

Community Conversation on Racism

Part 2 – Racism in the Workplace

RESPONSES

The format of this series was designed to allow open and frank dialogue between participants with the agreement not to disclose the identity of anyone in reference to remarks made during these discussions. There was not to be any media reports or documentation other than this summary outline compiled from the information shared during the conversation. The information contributed was used to reflect a profile of the perception of racism and the social determinants of racism. Hopefully this summary can also put light on solutions to develop tolerance, respect and peaceful coexistence between people of different races, genders, religions and/or sexual orientations.

(Questions are indented and participants' responses are in **BLUE**)

1. Give your definition of racism (or reasons for racism):

When the Minority is held back by the Majority and unable to move ahead whether it is race, disability or gender

When you are treated differently or like an outcast for no reason at all.

2. Share a situation where you believe you had experienced racism or discrimination in the workplace:

Was the only black female on a job and rules had two sets of standards, not enforced on white co-workers

At times I heard people make the statements about "this Korean or that Latino assuming that everyone in the ethnic group is the same

Co-worker deliberately gave wrong information about an ethnic event

Experienced an issue on the job of being accused of being racist, person later dropped claim

Staff members terminated one on grounds of racism other on grounds of sexual misconduct

3. Share a situation where you may have acted racist or discriminated against someone at work:

May have discriminated against someone during job interviews if they did not seem to blend with workforce

Was bothered by people speaking foreign languages on the job and felt they spoke foreign language deliberately so others would not know what they were saying

4. Name businesses/jobs/workplaces that you "think" or believe is racist or discriminates:

Public schools towards parents

Men's Stores

Restaurants in downtown Hagerstown

Hagerstown shows great volumes of racism everywhere

5. Why do you think or believe this?

Opportunities are limited for blacks, including advancements in pay or position

You are considered violent when you display emotions about mistreatment of blacks

Witnessed how children and parents are treated and disregarded by staff in the school program

Lack of minorities working in the schools in Hagerstown area

What solutions do you think can help to eliminate the impact of racism and discrimination in the workplace? (Example: tougher labor laws; diversity and sensitivity training; full benefits for all employees; better trained and/or equipped human resource departments; tougher sanctions against institutions with bad reputations for fair hiring practices; elimination of affirmative action requirements; raising or lowering age requirements; eliminate don't ask, don't tell policies...etc.)

The Hagerstown Police Department reported challenges in getting minority applicants

The pattern of recruiting minorities to work in law enforcement is a regional and national challenge even with large hiring bonuses and mandates to recruit blacks in areas like Baltimore City and Rochester, New York

Educating staff

Diversity and Sensitivity

Eliminate "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policies

Community Conversations such as this for an extended period of time (more than a year)

Statistical profile of participants in attendance at the "Racism Where We Live" conversation (as indicated on response form):

Male 40% Female 60%

60% African American/Black

% American Indian/ Alaskan Native

0% Asian or Pacific Islander

0% Hispanic/Latino

20% Caucasian/White

20% indicated "bi-racial" or "mixed"

Religion

Christian: 40% Jewish: 0% Muslim: 20%

Other: 20 %

Comments

The questionnaire was used as a framework to stimulate dialogue in the conversation. The guidelines for exchange in the conversation were as follows:

Everyone was instructed to limit each response to three (3) minutes per contribution.

“Verbal sparring” was allowed, however limited to three minutes per contribution/response.

“Venting” was also allowed and encouraged abiding by the 3 minute limit.

Panelist would be allowed to respond to each contribution/ response shared or directed to anyone.

Absolutely no “teaming up” against anyone speaking, one-on-one verbal sparring only.

When time is called by moderator to stop talking, STOP!

Additional Remarks:

Very low turn out for session two. I personally think that those who participated in the initial session fell away after I established that the series was not a just a venue to vent and air opinions, the series it to promote progress in race relations in an effort to bring people together, not continue to justify racist attitudes, anger and/or retaliation.

I believe those who wish to work together for resolve should be given the opportunity and those who wish to promote division and conflict will soon fade away with age, as the newer generation is more diverse, blended and have their own set of issues to resolve, some of those issues are a direct impact of racism that lingered throughout history contributing to the economic downfall, disenchantment of society and a lack of connection with one another's humanity.

If you wish to participate in this series or want assistance starting your own community conversation on racism, contact us. Please feel free to use this information to continue a successful dialogue and hopefully resolve issues concerning racism and discrimination.

Best regards,

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