

Teaching Race in
White Spaces
Klingenstein
Leadership Academy
July 15th, 2020

Stephen Brookfield, Ph.D., Emeritus
Professor, University of St. Thomas,
Adjunct Professor, Teachers College

Bryana French, Ph.D, L.P., Associate
Professor, University of St. Thomas

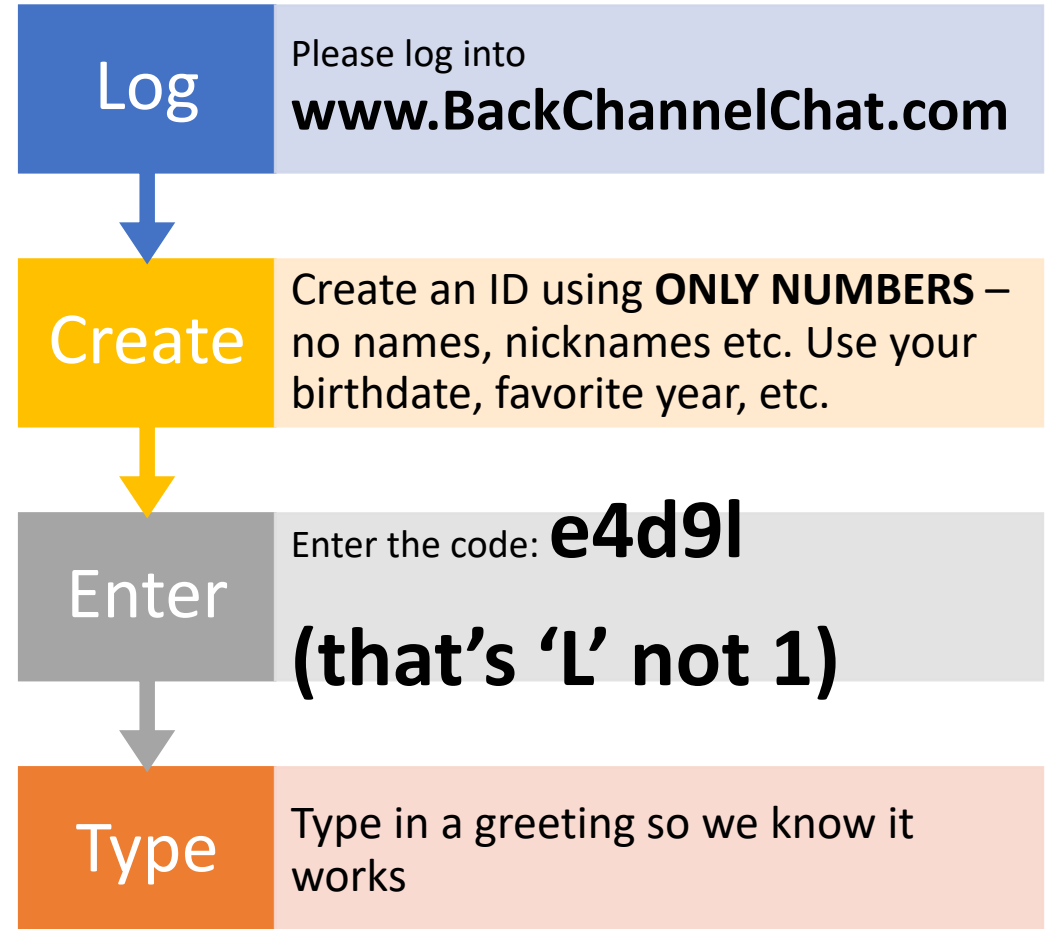




How do we
position
ourselves in
this work?

Tool of Engagement

- Go to backchannelchat.com
- Enter the code e49dl (that's "L" not 1)
- Don't include your name – use ONLY numbers & avatars
- First post a greeting
- Then post your response to the following question:
 - *When have you recently witnessed or committed an act of racism?*





Grounding In for Racial Dialogue

Defining Key Terms

Racism

Belief in superiority of one's own race and inferiority of another race, with the power to to take individual or collective action against racial groups deemed as inferior

Tripartite Model of Racism

- Individual
 - Individual's personal belief in the superiority of one's race over another
- Institutional
 - The Manipulation of institutions to maintain a racist advantage over others
- Cultural
 - Individual and institutional expression of the superiority of one's racial and cultural heritage over another
- James Jones, 1972, 1997

