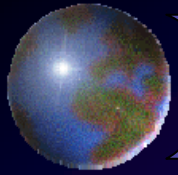


# *Difference, Power, and Privilege*

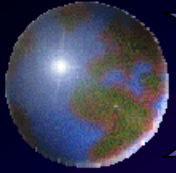
Dr. Susan Shaw





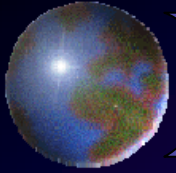
## *Definitions*

- Difference: socially constructed binaries that confer dominance or subordination on group members (gender, race, social class, ability, sexual identity, age, religion, country of origin)
- Power: the ability to control or coerce
- Privilege: “an invisible package of unearned assets”—Peggy McIntosh



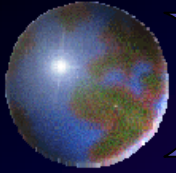
# *Power*

- Typically defined as “power-over,” the ability to coerce another’s behavior. Power also includes access to social, political, and economic resources.
- In systems of oppression, power accrues to those who most closely approximate the mythical norm—(in the US) male, white, heterosexual, financially stable, young-middle adult, able-bodied, Christian.
- Social institutions (family, education, religion, media, government) reproduce hierarchy and ensure the maintenance of power in the hands of members of the dominant culture by normalizing the dominant culture so that hierarchical orderings based on gender, race, social class, etc. appear natural and inevitable.



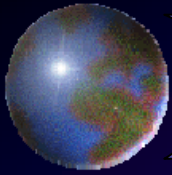
## *For example:*

- We would assume that the hiring, promotion & tenure processes at a college or university are neutral and based solely on merit.
- But the assumption of neutrality masks power relationships based on privilege.
- Power brings unequal distribution of tasks and rewards (starting salary, resources such as time off for research or start-up funds/travel funds, research assistance, service expectations).
- The result is:
  - 39% of instructional faculty are women;
  - Only 24% of full professors are women, while 51% of instructors are women.
  - Women hold 31% of tenured positions and 44.8% of tenure-track positions.
  - Women professors earn 81% of what male professors earn.
  - 86% of faculty members are white.



## *Questions for Discussion*

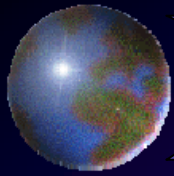
- How might the myth of neutrality mask the realities of Latinos in your work?
- What can you do in your work to make power arrangements visible and to ensure that they are not disadvantaging people based on race/ethnicity, gender, social class, or other forms of difference?



# *The Importance of Understanding Systems*

- The problem is not one of bad people (an individual approach) but of oppressive systems in which individuals participate in relative privilege or disadvantage depending on their location in the system.
- For example, not every man (individual) holds institutional power in the same way,
- but within social institutions most positions of power are held by men,
- and other men can identify with the power that accrues to manhood (system) in the institution





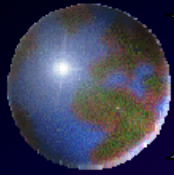
# *Privilege*

- An invisible package of unearned assets.



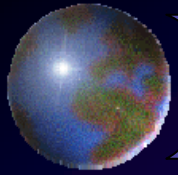
## *Why don't dominant groups see privilege as a problem?*

- They don't know privilege exists in the first place. They're oblivious.
- They don't have to. Privilege insulates them from its consequences.
- They think privilege is just a personal problem. Individuals get what they deserve.
- They want to hang on to their privilege.
- They are prejudiced.
- They're afraid. . . of blame, of guilt, of rejection by their own group if they acknowledge privilege, of loss.



## *For example, white privilege:*

- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
- I can go shopping alone most of the time, fairly well assured that I will not be followed or harassed by store detectives.
- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely and positively presented.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- I can go into a book shop and count on finding the writing of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
- I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
- I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
- I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
- I can easily find academic courses and institutions that give attention only to people of my race.
- I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.



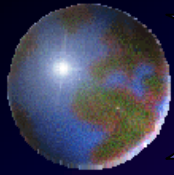
# *What are the consequences of having power and privilege?*

- One is able to experience one's own perspectives and experiences as normal and "human" rather than gendered or racialized.
- One is then able to function rather easily out of this perspective, assuming that one's behaviors reflect generic human behavior.
- One usually does not ask such questions as:
  - ❑ Would I think about this differently if I were a woman/a person of color/disabled/poor/LGBT/etc?
  - ❑ How might this affect women/people of color/disabled people/poor people/ LGBT people/etc?
  - ❑ For example: the Toyota Prius

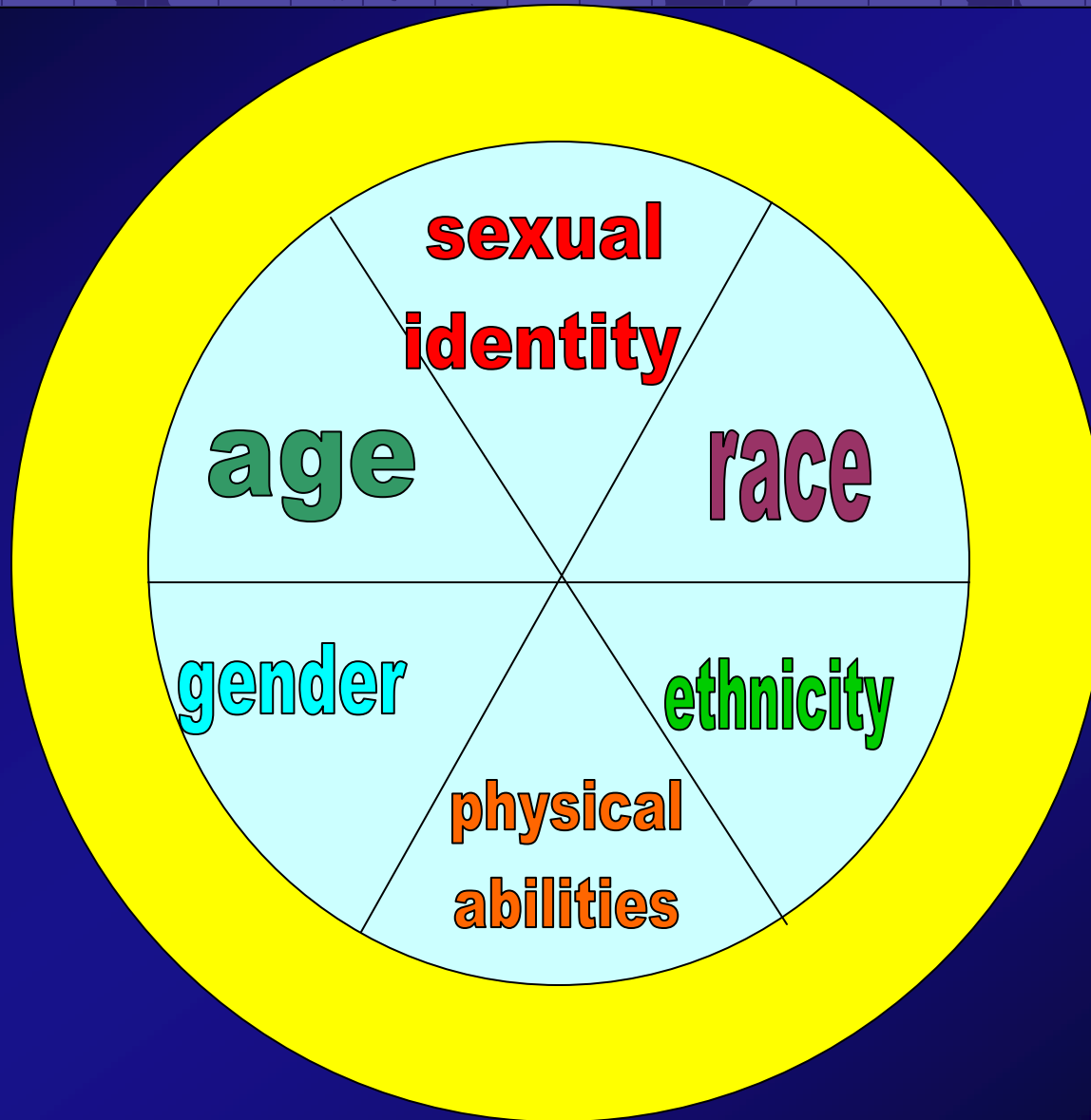


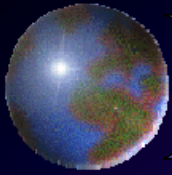
## *Can a Car Be Too Quiet?*

- The hybrid Toyota Prius was engineered to be especially quiet.
- But blind people are now protesting the Prius and requesting minimum noise levels for vehicles so that vision-impaired people will be aware of the vehicles.



