

SUNY: POTSDAM
**FINAL
REPORT**

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**ANTI-RACISM
DIALOGUE
FACILITATION
TRAINING**

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WRITTEN BY
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FINAL REPORT COVER LETTER

Date: December 21, 2020

To: SUNY: Potsdam Anti-Racism Dialogue Facilitation Training Coordinator Team, SUNY: Potsdam

From: Mary C. Parker (principal consultant with Just Collaboration)

Re: SUNY: Potsdam Anti-Racism Dialogue Facilitation Training Final Report

Dear SUNY: Potsdam Anti-Racism Dialogue Facilitation Training Coordinator Team,

I write to submit a final report for the SUNY: Potsdam Anti-Racism Dialogue Facilitation Training that took place during the Fall 2020 semester. This was a collaboration between Just Collaboration and the SUNY Dialogue Facilitation Coordinator Team.

Thank you for your commitment to developing and implementing anti-racism dialogue facilitation training for your faculty, staff, alumni, and current students. I appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with you on this important work and to support the SUNY: Potsdam community to become better-prepared dialogue facilitators for the First-Year Connect program.

This report contains a review of the training along with my final reflections and recommendations. Attached separately are the following final deliverables:

- A detailed report informed by a post-survey assessment completed by the Training Coordinator Team and trainees that outlines the training experience
- A Google Drive folder of legacy documents that include recommendations, training outlines, and accountability established by the Black Indigenous People of Color caucus for the White (Un)Learning and Action Groups
- Resource document that includes several resources shared during the training along with additional resources related to caucuses, race, microaggressions, politics, anti-racism, racial battle fatigue, college campuses/schools, and more general resources of additional readings sourced by other groups focused on anti-racism education and training

Thank you for your time and energy in this partnership. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Parker (principal consultant with Just Collaboration)
mary@justcollaboration.org



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BACKGROUND

2020 has been a year of increased global awareness of the atrocities against black folx around the world. Anti-blackness was actualized in the form of continued murders of black men, women, non-binary, and trans folx. What made this year different is the increased publicity that led to a global movement of anti-racism. When you layer this with a global pandemic from COVID-19 you have a multitude of intersections that disproportionately affect some populations over others.

With all of these factors at play, SUNY: Potsdam launched an anti-racism dialogue facilitation training. The anti-racism dialogue facilitator training was designed to support the continued development and preparation for future First-Year Connect (1YC) facilitators. This training was independently developed and delivered apart from the 1YC partnering organization Soliya. SUNY: Potsdam's training was informed from the Environmental Studies Department dialogue groups that have met since earlier this year. Adopting from their curriculum and in conjunction with 1YC as a focus, a Coordinator Team was established. The Training Coordinator Team was comprised of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer and Faculty member, Dr. Claudia Ford along with three other faculty members, Dr. John Youngblood, Dr. Michael Popovic, and Dr. Matthew (Moe) LaVine.

This group sought outside support in the form of a collaborative partnership with Just Collaboration Founder and Dialogue expert, Mary C. Parker to complete the SUNY: Potsdam anti-racism facilitator dialogue Coordinator Team. Parker has contracted with Soliya, the partnering organization 1YC, and supported the pilot over the summer through dialogue training of facilitators and delivering co-facilitated dialogues for the SUNY 1YC pilot in collaboration with Dr. Popovic. Out of that collaboration, a partnership emerged to support the SUNY: Potsdam community in preparing for 1YC in January 2021 with a desire for continued dialogue facilitation training using an anti-racism framework.

This final report documents the successes and challenges of the anti-racism dialogue facilitation training and recommendations for the future.

APPROACH

Using the dialogue curriculum from the Environmental Studies Department as a foundation, the anti-racism dialogue facilitation training was expanded to include the following:

- Four (4) intraracial training groups that met weekly starting the week of September 29 until the week of December 7
- Two Days of Reflection typically focused on "Facilitating Dialogue: The New First-Year Connect Program" and "Dialogue for Anti-Racism"
- Weekly Coordinator Team meetings composed of Ford, LaVine, Parker, Popovic, and Youngblood
- Weekly training group planning meetings for each respective training group
- Weekly 1YC specific focused meetings to discuss logistics of facilitator dialogue groups
- Two targeted events on anti-racism and dialogue facilitation at Days of Reflection
- Two additional practice sessions for the white-identified training groups
- Parker leading a dialogue specific focused training for white-identified groups in their final session

More on the components of these components can be found in the final report.

ABOUT THE GROUPS

Four intraracial groups included current students, faculty, and alumni. There was one Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) caucus consisting of two faculty and two current students. No BIPOC alumni participated in the BIPOC caucus. The three other groups were comprised of 17 white-identified faculty and 12 white-identified alumni; no current white-identified students were involved. These groups were named the White (Un)Learning and Action groups (WULAG) intentionally to account for the duality of desired learning, unlearning, and action necessary in anti-racism work. All four groups met weekly over the fall semester starting the last week in September. The length of each training session varied with the BIPOC caucus and the WULAG alumni groups meeting for 90 minutes during a weekday evening and the faculty WULAG groups meeting for an hour during the weekday.

RESULTS

The result of the training ended with 100% recommendations for all BIPOC trainees to become dialogue facilitators for 1YC. A small portion of WULAG folx was recommended, with confidence, to become dialogue facilitators. The readiness for WULAGs was filled with discrepancies. BIPOC folx were rated both on the merit of their dialogue skillset along with their awareness and capacity to not replicate harm to 1YC students. Whereas the minimum standard of not causing harm to first-year students was one of the prominent metrics in these referrals for WULAGs. This should not be celebrated as an achievement. Instead, this highlights the continued crisis of reluctance within white folx within the SUNY: Potsdam community to make a sustainable change within themselves for the betterment of the broader community.

During the training, it became abundantly clear the false dichotomy of a commitment to anti-racism work equates good facilitators. While both the BIPOC caucus and WULAG groups highlight a safe space was created, how that space was utilized varied significantly. BIPOC folx were provided safety in exploring topics related to personal interest while simultaneously practicing dialogue facilitation skills. Upon reflection, the WULAGs spent most of their time defining anti-racism and individual positionality within this framework. What this provided was a comfortable and safe place to explore the knowingly or unknowingly harm they have and continue to cause BIPOC folx. While this exploration was necessary, it often prolonged the training of applying their learning to a dialogue context. Therefore, the continued development of dialogue facilitation skills within WULAGs became secondary. This often positioned the Coordinator Team, who facilitated these WULAG groups, along with their BIPOC Coordinator Team counterparts, in roles of caretaking in addressing the fragility of WULAGs trainees.

This was not the intended purpose of this training. It also adds a significant emotional burden to the BIPOC Coordinator Team members who had to continue to engage in collaboration with those in WULAGs as part of their roles on campus as faculty. That emotional burden intersects with the continued harm BIPOC folx experienced from their white colleagues. If nothing else, this training magnified the expressed harm BIPOC faculty, students, and staff experience at the expense of white faculty, staff, and students due to the continued ignorance of the impact of whiteness.

Given all of this, I offer some reflections and recommendations in the next section.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting on the anti-racism and dialogue facilitation training I offer the following as recommendations that fall into the following broad categories:

- Goal Setting
- Assessment
- Anti-Racism Education and Anti-Racism Dialogues
- Interracial Trainee Groups
- Dialogue Practices
- Trainee Buddy Pairings
- Compensation for BIPOC SUNY: Potsdam Coordinator Team and Trainees
- Outside Hire to Support Training

GOAL SETTING

In the design of future training, there should be a clearly defined purpose, outcomes, and process that can be shared across all groups. This will allow for increased transparency and more clearly defined accountability and expectations for involvement.

ASSESSMENT

While defining the purpose and outcomes are important they should also be measured. It is recommended that a pre- and post-survey is designed to measure skills. If possible, a mid-evaluation could also be administered to account for an assessment that would communicate to the Coordinator Team where to concentrate efforts during the second half of the training.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACTION FROM WULAGS

The BIPOC caucus should create clear and measurable accountability for WULAGs. This accountability should be done early and assessed often by the Coordinator Team. Additionally, it should be expected for WULAGs that there will be an action that results in the requested accountability.

DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN ANTI-RACISM EDUCATION AND ANTI-RACISM DIALOGUES

There needs to be consideration of what anti-racism education looks like and if a required component of learning through readings for WULAGs precedes any dialogue practicum training. Being clear on what that is will allow for better-equipped facilitators to facilitate dialogues on racism.

INTERRACIAL TRAINEE GROUPS

While intraracial groups have their benefits, an interracial opt-in training group should be considered. This group can be trained by an interracial pairing from the Coordinator Team to allow for exchange across racial identities. It is important to note that there will

be additional labor in facilitating an interracial group due to the added group dynamics that naturally occur within interracial groups along the lines of power and privilege. Having a strongly skilled facilitation and training pairing would minimize, but not eliminate potential harm that exists within these inherent dynamics.