Anti-Black Racism



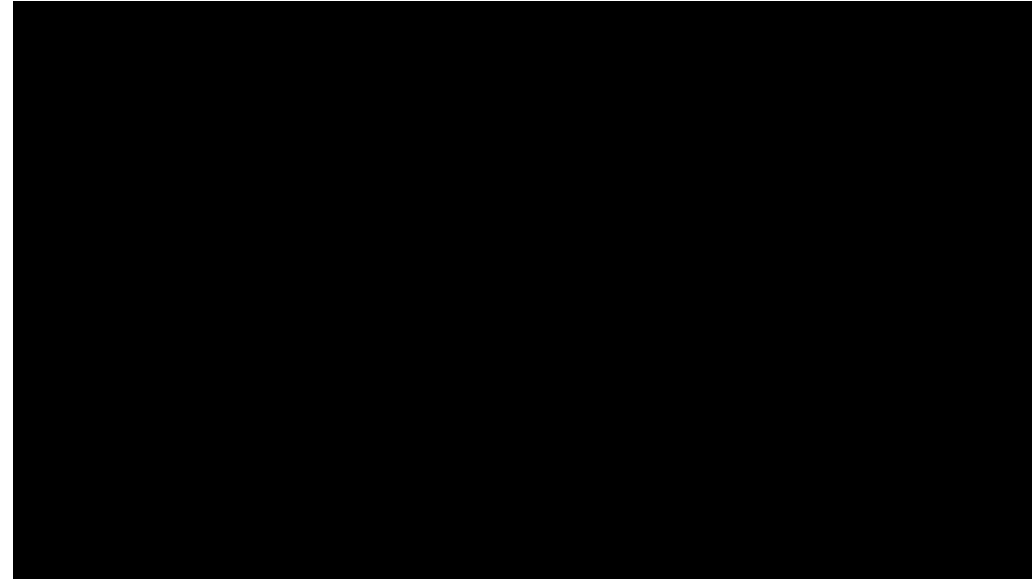
“The system of beliefs and practices that attack, erode, and limit the humanity of Black people” - Carruthers, 2018

- Inability to recognize Black humanity
- An articulation of what it means to be marked as Black in an anti-Black world
- Blackness tied to “slaveness”
- America’s Hatred of Blackness yet need for Black people’s existence

[*How can we win?*](#) Kimberly Latrice Jones

White Supremacy


- *White Supremacy is the ideology that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions.* - *Racial Equity Tools*
- Core Assumption
 - Due to their presumed innately superior intelligence, ability to use reason & logic, & capacity for calm objective analysis, whites should be entrusted with the power & control to make decisions for everyone else.
 - People of color are too unsophisticated, irrational & emotional to be entrusted with power. They have 'soul' and physical grace but are deemed not to possess intelligence & are driven by animalistic instinct.
- Unacknowledged component of white identity
 - If you are white assume that you, like all Whites, have this idea in your consciousness at an unacknowledged level. You may think you are past it, but it's in you.
- This core idea 'normalizes' racism for 'good whites'
 - We may deplore racism but we enact it because of learned white supremacy



Malcolm X Scene (2:29)

Racism is Embedded in Our Society

- Racism is a NORMAL & PERVASIVE part of White supremacist society (though obviously deeply harmful, dehumanizing, brutalizing, violent, destructive and immoral) (CRT)
- Acting in racist ways is not an example of your fundamentally flawed soul – IT'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT TO DO! (often completely without your awareness)
- So get past your “shame” and “guilt” at thinking of yourself as being racist – you didn't set out intentionally and deliberately to become racist: RACISM HAPPENED TO YOU! (by dint of growing up in the USA)



Systemic Racism Explained (4:23)

Intersectionality

- A lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects
- All people are positioned within socially created categories of oppression and domination such as race, culture, gender, and class that are located within a historical context
- Considers the ways that identities related to multiple socially constructed categories create similar, additive, and unique intersections of experiences, which are qualitatively different than the sum of individual identities
- Intersectionality is not, however, concerned only or primarily with identity, but with an examination of how systems of oppression and privilege interact





