

White leaders and practitioners have a responsibility to learn about whiteness, its relationship to how they see DEIB work, and what actions they can take to make change.

Background

According to a [Board Source report](#), 87% of non-profit executives and 78% of board members are white. As many non-profits are creating and implementing DEIB plans, it follows that there are a significant number of white people who are leading and influencing DEIB work.

We suggest taking the view that DEIB is in existence in response to the impact of white supremacy on peoples' behaviors, actions, and outcomes. If there were no white supremacy, then DEIB would not be needed.

We invite white leaders to see DEIB as a form of anti-white supremacy, then ask themselves what is required of white leaders to contribute to deepening their organizations' progress towards real diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging?

DEIB Planning Tips

DEIB efforts should be interwoven in everything you do. It is not jargon, a checklist, or a one-time training. It is the conscious daily work with our stakeholders. It is in how we work with each other, treat one another, and learn from our mistakes.

In social justice work, the journey is also a destination. How we behave and interact with each other along the way is a key goal in itself.

Acknowledge that the mere existence of DEIB indicates significant issues of inequity and exclusion in our country's institutions and organizations.

Identify goals and action steps - and accept that the work will never be complete.

Establish and empower a committee of diverse individuals to guide the work. Co-create charters, sponsors, and a budget for the committee to utilize. Without a charter, co-sponsors (who have power), and a budget, the efforts will not be in earnest.

Establish measurable, tangible, and transparent goals that are both objective (i.e. percentage of promotions who are people of color) and subjective (i.e. staff surveys) to provide you with feedback that will offer strategic insight and inform your next action steps.

Lastly, if the culture where you work is not generally supportive or collaborative, then a DEIB Plan will likely fail. For example, if your organization does not have an equitable salary structure, consistently applied policies and practices, or an inclusive organizational development approach, then DEIB work will need to start there.

Recommendations – How Does a White Leader Successfully Practice DEIB?

While no one anti-racist approach can be applied to each unique set of problems, there are actions white people can take to learn, grow, and be effective in the DEIB arena. This tip sheet offers ideas on what white people can see and do to be a positive presence in the work. Starting from the inside and moving out:

With Self:

A barrier in white people's work against white supremacy is dealing with feelings of discomfort and loss while avoiding victimhood or disengagement. A negative effect of white privilege is that it lowers one's tolerance of discomfort, which is a barrier to empathy. Work to:

- Put aside any shame or guilt and see this work as a call to reflection and action.
- Embrace discomfort and practice empathy as counterbalances to privilege.
- Accept loss and grief as part of the process (loss of unearned privileges), and work on this on your own, or with other white people.
- Seek out and listen to voices you may not usually hear or listen to. Learn about white supremacy in American history from both white and BIPOC perspectives.

With Others:

Accept that your work as a white person in this arena requires you to talk with white people who did or said something that you see as racist (e.g., a white colleague says they 'don't see color' in a group meeting). Don't leave this for people of color to do – it is your responsibility to call that person into a conversation, assume positive intent, and work with them.

Take time to adjust your approach so that you can be effective in your interactions by asking yourself these questions:

1. How can I move from “how do I fix them?” to “how can we help each other grow”?
2. What are my assumptions about the other white person? How can I reframe my assumptions and judgments into curiosity and empathy?
3. How difficult is it for the other person to ‘get’ what I am saying?
4. What am I trying to accomplish in the conversation? Can I share this with them?
5. What is at stake for the other person in this conversation?
6. What is the risk I am taking by having the conversation?
7. What is the risk I am taking by *not* having the conversation?

With Systems:

Work to make whiteness and white supremacy visible. Pay attention to where it hides in plain sight and work to illuminate it. Ask how can I use my power as a DEIB Officer, key decision maker, or participant to support DEIB work in my organization and the larger systems?

- Don't use the term Caucasian when indicating white people.
- When presenting data on system inequities, call out whiteness and white supremacy while calling in white people to the work.
- When exploring or sharing statistics on inequity, don't only focus on the disproportionately poor outcomes of people of color, also focus on the disproportionately strong outcomes of white people. Explore why.

Additional Resources

Democracy In America, Chapter 10, The three races that inhabit the US, Alexis De Tocqueville, 1850

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Chapters 1 & 2, Paulo Freire, 1970

Undoing Racism, A Philosophy of International Social Change, Ronald Chisolm and Michael Washington: The People's Institute, 1997 (<https://www.pisab.org>)

White Supremacy Culture, Tima Okun, 1999:
<https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/>

The Forge Critique of White Supremacy Culture, How (Not) to Dismantle White Supremacy, 2023: Sendolo Diaminah, Scot Nakagawa, Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, Rinku Sen, and Lori Villarosa
<https://forgeorganizing.org/article/how-not-dismantle-white-supremacy>

The Point is Not to Explore Whiteness but to Abolish It, Noel Ignatiev, 1997:
<https://blog.pmpress.org/2019/09/16/the-point-is-not-to-interpret-whiteness-but-to-abolish-it>

Leadership in the Age of Complexity: From Hero to Host, Margaret Wheatley with Debbie Frieze, 2010

Birth of a White Nation: The Invention of White People and It's Relevance Today, Jacqueline Battalora, 2013

The Color of Law, A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America, Richard Rothstein, 2017

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism, Robin DiAngelo, 2018

Barnraisers - <https://www.barnraisersproject.org>

Contradictions for White People in Racial Justice Work (@hannahbaer):
<https://x.com/malefragility/status/1274066857729744897/photo/1>