

RACISM & THE WORKPLACE

A CORPORATE PANDEMIC



Dr. Terrence Underwood

Table Of Contents

Table Of Contents

Racism the Epidemic	3
White Privilege, the Workplace, and You	6
What White Privilege Isn't	6
Defining Racism to Define White Privilege	7
So, What is White Privilege?	8
White Privilege in the Workplace	10
What Can White People Do About This?	11
Ageism & COVID-19	13
A Global Issue	13
The New Normal	14
Black Mental Health	16
How Is Society Contributing to Mental Illness	
Stigma?	16
The Stigma in the Black Community	17
Mental Health Care Challenges	17
Anger & Racism	20
The Feelings Hiding Behind Anger	20
Anger Management Training	22
Objectives of an Effective Anger Management	
Program	24
Recognizing Triggers	24
Stress Management	24
Practicing Emotional Intelligence	24
Practicing Assertive Communication	25

Table Of Contents

Acceptance	25
Communicating Across Difference	26
Inclusive Communication in the Workplace	27
Bias in Recruiting	31
Perceived Information regarding Candidates	31
Heuristics Situation	32
Expectation Anchor	32
Overconfidence Recruitment Bias	32
Tools/ Suggestions to mitigate Bias in Recruiting	32
Establish Awareness around the Hiring Bias	33
Use of Validated Assessments	33
Standardization of the Interviews	33
My First Racist Experience at Work	34
On the receiving end of Microaggression	35
Say Something: Interrupting Bias	37

Racism the Epidemic

Miriam Makeba once said “I look at an ant and I see myself: a native South African, endowed by nature with a strength much greater than my size so I might cope with the weight of a racism that crushes my spirit.” This words will remind you of the South African struggle against apartheid as much as it reminds you of the struggles for the liberation of African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Hispanics, Indians and others all over the world for a life devoid of discrimination based on race and race relations.

Over the past few months of 2020, even as a deadly pandemic swept through every inch of the earth, racism and the disparity it engenders reared its head in another ugly spectacle caught on camera in the United States. The narrative changed quickly from one end of the earth to the other, Coronavirus wasn't the main topic of discussion anymore; race and race dynamics took center stage. People from all walks of life lent their voices in unanimous condemnation of racism of every kind. But the real question is this, why are we still worrying about racism in 2020?

While the death of George Floyd in the United States caused widespread uproar, it wasn't the first time a black person had to lose their life because of their race. There are numerous records of people being treated differently in their work place, at the mall and school because of the colour of their skin. It is important to mention at this point that while this article places great emphasis on the treatment of blacks by the self-acclaimed superior race, it does not in any way suggest that people of other races do not face discrimination in the hands of their neighbours who believe their own race superior whilst looking down on others. But blacks often take the front seat whenever the topic of racism pops up. This might be because the black race continues to suffer fallout from slavery which afflicted black over 100 years ago.

RACISM

According to a BBC article published in 2012, the Institute of Race Relations opines that an average of five race related killings has taken place each year since 1993. From police shootings to racial profiling, black men in the United States have lived with the specter of their race hanging over their necks throughout their lives until they die. From unequal opportunities to a propensity to end up in jail black men in the United States face a difficult battle to survive in a land touted as overflowing with opportunities.

Shervin Assari, an associate professor of Family Medicine at Charles R. Drew University, in his research, found that the life expectancy of black men at birth stood at 71.9 years while that of their white counterparts stood at 76.4. Black women's life expectancy stood at 78.5 while their white counterparts have a life expectancy of 81.2. According to a report presented to the United Nations on racial disparities in the United States criminal Justice System, black Americans made up 27% of all individuals arrested in the United States in 2016. While drug use does not differ by race, more than one in four people arrested for drug law violations in 2015 was black. They also reported that 48% of people serving life and "virtual life" prison sentences in the United States are African American.

The statistics above is an unsavory one and paints a clear picture of the menace of racism especially on the black population in the United States. The Latinos come second in the race for the most racially abused group.

Beyond the shores of the United States, you will find monuments raised to racism and acts that openly or tacitly supported racism. The widespread protest and the "Black Lives Matter movement" led to an awakening in India for lower-caste Dalits in India. The Dalits are a people belonging to a caste in India who have been subjected to untouchability, these group are excluded from the four-fold order of Hinduism. They were seen as forming a separate, fifth order away from the major four, making them the bottom of the Indian caste hierarchy and membership to this caste is determined by birth. They raised their voices at the same time –every life matters- in a bid to get India to acknowledge centuries of oppression the Dalits have had to endure.

RACISM

In France, racial statistics aren't so different from what is obtainable in the United States. According to Suyin Haynes, Young Arab and black men are 20 times more likely as white men to be stopped by the police. It is easy to recall the death of a young black man Adama Traore in 2016. He passed away while in police custody in Paris after he was detained. The statistics in France is not much different from what is obtainable in Great Britain where black people are nearly 10 times more likely as whites to be stopped by the police. The disparities can be found everywhere and on every shore where humans are to be found. There seem to be a tendency for humans to seek to stand on a higher pedestal than other humans thus institutionalized racial prejudice continues to dominate our world on all sides.

Expunging racial injustice from our society has been a long and arduous journey. People have fought ages ago but it seems with each new generation, the battle is repeated. To arrive at that point where no man believes his race superior to that of the next man, we must purge our institutions of racism and prepare the generations after us to live better and do better than generations past and our own generation. During the George Floyd protests, several monuments of slavers and confederates were pulled down by protesters in a bid to erase these men from memory. That is only a physical step, we must actively seek to expunge these memories from our minds and seek instead to enthrone one another and hold hands in harmony. Because every human, black, white, Latino, Indian or Hispanic is first a human before anything else.

White Privilege

White Privilege, the Workplace, and You

White Privilege is one of those buzzword topics that everyone wants to talk about, but no one can seem to agree on. It's a topic that commonly raises people's self-defense mechanisms, regardless of their race. Despite all this, white privilege is a very real problem that has serious consequences for people of color, especially when we choose *not* to talk about it for fear of upsetting those we're conversing with. As a diversity and inclusion practitioner I am dedicated to breaking that silence and educating people from all across the spectrum about white privilege, how it works, who it hurts, and what you can do about.

What White Privilege Isn't

Because of the sensitivity some people can have in reaction to bringing up this topic, it can be helpful to first describe white privilege in terms of what it is not. The phrase "white privilege" is not meant to suggest that white people have not or do not struggle. There are millions of white people across the world who do not have access to the luxuries that generally come with affluence, such as food security or access to healthcare.

[White privilege](#) also does not assume that if a white person has success and accomplishments, they did not earn them. Plenty of white people have achieved success through hard work and dedication. White privilege also does not guarantee good outcomes for white people and bad outcomes for everyone else. Pretty much no one -- a white person or a non-white person -- is asking to be privileged or oppressed. And yet, there are systems at play in our society that allow white people privileges that they do not allow non-white people.

[Understanding white privilege](#) in the context of systemic racism can help us better interpret the ways in which white privilege is at work in our lives.

White Privilege

Defining Racism to Define White Privilege

Now that we've defined what white privilege *isn't*, we can dive into [defining it](#). It's impossible to understand what white privilege is or how it exists without understanding racism, as white privilege is both a product of and a catalyst for racism. White privilege would not exist without the legacy of racism and enduring biases, while white privilege allows for the constant recreation of racial inequality. White privilege would not have its power if racism hadn't come first, and [systemic racism](#) cannot continue without the power of white privilege. Think of it, kind of like the old chicken and egg conundrum.

So, what is racism and how does it both contribute to and thrive off of white privilege?

[Understanding racism](#) is a bit like unnesting Russian Nesting Dolls: the smallest, innermost doll is bias. Bias can be defined as "a conscious or unconscious prejudice against an individual or group based on their identity." Biases are the beliefs that lead to racism, such as the belief that people of color are more likely to be dangerous or violent. To continue our metaphor, the doll in the middle, squished in between the outer and inner dolls, is racism. In their essay "[Sociology on Racism](#)," Matthew Clair and Jeffrey Denis define racism as "individual and group-level processes and structures that are implicated in the reproduction of racial inequality." To simplify that, what Clair and Denis are saying is that while biases are simply the *racial beliefs*, racism occurs when those beliefs translate into an action.

The biggest, outermost doll in our metaphor is systemic racism, what happens when the aforementioned structures and processes are carried out by powerful groups, such as governments, corporations, or schools. I know what you're thinking: how does this play out in the real world? Let's take, for example, the belief that people of color are more likely to be violent or commit crimes. This bias can manifest as racism through a number of actions, some as benign as crossing to the other side of the street and some as serious as pulling a weapon on an approaching person of color. When a large number of people in a society exhibit these biases through racism, it allows systemic racism to occur; in our example, this manifested as the fact that in 2017, unarmed people of color who were not attacking anyone were [more likely to be killed by the police](#).

White Privilege

So, What is White Privilege?

In order to define white privilege, it is important to remember that without racism, white privilege would not exist or be able to thrive. In our racist society, white skin grants those who live in such a society an extensive array of [unearned privileges](#) that non-white people do not have access to. To further understand this, let's look at a few definitions of white privilege.

A Google search for "[define white privilege](#)" yields the definition of "inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice." Because our society functions to oppress non-white people in a way that it does not oppress white people, white people have privileges and opportunities that people of color do not. This can be seen in programs like New York City's now defunct "[Stop and Frisk](#)" policy that disproportionately targeted black and Latinx people; white people are less likely to be followed, searched, or interrogated by law enforcement, so they are able to move through life more freely.

In "[Diversity in the Classroom and Understanding White Privilege](#)," Francis E. Kendall defines white privilege this way: "having greater access to power and resources than people of color [in the same situation] do." This is an important distinction to make: the term "white privilege" applies in situations where everything else being equal, a judgment is made purely based on someone's race. For example, a [University of Wisconsin study](#) found that while 17% of white job applicants with a criminal history got a call back from an employer, only five percent of black applicants with a criminal history received calls.

White Privilege

For the [website Teaching Tolerance](#), Cory Collins describes white privilege as “the legal and systemic advantages given to white people...such as citizenship, the right to vote or the right to buy a house in the neighborhood of their choice.” In attempting to define and understand white privilege, it is important to remember that the term extends beyond whether people in your day-to-day life will judge you for the color of your skin. Legislative groups, corporate leaders, and educators are all still disproportionately white and these groups often make conscious choices (laws, hiring practices, standardized tests) that keep this cycle of racial inequality on repeat.

In her article “[Understanding and Defining White Privilege](#),” Dr. Nicki Cole is careful to point out that white privilege exists because in racially structured societies, they are at the top of the racial hierarchy. This explains how white privilege can be found in not just day-to-day transactions, but also in white people’s ability to move through professional and personal worlds with relative ease. White people will most often find themselves in situations that position themselves for success despite their merits (or lack thereof) because society is set up that way.

Allan Johnson also points out in his article “[What Is a System of Privilege?](#)” that the advantages afforded to white people through white privilege are socially conferred; they are the result of a society that is structured to support white people and oppress non-white people. White people move through the world with the expectation that their needs will readily be met (because that’s what they’ve been taught to expect), whereas people of color go through life knowing that their needs are on the margins (as has been proven time and time again). While most white people haven’t asked for this, it is a built-in advantage in our society that allows them to receive these privileges as a byproduct of racism and bias.

White Privilege

White privilege loads the odds that the chance of bad things happening to white people as a group is much lower than for everyone else. While this is primarily a characteristic of the social system we live in, we all participate in it. White privilege is not just the power to find the products you want in a grocery store or the ability to move through the world without the color of your skin defining your interactions. White privilege is also the power to remain silent in the face of racism and bias. It's the fact that white people have the *choice* to weigh the need for protest against the discomfort of speaking up. It's the ability to choose when, where, and how you want to take a stand, a privilege that can be used to fight the very systems that allow for its existence.

White Privilege in the Workplace

Some of the most pervasive, and painful, examples of white privilege occur in the workplace, as the racial hierarchy of our culture also affects hiring practices and other decisions made by employers. For example, [research](#) by Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan found that people with “white-sounding” names are 50% more likely to receive a call back for jobs than people with “black-sounding” names, despite equal resume quality. This reiterates the fact that oftentimes, all other factors being equal, white people have access to privileges and opportunities that non-white people do not, simply based on racial judgments.