Characteristics of Predominantly White Spaces

White Racial Identity Development: Janet Helms

Status	Description
Contact	Obliviousness. Being White is viewed as a "normal" state of being which is rarely reflected upon, and the privileges associated with being White are simply taken for granted.
Disintegration	Increased interactions with people of color and/or exposure to new information about the reality of racism greater awareness is often accompanied by feelings of guilt, anger and sadness. These emotions can lead to denial and resistance to this new learning, but they can also be a catalyst for action.
Reintegration	Feelings of guilt and denial may be transformed into fear and anger toward people of color. Resentful "blaming the victim" may be used as a strategy to avoid dealing with the uncomfortable issue of racism, as well as avoiding the struggle to abandon racist assumptions and define a new, anti-racist identity.
Pseudo-independence	Intellectual understanding of the unfairness of racism as a system of advantage and a recognition of the need to assume personal responsibility for dismantling it. The individual may seek to distance themselves from other Whites, and actively seek relationships with People of Color as a way of reducing the social isolation experienced earlier.
Immersion/Emersion	Actively seeking answers to the questions, "Who am I racially? What does it really mean to be White in society?," the individual needs information about White allies, those Whites who have worked against racism, as role models and guides for a new way to thinking about White identity
Autonomy	The internalization of a positive White racial identity and is evidenced by a lived commitment to anti-racist activity, ongoing self-examination and increased interpersonal effectiveness in multiracial settings

Racial/Cultural Identity Development: Derald Wing Sue

PHASE	ATTITUDE TOWARD SELF	ATTITUDE TOWARD SAME GROUP MEMBERS	ATTITUDE TOWARD OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS	ATTITUDE TOWARD DOMINANT GROUP
Conformity	Negative self-perceptions of physical and cultural characteristics	Internalized negative beliefs and attitudes, stereotypes	Internalized negative beliefs and attitudes, stereotypes	Belief White cultural, social institutional standards are superior
Dissonance	Growing awareness of racism, not all of a culture is good or bad, newly considers positive aspects	Questions dominant perceptions of group	Questions stereotypes of other groups	Considers not all aspects of dominant group are beneficial
Resistance & Immersion	Self-discovery and appreciation of cultural identity	Strong identification with race/culture	Superficial connection with other marginalized groups	Perceives dominant culture as the oppressor
Introspection	Conflict with racial allegiance and personal autonomy	Resent/resist pressure to align with group at all costs	Concern with ethnocentric basis for judging others	Selective trust and distrust
Integrative Awareness	Strong self image and worth, culture with autonomy	Strong pride without accepting unequivocally	Relationship building to understand	Openness and selective trust

“Good” White People

- Believe that we (they) don't see race
- Believe everyone is a human being & we (they) should treat everyone the same (colorblind racial ideology)
- Believe we (they) focus on actions & individual character, not racial identity
- Choose when to engage in race and anti-racism
- Can monitor our (their) own racism
- Believe we (they) have a pure, anti-racist soul
- Believe we (they) are free of white supremacist conditioning
- View racism as something committed by less enlightened whites
- Regard ourselves (themselves) as allies of People of Color
 - (Shannon Sullivan *Good White People* 2014)

How “Good Whites” Evade Confronting Racism

- Vigorously deny any racist intent, claim they have been misunderstood, are acting innocently, & are being unfairly accused
- Become defensive & immediately seek to explain to people of color the “real” meaning of their behavior
- Resist “sitting with” the reality that they have learned racism & white supremacy throughout their lives & carry those viruses
- Accuse people of color of imagining things, seeing racism where it doesn’t exist, & denying the validity of whites’ experience
- Come to each other’s defense in multi-racial discussions
- *I know this because these are all of my learned behaviors*

(Robin DiAngelo *White Fragility* 2018)

Consequences for BIPOC

- Catch 22 of responding to racism
- Gaslighting – “That’s not racist, anyone would have...”
- Also socialized with White supremacist ideology
 - Difficult to see and confront institutional racism
 - Inferiority theorizing
 - Superiority theorizing
- Difficulty with “Good whites”: Nice people can still be racist
- Whiteness won’t save us: Assimilating and appeasing
- Racial battle fatigue: Being the one to raise the issue



