

Manager Guide on Workplace Discussions About Race and Protest

Discussing Racial Inequality & Protest with Staff in the Workplace

In response to recent peaceful protest, acts of systematic racism and various related violence across the nation, President Bollinger, Emeritus Dean Goldman, and Interim Dean Rustgi sent emails to our community affirming Columbia's values regarding racism and other injustices. This document was created by CUIMC HR to provide managers with information on how to appropriately discuss race and the recent protests in the workplace. The resources included will provide all staff information on systematic racism in the United States, protesting and authentic allyship.

The first six months of 2020 have brought about overwhelming levels of pain, fear and exhaustion to the Black community and revived the Black Lives Matter movement and protests (#BlackLivesMatter). Columbia University and the Columbia University Irving Medical Center community stand against racism, intolerance, and injustice. Discussing racial inequality and the ongoing protests with your staff is difficult but necessary. Managers must have the tools to be able to talk to their employees about racism/racial inequality. We all need to be proactive and intentional about the conversation and create a safe space for employees to share their feelings about the issues of racism and protests against police brutality. Grounding these conversations in evidence from bona fide resources and displaying good intentions are better than not talking about race at all.

Here are some tips to help you navigate the conversation in a productive manner:

1. **Embrace the conversation-** Managers should lead the conversation about racial inequity and model for their subordinates how to navigate these challenging conversations with confidence and skill; *President Bollinger, Emeritus Dean Goldman, and Interim Dean Rustgi have spoken out publicly against racism and other injustices after the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Rashad Brooks and expressed their support to eradicate systematic racism. Reflecting on your own positive or negative experiences around race will open the door for employees to do the same. Understand that some employees may not be ready or willing to discuss these concerns. Be empathetic and give employees space to process the conversation.*
2. **Make it clear to employees that you are ready to listen and support-** Most employees are looking for a safe space to express their feelings. Managers should lead the conversation and help employees feel less anxious about the conversation; *talking about race in the workplace is uncomfortable for all involved. Discussing norms that would be observed during the conversation prior to engaging in dialogue may help to ease the discomfort (i.e., building a safe space, practicing respect, listening actively and being constructive).*
3. **Address the larger context of the moment-** Managers must set the tone within the context that appropriately captures the tensions at hand. Managers must understand, contextualize and articulate the current crisis for what it is, *an ongoing and longstanding struggle for*

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communities of color against institutional racism and violence perpetuated by individuals in power.

4. **It is not the responsibility of underrepresented minorities to explain racism-** It should not be a marginalized group's responsibility to teach the majority, but there may be "teaching moments". *Cultivate a network of relationships with a diverse set of allies (within or outside of your department) to assist and share appropriate resources.*
5. **Be authentic-** Employees are looking for authenticity. Express your own fears and outrage. The fear of a misstatement should not stop managers from broaching the conversation. An imperfect conversation is better than silence or apathy.

Definition of Anti-Racism

Anti-Racism is the act of opposing racism/white supremacy in all forms--in our society, other people, and even within ourselves and in the ways we perpetuate racism with our behaviors. It is about identifying the root causes of racism and putting an end to them.

Steps to Becoming Anti-Racist (*The Antiracism Starter Kit* by L. Glenise Pike):

1. **Awareness:** This might be your initial awakening to the racial injustices around you. You are not only finally able to see that they exist, but that you play a crucial role in stopping the cycle by becoming anti-racist. Being aware of racial injustices or understanding that you have privilege won't make you antiracist. You have to keep going through the remaining stages. This awakening is not a one-time event. It will happen once, on a broad level regarding race and white supremacy, and will continue to happen on issue-specific levels as you dive deeper and create space for more and more varied lived experiences in your understanding of these systems.
2. **Education:** This is where you become an intentional student in this work. From webinars, lectures, and workshops, to blog posts, books, and documentaries, study the complexities of racism and the many ways it manifests within our society. The point of educating yourself on race and white supremacy isn't for you to be able to articulate these complex topics in intellectual debates about inequality, it's about you being able to develop the eye for identifying white supremacy in its many forms (in others and in yourself) without being hand-held to do so.
3. **Self-Interrogation:** This is where you disarm yourself of the racist tools of defense that you've used to bypass the work of anti-racism. This is where you begin to replace them with tools of accountability to stop racist behaviors. Self-interrogation is a skill and a process. Being effective and efficient at this stage takes time and practice. While it will start out as the part of this work that source the most discomfort within you, you will eventually get to a place where you're operating out of a growth mindset and embrace the

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many ways to identify how you can better be living up to the person you want to be in this fight for human equality.

