



## Re-Examining Race & Workplace Trauma: The Practicum

The Winters Group, Inc. *Let's Talk About It! Series*  
with: Mary-Frances Winters, Travis L. Jones, Danielle Busby, PhD

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# Presenters

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**Mary-Frances Winters**  
CEO/Founder

- CEO/Founder, The Winters Group
- D&I Expert and Pioneer
- Author, Keynote Speaker, Change Agent, "Winds of Change" Awardee



**Travis L. Jones**  
Sr. Consultant

- Sr. Consultant, The Winters Group
- Educator and Instructor with focus on race, ethnicity, religion, culture
- Expert in Organizational Culture & Leadership Development



**Danielle Busby, Ph.D.**  
University of Michigan Health Center

- Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellow
- Extensive training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for youth with trauma histories
- Research examines effects of community violence exposure on Black youth



# be

- ...open
- ...authentic
- ...engaged
- ...comfortable with being uncomfortable
- ...non-judgmental
- ...understanding



# What We Hope to Accomplish

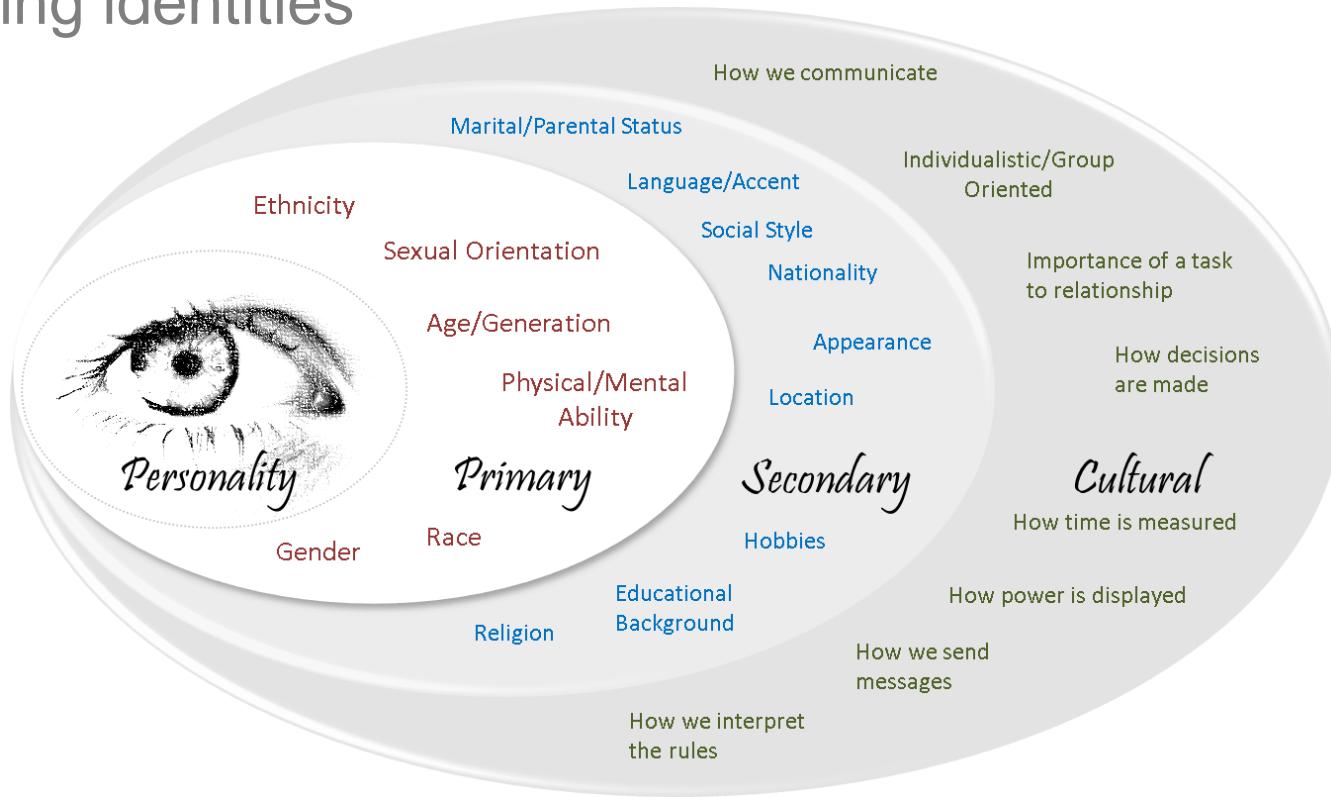
- Take a deeper dive into understanding trauma from the clinical psychological perspective
- Share more strategies & data around creating inclusive environments during times of tragedy
- Review findings from Winters Group Race & Trauma Survey
- Provide a forum for participants to practice facilitating and addressing difficult dialogue



# Setting Context: The Role of Identity

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- Our worldview and reactions to tragedy & trauma are influenced by our complex, intersecting identities



Adapted from Gardenswartz and Rowe



# Revisiting Trauma

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# trauma



*noun* | trau·ma | \traū-mə, 'trō-\  
|

**Experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions:**

- *Single event, multiple events, or a set of circumstances*
- *Experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening*
- *Has lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing*