Photograph by Jahi Chikwendiu

Hard Truths that Stephen Knows

- I MUST call out racist behavior (including in myself) as soon as I see it. If I don't I will have no credibility in the eyes of students and colleagues of color.
- I MUST assume that for students and colleagues of color EVERYTHING is seen through the lens of race. For them, NOTHING is "race free".
- I MUST acknowledge my own racist behavior when it's pointed out to me – not try to 'explain' it away, not protest my innocence: I must regard it as truth.
- I MUST NEVER try to talk people of color "out of" their testimony of racism.
- I MUST NEVER invoke "being respectful" or "seeing all sides of this" as a way of avoiding painful truths about my own socialization into, & learning of, racism.
- I MUST NEVER claim to be an "ally" or anti-racist "friend".
- I MUST NEVER ask people of color to teach me about racism or to tell me what I should do – figuring out what whites should do is OUR responsibility

Where do we go from here?

Whites

- Understand that calling out racism is the responsibility of whites
- Don't wait for people of color to say they're uncomfortable with something – if you have any unease, name it
- Strive to model anti-racist awareness in your own contributions
- Understand white privilege/power as an unconscious phenomenon – not worrying about how your race makes things difficult for you
- Don't expect gratitude or thanks – you're just doing the right thing
- Don't preach at, or disdain, those you regard as “less enlightened”
- Don't set up people to “confess” & then grant absolution
- Don't stay silent in multiracial discussions – but also don't take up space
- Do assume you'll say the “wrong” thing & leave feeling you messed up

BIPOC

- Know and believe in your worth
- Acknowledge and confront internalized racism and Anti-Blackness
- Find trusted BIPOC people to consult with and get support from
- Challenge injustice but pick your battles
- Recognize rest as resistance
- “Speak your truth, even when your voice shakes” – Audre Lorde

Discussion Activity: Circle of Voices

- Think silently for 1-2 minutes about the question posed by the teacher/leader & make notes on their response
- Group members go round the circle in order - each person has up to 1 minute of uninterrupted air time to give their response to the question. No interruptions allowed.
- Participants then move into open conversation with the ground rule that members can only talk about a comment made by **someone else** in the opening circle of voices. This need **NOT** be agreement - it can be a disagreement, a question, an illustration.
- *Your Question – how does white supremacy or anti-Blackness manifest themselves in your work environment?*

Preparing Institutions to Confront Racism

Leaders Need to Model

Signals that the institution takes this seriously

Encourages a culture shift in the institution

Models bravery and vulnerability

Promotes behavior that you want staff to engage in

Reinforces good behavior

Beginning Steps to Introducing Racism

- Define Terms
 - Racism, white supremacy, anti-blackness
- Understand racism as structural, systemic, a virus, learned behavior, all pervasive, air we breathe
- Adjust your definition of success
 - Having the conversation & keeping it going
- Frame the need for conversation in terms of the mission, purpose, strategic plan etc.
- Autobiographical disclosure
 - Talk about your own struggles with racism
- Model a public inter-racial conversation

Identifying Institutional Racism

What are the unintended consequences of the policies and practices?

- Standardized tests for admissions?
- Reliance on student evaluations for tenure/promotion?
- Implicit bias in hiring practice (e.g., “people like us”)?
- HR responses to complaints (e.g., complaints against BIPOC, complaints against racial microaggressions)
- Recruitment and retention of staff of color
- Diversity office vs. Racial justice focus, Sidelining diversity vs. embedded throughout

Discussion Tool: Snowballing

1. Instructor poses a question
 2. People individually make notes & then share responses in pairs
 3. After a while the pairs then join other pairs to share responses in quartets
 4. Quartets then join other quartets to share responses in octets ... & so on
 5. Each time groups merge with pairs, quartets, octets they focus on sharing....
 1. *Questions That Have Been Posed*
 2. *Different Interpretations & Responses That Have Been Expressed*
 3. *Issues Around The Topic That Seem To Be Emerging*
- *Example Question:* How do you/could you model addressing racism?

