, will allow for the *acceptance* and potential validity of other perspectives," (Robinson, 2009, 43). Below are a few questions (adapted from Dreasher, 2014) to consider:

- *If you are a member of a privileged group (e.g., white, male, heterosexual), how will that impact your relationship with employees from a non-privileged group? Or vice versa?*
- *How does your race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, ability, economic class, language, national origin, etc. impact your interactions with your employees?*
- *Have you ever been in a situation where you were a minority (meaning, outnumbered)? How did you feel? Can you empathize with your employees who are from underrepresented populations?*
- *What opinions or images do you carry about individuals from [name the group]? Are they positive or negative? How did you acquire them? Through personal history? Childhood memory? The media? What steps can you take to eliminate your biases towards each of these groups?*

Understand the Impact of Your Bias on Behavior

Another important aspect of self-understanding is being aware of and addressing how biases impact your behavior and the way you interact with others. According to Thiederman (2003), biases refer to our tendency to "prejudge" others according to the group to which they belong. This prejudgment about the nature, character, and abilities of the individuals we

interact with can be either positive or negative. Oftentimes, we are not even aware we are doing it; in other words, some of our biases are implicit, hidden, or unconscious. Psychologists argue that we are "hard-wired" to make unconscious decisions about others and that this tendency to categorize is necessary because this is how we make sense of the world around us. The problem arises when we form associations that undermine our ability to be fair and equitable.

Our biases have real life consequences, as Thiederman (2003) points out. How many overweight individuals have received lower performance evaluations? Have you considered the fact that some individuals are more often prescribed medical procedures because of their race? How many of us have been judged differently because of the clothing we are wearing? How else can we explain the fact that boys are called on more often than girls when they raise their hands in the classroom? Let us not forget the fact that criminal defendants with more Afro-centric features receive, in certain contexts, more severe criminal punishment than whites. These are examples of the many ways we make decisions every day in favor of one group and to the detriment of others *without even realizing we are doing it.*

Sometimes we acquire our biases from our parents or experiences and lessons from our childhood, which makes it nearly impossible to unlearn them. Other times, they stem from a negative experience and we allow our fear from one occasion to color our perception of an entire group of people. On the other hand, no force spreads bias more effectively than the media.

It is imperative that you identify and address your unconscious biases before attempting to facilitate polarizing conversations. In any situation, you need to observe your thoughts and gather evidence prior to determining what it really means. Consider the following example:

Example: Race & Executive Presence

Situation	A group of mostly white, male executives are discussing a group of emerging leaders in their company, and you notice that all of these emerging leaders are white men.
Your Reaction	*We would like to have more diversity at the executive level, but these are simply the people who have shown themselves to have executive presence.*
Ways You Can Analyze & Reflect On The Situation	*How do I define executive presence? How is that definition based on my own cultural values, and perhaps, to the exclusion of others?*
Self-Assessment	*I may have a bias that tricks me into believing that non-white people are incapable of leadership.*

As Thiederman (2003) suggests, the key in situations like the one just described is "mindfulness." Given all of us can be biased, we need to learn to suspend our judgement long enough to ascertain the situation. If you want to learn about your implicit biases, take the *Implicit Association Test (IAT)*. This is the most prominent method of measuring implicit bias and it can be found at https://implicit.Harvard.edu/implicit.

Understand How Your Power and Privilege Will Influence the Conversation

It is important to keep in mind that we all have very complex identities; that is, we all belong to multiple identity groups simultaneously. This is what Sociologist, Kimberlé Crenshaw, refers to as "intersectionality" (as cited in Winters, 2017). For some of us, our identities afford us privileges as being part of the dominant group – for example, being a white, male, heterosexual, middle class, Christian, etc. Likewise, some identities are part of subordinated groups. When we are part of subordinated groups, those identities become more salient to us, but when our identities afford us privileges, we often aren't aware of them. When preparing to engage in a Bold, Inclusive Conversation™, one must be aware of how their and others' multiple identities will influence the conversation, and which ones will be more salient in the context of the conversation.

Our race, class, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, nationality, weight, ability, and many other cultural or physical aspects, determine how much power and privilege we have. This ultimately translates into who has access to resources and who participates in

decision-making. In other words, our group membership gives us advantages and disadvantages. Winters (2017) states that dominant group individuals need to work on understanding the impact of their unearned power and privileges. Those belonging to non-dominant groups, however, need to change their mindset and, instead of seeing themselves powerless, start behaving as if they have power and ability to create the desirable changes.