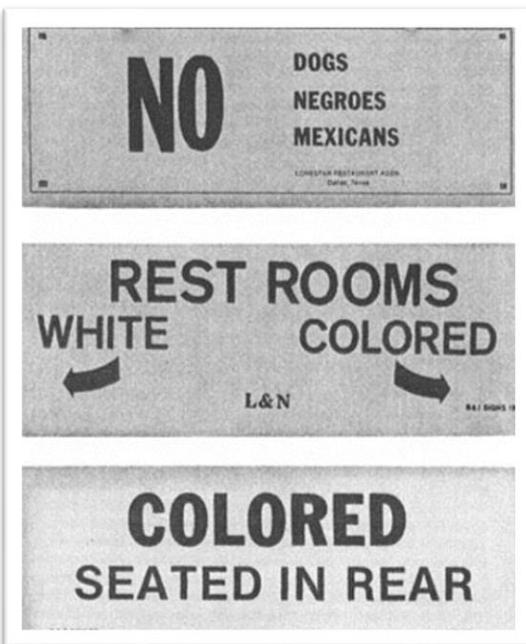


Source: SAMSAH, 2012

# Brief Theoretical Background

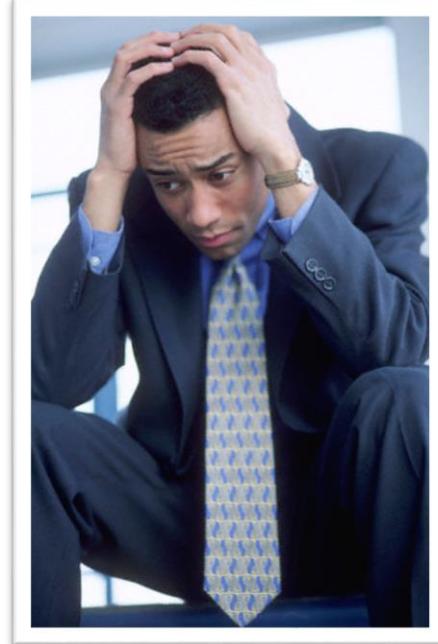
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- Historical based trauma
- Race-based traumatic stress
- Carlson's model of traumatic stress



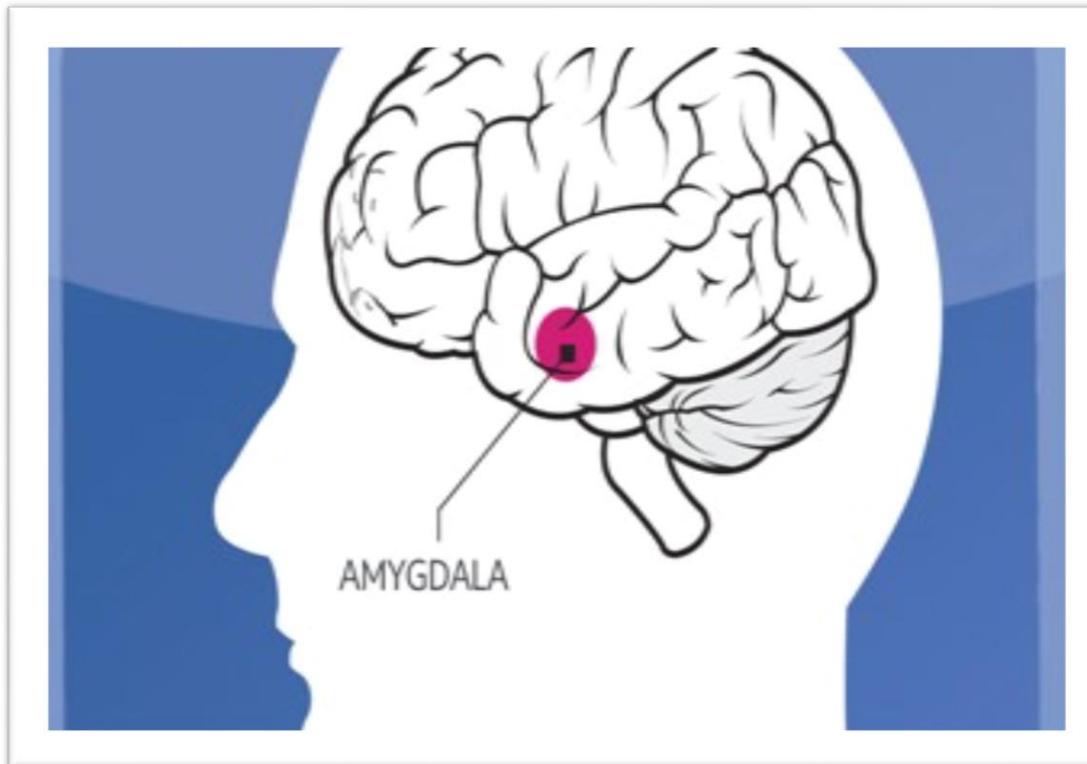
*"It is important for us to know our history, because we are carrying it."*

*-Maria Yellow  
Horse Brave Heart,  
PhD*



# Fight, Flight, or Freeze

When a person experiences a traumatic event, all of the sights, sounds, and smells in their environment get instantaneously paired with a surge of adrenaline, stress and fear



# Responses to Trauma

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## Immediate Reactions

- Numbness
- Sadness
- Anger
- Helplessness
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Difficulty concentrating and problems with memory
- Rumination or racing thoughts
- Strong identification with victims
- Elevated heartbeat, respiration, and heartbeat
- Greater startle response
- Immediate disruption of life assumptions (fairness, safety, goodness)