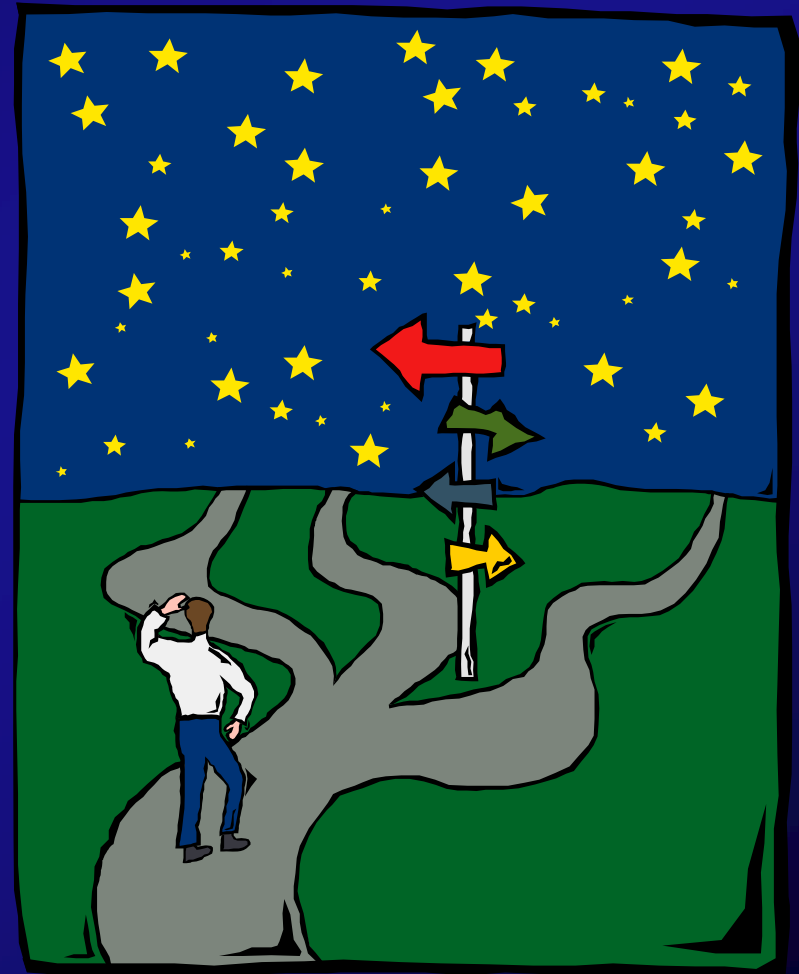
# The Diversity Wheel

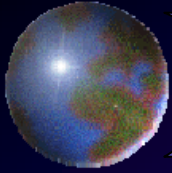




# Group Discussion

- What if one thing on the inner wheel changed for you?
- How would your life be different?

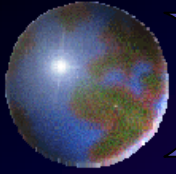




# *Naming My Privileges*

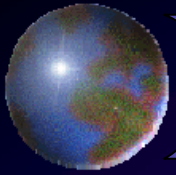
*Male privilege*  
*Class privilege*  
*Heterosexual  
privilege*  
*Able-bodied  
privilege*  
*Age privilege*





## *Questions for Discussion*

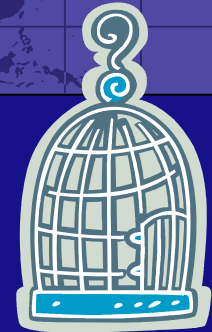
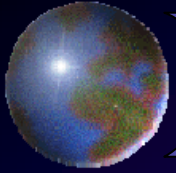
- How might various forms of hidden privilege and disadvantage affect the people with whom you work?
- How might these affect your work relationships with these people?
- What can you do be be aware of the workings of privilege?



