



Witnessing Whiteness at UW-Madison

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We are not aware that we are
distancing ourselves from the
problem instead of working toward a
solution.

– Shelly Tochluk





Session Goals

- Highlight the importance of self-work for white people in racial justice work
- Explore why white people use certain strategies that keep us from paying attention to race
- Investigate the intentions and impacts of using race-distancing strategies
- Set an intention for future action





Participation Guidelines

- Speak from your own experience
- Take risks
- Listen actively & discuss sincerely
- Strong feelings are okay
- Impact matters more than intent
- Notice & explore moments of defensiveness denial





Which keynote session(s) did you attend?

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Robin DiAngelo				
Austin Channing Brown				
Both				
Neither				





When you hear the word "whiteness" what comes to mind?





While listening to Robin DiAngelo talk about white fragility, what did you FEEL?





**While listening to Austin Channing Brown's keynote,
what did you FEEL?**





Why did you choose this session? (Pick top 2)

0

To learn more about Witnessing Whiteness

0

Engage in self-work regarding racial justice

0

I'm skeptical about white accountability groups

0

Other





Session Overview

- What is Witnessing Whiteness?
- Reflection activities
- Past participant feedback
- Q&A
- Resources and next steps





What is Witnessing Whiteness?





Goals of Witnessing Whitness

- Explore personal relationship to race
- Notice and respond
- Identify patterns and develop tools
- Create accountability
- Build community





Race distancing behaviors

and why we do them





Reflection Activity...





When someone says "I'm colorblind", what might they mean? What might they hope?



**How might saying you are colorblind impact
someone negatively even if it was meant
positively?**



Imagine that someone says they don't see an important part of you. How would that make you feel?



**What are other race distancing strategies
you've seen/heard/done?**





Why is it important for us to know about the negative impacts of these strategies?





What feelings came up for you while doing this reflection?





What did you learn from the exercise?



Paying Attention to Race?

The following are very common intentions and impacts of strategies used to avoid race.

The INTENT	The IMPACT
Seeing oneself as colorblind may be intended to... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell people we are against racism 2. Tell people we plan to treat everyone equally 	Seeing oneself as colorblind often has a negative impact because it can... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell people that race shouldn't matter in their lives...when it usually does – so it denies people's lived experience 2. Tell people that we will likely ignore them if they tell us there is subtle racism present in what we say or do 3. Tell people we are inattentive to how racism and privilege play out in our society and institutions
The idea that we transcend race may be intended to... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell people we want to heal from our history of racism 2. Tell people we do not want to focus on the differences between people 	The idea that we transcend race can have a negative impact because it can... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell people that we are not going to see that we might carry lingering racism within us 2. Tell people that we don't see how race has shaped our attitudes and behaviors 3. Tell people that we see race conscious people as less evolved than those who believe they have moved beyond race 4. Tell people that we believe seeing racism is the problem in itself
Seeing myself as without a race can be well intentioned when we mean for it to... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell people we recognize that we are all part of one group – the human race 2. Tell people we do not want to focus on the differences between people 	Seeing myself as without a race can have a negative impact because it can... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell people we are not going to see that we might carry lingering racism within us 2. Tell people we don't want to see ourselves as part of our racial group and we don't want to see how our group's general tendencies might affect our attitudes and behaviors 3. Tell people we refuse to see ourselves as part of supporting societal racism since we don't see ourselves as part of a "race issue"





How have past participants been impacted?



It has released some of the guilt and
shame, and instead provided me
with an actionable lens to hold
myself accountable.





I continually think about my role in
racism and take actions to increase
my knowledge of racism and
promote a more equitable and just
culture.





More confidence in discussing issues
of race in my daily life and in
exploring ways to do anti-racist work
beyond just "calling other people
out."





I speak up when I notice my
whiteness in action or when my racial
identity is influencing my response.





I have leveraged my leadership
position to launch new DEI
initiatives in my unit.





What questions do you have?

0 questions
0 upvotes



Resources

→ witnessingwhiteness.com

→ healandharmonize.com





Call to Action:





Closing meditation

