Shades of Sustainability: Strategies for Deep, Ethical and Anti-Racist Practices in Sustainability Education

Saiyare Refaei | Coordinator for Sustainability Integration, Pacific Lutheran University

Nicole Juliano | Director - The Diversity Center, Pacific Lutheran University

Arlene Plevin | Professor of English, Olympic College

Goals

1. Understand white supremacy culture and its connection with sustainability education
2. Shades of Sustainability–Light, White, and Carbon Heavy
3. Group conversation

Agenda

1. Introductions - What we hope to gain from time
2. What is White Supremacist culture?
3. White Supremacist Culture & Sustainability Practices
4. Group table activity breaking down the characteristics of White Supremacy Culture and con-constructing anti-racist strategies for sustainability education.
5. Closing & Questions

Concepts

-   WHAT IS CULTURE?

-   IS CULTURAL RACISM

-   WHAT IS WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE?

THE LONGER YOU SWIM IN A CULTURE, THE MORE INVISIBLE IT BECOMES

Characteristics of White Supremacist

- perfectionism
- sense of urgency
- defensiveness
- quantity over quality
- worship of the written word
- only one right way
- paternalism
- either/or thinking

- power hoarding
- fear of open conflict
- individualism
- I'm the only one
- progress is bigger, more
- objectivity
- right to comfort

(tema okun, drworks)

sense of urgency

• continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences

• frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)

• reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

(tema okun, dRworks)

quantity over quality

• all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals

• things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict

• little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value

• discomfort with emotion and feelings

• no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people's need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)   (tema okun, dRworks)

either/or thinking

• things are either/or — good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us

• closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict • no sense that things can be both/and

 • results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education

 • creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people feel they have to make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources

• often used by those with a clear agenda or goal to push those who are still thinking or reflecting to make a choice between 'a' or 'b' without acknowledging a need for time and creativity to come up with more options   (tema okun, dRworks)

power hoarding

• little, if any, value around sharing power

• power seen as limited, only so much to go around

• those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership

• those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened

• those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

(tema okun, dRworks)

Table Pair & Share

(20 min)   With a partner, choose a White Supremacy Characteristic card

How do you notice this characteristic showing up at your university?

Pair Question #1, 5 min

What are strategies to challenge this characteristic utilizing suggested antidotes?

Pair Question #2, 5 min

Questions, Comments, & Gratitude