4. ***Community Action:*** Attempting to do this part of the work without accomplishing the first three stages is how you end up harming communities of color with performative allyship. In stage four, you incorporate what you've learned during your ongoing process into your everyday life. You leverage your positions of leadership and influence - no matter how big or small - to encourage others to do their own work in anti-racism. You elevate the intellectual contributions and scholarship of people of color educators and thought leaders in the process. This stage of the work will not be void of mistakes, but the way those are handled and the number of times they are repeated thereafter (as least as possible), is what will make the difference here. Because leading by example in your failures is but one of the many ways for you to do this work authentically.

Being an Authentic Ally for Coworkers

1. **Recognize your privilege:** Understanding your privilege as a white person is critical to understanding how race and racism can impact the trajectory of one person's life.
2. **Educate yourself:** The real work of allyship comes in the form of educating yourself on the things you need to personally learn and unlearn in order to be a better advocate.
3. **Check in and speak up:** During times like this when the news is filled with heavy headlines about Black death, violence and protests, checking in with your Black colleagues just to show that you care and are aware of what's going on can make a difference.
4. **Understand that silence is complicit:** Beyond addressing what's happening in the news, it's important that non-Black colleagues and leaders are vocal when they witness instances of bias, racism and injustice in their immediate workplace and community.
5. **Hire, promote and support Black professionals:** Speaking out against issues of racism and injustice can easily fall on deaf ears if you're leading a department that does not prioritize hiring, promoting and supporting Black employees.

Anti-Racism, Racial Equality & Protest Resources

CUIMC Specific Resources

- [CU University Life Resources for Racial Justice](#)
- [CUIMC Well-being Resources](#)
- [CUIMC Employee Assistance Program](#)
- [CUIMC CopeColumbia Mental Health](#)
- [CUIMC Staff ERGs \(Employee Resource Groups\)](#)

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External Resources

Articles

- [The 1619 Project](#). Nikole Hannah Jones, *The New York Times*.
- [An Antiracist Reading List](#). Ibram X. Kendi, 2020.
- [Becoming Trustworthy White Allies](#). Melanie S. Morrison, 2017.
- [Harvard's Implicit Bias Test](#)
- [Race without Racism: How Higher Education Researchers Minimize Racist Institutional Norms](#). Shaun Harper, 2012.
- [Racism Defined](#). *Dismantling Racism*, 2020.
- [Talking About Race](#), National Museum of African American History and Culture.
- [Welcome To The Anti-Racism Movement — Here's What You've Missed](#). Ijeoma Oluo, 2017.
- [White Fragility and the Rules of Engagement](#). Robin Diangelo, 2015.
- [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#). Peggy McIntosh, 1989.
- [Dismantling Racism: A Resource Book](#)
- [Resource on Having Difficult Conversations](#)
- [Racial Justice Assessment Tool](#)
- [Coming Out for Racial Justice](#)
- [White Coats for Black Lives](#)

Books

- *Anti-Racism* by Alastair Bonnett
- *How To Be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander
- *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo

Guides

- [The Antiracism Starter Kit](#)
- [This Is Not A Riot](#)

Organizations

- Black Lives Matter: [Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- Color Of Change: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- The Movement for Black Lives: [Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Youtube](#)
- NAACP: [Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund: [Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- National Urban League: [Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Youtube](#)

Videos

- [A Conversation on Race and Privilege with Angela Davis and Jane Elliott](#)
- [Systemic Racism Explained](#)

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- [Addressing Race in the Workplace](#)
- [A Description of Racism](#)
- [A Description of White Rage](#)
- [From Bystander to Upstander](#)

Please note these resources provided are not exhaustive and many more are being created on this topic daily. We will continue to update this list accordingly.

For more information regarding activities and events at CUIMC on this subject, please contact Tonya Richards, Senior Human Resources Business Partner/Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, at custaffdiversity@cumc.columbia.edu or visit <https://www.cumc.columbia.edu/hr/working-at-cumc/staff-diversity-inclusion>