## Delayed Reactions

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Emotional detachment
- Avoidance of event reminders
- Decreased activity level
- Difficulty expressing oneself
- Intrusive memories
- Preoccupation with event
- Persistent fatigue
- Elevated levels of cortisol
- Suicidal thoughts
- Foreshortened sense of future
- Reactivation of previous traumatic events



# “Why can’t I just shake it off?”

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*Rapid exposure to numerous traumas,  
**one after another**, lessens one's ability to process  
the event before the next.*

*This creates a cumulative effect, making it more  
difficult to heal from any one trauma.*



# Coping & Self-Care: Individual

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## Coping with Race-Based Trauma

- Affirmation and acknowledgement
- Create space for race
- Racial storytelling
- Validation
- The process of naming
- Externalize devaluation
- Counteract devaluation
- Rechanneling rage and anger
- Meaning-making
- Skills-building approach
- Strengths-based model (e.g., acknowledge factors of resilience)

## Ways to Engage in Effective Self-Care

- Assess current self-care practices across different types of self-care
- Take a holistic approach and write plan down
- Learn what is best for you—will look different for everyone
- Just say no. —Set healthy limits
- Establish healthy social support networks
- “Check-in” with self when needed
- Notice when self-care engagement is going well
- Practice!



Adapted partially from Hardy, 2013

# Self-Care: Role of Employer

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## Establish Organizational Wellness Programs

- On or off-site services sponsored by organizations/companies which attempt to promote good physical and mental health.

## Elicit Employee Participation

- Engage employees in the development and implementation of wellness programs. Assess the needs of employees and provide opportunities for employees to provide input and ideas about ways to promote self-care in the workplace.

## Provide Incentives for Self-Care

- Establish a work culture that allows employees time to engage in self-care activities. Provide incentives for employees who practice self-care (e.g., incentives for using vacation days etc.).



# TWG Race & Trauma Survey- Words Behind the Trauma

***“Realizing how privilege comes with being born white has left me brokenhearted. There are habits, life-choices, and instincts that I will never have to practice because of this.”***

*I am concerned for my son and grandchildren in the wake of the recent murders of African Americans at the hands of the police and the subsequent retaliatory violence/murder targeting police officers.*

***“I felt suffocated at work because there was no space to talk about and process events that's happened. I try to distract myself by keeping busy, but it wasn't effective. My productivity was at its all time low. I was suffering quietly on my own at my cubicle. It's ridiculous that it's this way.***

***“I am also experiencing more health symptoms like tiredness, stomach aches, high blood pressure, and feel distracted for long periods of time during the work day.”***

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***“As a white mom of two black sons, I'd add bouts of periodic terror to the list. I'm beyond frustrated that "all lives matter" seems to be the most common response to "black lives matter."***

***If all lives really DID matter, there would be no need for this conversation. The sad reality is all lives DON'T matter; or at least, they all don't matter to the same degree..”***

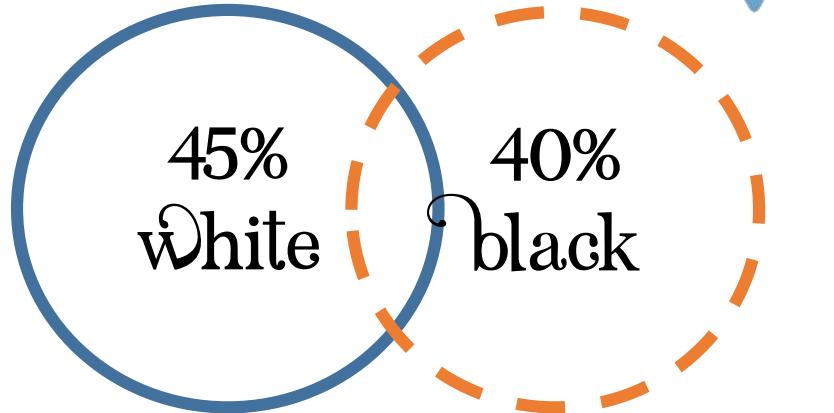
***“While the events nationally are troubling, what is most concerning is that my institution has said nothing. It makes me question the values of the institution and whether I belong here.”***



# TWG Race & Trauma Survey - Demographics



400  
RESPONSES



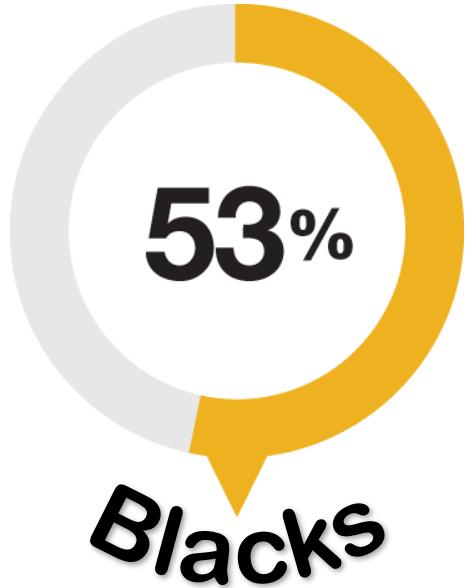
47%  
Generation X

32%  
Baby Boomer

21%  
Generation Y



# TWG Race & Trauma Survey – How much do we really understand each other?



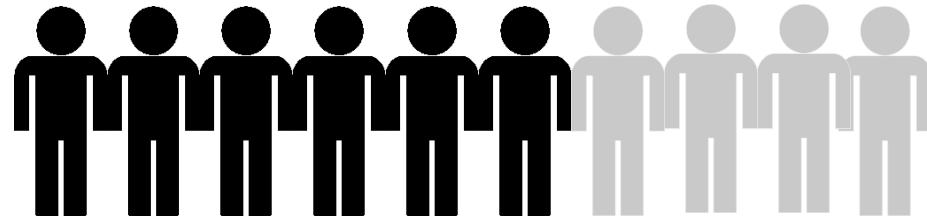
*believe their co-workers have **little to no understanding** of their feelings around recent events...*

yet...



*believe they **somewhat or fully understand** their coworkers' feelings*

# TWG Race & Trauma Survey – *How much do we really understand each other?*



## 6 out of 10 Blacks

*believe their organizations DO NOT understand their unique experiences in the workplace*



## 6 out of 10 Whites

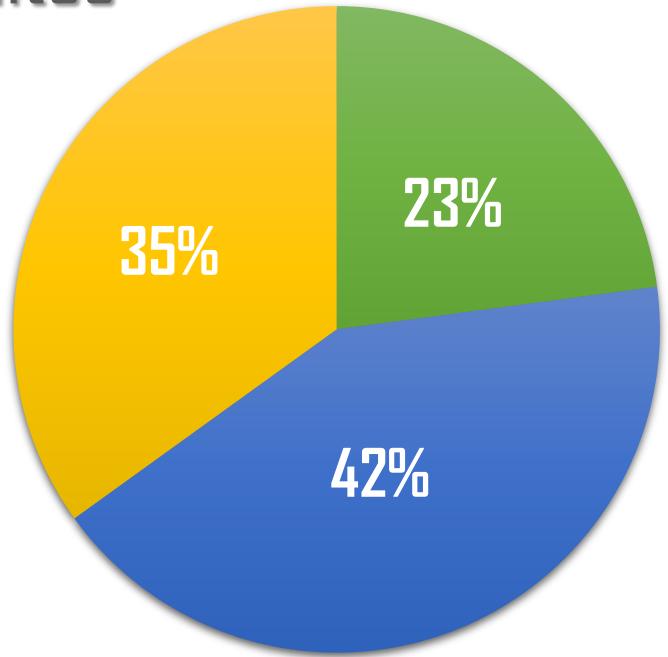
*believe their organizations DO understand the unique experiences of Black employees in the workplace*



# TWG Race & Trauma Survey – Are race relations getting **worse** or **better**?

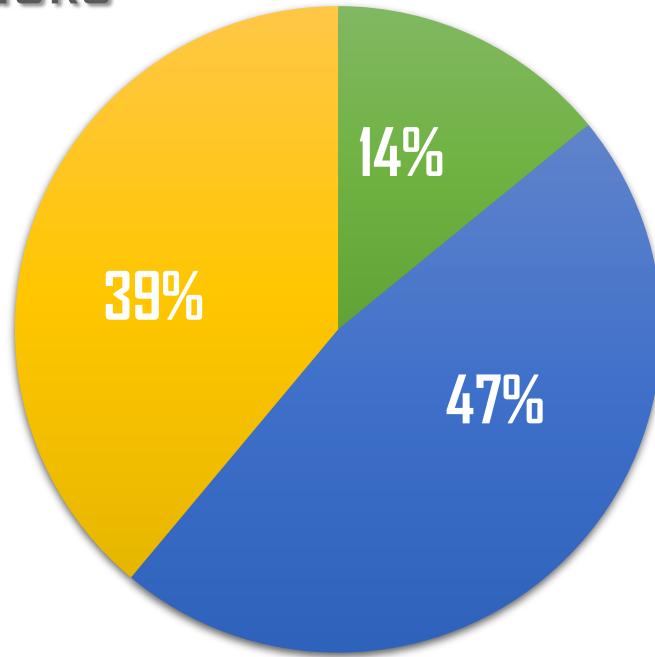


Whites



- Getting better
- Getting worse
- Not much has changed

Blacks



- Getting better
- Getting worse
- Not much has changed

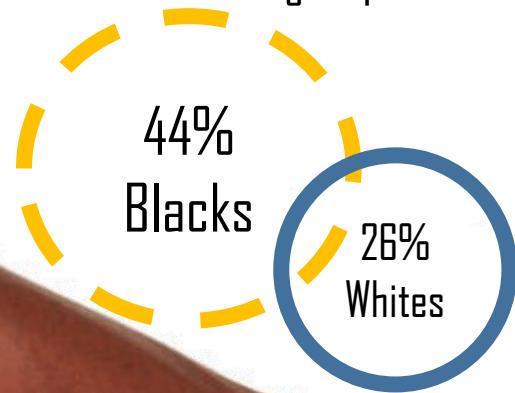


# Pew Study- *Differing Perspectives on Improving Race Relations*

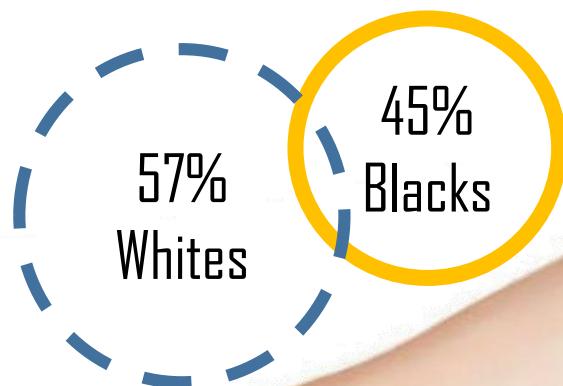
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To improve race relations, it is more important to focus on ...

Unique Experiences of different  
racial/ethnic groups



What different groups have in  
common



Source:  
PewResearchCenter



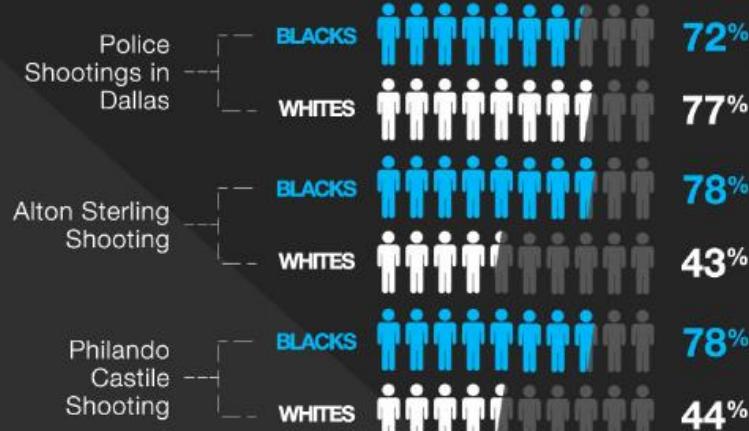
# Radio One & Edison Study- Disparities in Empathy & Concern

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Study showed White Americans were less than 1/2 as likely to be concerned about recent shootings than Black Americans



## % VERY Concerned About Recent Shootings



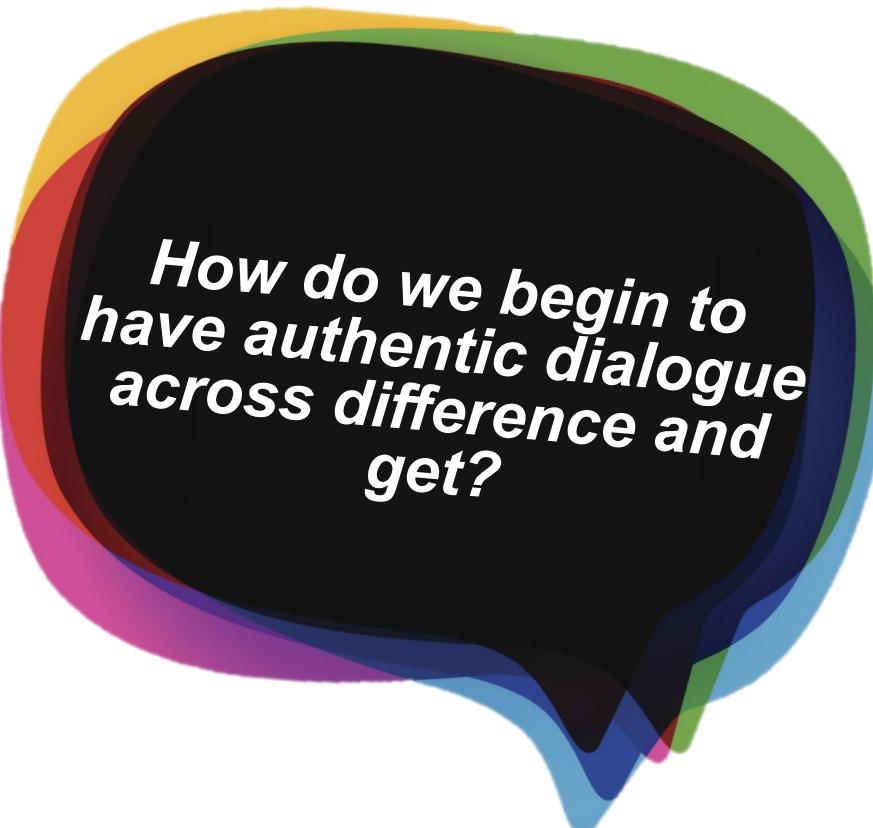
BLACK, WHITE & BLUE  
A Spotlight on Race in America  
RADIO ONE ONE HOUR