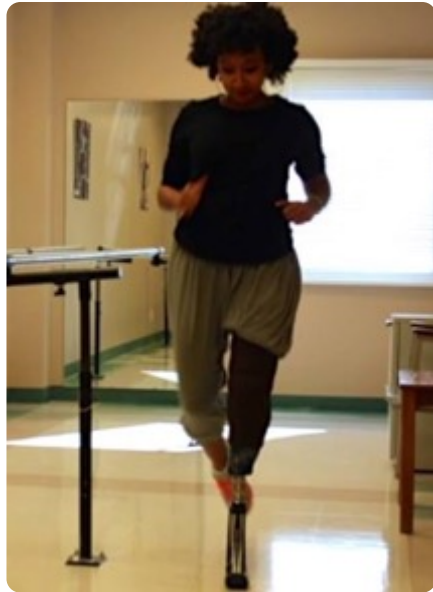


Creating Conditions for Racial Dialogue



Fostering the Environment: Working Alliance

- Model vulnerability (e.g., start by sharing your positionality)
- Use a relational approach
- Cocreate ground rules, Brave Space over Safe Space
- Use of questions to foster curiosity and reserve judgment
- Acknowledge emotional as well as intellectual learning (e.g., discomfort, anger, guilt, avoidance, defensiveness, apathy)
- Building community responsibility for conversation
- Assume good intentions but accept responsibility





Activities for Engaging in Racial Dialogue

- Videos & testimony studied by community
- Specific discussion protocols
 - Bohmian dialog, Methodological Belief, Circle of Voices, Circular Response, Chalk Talk, etc.
- Anonymous engagement
 - Back Channel Chat, Critical Incident Questionnaire
- Using your authority to prevent avoidance
- Using racial affinity groups for discussion

Facilitation Techniques Conditions for Racial Dialogue

- Transparent facilitation
 - Explanations of your process as facilitator / leader (e.g., applying the principle of fairness, why you stay with a particular person/issue, why you call on people, standing your ground when people try to resist & deflect)
- Scaffolding
 - Start with events & scenarios removed from people's experiences, then move to a direct examination of personal/group experience
 - Move from unequivocal glaring examples to more nuanced examinations involving intent, context, micro-factors
 - Start by discussing oppressed identities then move to privileged identities
- Regular formative evaluation shared w/ community

Circular Response



How would you set up colleagues to discuss racism

Asking the Right Questions

- The power of asking the right questions to help generate self reflection and action

The Color of Fear (5:11)

Small Group Discussion

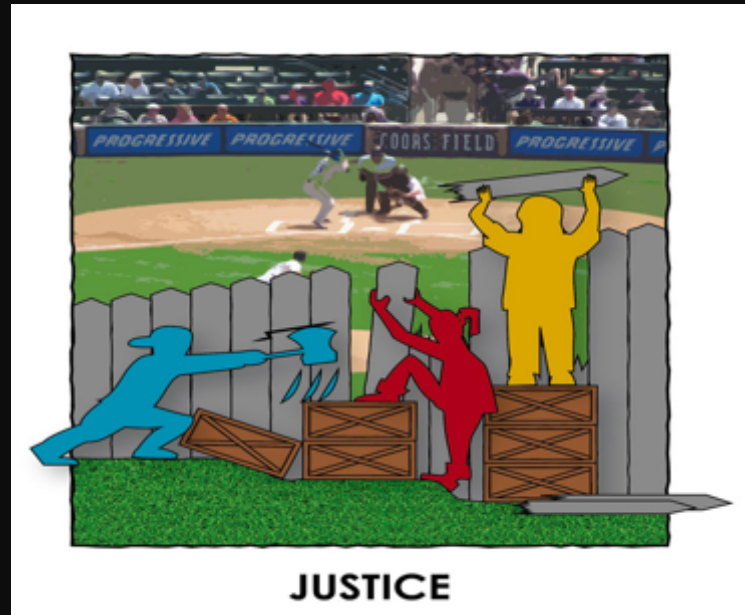
- What are the most productive questions you can pose about race in your institutions?
-



