Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Belonging (DEIJ&B)© for Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs)

Recording Transcripts (read by facilitators)

Recording 1 Transcript:

For contextualization, speaker is a Black, queer man attending a mental health workshop.

So, an experience I've had with racism, is related to, ironically enough, a training that I went to on mental health. During this past semester, my social work program, I went to a training that was put on from the university about mental health on college campuses, it's a pretty innovative, approach.

There's a group on campus that uses theater to illuminate, some of the challenges that people face, on campus, that college students face on campus related to mental health. I thought it was interest. The thing that struck me about the presentation is, you know, I arrived there after a morning class.

And, and they're, as they're introducing the activity, they highlight some data, specific to our university. And in that data, they highlight that people who have marginalized identities or who hold marginalized identities, are more likely to be impacted by mental health challenges. And so they talked about how LGBTQ students are particularly impacted by mental health.

But then they also focused on black students. And, at our university, Black students are over, experienced mental health challenges at five times the rate of their white counterparts. And so what this data tells us is that we need, if we really wanna focus on the people who are most impacted, we should be focusing on Black students.

We should be focusing on LGBT students. And as a queer Black man, we should particularly be focusing on students that look like me. So not only did the presenter present this data, and highlight to the classroom. But they talked about it, they had a discussion about it, and I think it's important to highlight that because it shows that there's an awareness.

You know, both the presenter and the people in the training can't say they didn't know about the disproportionate impact, of, of mental health on the Black community in spite of their evident awareness of this. They proceeded with the training and in their scenario, they had, two white people.

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They had a white professor and a white student. And they went through the scenario twice. So they had this, the first time the scenario was done, I think it was kind of a what not to do and we had a discussion about how to unpack that and then they did, they did the scenario a second time about what you should do in that scenario.

In the scenario, the student, the scenario was a student who was, being impacted by depression, maybe even grief after a loss. And they were struggling to get their classwork done and they were going to the professor to potentially get an extension on their work. At no point was race discussed. At no point was identity discussed.

And again, I think that was, you had that challenge given that both actors are white, that it can be a little more difficult to bring up, you know, identity, specifically race. After both discussions, you know, at no point during the discussions did somebody bring up like, oh, these people are white. This would be different if students were Black.

And so I raised my hand. I was particularly frustrated in that moment because it had just come from a class where I had dealt with, a situation where we weren't talking about race. And so I was frustrated already and I walked into this class or into this training. And again, it's a situation where we're not talking about, I don't want the elephant in the room, for lack of a better expression.

So I raise my hand and I ask, you know, the. , you know, the presenter to, to tell us a little bit about how, even though we know that students here are disproportionately impacted. Black students here are disproportionately impacted by mental health. Why we didn't discuss it at all, and it wasn't brought up in the training.

Additionally asked her because I looked through the materials, that the materials that they were providing, the written materials that they're providing, didn't speak in any way to the unique experiences of Black students. So, to clarify to, to kind of summarize the training that we're having, didn't talk about Black students, which they could argue there were limitations due to the race of the part of the actors. But the paper materials that you were giving out didn't speak to how to provide culturally humble and culturally competent care to black students. So we (a) know that students are disport, Black students are disproportionately affected by mental health, (b) we aren't addressing it in the training, and (c) we aren't even using written materials as an opportunity to talk about the, you know, disproportionate burden of Black students. And so I have to hold those people accountable because, It's a micro invalidation, and it really is. And, and ignoring of the facts and the prioritizing of, you know, the comfort of the people and the presenter and the actors in that room.

And so again, as a Black student, I know I'm already disproportionately impacted by mental health, but I am being micro aggressed in a training that is on mental health. This very training that is supposed to help me navigate mental health is creating distress and likely impacting my mental health. And so I think it was really frustrating.

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I think, a couple things that I want people to know or think about is to think about the cumulative impact I've just left a classroom where I'm facing microaggressions and you know, having racial, you know, dealing with racial stress and now coming to a training at lunchtime. And, and that is now compounding it.

So, we're at lunchtime, I've already had to deal with, be in two spaces, you know, where I, my racial identity is impacting my mental health. So it's a cumulative effect as we grew up through the day, and I don't remember this statistic, but you know, there was a statistic that said, the majority of Black people experience microaggressions on a daily basis.

So, this is every day. And these are just two microaggressions in that one day. Second, is, I don't remember how many people were in the room. I'd say 30, 40, maybe more. But nobody in that classroom or nobody in that training space raised their hand and talked about, the impact of, you know, or the fact that we, there's basically the erasure of the Black experience.

Everyone in that classroom in that moment is choosing to be complicit with systemic racism. I don't think anybody in that classroom could say that they were, you know, practicing anti-racism in that moment. Regardless of whether they think they're an anti-racist or whether they think diversity, equity, and inclusion important in that moment, they dropped the ball.

Additionally, I would think. I, I think it's just important also to highlight that what occurred was harmful. You know, for some people, you know, it's, oh, maybe they're avoiding an uncomfortable conversation or maybe, you know, we're limited by, we only have white actors. But what was done in that classroom was harmful to Black students.

It had the a, the, the opposite effect that they were anticipating. It was supposed to be a space to talk about mental health, but it's actually a space that was, impacting, negatively impacting my mental health. And so, you know, I think we really have to be very cognizant and do I think it was intentional? I don't. I had to follow up with the trainer we met later to talk about what could be done to be, to do better. And they were absolutely graceful and I think they, in my, from my perspective, repaired the relationship. But systemic racism is so massive and entrenched and insidious. We don't have opportunities to not stand up and speak out against anti-racism.

And it's our obligation. It's the obligation, particularly of white people because I was burdened in that moment to speak up, and it caused me to lose trust and faith in everyone else in that room. So, as you're going through this training, hope you to think, I hope you can keep my experience in mind and think about who would you have been in that room and after this training, who do you hope to be and how will you show up moving forward?

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Recording 2 Transcript:

For contextualization, speaker is a Black mixed race woman working in the RCO space.

I love what I do and working for a predominantly white organization is exhausting. Having a young white man as a team lead who can look me in my face and say, racist microaggressions, and not even flinch is exhausting. Saying almost the exact same things that you've been saying to us, Chidimma and consistently being unheard and invalidated and overlooked is exhausting. Advocating as hard and as frequently as I have to for BIPOC lives, respect hair products, and safe spaces to receive treatment is exhausting. We've had a white client make monkey noises at a Black client when she laughed and nothing happened. We had white clients write the N word on a Black client's belongings and burned toothpick crosses and put them on his bed and nothing happened. We had a white man in our services who told me and another woman at [RCO name redacted] that he's not racist because he watches Ebony porn. His house manager knew about that, who told me that our housing coordinator knew about that, and he was hired to be a house manager.

We have another house manager who openly calls Black women, "Aunt Jemima", and he was hired as a [RCO name redacted] counselor. So, my question to admin and to my coworkers is when will the safety, recovery, general wellbeing, and overall comfortability of Black lives actually and genuinely begin to matter to y'all?

Because their Black staff and our Black clients don't feel it. It's not enough to say or for your Black friends to say that you do the work, you have to implement it. It's not enough to get on social media and repost that Black Lives Matter and, and type f*ck white supremacy, and then come into your organization and participate in white supremacy or participate in systemic racism.

It is not enough. We as an organization have not been doing enough. We're doing this anti-racism training and when it's all said and done and we have our CE certificates, [RCO name redacted] will still not have an anti-racism policy, and that is unacceptable. Period.

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