As part of the process of understanding the role your power and privileges will play in the conversation, some of the questions you should ask yourself include (for a complete list, see Winters, 2017):

- *What is my positional power in this situation?*
- *Is my power simply due to the fact I am a member of a dominant group?*
- *What considerations have I given to the power and privileges of those who will take part in the conversation?*

These are important questions to consider as part of your readiness to facilitate Bold, Inclusive Conversations™ because power imbalance can most definitely prevent an equitable dialogue from taking place.

Broaden Your Understanding of Cultural Differences

Today's workforce is considerably different than it was a decade ago. The average age of workers is rising, ethnic minorities make up 36% of the labor force, and more women have joined the workforce. Each year, an increasing number of immigrants come to live and work in the United States. In fact, projections by the Census Bureau indicate that by the year 2030 the United States will be a global society in which nearly half of all U.S. Americans will be from today's racial and ethnic minorities (Dreasher, 2014). Businesses can no longer afford to ignore the impact these trends are having on the workplace.

Because of this increased diversity, the potential for cultural misunderstandings is much higher. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the impact of these differences in the workplace, however the differences mentioned below should be considered, as they are critical to engaging in Bold, Inclusive Conversations™, particularly around race:

- *Differences in communication styles*
- *Differences in the way individuals perceive authority*

- *The need for avoiding negative confrontations by certain groups*
- *The importance of "saving face"*
- *The need for avoiding calling attention to the individual*

Culturally competent dialogue facilitators are aware that these differences exist, are knowledgeable of their impact on the workplace, and have the skills to adjust their behavior to the cultural orientation of others.

Winters (2017) recommends engaging in The Cultural Competence 4E Model™ as requisite to engaging in dialogue across differences:

Exposure: Without cross-cultural exposure, your ability to understand others is very limited.

Experience: In other words, you need to have meaningful relationships with those who are different from yourself. I can spend a week in Japan, stay at the Hilton, and consume mostly western-style meals ordered through room service. Will I be exposed to the Japanese culture? Sure. Will it be meaningful? Hardly. Engaging with those who are different from ourselves can be uncomfortable, but it is the only way to start the process of developing meaningful relationships with others.

Education: You will need more formal education about the many significant ways your employees differ from each other. Professional development opportunities, continuing education courses, Webinars, books, are just a few ways you can learn about cultural differences, and the different worldviews you will encounter in the workplace today.

Empathy: Empathy, which is different that sympathy, or pity, is the ability to put oneself in another's shoes. Empathy leads to mutual understanding and, ultimately, respect.

Part of your "other" awareness journey is your increased understanding of the daily struggles your

employees are dealing with. *Do you recognize the anxiety transgendered employees face while choosing the bathroom associated with their gender identity? Are you aware of all the pain your black employees may be bringing with them to the workplace because of the recent killings of unarmed black men by police officers? Have you considered the impact of all the Islamophobic incidents on your Muslim employees?* Without a doubt, employees do bring the external world with them to the work environment. In some cases, their world is filled with pain, fear, and anxiety, which is compounded by their inability to address these feelings in the workplace. This dynamic will most certainly impact productivity and engagement.

How Do You Know Your Organization is Ready?

In addition to ensuring you have the necessary knowledge and skills to address some of the issues employees are bringing to the workplace, it is equally important that your organization demonstrate the same level of readiness. Only those companies with noticeable evidence that they truly value diversity and practice inclusion are ready to address external climate issues in the workplace.

Experts such as Winters (2017), Banks (2016), Hubbard (2004), Gardenswartz and Rowe (1998), agree that the following are good indicators of diversity and inclusion organization readiness:

- *Diversity and inclusion goals are clearly articulated, and results are used both to guide action planning and to set a baseline for assessing progress. Leaders are held accountable and evaluated on their inclusion practices.*
  - *Policies are reviewed annually to assess effectiveness towards diversity and inclusion.*
- *All employees feel valued, respected, and feel they can bring their authentic selves to work. In other words, they do not need to "cover" any significant parts of their identity (Yoshino, 2013)*
- *There are formal programs in place to promote an inclusive environment such as mentoring, professional development opportunities, employee network groups, etc.*
- *The organization celebrates diversity through different company-sponsored events.*
- *The company is vested in finding creative ways to attract top talent among diverse groups.*
- *There is openness to suggestions from people at all levels in the organization.*