However, white privilege in the workplace doesn't end with prejudice in hiring practices. In her [2003 study](#) “Race and the Invisible Hand: How White Networks Exclude Black Men from Blue-Collar Jobs,” sociologist Deirdre Royster compared black and white men who graduated from the same school with the same skills. In comparing their success with school-work transition and working experiences, Royster found that white graduates were more likely to be employed in skilled trades, earn more, hold higher status positions, receive more promotions and experience shorter periods of unemployment than their black counterparts.

White Privilege

Despite having nothing more to offer than their black counterparts, aside from the color of their skin, white people are offered significant privileges and opportunities in the workplace that are denied to non-white people. People of color in some of the most well-respected and highly trained jobs such as lawyers, doctors, and politicians describe a constant checking of their credentials and repeatedly being mistaken for janitors or assistants, a situation in which white people rarely find themselves.

A study called "[Discrimination and Worker Evaluation](#)" by Costas Cavounidis and Kevin Lang found that black employees tend to receive more scrutiny from their bosses than their otherwise equal white counterparts, which leads to worse performance reviews and lower wages. White privilege in the workplace offers white people protection from the lowest wages and most dangerous labor conditions in today's world of globalized production.

What Can White People Do About This?

If you're a white person reading this and you've made it this far, chances are, you're feeling pretty freaked out. For a lot of white people, they never stop to think about the ways in which the system benefits them, simply for being born white. Once you realize one instance in which you benefited from white privilege, you start to see it everywhere. This can be overwhelming, but the good news is that white people can use this societal power to fight back against white privilege.

The most important step in this process is to *listen*. For so long, minority voices and experiences have been silenced to allow the progression of white privilege. When white people stop to listen to people of color speak about their experiences of oppression, it's important not to dominate the conversation or question those experiences. Rather, you should use your privilege to amplify those voices. Share the art and perspectives of non-white people on social media. Give credit to colleagues of color for their ideas. This not only helps stories of racial oppression to reach the right audience, but it also spreads messages of equality directly from the source, and not through the lens of white people.

White Privilege

While it is important to listen to your non-white counterparts, it's also important to know when to speak up. If you hear racist remarks, say something. If you see opportunities to educate your white friends about racism and privilege, do so. Be sure that when you do speak up, you know what you're talking about. It is equally as important for white people to educate themselves about these issues. Look for books and articles on racial topics written by people of color. Have critical conversations about documentaries on topics like slavery or the U.S. prison system. In the age of the internet, we have more access to content and stories created by people of color than ever before. Take advantage of these opportunities and then use what you know to speak up when you see racial injustice.



Ageism & COVID-19

Our current global health crisis has brought to light another global issue: Ageism. According to the World Health Organization, ageism is a global concern. Happening in countries all over the world, this discrimination is both prevalent and harmful.

The term “Ageism” was coined in 1969 by Robert Butler, to better define the discrimination that happens when elderly people are stereotyped. Since the 1960s, Ageism has been associated with the discrimination of this age group, often occurring within the workplace; however, the negative effects of ageism go beyond the workplace. The dangers of ageism discrimination are plentiful: whether older people are unable to find adequate employment, receive proper healthcare, or avoid being victims depend on how people view and care for the elderly.

A Global Issue

From its onset this coronavirus has been found to disproportionately impact adults older than 60 years. As early as February 17, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention shared statistics on the confirmed cases and death rates of their population. Individuals 60+ years of age accounted for only 31% of confirmed cases but 81% of deaths. Yet, the global response to protect their elderly populations was not quick and effective enough to reduce the spread. Few countries enforced precautions addressing elderly, with the U.S. only issuing a state of emergency on March 13th, which called for nation-wide social distancing. This came three months after the outbreak in China, and over 7 weeks after the first confirmed case in the U.S. Additionally, though the government was aware that the virus had a meaningful and disproportionate impact to elder populations no specific action was taken to close down or isolate senior living facilities, or provide them preferential accommodations for essential daily activities (e.g. grocery shopping pharmacy visits, etc.)

Ageism & COVID-19

Caitlin Rivers, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, stated that from past pandemic research, children are the drivers of infection within societies. Which brought to light a thought: what if COVID-19 affected children at a higher rate than other age demographics? Would we have acted faster? Would we have closed schools, closed non-essential services earlier and cared for this demographic at risk more effectively?

The global response to the coronavirus has demonstrated inherit ageism at best, and at worst conscious bias towards our elderly population.

The New Normal

As a 41-year-old employee and entrepreneur, COVID-19 has driven me to self-reflect on Ageism in the workplace. The coronavirus has already started to create a new normal for our 55+ years of age workforce. Take for example my close friend, a 59-year-old elementary school teacher who has never worked remotely, now facing the need for online instruction. They are facing a steep learning curve in order to effectively engage elementary kids through a virtual platform. This new normal of virtual instruction reinforces the fear that younger educators will have a disproportionate advantage in the workforce. As stated above, our society holds inherit ageism, and now with a new reality that demands quick adaptation to new technology, processes, and strategies, our senior citizen workforce may be entering a bias workforce. As highlighted, I believe senior citizens will face two main things in the workforce as we adapt to a new business as usual:

1. Layoffs: As organizations continue to lose revenue with no end in sight, we can only anticipate downsizing. Mitchell Plastics of Charlestown, Ind., is one of many companies who has recently announced temporary layoffs, totaling 360 employees due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Technology: As organizations, institutions, and entrepreneurs begin to focus on being virtual ready, employees will have to up-skill on technology without minimal training and short timelines.

Ageism & COVID-19

Together these two realities, will foster one of the most freighting aspects of layoffs for older employees: applying for an opportunity against someone who is 10+ years younger in an environment of increased ageism. Insurance provider Hiscox conducted a recent [study](#) on ageism and found 21% of people over the age of 40 experienced age discrimination in the workplace and has impacted the career trajectory of 80% of people over the age of 40. During this same study, 60% of all workers said they never received formal age-based discrimination training in recent years.

