

How to Fight Racism & White Privilege: A Primer for Faculty

by Kimberly D. Acquaviva, PhD, MSW, CSE

Are you a white faculty member struggling to figure out how you can fight racism and white privilege? Here are a few ideas:

1. Decenter whiteness in your courses & seek out readings from Black scholars.
2. Don't look to Black students to speak for all Black people
3. If you see Black colleagues being asked to do more than their fair share of service, SPEAK UP and take on some of their service burden.
4. If you're on a search committee, throw the flag if you hear people dismissing a candidate because they "don't look like a good fit."
5. Ask questions about the diversity of your faculty & the leadership team. Ask yourself, "what are we doing to perpetuate white privilege?"
6. