

Resource:

Anti-Racist Sex Ed



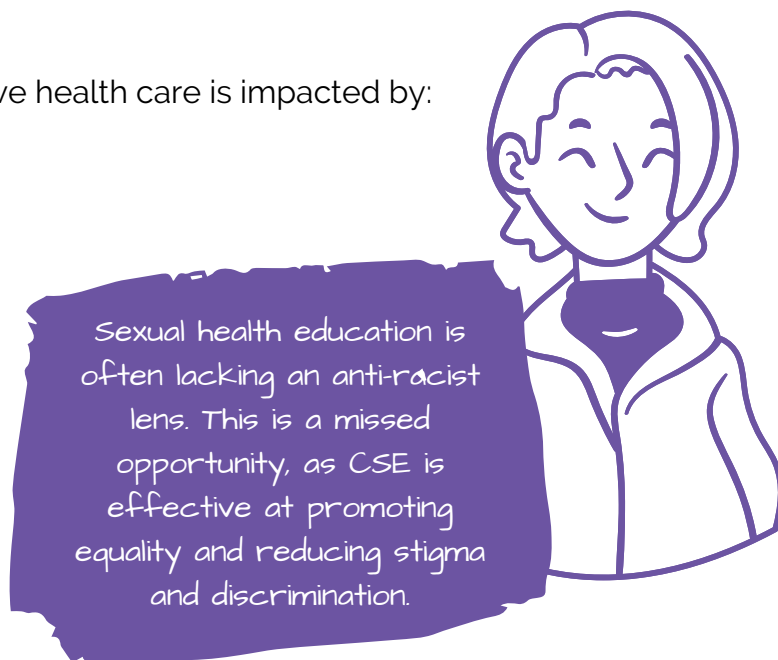
Good sex ed has the power to be transformative. Beyond the birds and the bees, sexual health education has the ability to shape the way young people interact with each other and the world. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) teaches young people about power and privilege, and equity in relationships. They learn to stand up for what they believe in. CSE equips young people for the real world. It addresses inequity and injustice. Responsive, honest and inclusive sex ed must be anti-racist.

Anti-racism

Anti-racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach and is set up in opposition to individual racist behaviours and impacts. Anti-racism has three broad goals. First, to examine power dynamics, as race and social differences are related to power, who has it and how it is used. Second, it must use an intersectional lens to analyze and understand social oppressions. Third, it must apply this analysis to individual, societal, and systemic practices. Anti-racism is rooted in critical race theory (CRT), which is the theoretical framework used to examine society and culture as they relate to race, power and laws. Anti-racist sex education is built on interrogating systemic factors contributing to inequity.

Access to sexual and reproductive health care is impacted by:

- Distrust of the healthcare system by Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC)
- Educational systems perpetuating colonial ideals
- Inaccessible or irrelevant content in CSE
- Cultural or language barriers
- Stigma
- Stereotyping
- Prejudice
- Discrimination



"Individuals who have experienced systemic stigma, exclusion, marginalization, mental health issues and discrimination based on race, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, drug use, or involvement in sex work may also be more vulnerable to STBBI. Canada's colonial history and continued health and social inequities experienced by Indigenous Peoples also contribute to STBBI vulnerability" (Pan-Canadian Framework for Action on STBBIs, 2018)

History

To understand the nature of racism in sexual and reproductive health we need to look at the history of medical racism and health inequities. Medical racism is "the systematic and wide-spread racism against people of colour within the medical system." It includes both the racism in our society that makes BIPOC less healthy, the disparity in health coverage by race, and the biases held by healthcare workers against BIPOC in their care. From medical experimentation on enslaved people in the United States, to birth control trials on impoverished populations in Puerto Rico, and eugenics practiced here in Canada, BIPOC have always been subjugated through control of their sexual and reproductive health. The trauma and violence inflicted on people of colour in the process of colonization are deeply rooted, and continue to impact the health outcomes of racialized populations in Canada today.

Impact

Medical racism still occurs today. Stigma, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination all have tangible impacts on health outcomes for BIPOC. A lack of inclusivity or culturally competency in primary, secondary, and post-secondary curriculums makes the content less relevant and responsive to the needs of BIPOC. When it comes to sexual health outcomes, these gaps in care and education have repercussions. For example, Black, Caribbean and African youth in Canada reported that racism was a significant barrier in their access to sexual health. The Toronto Teen Survey (2009) found that Black Canadians had the lowest rates of accessing services at a sexual health clinic, at only 34%. Indigenous people also experience higher rates of poor health outcomes than non-indigenous people in Canada, which includes HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018). As Canada's demographics continue to change, educators should be aware of the changing needs of the population. In our province, the health education curricula have not been updated in a decade. In 2006, visible minorities represented only 3.6% of the population; however, that increased to 10.8% in 2016. If sexual health education is going to be effective, it is crucial that it is relevant and responsive to the needs of all students in the classroom.

Anti-racist sex education is not raceless. A raceless curriculum is the opposite of an anti-racist education. Unfortunately, many curriculums adhere to this racelessness. A raceless curriculum omits discussion of difference and social issues, while anti-racist education is built on interrogating systemic factors. It is not only for BIPOC students. Anti-racism does not exclude those who identify as white. Whiteness is also racialised, although it is often perceived as the norm, default or neutral. All students need to be aware of racism and discrimination, and equipped to recognize and combat it. Anti-racism is not the same as multiculturalism. While multiculturalism focuses on the superficial or celebration of culture, it does so at the expense of in-depth discussions on systemic issues. Multiculturalism avoids the sometimes painful discussions of resistance, colonialism, racism, and imperialism.

Representation Matters

Anti-racist sex ed considers the experiences of all the students in the classroom. They should see themselves in the resources that are handed out, and the videos they watch. Classroom materials should include diverse names and photos that depict darker skin tones. They should hear discussions that include stigma, discrimination, and the impacts of race on health. They should feel included, valued, and respected by their teachers and by their peers. Moreover, when BIPOC educators, or leadership are involved in health promotion it can improve engagement among BIPOC students. Research on increasing sexual health accessibility for minorities found that identifying community leaders to champion STBBI issues helps address the stigma and isolation BIPOC experience.

Classroom Conversations

It is important to start from a place of mutual respect. This might include trigger warnings, community guidelines, discussing safe space, and offering land and/or privilege acknowledgements. These are complex topics that may directly impact students livelihood. It is important that all students feel seen, heard and validated. Plan ahead for how you will address conflict or disrespect, including a plan on how to de-escalate or call in hateful or misguided comments.

Laying a Foundation

Start with the basics on identity and self. Then move on to talk about race, background and history. This gives students the opportunity to reflect and talk about something they are experienced with. Introduce key terms like anti-racism, oppression, and discrimination. Ensure that your understanding of the terms is strong and can be communicated clearly to students. Once you have established an understanding of the basics, it will be easier to discuss complex topics. Building on this foundation should be a continuous process across disciplines/subjects.

Open and Honest

Create space for open dialogue about how racism affects perceptions of BIPOC in social spaces (i.e. stereotypes and sexualization), as well as in health care. Discuss the social, historical, and systemic factors that contribute to disparities in sexual health. Moreover, bring attention to how racism and discrimination relate to inequitable health outcomes. Discuss advocacy and anti-racism. Discuss how they can promote dignity and respect. On a larger scale how can they advocate for inclusive and anti-racist policy. Most importantly, make space for these conversations in a safe and affirming environment.

Recommendations

Sexual health curriculums need to be evaluated to ensure they offer honest, inclusive, culturally responsive and ultimately, anti-racist education. If CSE is to equip youth for the world beyond the classroom, it must also equip them for complex conversations, especially around the topic of power and stigma.

Resources

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights

- Beyond the Basics (2017)
- The State of Sex-ed in Canada (2020)



CATIE

- CHAMP: Mobilizing people living with HIV and allies to champion HIV prevention and care in ethno-racial communities (2016)

Native Women's Association of Canada

- Knowing Your Rights Toolkit: Sexual and Reproductive Health Booklet (2020)

Public Health Agency of Canada

- At a glance: Prevention of sexually transmitted and blood borne infections among ethnocultural communities (2015)
- Key Health Inequalities in Canada: A National Portrait – Executive Summary (2018)
- Pan-Canadian Framework for Action on STBBIs (2018)

Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology Canada

- First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health (2013)

Sex Information and Education Council of Canada

- Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education
- Statement Anti-Racism Statement (2020)

Educators

- AMAZE
- Karen BK Chan
- Dr. Tracie Gilbert
- Melissa Pintor Carnegey - Sex Positive Families
- Native Youth Sexual Health Network

Guiding Principles of D.E.I. work in Sex Education

Know who you are talking to.

The history of sexual oppression in the U.S. is not uniform and neither should be the education you provide. What historical traumas has your particular population experienced? Are they in the distant past? Are they still happening today? How are they still affecting people?

Know where your information comes from.

Recognize and explain the problematic and traumatizing histories of sexual oppression. Acknowledge that the history of sexual health and education in the U.S. has been offered inequitably and built on the backs of marginalized populations. Discuss the nuances of that history and the fact that the outcomes of some events are still felt/present/in use today.

Know what your mission is.

Use Reproductive Justice to frame your work. What biases do you have regarding what people “should” do? What experiences and traumas and cultures are you not taking into account? Why are you teaching what you are teaching? What are you hoping people will learn or gain from you?

The Tenets of Reproductive Justice

- The right to not have children.
- The right to have the children we want to have.
- The right to control the conditions under which we have children.
- The right to raise children in safe and healthy environments.
- The right to maintain personal bodily autonomy.

<https://www.sistersong.net/>

Some Shared Language

Anti-Racist: The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. "Not racist" in action.

BIPOC: Acronym, stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color. Used to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness which shapes experiences and relationship to white supremacy.

Decolonization: The process of deconstructing colonial ideologies/privilege of Western thought.

Marginalization: Social exclusion, treatment of a person or group as peripheral. Often includes denial of rights, resources, or social supports.

Oppression: Systemic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful group for social, economic, or political benefit.

White Supremacy: A racist ideology based on the belief that white people are superior to people of other races and should be dominant. White supremacy is not just an individual attitude but extends to how systems and institutions operate.

History of Reproductive Oppression Worksheet

1. How much of this history, if any, was new to you?

2. What is missing from this timeline?

3. How do you see this history showing up in your work?

4. What is your responsibility to this history?

Leaders in the Field of Anti-Racist Sex Education

Ericka Hart

[Linktr.ee/ihartericka85](https://linktr.ee/ihartericka85)

Hoodrat to Headwrap: A Decolonized Podcast

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hoodrat-to-headwrap-a-decolonized-podcast/id1279429651>

Ericka Hart (pronouns: she/they) is a black queer femme activist, writer, highly acclaimed speaker and award-winning sexuality educator with a Master's of Education in Human Sexuality from Widener University. **A Decolonized Podcast** for lovers on the margins, join your resident sexuality educator Ericka Hart and Deep East Oakland's very own Ebony Donnley, as we game give, dismantle white supremacy and kiki in the cosmos somewhere between radical hood epistemological black queer love ethics, pop culture, house plants and a sea of books.

Bianca I Laureano

www.anteuppd.com/our-team

www.wocshn.org

Bianca I Laureano is an award-winning educator, curriculum writer, and sexologist. She is a foundress of the Women of Color Sexual Health Network (WOCSHN), The LatiNegrxs Project, and hosts LatinoSexuality.com. She has written several curricula that focus on communities of color: What's the REAL DEAL about Love and Solidarity? (2015) and Communication MixTape: Speak On It Vol 1. (2017) and wrote the sexual and reproductive justice discussion guide for the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene published in 2018. Bianca has been on the board of CLAGS, the LGBTQ Center at CUNY, The Black Girl Project, and SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective.

Loretta Ross

www.lorettajross.com

www.sistersong.net

Loretta Ross is an academic and activist who has dedicated many years to advocating for women's rights and reproductive justice. Most notably, she is a cofounder of SisterSong and Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, served as a previous Executive Director of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, and is one of twelve women credited with coining the phrase and framework "reproductive justice." Ross continues to be regarded as a voice of authority on women's rights. She continually combats racism, sexism and sexual violence, particularly by creating coalitions by and for women affected by these inequities.

Stephanie Zapata

www.stephaniespeakshere.com

Steph Zapata is a well-seasoned, award-winning, Nuyorican sexuality educator, & space creator. They have become a long-term catalyst for change within sexuality education through their radically intentional approaches that call out systems of oppression, and call-in individuals and community to disrupt & reimagine what can be. Their work focuses on collective liberation tactics through innovative and honest sex ed that creates space for the whole self, and the whole truth. Steph is a self-titled Unprofessional Professional who offers no apology for the disruption of white supremacy through the joy of decolonial sexuality education.

Websites and Resources

Racial Justice in Sex Education

www.advocatesforyouth.org/racial-justice-in-sex-education

Advocates for Youth and SisterReach, along with other key experts and thought-leaders in the field, have created free, fully online e-learning modules to address issues of racial justice in sex education. Through five engaging and dynamic e-learning modules delivered via Moodle, each 30-45min in length, educators can learn and reflect on the following issues as they relate to sex education;

- Race and Racism
- White Privilege and Sex Ed
- Racism and Youth Sexual Health Outcomes
- Racial Justice in Sex Ed
- Reproductive Justice in Sex Ed

Sex Education Collaborative

Centering Racial Justice in Sex Education

<https://sexeducationcollaborative.org/resources/centeringracialjustice>

Centering Racial Justice in Sex Education: Strategies for Engaging Professionals and Young People. As many areas of public health are working to address racial justice and equity, it is important to acknowledge that the field of sex education needs to be included in this conversation. Not only do practices and delivery of sex education need to be challenged and changed to meet the needs of youth of color, but there is also a need for more research dedicated to this topic. This practice paper serves as a guide to providing racially just practices for those working in the field of sex education. The recommendations offered in this paper transcend attempts to, for example, meet baseline requirements to assert a leadership perspective in addressing racial justice and equity with your staff of color.

SisterReach

www.sisterreach-tn.org

Founded October 2011 in Memphis, TN, SisterReach is a grassroots 501(c)3 nonprofit that supports the reproductive autonomy of women and teens of color, poor and rural women, LGBTQIA+ people and their families through the framework of Reproductive Justice. Offering online learning modules, virtual meetups, policy and voter engagement, adult sex ed classes and more.

S.L.A.M. Virtual Conference

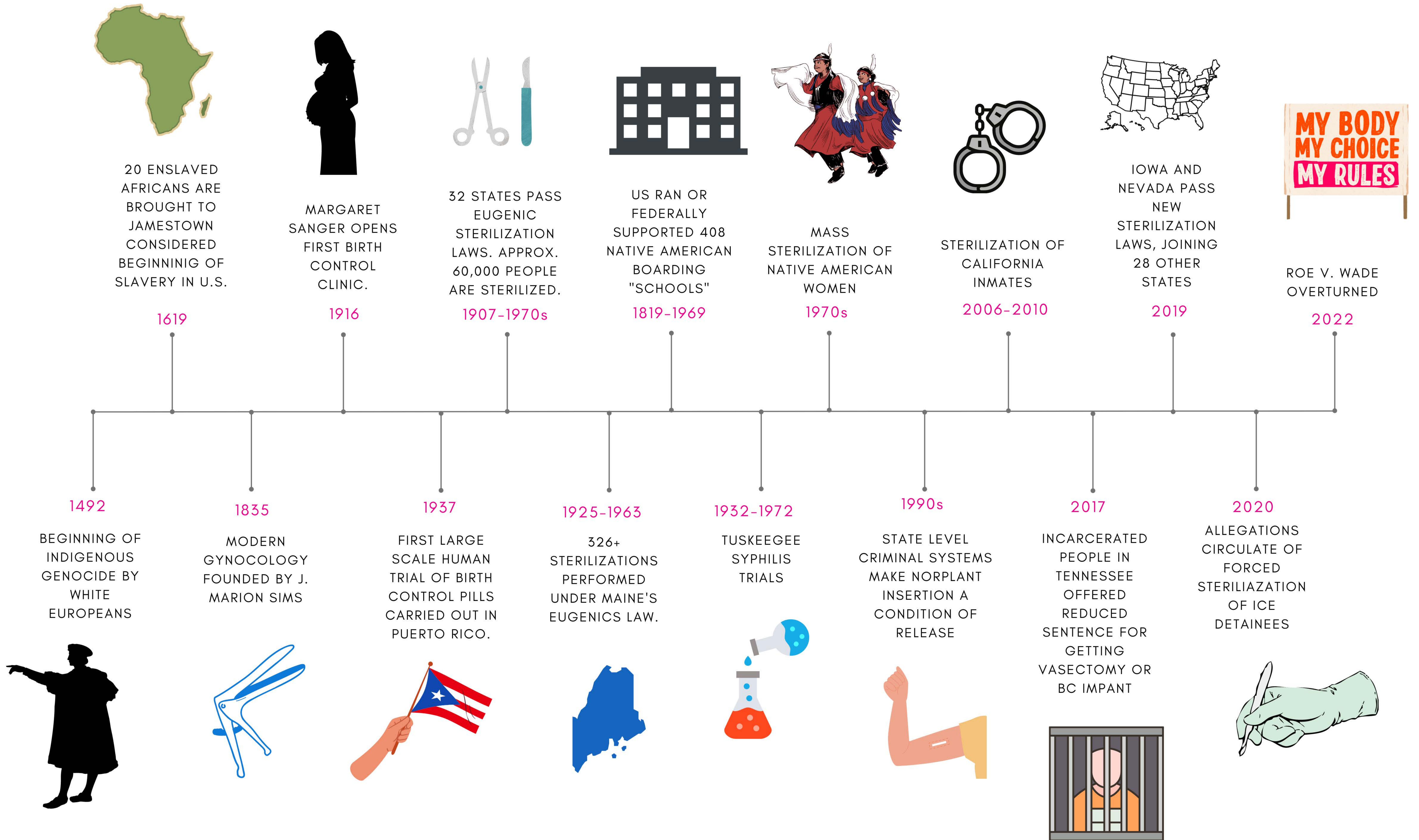
<https://www.stephaniespeakshere.com/copy-of-the-s-l-a-m-4-youth-confere>


Have you been using the same "comprehensive" sex ed curriculum for eons? Do you work with or parent youth? How prepared are you for "THE TALK?" Need help making your sex ed more engaging, inclusive and liberatory? The Sexuality Liberators And Movers virtual symposium is for parents, teachers, sexuality educators and direct service adults who work with and care for young people.

S.L.A.M.'s focus is shifting and moving sex education forward by centering the contributions, experiences, and expertise of Educators of Color, while challenging isms and institutions that keep sex education white-washed, fear based, and ineffective. At S.L.A.M. we believe that our young people, our children, students and siblings deserve sex education that centers and affirms them. With this goal in mind, conference organizer, Stephanie Zapata, has brought together some of the country's top youth centered BIPOC Sexperts.

A Not Great Timeline in America

Brief History of Reproductive Oppression





I UNDERSTAND
+ THAT I WILL
NEVER UNDERSTAND
HOWEVER,
I STAND WITH

BECOMING ANTI-RACIST

23 Things You Can Watch, Listen, or Do.

This toolkit is a starting point. There are many valuable resources available to support you as you seek to understand and become anti-racist, and these are a few that our team has found helpful. The first step is being open to learning and committing to the ongoing journey of becoming anti-racist.

AS A WHITE PERSON, WHERE CAN I START?

Read (10 min):

[4 Steps We Can Take as White People](#)
by Christina Marie Noel

"If I'm being completely honest, a large part of my hesitation to write about racism has stemmed from the fear of somehow "getting it wrong." I was afraid I might offend someone, use the wrong language, or accidentally be disrespectful in some way."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO EXPERIENCE RACISM?

Read (5 min):

[Don't understand the protests?](#)
[What you're seeing is people pushed to the edge](#)
by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Read (8 min):

[Who gets to be afraid in America?](#)
by Ibram X. Kendi

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM AND SLAVERY? WHERE DID THIS COME FROM?

Listen (Six 30-minute episodes):

[The 1619 Podcast](#)
by The New York Times

Explore:

[The full 1619 Project](#)
by The New York Times

AS A WHITE PERSON, HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND "WHITE PRIVILEGE"?

Read (20 min):

[Understanding White Privilege](#)
by Frances E. Kendall

Read (15 min):

[Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)
by Peggy McIntosh

TALKING ABOUT RACE, AS A WHITE PERSON, CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE – WHY IS THAT?

Read (15 min):

[From White Racist to White Anti-Racist, the Lifelong Journey](#)
by Tema Okun

WHY DON'T WHITE PEOPLE TALK ABOUT RACE?