We have witnessed this with other discrimination in the workplace: racism, homophobia, and gender bias. The first step is acknowledging that we all have biases. This step is normally the hardest. It requires us to turn our focus away from others and look internally. What is found can be hard to accept. The second step is having the courage to self-correct those internal biases. Finally, we need to be an ally and interrupt bias when we see it.

As a colleague, manager, or member of society, we can all reverse discrimination and prejudice against the elderly. We need to consider ageism during the recruitment process, project assignment, and recognition practices. Updating processes to ensure ageism discrimination is eliminated should become a core part of all our new normal as we recover from COVID-19.



Over 50 doesn't mean less tech savvy

Black Mental Health

The stigma around mental illness is still very present in our society. Mental health disorders occur regardless of race, color, age, social status, identity, or gender. The World Health Organization (WHO) data indicates that one of four people will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives. The young population is particularly vulnerable to mental health disorders, with suicide being the second leading cause of death among people age 15-29 worldwide.

Anyone can experience mental health problems. However, the African American community sometimes experiences more severe psychological distress due to other mental health-related challenges.

How Is Society Contributing to Mental Illness Stigma?

Society generally has stereotypes about mental illness. Many people with different mental health conditions report experiencing the stigma around their mental health. The stigma attached to mental well-being usually generates prejudices and discrimination that often lead to negative actions toward persons with mental illness.

The stigma is one of the main challenges people of color encounter when struggling with mental health conditions. Mental health stigma makes people feel judged and prevents them from talking about their internal challenges.

Black Mental Health

The Stigma in the Black Community

African Americans, like other minorities, often get trapped into a cycle of despair and experience even worse mental health outcomes caused by stigma. Due to the stigma, the African American population with mental health disorders may have difficulties to find work, reach academic goals, be socially active, live in decent housing, and maintain positive relationships.

Their research also shows that suicide was the second leading cause of death among young African Americans 15 to 24 years old in 2017. The reports also show that minorities, in general, have less access to mental health services. Fewer than one-half of people with mental illness receive treatment. A lack of understanding of mental illness and the stigma prevent necessary actions in the field of mental health.

So, instead of seeking professional help, many African Americans with anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions opt to bottle up their challenges and resort to self-medication and isolation from their community.

Mental Health Care Challenges

Different reasons prevent people of color from seeking treatment and receiving quality mental health care. Factors such as lack of information about mental illness, relying on the family, community, and faith, misdiagnosis and the wrong treatment, and bias and mistrust in mental health providers are among the most common reasons why people of color don't seek help and receive treatment.

Black Mental Health

Lack of Information

Many people in the Black community are reluctant to acknowledge mental health problems and to talk about this topic. The lack of knowledge and understanding leads many to perceive mental illness as a sign of weakness. Also, many African Americans have difficulties recognizing the symptoms of mental illness and don't know where to find help for their problems.

In addition, African Americans may be unwilling to discuss their mental health and seek support because of the stigma attached to such conditions. Research suggests that people of color believe that conditions such as anxiety and depression may be considered “crazy” in their community. They also don't find [discussions about mental illness](#) with family and friends appropriate.

Family, Spirituality, and Community

Many people in the African American community rely on family, community, and spirituality for support rather than seeking professional mental health care. While relying on these circles of support is invaluable, sometimes professional help may be necessary too.

The Wrong Diagnosis and Treatment

Mental health misdiagnosis keeps people with mental illness from receiving the proper treatment and hinders their recovery. A lack of cultural competence by health professionals may lead to misdiagnosis and wrong treatment of mental health disorders. For example, a patient may describe the cramps and digestive problems when talking about depression. If a mental health provider is not culturally competent, these signals may go unrecognized.

Black Mental Health

Mental Health Provider Bias and Mistrust

Many African Americans in need experience conscious or unconscious bias from health providers which results in their reluctance to seek treatment and poorer quality of mental health care.

Socio-economic Factors

According to Mental Health America (MHA), 11% of African Americans had no health insurance in 2017. African Americans who live below poverty are three times more likely to report serious mental health conditions than those who live above poverty.

How to Fight Mental Illness Stigma?

In-person contact with people who have a mental illness is one of the best ways to challenge the stigma. Therefore, it is critical to encourage people with mental health disorders to talk about their challenges. Another important part of overcoming the stigma includes raising the awareness that no one is immune to mental illness. Only the understanding that mental illness can happen to everyone regardless of their color, race, identity, social status, or age can help remove the stigma from mental health.

Of course, changing deep-rooted attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors is not an easy task.

However, the serious mental health burden associated with the stigma attached to minorities suggests that African Americans would benefit from discussing their mental health issues openly within their families, social circles and the wider community.

In spite of the progress achieved over the years, African Americans' mental health is still affected by negative stereotypes and prejudices. Therefore, to improve the mental health of the Black community, these issues need to be addressed as well.

Anger & Racism

Anger & Racism

People who live at the edge of society are often hit with bias, stigma, bigotry, and racism. In spite of a lot of improvement that has been achieved over the past few decades, people of different genders, races, ethnicities, disabilities, religions, and sexual orientations are still the targets of prejudices, discrimination, and day-to-day micro-aggressions.

Members on the margins of their families, social circles, or society as a whole, feel constantly rejected and tend to be viewed as different and deviant. This causes an individual to withdraw and isolate from social interactions.

Different studies show that social rejection affects a person's health, emotional state, and behavior. Research shows that rejected people tend to display aggressiveness, detachment, and emotional numbness.

However, you don't have to isolate, bottle up your struggles, and suffer alone. Anger management applied through anger therapy can benefit you when faced with these challenges.

The Feelings Hiding Behind Anger

Whether constant comments about their appearance from strangers or constant questions about their mental health from the boss, microaggressions can wear a person down. Many people in marginalized populations have to deal with the feelings of hurt, anger, and resentment every day.

It is normal to experience these feelings if you have constantly been exposed to stigma, stereotypes, and prejudices. You may experience anger to cover vulnerability or to mask other emotions that are too disturbing. Anger often arouses as a response to emotions such as fear, hurt, or shame.

Anger and Racism

Suppressed anger can lead to anxiety, depression or other mental health problems, so these feelings and behaviors can damage your health, well-being, and your relationships.