EQUALITY



EQUITY



JUSTICE

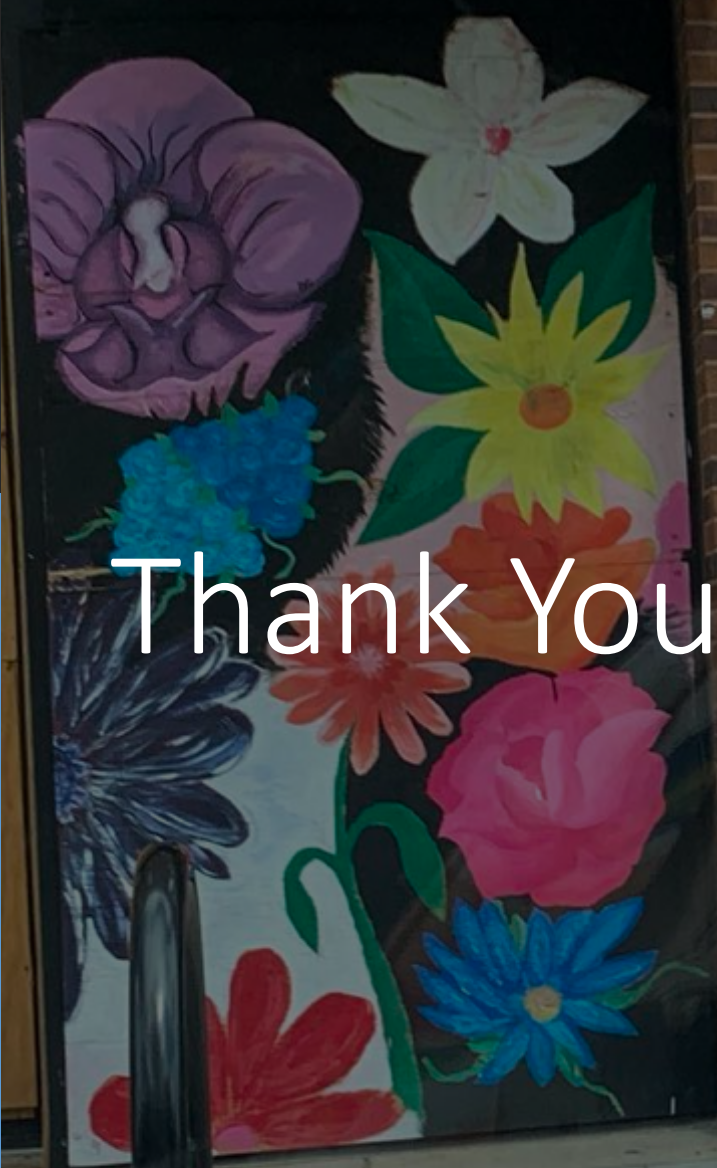
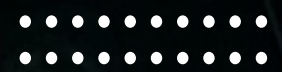


Appreciative Pause

- Pause & think about something that another participant did or said today that you appreciated.
- Maybe this was a new idea, a personal affirmation, a question posed, a resource shared, a practice suggested, an expression of support or empathy and so on.
- When you're ready, speak your appreciation for that action out loud for the whole workshop to hear
- Do NOT refer to something the facilitators did in this activity

Additional Resources

- Ijeama Oluo – *So You Want to Talk About Race* (2019) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnybJZRWipg>
- George Yancy - *Look! A White* (2012), *What White Looks Like* (2004), *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-Racism* (2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyZNAAr8czE>
- Derald Wing Sue – *Race Talk & the Conspiracy of Silence* (2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nrw6Bf5weTM&t=53s>
- Shannon Sullivan – *Good White People* (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZo06BjmbbE>
- Robin DiAngelo – *White Fragility* (2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45ey4jgoxeU>
- Ibram X. Kendi – *How to Be an Anti-Racist* (2019) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzuOlyyQlug>
- Glenn Singleton – *Courageous Conversations About Race* (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwaOBXzJ3hs>
- Tim Wise – *White Like Me* (2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4fbr1LlxEk>
- Stephen Brookfield & Mary Hess - *Creating an Anti-Racist White identity* (2021 – Forthcoming)
- *Kimberle Crenshaw Instructors Guide: [Free resources on intersectionality, critical race theory across disciplines](#)*
- Menakem, R. (2017). [*My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies.*](#) Central Recovery Press.
- Roberts, J. (2020, June 8). White academia: Do better. Higher education has a problem. It's called White supremacy. *Medium*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/the-faculty/white-academia-do-better-fa96cede1fc5>
- Tatum, B. D. (2017). [*Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race.*](#) Basic Books.
- <https://www.racialequitytools.org/home>. <https://www.academics4blacklives.com/>
- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PrAq4iBNb4nVlcTsLcNIW8zjaQXBLkWayL8EaPlh0bc/preview?pru=AAABcp874EU*ZgRWhZDC5EHSU3mP4-YHDg
- Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). [*From safe spaces to brave spaces. The art of effective facilitation: Reflections from social justice educators*](#), 135-150. Stylus



Thank You

