

Common Racist Behaviors and Attitudes of Many of Whites

Directions: review these common group dynamics:

- a. Check-off any dynamics which you have observed or heard a credible story about.
- b. Make a note next to the dynamics that you have personally experienced, felt, or done.
- c. Add any additional common patterns/dynamics you have witnessed or experienced.

Some/Many Whites Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):

1. believe they have “earned” what they have, rather than acknowledge the extensive white privilege and unearned advantages they receive; believe that if people of color just worked harder...
2. not notice the daily indignities that people of color experience; deny them and rationalize them away with PLEs (perfectly logical explanations)
3. work to maintain the status quo and protect the advantages and privileges they receive
4. believe that white cultural norms, practices and values are superior and better
5. internalize the negative stereotypes about people of color and believe that whites are smarter and superior to people of color
6. want people of color to conform and assimilate to white cultural norms and practices
7. accept and feel safer around people of color who have assimilated and are “closer to white”
8. blame people of color for the barriers and challenges they experience; believe that if they “worked harder” they could “pull themselves up by their bootstraps”
9. believe that people of color are not competent and are only hired/promoted to fill quotas
10. interrupt and talk over people of color
11. resent taking direction from a person of color
12. dismiss and minimize frustrations of people of color and categorize the person raising issues as militant, angry, having an “attitude,” working their agenda, not a team player...
13. focus on their “good intent” as whites, rather than on the negative impact of their behavior

14. focus on how much progress we have made, rather than on how much more needs to change
15. want people of color to “get over it” and move on quickly
16. get defensive when people of color express their frustrations with current organizational and societal dynamics
17. “walk on eggshells” and act more distant and formal with people of color
18. segregate themselves from people of color and rarely develop authentic relationships across race
19. exaggerate the level of intimacy they have with individual people of color
20. fear that they will be seen and “found out” as a racist, having racial prejudice
21. focus on themselves as an individual (I’m not racist; I’m a good white), and refuse to acknowledge the cultural and institutional racism people of color experience daily
22. pressure and punish whites who actively work to dismantle racism to conform and collude with white racism; criticize, gossip about, and find fault with white change agents
23. expect people of color to be the “diversity expert” and take the lead in raising and addressing racism as their “second (unpaid) job”
24. minimize, under-value, ignore, overlook and discount the talents, competencies and contributions of people of color
25. rephrase and reword the comments of people of color
26. ask people of color to repeat what they have just said
27. assume the white teacher/coach/facilitator/employee, etc., is in charge/the leader; assume people of color are in service roles
28. rationalize away racist treatment of people of color as individual incidents or the result of something the person of color did/failed to do
29. dismiss the racist experiences of people of color with comments such as: That happens to me too...You’re too sensitive...That happened because of _____, it has nothing to do with race!

30. judge a person of color as over-reacting and too emotional when they are responding to the cumulative impact of multiple recent racist incidents
31. accuse people of color of “playing the race card” whenever they challenge racist policies and practices; instead of exploring the probability of negative differential impact based on race, or that racist attitudes and beliefs are operating
32. if confronted by a person of color, shut down and focus on what to avoid saying or doing in the future, rather than engaging and learning from the interaction
33. look to people of color for direction, education, coaching on how to act & what not to do
34. compete with other whites to be “the good white;” the best ally, the one people of color let into their circle, etc.
35. if a white person makes a racist comment or action, aggressively confront them and pile on the feedback to distance from them and prove who is a better ally
36. seek approval, validation, and recognition from people of color
37. if confronted by a person of color, view it as an “attack” and focus on and critique HOW they engaged me, not my original comments or behaviors
38. disengage if feel any anxiety or discomfort
39. avoid confronting other whites on their racist attitudes and behaviors
40. when trying to help people of color, feel angry if they don’t enthusiastically appreciate the help
41. believe there is one “right” way, meaning “my way” or the “white way”
42. engage in “tone policing” of people of color

More productive approaches:

43. track patterns of differential treatment of people of color and intervene to stop inappropriate actions and educate others
44. continually learn more about the experiences of people of color and racism
45. recognize when people of color might be reacting out of cumulative impact, and offer space to talk about issues and their experiences

46. analyze policies and practices to assess any differential impact on people of color and intervene to create change
47. constantly track daily organizational activities to ensure fairness, respect, and inclusion for all people with respect to group dynamics, communication, task assignments, professional development opportunities, decision-making, conflict management, mentoring, networking, etc.

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