When you hear “anger management” you probably have a specific idea of the kind of person that would need it in your mind. Maybe it is a co-worker that you have had in the past or a friend who seems to get hot-headed over the smallest issues. When we talk about anger management in the workplace specifically, we tend to look anywhere but inward. As Linda Wasmer Andrews highlights in the article [When It's Time for Anger Management](#), most people attend anger management workshops with someone else in mind and are rarely seeking help for themselves.

In discussing anger management as it relates to diversity and inclusion in the workplace, we must first establish the fact that anger management is something that can be useful for any employee. Anger management can be a valuable tool in assisting a team of employees of varied cultural backgrounds to face workplace conflicts in a more respectful way. After all, a diverse workplace will be filled with employees that come from varied cultural backgrounds where displays of anger may be represented differently. This can be a cause for some concern when there are stark differences between how one employee handles displaying anger as opposed to another.



Anger Management Training

To truly understand the need for anger management training as part of a diversity and inclusion program, we must first look to the past. One of the most notable periods where anger management training became a much-needed component of diversity and inclusion programs was post 9/11.

At this time, members of the Sikh community suffered a reported increase of workplace discrimination and violence against workers. In the San Francisco Bay Area alone, there was a reported 12 percent increase in workplace discrimination against Sikh employees. Although not all workplace-related, there were also a reported [300 cases of violence and discrimination](#) against Sikh Americans throughout the United States during this period.

Anger tends to be a direct result of fear and the post-9/11 workplace was (and continues to be) a hotbed for this kind of injustice. In an effort to accept the cultural differences that make a diverse workplace great, anger management, among many other forms of diversity and inclusion practices, must be implemented and held as a top priority.

The need for anger management training as part of a diversity and inclusion program can be further observed by the way workplace anger can manifest. Unfortunately, it isn't at all uncommon for employees and supervisors to display frustration differently depending on the employee the frustration is against. Often times, workers and supervisors alike will perceive a member of their team as less efficient and this is all too common in relation to certain racial or cultural biases and stereotypes.

Anger and Racism

In order to counteract this unfairness, an anger management program must be centered around recognizing such biases in every employee. Effective anger management training programs will seek to inspire employees to look inward and find what may trigger their anger against other employees. This is the first step in understanding how to deal with anger and frustration in a professional and respectful manner, further strengthening a diverse workplace environment.



Anger and Racism

Objectives of an Effective Anger Management Program

So, what does an effective anger management training look like in implementation with a diversity and inclusion program? There are a few major components of recognizing and dealing with workplace anger and conflict that an anger management training program should address. Let's explore those more in-depth.

Recognizing Triggers

The first step in practicing effective anger management is to first recognize what triggers an anger response. According to the [Anger Management Training Institute](#), up to 42 percent of employee time is spent either engaging in or trying to resolve workplace conflicts. This is a huge chunk of time taken away from employees practicing job tasks and responsibilities during any given workday. Much of this valuable time could be taken back if employees only recognized what triggered an angry response in them before reacting.

Stress Management

Stress is present in any workplace and, unfortunately, high amounts of stress can be a trigger for anger in the workplace. While much of workplace stress can be self-imposed, a perceived lack of effort from other employees and/or workplace misunderstandings can add to it. When stress is heightened, anger is almost sure to ensue. An effective anger management training program will also highlight the importance of managing stress.

Practicing Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a concept popularized by psychologist Daniel Goleman and is based around practicing emotional control. Emotional intelligence is defined by Goleman as "the capacity of recognizing our own emotions and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships". As discussed, much of the conflict that arises in workplace environments is caused by a lack of recognizing a need for anger management practices within ourselves.

Anger and Racism

Empathy and social awareness are two of the biggest components that Goleman cites as skills that can be learned to heighten our overall emotional intelligence. Considering the fact that one of the primary [goals of a diversity and inclusion program](#) is to encourage empathy and awareness of social differences across varied races and cultures, practicing emotional intelligence is a key component of an effective anger management training program.

Practicing Assertive Communication

Ineffective communication is one of the biggest reasons for workplace conflict. Communication problems can cause workplace conflicts to arise and ultimately affect workplace performance and concentration. Anger management programs that highlight the importance of assertive communication practices will do well to strengthen the overall diversity and inclusion standards in any workplace environment.

Assertive communication includes using “I” statements rather than “you” statements as this is a much more productive way to communicate feelings to coworkers. “You” statements tend to come across overly confrontational and accusatory while “I” statements work to communicate your feelings in situations of conflict. Assertive communication is based around a sharing of feelings and listening to responses and conflicting views in order to reach a solution that benefits the greatest amount of people.

Acceptance

Sometimes the best way to resolve conflict within a workplace, whether over an issue of diversity and inclusion or otherwise, is to simply accept. Accepting a difference of opinion and recognizing cultural differences in others is the base of any diversity and inclusion program and this extends to anger management training. When conflicts arise due to a lack of understanding, this should be acknowledged. Sometimes conflicts can't be fully resolved and accepting a difference in opinion is the best way to come to a solution. Setting aside differences and accepting where possible can work to maintain a level of productivity and receptiveness within the workplace.

Communicating Across Difference



Communicating Across Difference

When it comes to [workplace discrimination](#), much of the disservice done happens completely unconsciously, yet it is reinforced by members of the workplace due to a lack of inclusive communication. [Inclusive communication](#) is the act of having meaningful conversations about workplace differences, as well as communicating across these differences, and yet so often this important component of workplace diversity and inclusion is overlooked.

In order to promote an environment of inclusivity that appreciates the cultural and socioeconomic differences found in the workforce, team leaders need to be more aware of how to engage their employees in [inclusive communication practices](#). While this may seem to be a matter of common sense, implementing an inclusive communication practice into the workplace environment can sometimes be easier said than done.

Communicating Across Difference

Today, we'll be talking about the importance of inclusive communication in the workplace. The goal of our Communicating with Inclusion course is to create a psychologically safe environment that promotes supportive and effective communication using our proprietary four skills as Communicating with Inclusion tools. We will be looking at each of these four skills to understand how inclusive communication benefits a workplace environment. Let's get started!