## ● Oppression:

- “The root of the word ‘oppression’ is the element ‘press.’ The press of the crowd; pressed into military service; to press a pair of pants; press the button. Presses are used to mold things or flatten them or reduce them in bulk . . . Something pressed is caught between or among forces and barriers which are so related to each others that jointly they restrain, restrict or prevent the thing’s motion or mobility. . . One of the most characteristic and ubiquitous features of the world as experienced by oppressed people is the double bind—situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation.”

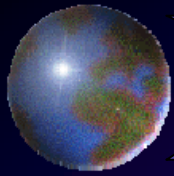
– Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality*



## *Consider a birdcage. . .*

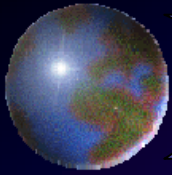
- "The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidentally or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction. It is the experience of being caged in."

– Marilyn Frye



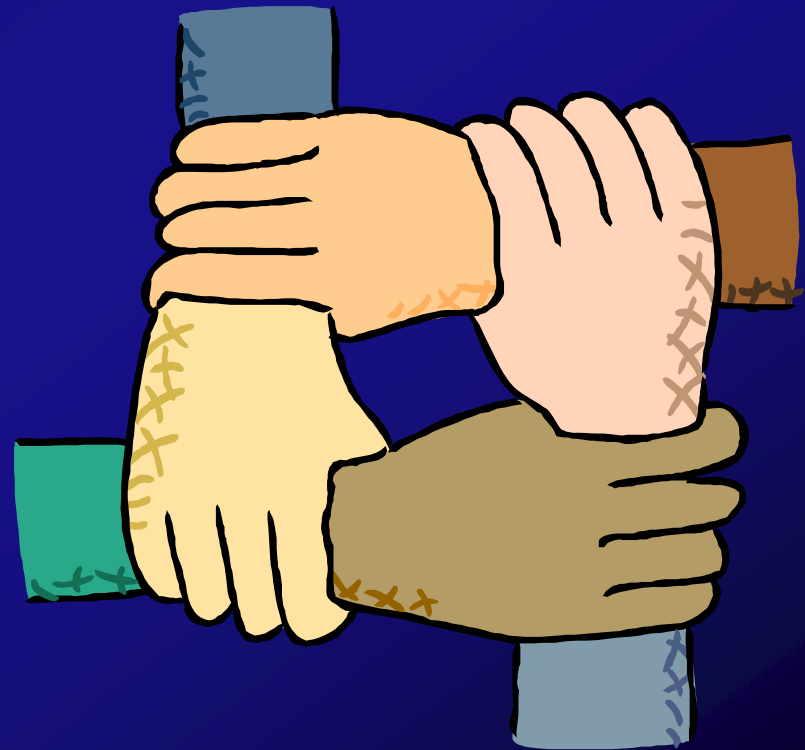
# *Dimensions of Oppression*

- The Institutional Dimension of Oppression
  - ❑ systematic relationships of domination and subordination are structured through social institutions such as schools, businesses, hospitals, the work place. Race, gender, and class place people in distinct institutional niches with varying degrees of penalty and privilege.
- The Symbolic Dimension of Oppression
  - ❑ socially-sanctioned ideologies used to justify relations of domination and subordination. Central to this process is the use of stereotypical or controlling images of diverse gender, race, and class groups.
- The Individual Dimension of Oppression
  - ❑ the ways in which race, gender, and class as categories of analysis frame our individual biographies, the ways we participate in privilege and disadvantage based on our institutional and symbolic statuses.



# *Common Elements of Oppressions*

- A Defined Norm
- Institutional Power
- Economic Power
- Threat of Violence
- Lack of Prior Claim
- Othering
- Invisibility
- Stereotyping
- Blaming the Victim
- Horizontal Hostility
- Isolation
- Assimilation and Tokenism
- Individual Solutions