Read (10 min):

[White people are still raised to be racially illiterate](#)
by Robin DiAngelo

Go Deeper:

Read the book [White Fragility](#)
by Robin DiAngelo

BECOMING ANTI-RACIST

23 Things You Can Watch, Listen, or Do.

WHAT IS "ANTI-RACISM"? DOES "RACIST" DESCRIBE A PERSON OR AN IDEA?

Watch (60 min):

Wesley Lowery and Ibram X Kendi discuss "[Stamped from the Beginning](#)"

- If you only have 10 minutes: start [here](#) (minute 15)

Read (10 min):

[What It Means to Be Anti-Racist](#), Vox
by Anna North

Go Deeper:

[How to be Antiracist](#)
by Ibram X Kendi

HOW DO I START CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE?

Respond to everyday interactions with tips from [Teaching Tolerance](#)

Start a book club with the [White Fragility group guide](#)

Note: useful tips beyond just this book

Listen:

[Talking Race with Young Children](#)
podcast by NPR

Go Deeper:

[So You Want to Talk About Race](#)
by Ijeoma Oluo

HOW DO I JUMP INTO EXISTING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE?

Listen:

[Code Switch](#)
by NPR

Podcast, 20-30 minute episodes

I'M CURIOUS TO LEARN MORE NOW...WHAT ELSE CAN I READ?

[The Fire Next Time](#)

by James Baldwin

Two essays on the consequences of racial injustices written during the emerging civil rights movement

[Just Mercy](#)

by Bryan Stevenson

Dive deeper into the injustices in the U.S. criminal justice system

[Breaking Hate: Confronting the New Culture of Extremism](#)

by Christian Picciolini

Understanding how to break extreme hate in the U.S.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

Put it into practice:

[Being Antiracist](#)

by Angela Y. Davis

Put it into practice:

[75 things white people can do for racial justice](#)



White Supremacy Culture

From Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture which show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being pro-actively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. They are damaging to both people of color and to white people. Organizations that are people of color led or a majority people of color can also demonstrate many damaging characteristics of white supremacy culture.

Perfectionism

- little appreciation expressed among people for the work that others are doing; appreciation that is expressed usually directed to those who get most of the credit anyway
- more common is to point out either how the person or work is inadequate
- or even more common, to talk to others about the inadequacies of a person or their work without ever talking directly to them
- mistakes are seen as personal, i.e. they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are ó mistakes
- making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong
- little time, energy, or money put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice, in other words little or no learning from mistakes
- tendency to identify what's wrong; little ability to identify, name, and appreciate what's right

antidotes: develop a culture of appreciation, where the organization takes time to make sure that people's work and efforts are appreciated; develop a learning organization, where it is expected that everyone will make mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning; create an environment where people can recognize that mistakes sometimes lead to positive results; separate the person from the mistake; when offering feedback, always speak to the things that went well before offering criticism; ask people to offer specific suggestions for how to do things differently when offering criticism

Sense of Urgency

- continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)
- reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

antidotes: realistic workplans; leadership which understands that things take longer than anyone expects; discuss and plan for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time; learn from past experience how long things take; write realistic funding proposals with realistic time frames; be clear about how you will make good decisions in an atmosphere of urgency

Defensiveness

- the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it
- because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude)
- people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, making it very difficult to raise these ideas
- a lot of energy in the organization is spent trying to make sure that people's feelings aren't getting hurt or working around defensive people
- the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture

antidotes: understand that structure cannot in and of itself facilitate or prevent abuse; understand the link between defensiveness and fear (of losing power, losing face, losing comfort, losing privilege); work on your own defensiveness; name defensiveness as a problem when it is one; give people credit for being able to handle more than you think; discuss the ways in which defensiveness or resistance to new ideas gets in the way of the mission

Quantity Over Quality

- all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals
- things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
- little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value
- discomfort with emotion and feelings
- no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people's need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)

antidotes: include process or quality goals in your planning; make sure your organization has a values statement which expresses the ways in which you want to do your work; make sure this is a living document and that people are using it in their day to day work; look for ways to measure process goals (for example if you have a goal of inclusivity, think about ways you can measure whether or not you have achieved that goal); learn to recognize those times when you need to get off the agenda in order to address people's underlying concerns