Inclusive Communication in the Workplace

According to the [Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#), inclusive communication is “an approach that seeks to create a supportive and effective communication environment, using every available means of communication to understand and be understood”. Considering the fact that inclusive communication works to make those practicing it aware of all of the various ways that a person communicates their thoughts, feelings and emotions, you can understand why this would be an important practice in the workplace.

Each and every day, we spend much of our time at work. In fact, according to the Gettysburg College, the average person will spend [90,000 hours of their lifetime in the workplace](#).

Considering how much time is spent at work among our peers, it would only make sense that we need to learn to communicate in the most effective way possible. This is especially important considering the way we communicate with our peers is a huge factor in productivity and efficiency in the workplace.

There are four proprietary skills taught through inclusive communication and each of these skills are used as tools to understand and be understood, the primary purpose of inclusive communication. Our Communicating With Inclusion course is structured around the use of these inclusive communication tools and each offers a powerful way to better understand and relate to those that we spend so much time with.

Communicating Across Difference

1. Self-Discovery

The first inclusive communication tool that we will be talking about is that of self-discovery. Before we can begin to communicate inclusively, we have to look inward. There are things we must notice and observe about our own communication style before we can practice more inclusive communication.

Self-discovery involves beginning by recognizing your own unconscious biases. Gaps created by a lack of appreciation for diversity in the workplace are not easily overcome by way of good intentions alone. Each member of the workforce must stop to notice their own unconscious biases and, even further, observe how these unconscious biases influence their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards their coworkers.

2. Using Vulnerability

The “get down to business” culture of the workforce today can sometimes make it difficult to be 100 percent authentic and vulnerable. Regardless, one of the most important tools used in the inclusive communication style is using vulnerability to view yourself and your coworkers as people and not just cogs in a machine.

Start by remembering that there is a person behind each of the operations that your company completes each and every day. By recognizing this, you are allowing yourself to be vulnerable, working with human connection and authenticity at the forefront of your thoughts rather than the “get down to business” culture of today.

Productivity is always boosted when people feel heard and appreciated. Part of using vulnerability is allowing yourself to show a professional amount of affection towards your coworkers. Let yourself be vulnerable enough to show appreciation for what those around you do. In this way, you are driving inclusive communication practices and opening the door for a more connected workforce.

Communicating Across Difference

3. Removing Bias

After recognizing your own biases through the self-discovery tool, it is all about taking the necessary actions to remove those biases. After all, operating with cultural, socioeconomic, or gender biases in mind will only cause you and those that hold such biases to harbor certain negative feelings towards other members of your workforce. While it is a huge step to recognize the biases we hold, it is far more important to act proactively to remove them.

Most of us carry preconceived notions and stereotypical responses in our heads each day that we assign to the people that we interact with. Make an effort to remove these limiting beliefs from your mind and, instead, be open to the person standing before you. By viewing people as people and not as the unconscious biases that we hold against them we work to communicate more inclusively, allowing space for those of all cultural, socioeconomic, or racial backgrounds.

Listen actively to those you speak with and make an effort to create a genuine connection with that coworker as a person. Respond with interest, ask questions, and show nonverbal cues that you are listening and understanding. Work to acknowledge the strengths of your coworkers, creating a respectful professional relationship that leads to mutual levels of success.

4. Creating Cross Cultural Conversation

Once we have utilized self-discovery to recognize our unconscious biases, used vulnerability to see past the “get down to business” culture of today, and worked to remove our biases from our workplace conversations, it is all about creating cross cultural conversation.

In order for an appreciation for workplace diversity to truly be created, there has to be conversations that include hearing, understanding, and appreciating cultural differences. In order for a true respect for the cultural differences found in your workplace to be fully demonstrated, there has to be a chance for coworkers to learn about and respond to cultural differences between them.

Communicating Across Difference

Inclusive communication is all about focusing on building a relationship with your workforce and, for this reason, each employee must be willing to be adaptable. Inclusive communication is structured around the human need to be heard and be understood and creating cross cultural conversation is one of the best ways to demonstrate this.

Encourage yourself to be open to listening, open to respectfully disagreeing, but more than anything, to understanding. This is the basis of inclusive communication and generating an interest around cross cultural conversations in the workplace is a great place to start.



Bias in Recruiting

Bias in Recruiting

A large number of researches have shown that most of the hiring processes are unfair and biased. Unconscious bias factors like ageism, racism, and sexism play their role in the process. Experts say that unconscious biases can have a problematic effect on our judgment, they often make us decide in favor of one person over the other unfairly. Managers and the decision-makers in the hiring teams need to de-bias their practice and procedures to make sure their decisions are fair. Every recruiter aims to select and hire the best workers possible. However, the process of recruitment can be impacted by unconscious and bias recruiting. It can be hard to uncover the bias situations during recruitment, which results in imbalances in the process of hiring. When candidates for different positions in a company experience bias hiring, they become demoralized. Bias hiring is also disadvantageous to the organization because it results in uniformity in the workplace rather than the intended diversity (Tore, 2017). During the process of recruitment, the company should encourage diversity. However, in the situation where there is bias hiring, the company may end up hiring uninformed, poor skilled, and inexperienced individuals who will negatively impact the reputation of an organization. The hiring bias which can occur in a company can be experienced due to the following reasons;

Perceived Information regarding Candidates

Each person is quick to pass judgment, and that results in disadvantageous situations. The majority of the people make snap decisions based on perceived truths that have not been confirmed. During the recruitment exercise, the recruiters may hire candidates based on the unconfirmed information (Alexandra, 2019). They do make decisions to hire a particular candidate based on some poorly researched information regarding a specific candidate.

Bias in Recruiting

Heuristics Situation

It is the bias in which the recruiter mentally takes shortcuts to reach a recruitment conclusion. They can poorly think that the candidate is fit for a particular job position even though such an individual may not have the right qualities for the job. The recruiter may quickly judgment a candidate's suitability for the position without asking for more data.

Expectation Anchor

The expectation anchor bias during recruitment is when the recruiters allow themselves to anchor onto a specific piece of data about a candidate and influence others towards recruiting such a candidate (Alexandra, 2019). It happens when one recruitment sees accurate data about one candidate and believe other candidates do not have such a characteristic.