- Suzanne Pharr, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*

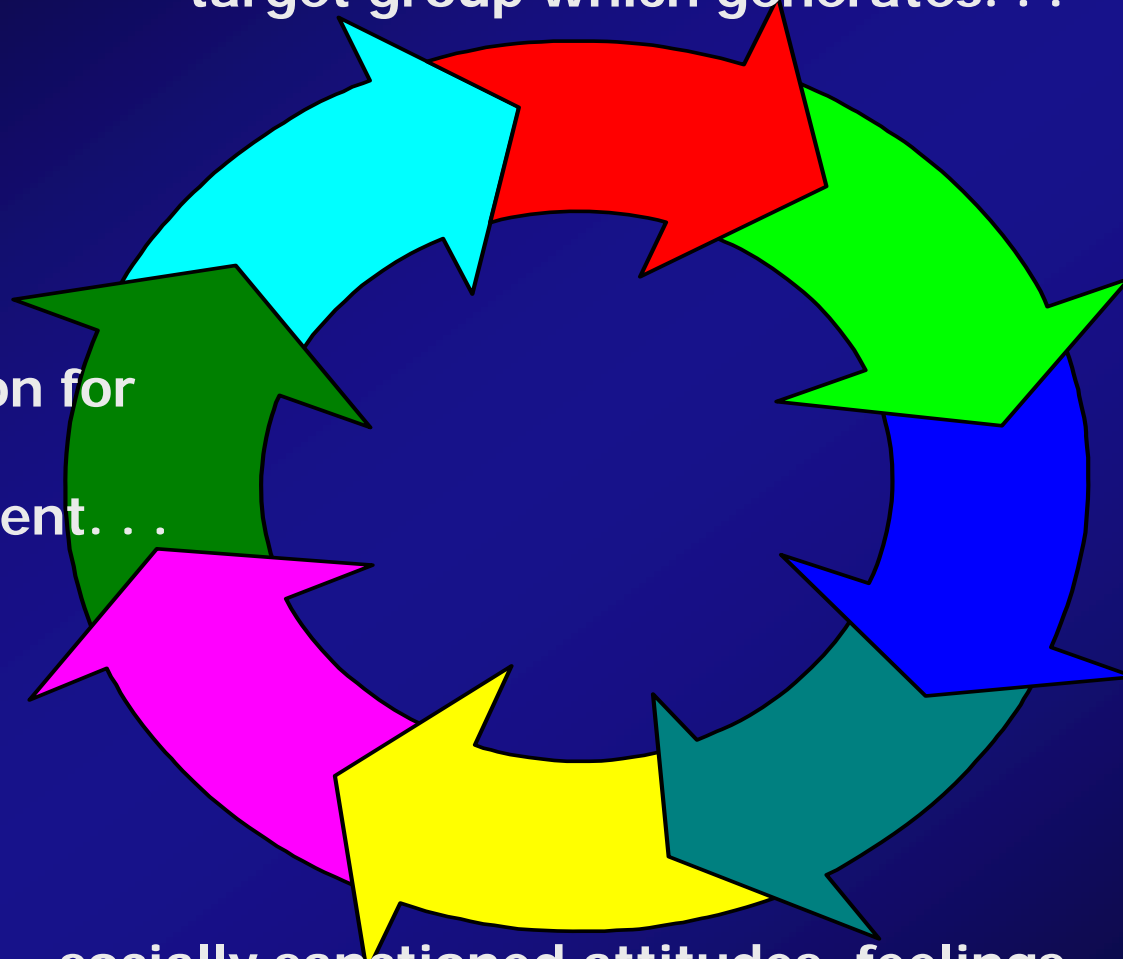
# The Cycle of Oppression

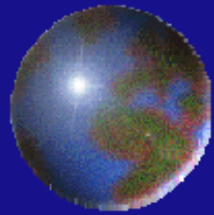
Systematic mistreatment of a target group which generates. . .

justification for further mistreatment. . .

misinformation and ignorance about these people which become. . .

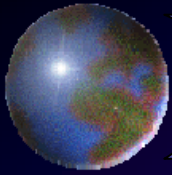
socially sanctioned attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and assumptions which become. . .