Source:  
<http://blackwhiteblue.newsone.com/#work>

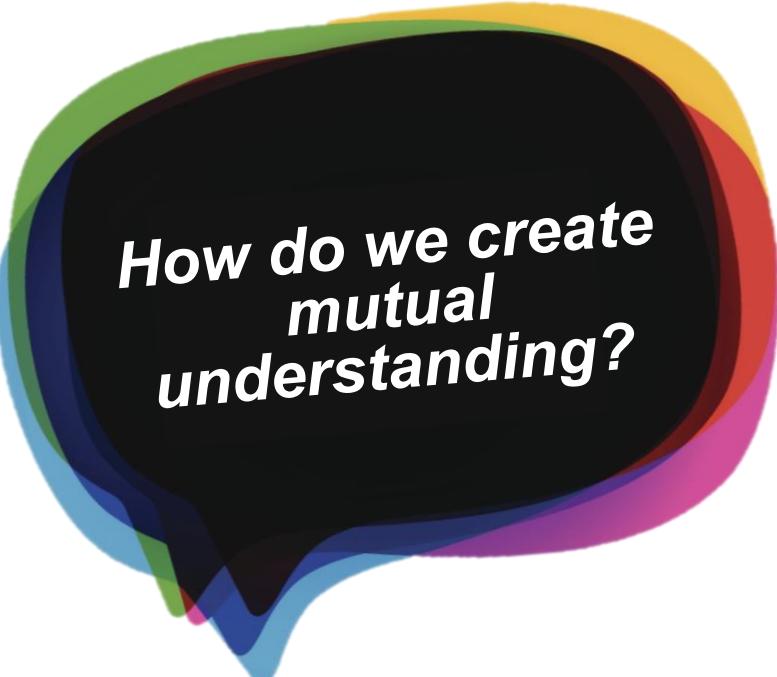


# The Practicum

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*How do we begin to  
have authentic dialogue  
across difference and  
get?*



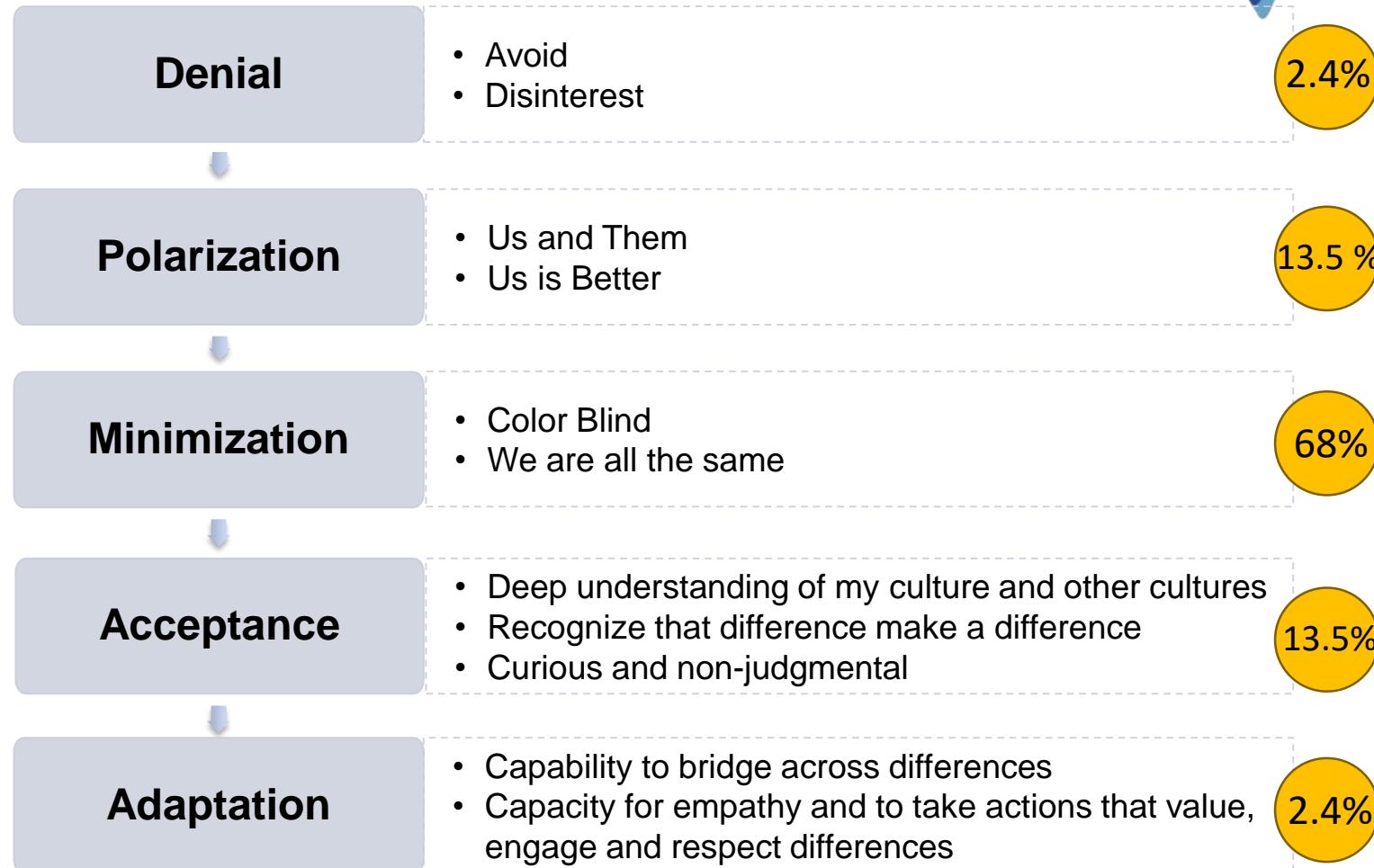
*How do we create  
mutual  
understanding?*



# Brief Recap: Is Your Team/Organization Ready?

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## Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity



Source: Milton Bennett, Mitchell Hammer



# Common Reactions to Race-Based Dialogue, BLM, etc.

*When we understand how people experience difference, we're better prepared to respond accordingly.*

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## Denial

- Avoid
- Disinterest

## Polarization

- Us and Them
- Us is Better

## Minimization

- Color Blind
- We are all the same

## Acceptance

- Recognize that difference make a difference
- Curious and non-judgmental

“All Lives Matter!”