Overconfidence Recruitment Bias

The overconfidence bias takes place when the recruiters are so confident in their abilities to either have the right candidate or eliminate those whom they think are unfit for the job. Therefore, they justify their decisions by reducing the unrequired candidates until they remain with one (Tore, 2017). However, the remaining candidate may not qualify for the job. In such cases, the best candidates may be kicked out.

Tools/ Suggestions to mitigate Bias in Recruiting

The decisions of the recruiters impact the recruiting process as it can result in bias recruiting. It is of great significance for the panel to ensure that they follow the guidelines to have the best candidate based on merit (Tore, 2017). The following are essential suggestions which the recruiters can utilize to prevent hiring bias.

Bias in Recruiting

Establish Awareness around the Hiring Bias

The company management needs to teach everyone else responsible for hiring regarding the bias situations which might occur during hiring. Accordingly, the recruiters need to be supplied with important guidelines binding the recruitment process (Chartrand, 2016). The panel should be aware that merit hiring is essential and results in the best candidate for the job position advertised.

Use of Validated Assessments

Validated assessments are those pre-employment test which has been screened for the removal of bias hiring. The utilization of assessments during the process of hiring should be an ongoing process in the company, especially during the hiring period (Alexandra, 2019). The candidates should be assessed based on the set assessment criteria to ensure the right candidate has been hired.

Standardization of the Interviews

The interviews must be equal and standardized for all the candidates. The recruiters should utilize a standardized interview format for all the candidates during the recruitment process. Also, the interview questions should be equally administered to all the candidates (Wainaina, 2019). Furthermore, the whole process of recruitment should be effectively monitored to eliminate the chances of bias situations among the recruiters.

Using these strategies can help you maintain a good company culture and improve your hiring process.

My Story

My First Racist Experience at Work

I received my first leadership position in my mid-twenties. On my first day, I was met by my leader and four members of the store staff. As I preceded to introduce myself, “Hi, it is so ni..c..e.....,” before I could finish my sentence the staff walked out, murmuring statements of how they would not put up with this change. My leader, only a few weeks into their role, was left in shock by this behavior, however, they quickly motioned for us to get to work setting goals and expectations for my team of four white men who had just stepped away. As I had always been expected to do, I worked at adopting hobbies and interests of those around me and inquire across differences. Sure, I would build relationships with each member, but at the cost of my own emotional equity as I continuously took microaggressions and biases with a smile. One year later, my team was ranked #1 in the region. Within days the Director hosted a meeting, starting with accolades of how my team’s moral was at an all-time high. Only to then proceed with how I would not be promoted because “it wasn't my time.” It took everything inside of me to hold back the sea of emotions rushing to my head. As a result of having to shut it ALL off, I just sat there in silence. That evening, when I didn’t have to put on a façade of happiness, I began to cry profusely. That was when I knew I had to change my perspective and actions if I was going to survive in a structure that didn’t include anyone like me and didn’t value inclusive behavior. So, I adopted three practices to help me interrupt bias and survive until the next opportunity.

1. Positive Self-talk: I would replace each negative comment about me with three positive statements in my head. I had proven I could do the job and now started to believe it.
2. Remember the Big Picture: I saw the toxic environment and poor management as a learning ground—for how not to do things. I also reminded myself in the face of biases, that this position was a steppingstone for something greater.
3. Sell Yourself: I learned this one the hard way; the only person that will sell you, is you! So, go sell your accomplishments - every project, role, and assignment.

My Story

While I commend those, who are willing to help the unintended aggressor acknowledge their unconscious bias, as I once did, I praise those who apply their energy to themselves the most. As minorities, moments of recognition in our potential, strengths, or accomplishments are few. It is up to us to instill these affirmations in our lives so that when we face bias, we have the strength to contest, disagree, or explain our views to others, and most importantly to ourselves.

On the receiving end of Microaggression

About 15 years ago, I was facilitating a workshop and received some unexpected feedback from my manager:

Manager: I noticed you used the word “da” instead of “the” and “dat” instead of “that.” It might be because you’re black and from the south.

Me: Thank you for the feedback. (In truth, I was upset and alarmed by this. It was the first time I experienced bias.)

Unconscious bias is social stereotypes we form about certain groups of people based on our experiences. At work, Unconscious bias could be a millennial saying a baby boomer is not good with technology or selecting a male to take a traveling assignment over a woman.

Although this was extremely upsetting and alarming, it drove me to garner a more in-depth understanding of Diversity and Inclusion and the impact it has in the workplace. As I reflect on that moment in time, being one of the only people of color in that department, that leader displayed unconscious bias, microaggression, and macroaggression, like so many other leaders who lack the understanding or tools to create and navigate a culture of inclusion.

>Today people are still experiencing various types of discrimination from inequity in wage, career advancement, to straight up racism.<

My Story

A Catalyst Study revealed there is a cost associated with daily insults. The idea of always having to stand your ground imposes an Emotional Tax on people of color. Many people of color contend with the burgeoning of psychological safety from living in the intersectionality of sexism, racism, ageism, and gender, imposed by the meritocracy of white privilege. (Catalyst, 2018)