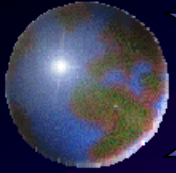
# *Understanding Race & Racism*





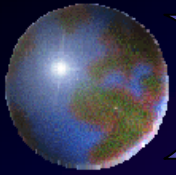
# Race As A Socially Constructed Category

- Race: a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as possessing distinctive hereditary traits.
- Ethnicity: a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as sharing cultural traits such as language, religion, family customs, and food preferences.
- The Institutional Construction of Race: the recognition by social institutions of one's membership in a race category
- The Interpersonal Construction of Race: the need to define others by distinct racial categories. White is generally constructed as an unmarked category (We don't usually ask whites, "what are you?")
- The Internal Construction of Race: the reinforcement of racial categories and the meanings associated with them within ourselves, internalizing the social values accorded racial categories.



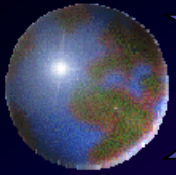
## *Questions for Discussion*

- How are the categories “Latino,” “Latina,” “Hispanic,” “Chicano,” “Chicana,” “Mexican” constructed in our dominant culture?
- What effects do these cultural constructions of race/ethnicity have on people who are placed in these categories?
- How do these categories of race/ethnicity affect the work you do?



# The Social Construction of Whiteness

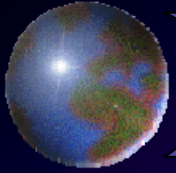
- Who is white?
- Are Jews, Irish, and Italians white?
- If I'm white, do I have a culture?
- Why does a drop of blood make you Black, when it takes a full-blooded great-great grandparent to make you Native American?
- Why do white people have such an investment in whiteness?



## *What, then, is whiteness?*

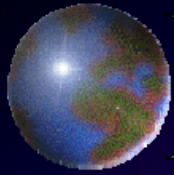
- Most basically, "whiteness" is an ideological fiction naming those properties supposedly unique to "white people," properties used to claim that they are a "superior race" and the "norm" by which others are judged. "Whiteness" is also—or above all else—a legal fiction determining the distribution of wealth, power, human rights, and citizenship among bodies denominated by this fiction (see Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*). Historically, white people are an invented "race," made up of various ethnic groups perceived to have a common ancestry in parts of Europe and self-proclaimed to be superior biologically and culturally to other "races." "White" was invented as a category when previous notions of national "races" (French, German, English, Norwegian, etc.) were lumped together to create a single powerful coalition. "White" is thus a political fiction that has been used by one social group to harm and oppress others.

--<http://www.uwm.edu/People/gjay/Whiteness/introwhite.htm>



## *The Usefulness of Race*

- What is the political usefulness of thinking of race as a fixed biological characteristic?
- Why do you suppose many people have a difficult time accepting race as a constructed category?
- How does the social construction of whiteness play out in Latino communities? What is its impact? How does it affect your work?



# Four Forms of Racism

- **Aware/Blatant**

- ❑ outright racism, without apology or confusion

- **Aware/Covert**

- ❑ hidden but intentional racism (job vacancies or apartment vacancies suddenly filled)

- **Unaware/Unintentional**

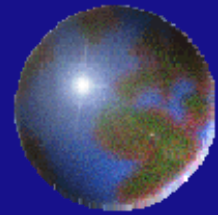
- ❑ behaving in racist ways without meaning to because of misinformation, naïveté, and/or lack of awareness of privilege

- **Unaware/Self-righteous**

- ❑ the “good whites” who often tell people of color what their issues are and what they should be doing about them

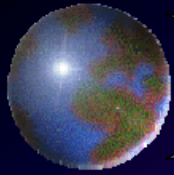


Gloria Yamato, “Something about the Subject Makes It Hard to Name,” *Making Face, Making Soul*. Ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), 20-24.



# *Alliance-Building, Coalition-Building, & Reconciliation*



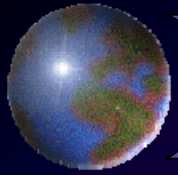


# *Am I an Ally? Evaluating My Awareness*

**Respond with Almost Always, Usually, Seldom, or Almost Never**

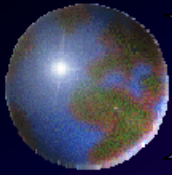
## HOW OFTEN DO I:

- Challenge others on racial/ethnic/sexually derogatory comments?
- Speak up when someone is humiliating another person?
- Refuse to participate in jokes that are derogatory to any group, culture, sex, or sexual orientation?
- Refrain from repeating statements or rumors that reinforce prejudice or bias?
- Recognize and challenge the biases that affect my own thinking?
- Avoid using language that reinforces negative stereotypes?
- Get to know people from different cultures as groups and as individuals?
- Learn about and appreciate the richness of other cultures and respect their holidays and events?
- Encourage target group members to speak out on their issues and concerns and treat those issues as valid?
- Disregard physical characteristics when determining abilities?
- Listen to and value contributions by target group members in meetings?
- Call, write, or in some way protest when a book, newspaper, TV show, or some branch of media perpetuates or reinforces a bias or prejudice?
- Refuse to join or remain a member of associations or groups that allow or reinforce values or practices that are racist, sexist, heterosexist, classist, ageist, ableist, or otherwise biased or prejudiced?
- Confront organizational policies and procedures that lead to the exclusion of anyone?
- Accept and reinforce the fact that not everyone has to look a certain way to be valued?



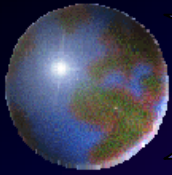
## Begin with Appropriate Assumptions

- Assume that all people are of one race, the human race, and that we are more alike than different. Acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, and other institutionalized forms of oppression exist.
- Acknowledge that non-targets receive privilege, whether it is wanted or not, within power structures.
- Assume that the liberation of all people is your business and your responsibility.
- Recognize that all people need the acknowledgement that their liberation issues are legitimate.
- Assume that misinformation, oppressive behaviors, and oppressive attitudes are learned and therefore can be unlearned.
- Assume that misinformation and mistreatment isolate and divide all people, not just members of the target group.
- Assume that members of target groups are experts on their own experiences as target group members and that you have much to learn from them.
- Agree not to blame target group members for the conditions of their lives.
- Assume that target group members are survivors and that they have a long history of resistance.
- Recognize that as a non-target person you are an expert on your experience of having being conditioned to take the oppressor role.
- Agree not to blame yourself or others for the misinformation you have learned but to accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after you have learned otherwise.
- Assume that non-targets also have a history of resistance which has been obscured and hidden.
- Assume that people can and do change.
- Do not expect gratitude from people in the target group.
- Be an ally 100%, no strings attached.



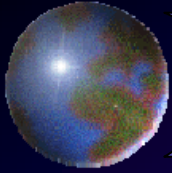
## *Get Good Information*

- **Recognize that through socialization you have received misinformation about both target and non-target groups.**
- **Find out as much as you can about other groups--their history, their religious practices, their art, music and literature. Remember you are responsible for educating yourself about other's groups. Don't expect target groups to do it for you.**
- **Become an expert on all of the issues which are of concern to people in the target group.**
- **Identify resources and join local organizations which combat oppression.**
- **Reach out and make friends with people in other groups. Listen to the unique perspective of each person, and remember that each person is an expert on his or her experience of being a target. Never demean, devalue, or in any way "put down" people for their experiences.**
- **Share information about your group with others. Speak from your own experience without comparing your oppression to theirs.**



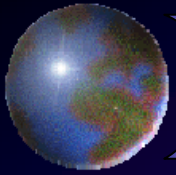
## Look at Where Your Own Difficulties/Issues Lie

- Don't live in denial. Acknowledge that racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression exist. Acknowledge the ways in which you are contributing to oppression.
- Notice the stereotypes and misinformation you have about other groups.
- Notice your own embarrassment, awkwardness, and fears.
- Get information about the ways you have been targeted. One way to do this is by remembering your own experiences.
- Get information about the ways you learned to target others. One way to do this is remembering early experiences where you were taught to target others.



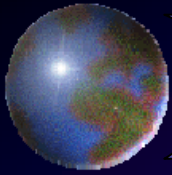
## Reject the Mythical Norm

- Acknowledge the existence of this norm in our society--white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, financially secure.
- Identify differences in power that accrue to groups based on their proximity to the mythical norm.
- Reject the entire norm, not just the part that oppresses your group.



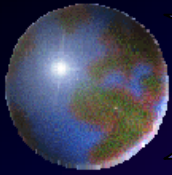
## Don't Compare or Rank Oppressions

- Recognize that all oppressions are harmful and, that in the work of liberation, all oppressions must be resisted and eliminated.
- Recognize that each oppression is different and is experienced differently by members of target groups.
- Recognize that comparing or ranking oppressions adds to the divisions between target groups which prevent them from acting in solidarity against the dominant culture.
- Don't be a one-issue person. Alliance-building involves fighting against all oppressions.