- *The services provided by the company reflect awareness of an increasingly diverse population.*
- *All segments of the population are represented at the top level of the organization.*
- *Variety in dress and grooming is accepted.*
- *There is sensitivity to and awareness of different religious and ethnic holidays and customs.*
- *The organization has a practice of "calling out the elephants in the room" (Winters, 2017).*
- *Selection of food and refreshments at department-sponsored functions takes into account religious and personal preferences.*
- *Flexibility exists to accommodate personal responsibilities outside the job.*
- *The organization actively supports philanthropic causes of diverse groups.*
- *There are trained dialogue facilitators within the company to support employee development and address personal concerns or any inequity issues that arise.*

Above all, creating an inclusive environment for all has to be a part of the company's long-term strategic plan. There also needs to be a deliberate move away from isolated trainings. Instead, companies need to nurture an environment that encourages *regular and consistent* discussions about race equity—even if these conversations are difficult to navigate and are certain to provoke anxiety and discomfort. The ultimate goal should be long-term climate change in the organization.

Being proactive is also essential. Companies shouldn't wait for a crisis to emerge. Instead, ensure there are regular opportunities for employees to talk about race-related incidents and how they are impacted by them. The caveat is to establish ground rules for these conversations and that employees feel safe about sharing their personal information without retaliation. Lastly, there needs to be a sense that company climate change is everyone's responsibility because "cordoning off diversity and inclusion efforts in a single department signals those issues aren't priorities, making challenging conversations easier to avoid" (Banks 2016).

Engaging in Bold, Inclusive Conversations™

Preparing to engage in Bold, Inclusive Conversations™, particularly about polarizing topics like race, is a challenging process. Dialogue facilitators need to be aware that some employees are coming to work carrying a lot of hurt, have a deeper understanding of what the issues are, and go through the process of acquiring the necessary skills to be able to address those issues in an effective manner. The latter is a developmental process which will require persistent work on their part. Before engaging in these

conversations, Winters (2017) suggests facilitators consider the following:

Accept you will be starting from a place of vulnerability. Recognize you may not know much about the situation at hand but that you are willing to learn. Phrases like, "I don't know as much as I would like to know about [insert topic]," "I am new at this and recognize I may need your support," will go a long way to start building trusting relationships with employees.

Think about the details. Before embarking in polarizing conversations, decide ahead of time ***why*** you will be pursuing the conversation, ***who*** needs to be involved, ***what*** is the expected outcome, ***where*** it should take place, etc. These details matter since they can impact the outcome of the conversation. For example, in thinking about who should attend, there are many individuals who could be involved such as human resources, affinity groups, company leaders, and many others. *How will they add/contribute to the conversation? How will the conversation impact actual company policy?* Having the CEO present may be a great opportunity for her/him become aware of some of the issues employees are facing. *On the other hand, will her/his presence stifle the free flow of conversation? Will employees feel they can air their concerns freely without impacting their position in the company negatively?*

Practice inclusive listening. Studies show that most of us listen only at 30 percent capacity (Thiederman, 1991). Very often, as someone speaks, we immediately start thinking about how we are going to respond and, as a result, miss a lot of important details of what is being shared. When engaging in Bold, Inclusive Conversations™, listen with the intent to understand and not to reply. This also allows you to ask clarifying questions (e.g. *Could you tell me more? Could you elaborate on this last point?*), or check for understanding throughout the conversation (e.g., *Let me see if I understood you correctly… What I heard you say…*).

Remember what you bring to the conversation. As discussed earlier, remember that you will be wearing your "tinted lenses" throughout the conversation, and so will your employees. This will certainly impact your interpretation of the situation. While it is not necessary that you remove your lenses, you must be aware you have them on. The key is to try to understand the situation from your 'others" perspective, so that you can make the necessary adjustments to achieve mutual understanding.

Use discontent and conflict to your advantage. In other words, use them as golden opportunities for everyone to listen, respond non-defensively, learn from each other, grow, and eventually find a pathway for an equitable solution. Becoming defensive when faced with conflict or discomfort only serves to hinder progress and open dialogue. Be ready to open the door for somebody else's perspective.

Keep practicing. As highlighted throughout this paper, getting yourself to the point where you feel ready to engage in and facilitate Bold, Inclusive Conversations™ is a journey. It will take daily and persistent work on your part until you feel comfortable in facilitating those conversations. More importantly, you do not have to wait until you have mastered all of the skills before you start facilitating polarizing conversations. The key is to get started on your journey but know that you may stumble at times. However, it is essential that you do keep on taking the steps necessary to create a truly inclusive workplace culture where everyone feels comfortable in addressing race and racism without fear.

Interested in increasing your organization's capacity to engage in Bold, Inclusive Conversations™? Contact us today: learning@wintersgroup.com.

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