“This really doesn't have anything to do with race.”

“What about Black on Black crime?”

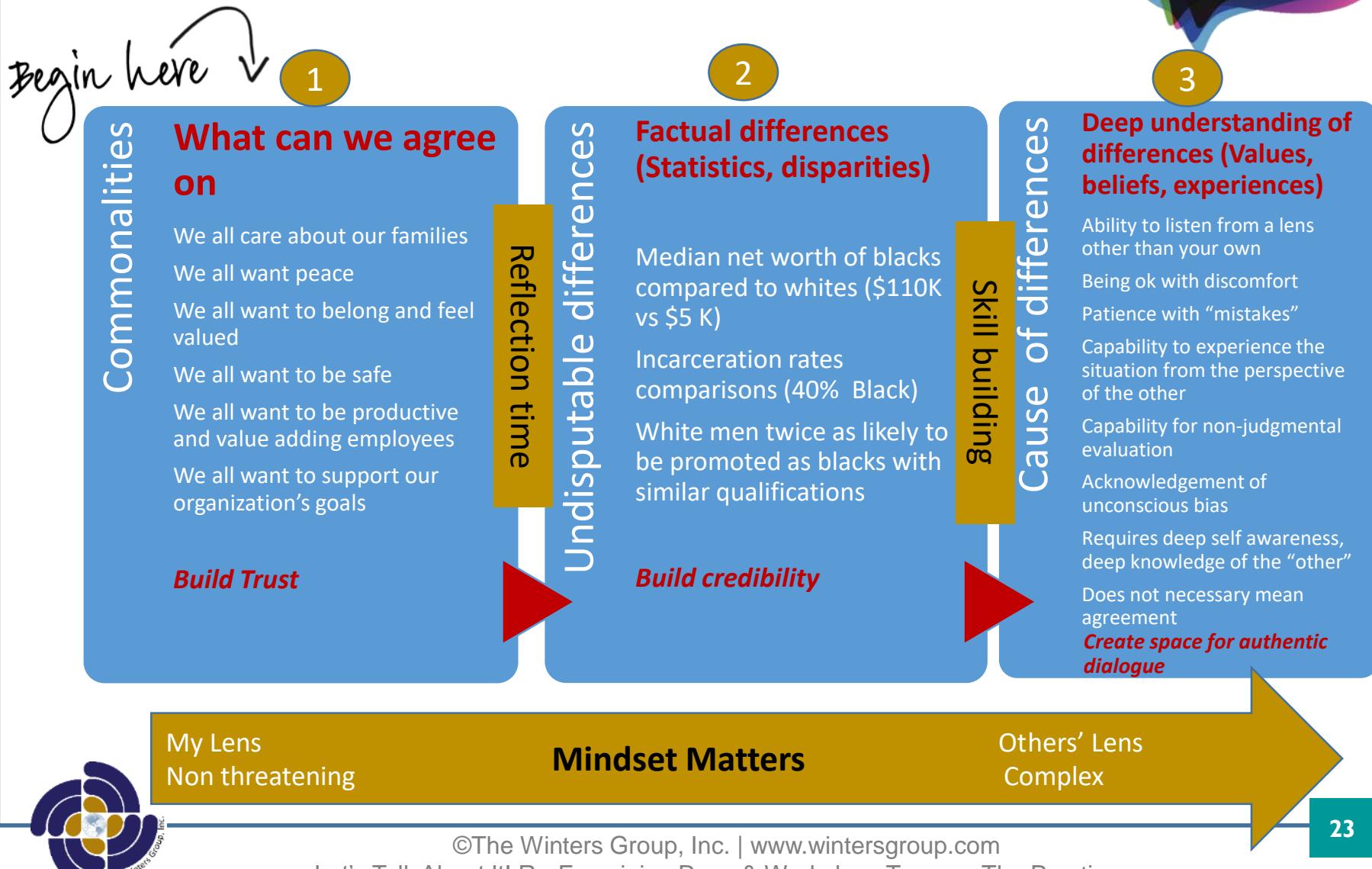
“I get it, but what can we do to fix it?”

**\*In the chat, which orientations match these common responses to race and #BlackLivesMatter?**



# Brief Recap: Developmental Dialogue Process™

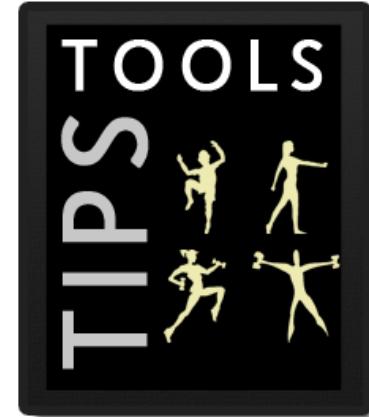
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# Brief Recap: *Using the Developmental Dialogue Process™ to Start One-One Dialogue*