## Interrupt Oppressive Behavior

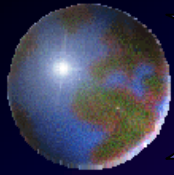
- Recognize that actively joining in oppressive behavior or giving no response at all both work against social justice.
- Interrupt oppressive behavior, such as jokes, name-calling, stereotyping, and discrimination by expressing your disapproval of the behavior.
- Educate those behaving in oppressive ways by explaining what is oppressive about the behavior.
- Support the proactive responses of others.
- Initiate proactive responses by taking some kind of action which promotes understanding and valuing of differences.



## Make an Ongoing Commitment: Always Have Another Step to Take

- Set goals for yourself to continue working toward justice.
- Create accountability with others who have a similar commitment to social justice.
- Keep abreast of developments in social and political arenas which affect target groups.
- Attend workshops and conferences to increase your skills as an ally.
- Read books, newspapers, and journals which address issues of concern to target groups.
- Support others who have also made a commitment to social justice.
- Celebrate our diversity.

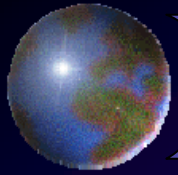
- Sources: Dr. Annie Popkins, WS 514 "Systems of Oppression in Women's Lives;" WS 599 "Unlearning Racism," Oregon State University.
- Dr. Ricky Sherover-Marcuse. Unlearning Racism Workshops. Oakland, CA
- The Anti-Racism Project of the City of Portland Bureau of Community Development.
- Mary McClintock. "How to Interrupt Oppressive Behavior." Camping Magazine (Nov-Dec. 1990) 32-34



# *Coalition-Building*

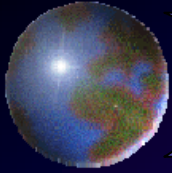
- A coalition is a temporary alliance or partnering of groups in order to achieve a common purpose or to engage in joint activity.
- Coalitions offer:
  - ❑ strength and power in numbers, leading to a wider reach
  - ❑ added credibility to the health community when it has a coordinated plan, a united front and a consistent message
  - ❑ a public perception of tangible, broad community support
  - ❑ media attention and public profile for organizations which they may not otherwise achieve
  - ❑ increased access to policy makers
  - ❑ networking and partnership opportunities
  - ❑ economies of scale and cost-efficiency
  - ❑ division of labor and reduced duplication
  - ❑ information
  - ❑ the exciting feeling of belonging to something greater than the sum of its parts

– <http://www.cypresscon.com/coalition.html>



## *What are the benefits of coalitions?*

- ❑ A coalition of organizations can win on more fronts than a single organization working alone and increase the potential for success.
- ❑ A coalition can bring more expertise and resources to bear on complex issues, where the technical or personnel resources of any one organization would not be sufficient.
- ❑ A coalition can develop new leaders. As experienced group leaders step forward to lead the coalition, openings are created for new leaders in the individual groups. The new, emerging leadership strengthens the groups and the coalition.
- ❑ A coalition will increase the impact of each organization's effort. Involvement in a coalition means there are more people who have a better understanding of your issues and more people advocating for your side.
- ❑ A coalition will increase available resources. Not only will physical and financial resources be increased, but each group will gain access to the contacts, connections, and relationships established by other groups.



- ❏ A coalition may raise its members' public profiles by broadening the range of groups involved in a conflict. The activities of a coalition are likely to receive more media attention than those of any individual organization.
- ❏ A coalition can build a lasting base for change. Once groups unite, each group's vision of change broadens and it becomes more difficult for opposition groups to disregard the coalition's efforts as dismissible or as special interests.
- ❏ A successful coalition is made up of people who have never worked together before. Coming from diverse backgrounds and different viewpoints, they have to figure out how to respect each other's differences and get something big accomplished. They have to figure out how each group and its representatives can make their different but valuable contributions to the overall strategy for change. This helps avoid duplication of efforts and improve communication among key players.

– [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/coalition\\_building/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/coalition_building/)