

White Supremacy Culture, A Summary

From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

Characteristic	Antidote
<p>Perfectionism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on what is wrong • Mistakes seen as personal, shameful • Little reflection when things go wrong, hard to learn from 'mistakes' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop culture of appreciation - Develop learning organization, "mistakes" seen as opportunities - When giving feedback, always speak to the things that went well first
<p>Sense of Urgency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no "time" to be inclusive, be thoughtful, consider the long-term consequences • Default is to the current (white) norm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be realistic about how long things take - Understand that there are no shortcuts to building a diverse community - Adhere to agreed-upon decision-making processes; no "shortcuts"
<p>Defensiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticism of those in power seen as threatening, rude, or inappropriate (due to either/or thinking) • New/different ideas seen as threatening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name defensiveness as an issue and explore how it impedes the mission - Understand the link between defensiveness and fear and build community as an antidote to fear
<p>Quantity over Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on content rather than on process • Emphasis on what can be easily and "objectively" measured • Discomfort with emotions and tension • End up making decisions that don't stick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adhere to organizational values that value inclusion and process - Develop protocols for knowing when to move off content and into process, and build skills in having difficult conversations
<p>Worship of the Written Word</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it's not written down, it doesn't exist • Those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, whether this is related to the organizational mission or note • There is one right way to do things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledge that there are many ways of reaching the same goal - Accepting and implementing decisions made in different ways - Understand that there are many skillful ways of being in the world and it is desirable for all to flourish
<p>Paternalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it • Those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power • Those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop clear and transparent decision-making processes - Clearly defining roles and responsibilities - Emphasize transparency and discussion
<p>Either-Or Thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to see 'both/and' • Hard to learn from experience or accommodate diverse views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notice when either/or thinking arises and note this out loud as a group - When there is pressure to make a decision "right away," take time to lower

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters conflict, urgency, oversimplification of complex issues 	<p>the emotional temperature and consider alternatives</p>
<p>Power Hoarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little value around sharing power • Those with power believe that they have the whole organization's interests at heart and see those advocating for change as ill-informed or... • Those in power don't see themselves as hoarding power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actively share power, i.e. by rotating leadership positions - Clearly define and abide by organizational roles and responsibilities - Emphasize leaders' responsibility to develop others' leadership skills - Stay focused on the mission
<p>Fear of Open Conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on being "polite" • Those who bring up difficult issues are seen as rude, blamed for 'causing problems' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build distress tolerance and conflict management skills - Use discomfort as a signal for investigation
<p>Individualism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize (supposed) individual achievement/competition over cooperation • Fosters isolation • Leads to focus on individual v collective/organizational goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support teamwork and develop related skills - Emphasize collective goals - Actively give credit to everyone contributing to a process/activity/goal
<p>Progress is Bigger/More</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume that increasing in size is necessarily a good thing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carefully evaluate plans and proposals for their impact on the mission/community
<p>Objectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief that there is such a thing as "objective" • Devalues emotion (and people expressing emotion), hypervalues "logic" (and people arguing "logically") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accept that there are many ways to experience a given situation - Assume that everyone has a valid point and it is your job to understand it fully
<p>Right to Comfort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those with power have a right to be comfortable • Scapegoating those who "cause" discomfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold the systemic view that allows you to not take things personally - Accept that change and inclusion brings discomfort