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- **Step 1: Probe for desire**
  - I don't claim to understand how the recent events may be impacting you. Is it something you would like to talk about? I am open and would like to learn more from your perspective.
  - If no desire, then leave the door open to discuss at another time
- **Step 2: If desire exists, seek common ground**
  - Remain neutral and non-judgmental
  - Know the "facts" as they have been presented from all sides
  - Goal is to build trust and reach common ground during first discussion
  - May need to keep your opinion out of the first discussion
- **Step 3: Decide how far to take the first conversation**
  - Listen to each other
  - Seek first to understand
  - Be tolerant of mistakes, misinformation from your perspective
  - Affirm perspectives on the facts
  - Do not debate
  - Be ok with non-closure
- **Step 4: Agree to meet again after time to reflect**
  - In the interim, gather more facts
  - Seek out other opinions and perspectives
  - Check your own biases and beliefs
- **Step 5: Meet again and again as desired (Cross Cultural Learning Partners)**
  - Begin to share differences
  - Remain non-judgmental
  - Try to see the situation from the other person's perspective
  - Be ok if conclusion is agree to disagree



# Scenario #1 - Leader

- You are a leader or HR partner at your organization.
- You have noticed that other members of the leadership team are apprehensive towards discussing race. They see it as divisive and irrelevant to the workplace. Even though D&I is an area of focus for the organization, many believe these conversations, along with politics, have no place in the work environment.
- **How might you use the Developmental Dialogue Process to engage your counterparts in dialogue? (See next slide)**



## How would you start a dialogue using the Developmental Dialogue Process™?

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- Step 1: Focus on commonalities. *What commonalities would you highlight to set a common ground?*
- Before moving to step 2 allow time for reflection
- Step 2: Agree on facts as they are known. *What facts could you use to establish credibility and engage leaders?*
  - *What types of resistance should we anticipate?*
  - *How do we respond?*
- Before moving to step 3 allow time to develop skills
  - Empathy
  - Recognize our unconscious biases
  - Practice non-judgment



## Scenario #2- Coping Employee

- You are an African-American employee coping with the recent acquittal of a police officer who shot and killed an unarmed black boy. You've been consumed by the social media outrage and coverage of the reactions from disappointed community members.
- In the office lunch room, the local news is on and covering the story. Several coworkers are watching it on TV.
- One of your co-workers states: *"I just don't understand why people would riot their own neighborhoods. Shouldn't they be this angry about Black on Black crime? I just don't understand why we make these things about race. It's really about what's right and wrong."*
- **How might you engage in effective dialogue, while also practicing self-care? (See next slide)**



## How would you start a dialogue using the Developmental Dialogue Process™?

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- Probe for Desire & “Check-in” with yourself. Reflect on if you’re ready to have this dialogue. *What are some ways to confirm if you are or are not ready to have productive dialogue?*
- Identify commonalities. *What are some commonalities you could use to engage your co-worker in understanding?*
- Agree on facts as they are known
  - *What facts could you use to support your perspective and build credibility?*
- Decide how far to take the conversation
  - *What context clues could you use to gauge when the conversation has gone too far or if it should continue?*
- Agree to meet again after time to reflect
  - *What mediums or venues could be used to continue the conversation?*



# Scenario #3 - Ally

- You are white employee and consider yourself an ally.
- You noticed that one of your black co-workers seems distant (*this is from your perspective*), and assume it may be due to recent events around racial injustice.
- You want to communicate your support and get their thoughts on how you can help. However, you don't want to come off offensive or make assumptions of the degree to which they are impacted.
- *How do you go about initiating that dialogue? (See next slide)*



## How would you start a dialogue using the Developmental Dialogue Process™?

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- Probe for Desire & “Check-in” with yourself. Reflect on if you’re ready to have this dialogue. *What are some ways to confirm if your coworker is ready?*
  - *What if they are not ready, how do you “leave the door open?”*
- If desire exists, identify commonalities. Practice Empathy, not Sympathy. *What are some methods you could use to establish common ground and build trust?*
- Agree on facts as they are known
  - *What facts could you use to support your perspective and build credibility?*
- Decide how far to take the conversation
  - *What context clues could you use to gauge when the conversation has gone too far or if it should continue?*
- Agree to meet again after time to reflect
  - *What mediums or venues could be used to continue the conversation?*



# Scenario #4 – Leader

- You are a leader or manager.
- You recognize the need to create a space for dialogue around recent events, but are concerned for the polarizing views that exist on your team.
- One of your white team member's husband is on the police force. One of your black team members is heavily involved in community and social justice spaces.
- How do you begin a dialogue and create the environment that is inclusive of and considerate to polarizing perspectives? (See next slide)



How would you start a team dialogue at work about race-based trauma, etc. using the Developmental Dialogue Process™?

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- Step 1: Focus on commonalities. *What commonalities could you identify to establish common ground and build trust among the team?*
- Before moving to step 2 allow time for reflection
- Step 2: Agree on facts as they are known. *What facts could be presented to build credibility?*
  - *What types of resistance should we anticipate?*
  - *How do we respond?*
- *What context clues could you use to gauge when the conversation has gone too far or if it should continue?*
- Before moving to step 3 allow time to develop skills
  - Empathy
  - Recognize our unconscious biases
  - Practice non-judgment



# Remember: *Authentic Dialogue Occurs When...*

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- Trust has been built
- High level of self-awareness (e.g. blind spots, unconscious bias)
- People will not feel judged or punished
- There is a curiosity to learn more
- Skilled facilitation for team discussions
- Commitment to ongoing learning
- Commitment to expand exposure to difference
  - Example, cross cultural learning partners



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