Worship of the Written Word

- if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist
 - the organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared
 - those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission
- antidotes: take the time to analyze how people inside and outside the organization get and share information; figure out which things need to be written down and come up with alternative ways to document what is happening; work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization (for example, the ability to build relationships with those who are important to the organization's mission)**
- only one right way

- the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it
- when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who know the right way)
- similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good

antidotes: accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; once the group has made a decision about which way will be taken, honor that decision and see what you and the organization will learn from taking that way, even and especially if it is not the way you would have chosen; work on developing the ability to notice when people do things differently and how those different ways might improve your approach; look for the tendency for a group or a person to keep pushing the same point over and over out of a belief that there is only one right way and then name it; when working with communities from a different culture than yours or your organization's, be clear that you have some learning to do about the community's ways of doing; never assume that you or your organization know what's best for the community in isolation from meaningful relationships with that community

Paternalism

- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does
- those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them

antidotes: make sure that everyone knows and understands who makes what decisions in the organization; make sure everyone knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in the organization; include people who are affected by decisions in the decision-making

Either/Or Thinking

- things are either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us
- closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict
- no sense that things can be both/and
- results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education
- creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people are felt they have to make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources

antidotes: notice when people use either/or language and push to come up with more than two alternatives; notice when people are simplifying complex issues, particularly when the stakes seem high or an urgent decision needs to be made; slow it down and encourage people to do a deeper analysis; when people are faced with an urgent decision, take a break and give people some breathing room to think creatively; avoid making decisions under extreme pressure

Power Hoarding

- little, if any, value around sharing power
- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

antidotes: include power sharing in your organization's values statement; discuss what good leadership looks like and make sure people understand that a good leader develops the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and challenges to your leadership can be healthy and productive; make sure the organization is focused on the mission

Fear of Open Conflict

- people in power are scared of conflict and try to ignore it or run from it
- when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem
- emphasis on being polite
- equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

antidotes: role play ways to handle conflict before conflict happens; distinguish between being polite and raising hard issues; don't require those who raise hard issues to raise them in "acceptable" ways, especially if you are using the ways in which issues are raised as an excuse not to address the issues being raised; once a conflict is resolved, take the opportunity to revisit it and see how it might have been handled differently

Individualism

- little experience or comfort working as part of a team
- people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone
- accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve
- desire for individual recognition and credit
- leads to isolation
- competition more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate
- creates a lack of accountability, as the organization values those who can get things done on their own without needing supervision or guidance
antidotes: include teamwork as an important value in your values statement; make sure the organization is working towards shared goals and people understand how working together will improve performance; evaluate people's ability to work in a team as well as their ability to get the job done; make sure that credit is given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals; create a culture where people bring problems to the group; use staff meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities

- I'm the only one
- connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, "I" have to do it
- little or no ability to delegate work to others

antidotes: evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals

Progress is Bigger, More

- observed in systems of accountability and ways we determine success
- progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people (regardless of how well they are serving them)
- gives no value, not even negative value, to its cost, for example, increased accountability to funders as the budget grows, ways in which those we serve may be exploited, excluded, or underserved as we focus on how many we are serving instead of quality of service or values created by the ways in which we serve

antidotes: create Seventh Generation thinking by asking how the actions of the group now will affect people seven generations from now; make sure that any cost/benefit analysis includes all the costs, not just the financial ones, for example the cost in morale, the cost in credibility, the cost in the use of resources; include process goals in your planning, for example make sure that your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do; ask those you work with and for to evaluate your performance

Objectivity

- the belief that there is such a thing as being objective
- the belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process
- invalidating people who show emotion
- requiring people to think in a linear fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways

- impatience with any thinking that does not appear “logical” to those with power

antidotes: realize that everybody has a world view and that everybody’s world view affects the way they understand things; realize this means you too; push yourself to sit with discomfort when people are expressing themselves in ways which are not familiar to you; assume that everybody has a valid point and your job is to understand what that point is

Right to Comfort

- the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing “logic” over emotion)
- scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets people of color

antidotes: understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning; welcome it as much as you can; deepen your political analysis of racism and oppression so you have a strong understanding of how your personal experience and feelings fit into a larger picture; don't take everything personally

One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multicultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly multi-cultural organization.