DIALOGUE PRACTICES

Within the training, opportunities for interracial dialogues should be made abundant. It was requested by both the BIPOC and WULAGs as opportunities for interaction. Providing interaction in a dialogue setting deepens the practical nature of dialogue work along with increased relationship-building. If possible, I encourage interracial facilitation pairing during these practices. This pair can have additional support from the Coordinator Team in the form of additional coaching to prep and debrief their practice facilitation.

Even if interracial dialogues are not possible, additional practicum experience facilitating is necessary to prepare folx to lead future dialogues outside of the training. Practices should be consistently available as part of this work.

TRAINEE BUDDY PAIRINGS

If interracial groups are not possible due to the concern of safety and harm described in this document, interaction across groups could take the form of intentional pairings across the BIPOC caucus and WULAGs. These pairings can serve the function of being thought partners in discussing shared readings together. And a more substantial outcome is relationship-building across roles within the SUNY: Potsdam community for faculty, staff, alumni, and students. These pairings can again be supported in a coach type role offered by the Coordinator Team to allow for potential conflict resolution and mitigation and maintaining accountability in action within and beyond these pairings.

COMPENSATION FOR SUNY: POTSDAM COORDINATOR TEAM AND TRAINEES

At a minimum, there should be compensation for labor paid toward BIPOC folx. It is possible to also consider compensation for WULAG participants as well for their additional time in the training; however, precedent should be given to BIPOC folx because of the emotional labor mentioned previously in this document. It should also be mentioned that there is more at risk for BIPOC folx to participate in training like this.

There is a higher risk of harm that can be caused and unintentional trauma or retraumatization that can often result from discussing topics related directly to their identity or direct or indirect action of harm from white folx because of continued systemic racism. The continuation of this harm can be considered an act of violence towards BIPOC faculty, staff, students, and alumni so it is incredibly critical to take steps towards dismantling the oppression that perpetuates on the SUNY: Potsdam campus.

While compensation does not replace the work necessary to eradicate racism, it does demonstrate a recognition of the value for the additional labor and harm that BIPOC folx are inherently subjected to when engaging in work related to racism. This labor often comes in the form of emotional labor but is not limited to that. There is also harm and trauma that occurs to BIPOC folx in participating and leading this work in the form of microaggressions and expected caretaking of white folx when fragility presents itself

within these groups. All of this should be compensated because this is additional work beyond the scope of the actual training.

OUTSIDE HIRE TO SUPPORT TRAINING

Due to the additional support recommended in the form of coaching, additional practice sessions, and emotional labor, it is highly encouraged and recommended that someone outside of the SUNY: Potsdam community continue to support a Training Coordinator Team. This person can support the administrative roles necessary for communicating across all groups. This can relieve the additional labor and time required in supporting groups in the form of email communication and coordination of scheduling along with check-ins and coaching encouraged previously to trainees. An outside hire can also offer a neutral role both in the delivery of training and perspective on the training because they do not have any conflicts of interest related to SUNY: Potsdam by having any additional roles as faculty, staff, student, or alumni.

CONCLUSION

In addition to the reflections shared in this report, I also leave behind the following materials as products of the legacy of this work. This includes the following:

- A detailed report informed by a post-survey assessment completed by the Training Coordinator Team and trainees that outlines the training experience
- A Google Drive folder of legacy document that includes recommendations, training outlines, accountability established for WULAGs by the BIPOC caucus
- A resource document that includes several resources shared with trainees along with additional resources related to caucuses, race, microaggressions, politics, anti-racism, racial battle fatigue, college campuses/schools, and more general resources of additional readings sourced by other groups focused on anti-racism education and training

I want to offer a few reminders related to this work. Firstly, the work of anti-racism facilitation dialogue training can be both joyful and painful work. Joyful in the intention of having the opportunity to create change and deepen relationships within the SUNY: Potsdam community. And painful at the same time in realizing the impact of this work can be harmful toward BIPOC folx and challenging due to the pace at which change is occurring. Secondly, it is important to continue to have interracial Coordinator Teams to support these efforts. This allows for a diversity of thought and engaging with others who hold perspectives different from our own. This is critical to deepening the learning necessary in this work that informs institutional change. And lastly, systemic structures are necessary and needed to sustain this work or the legacy of this training is at risk.

As you continue to reflect on this process I want to offer that I am willing to continue to support the efforts of SUNY: Potsdam in developing these recommendations and the continued support in delivering training and coaching that allows for a more inclusive campus and community.

Thank you for the opportunity to collaborate on this important work.