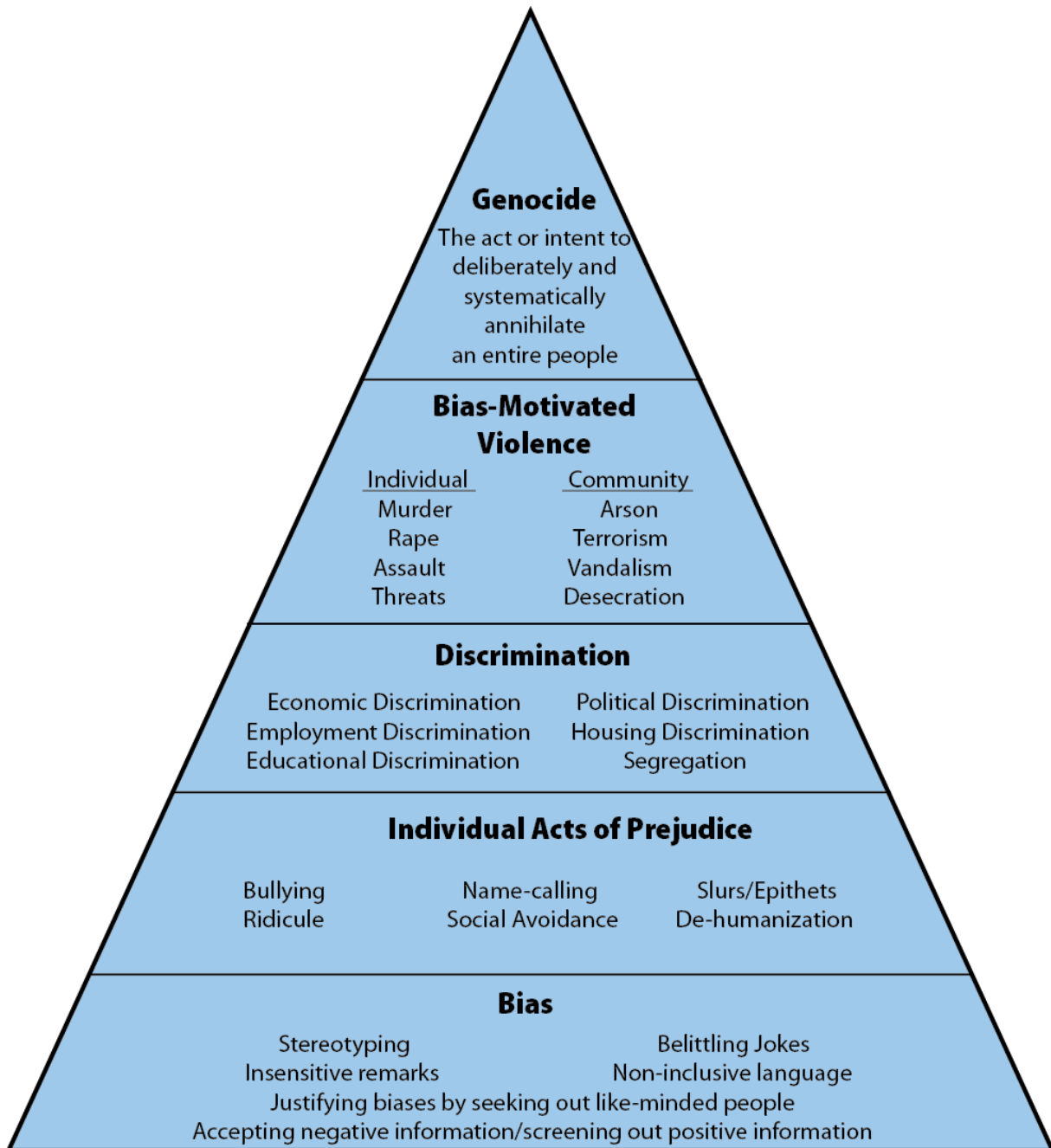
Research data from Forbes revealed that companies with high ethnically diverse teams are 33% more profitable and 37% of employees felt that business results were more significant with gender diversity. (Berger, 2018)

I challenge everyone to speak out against injustice, to develop their self-awareness on unconscious bias, and to take steps to interrupt biases as they happen in real time. We can do this by observing the way we react to opposing comments on social media post, questioning ourselves when we generalize different ethnic groups, and getting to know the group of people that make us feel uncomfortable.



Say Something: Interrupting Bias

Say Something: Interrupting Bias



Pyramid of Hate, © 2005 Anti-Defamation League

Source: ADL

Say Something: Interrupting Bias

We all have the power to make the world a better place. This means we have to be active and aware when it comes to our words, the words of others, our own actions and the actions of those around us. Bias creeps into daily life from two places: our own internal bias and the bias of others that often goes unchecked in the classroom, hallway, school event, or even just hanging out with friends.

As you can see, bias is at the bottom - the biggest layer of the Pyramid of Hate. This is the place where every other layer builds from, adding more and more alarming, hateful, and lastly, genocidal acts towards the top. If we can dismantle and disrupt the bottom layer, we can topple the pyramid.

In a world of diversity and inequality, those with privilege in our society have the power to end the differential treatment of others by checking their own biases and using their positions of privilege to ensure those around them of the privileged group hear how uncool it is for them to use stereotypes, slurs, hate speech, or excuse or trivialize national acts of racism and injustice.

So what can you do?

We have to first know that we can handle and interrupt the biases inside of us. Here's how.

1). Understand Prejudice is Learned Not Normal

Prejudice is a learned judgement toward social others and refers to internal thoughts, feelings, attitudes and assumptions based on the groups to which they belong (Is Everyone Really Equal, 29). Key to this is the knowledge that this is a learned way of thinking and feeling, and that it can be unlearned - it is not natural, normal, or innate. You can change your own prejudices and help those in your life change theirs.

2). Be Aware and Mindful of Your Own Thoughts and Actions: Think before you speak and act!

Say Something: Interrupting Bias

3). **Change Your Behaviors:** While you work on your mental and emotional biases, ensure your behavior lines up with things that are respectful, honoring of others, inclusive, and kind. They will eventually merge and meet - positive actions can re-shape and work unlearn biases.

4). **Share Your Experiences With Others:** This will help foster understanding and growth in your communities.

Next, we have to know that we can handle and interrupt the biases of others when they ripple out into conversation, action, image, and tone in spaces we are with friends, family, or even strangers. Interrupting bias in healthy and strong ways is a powerful way to eliminate discrimination and oppression.

1). **Be Ready:** Speaking out and standing against biases like racism and sexism takes courage!

2). **Identify the Behaviors:** Tell the person that their behavior was racist, sexist, etc. do not label the person.

3). **Appeal to Principals:** Let the person know that what they just said does not line up with some of the better things they believe about people, life, or human rights - appeal to their higher principals to get them to connect the dots.

4). **Set Limits:** Let the person know you will not allow this kind of talk or action in your presence, space, or home.

5). **Find an Ally/Be an Ally:** Don't go it alone, you are not alone!

6). **Be Vigilant:** Don't let racism, sexism or other forms of prejudice slide - call it out, and create safe spaces in your community.

Say Something: Interrupting Bias

For more information on interrupting biases, check out the [Southern Poverty Lawcenter's Guide Teaching Tolerance's Speak Up Guide](#), or the [Anti-Defamation League](#).



Racism & The Workplace

A Corporate Pandemic

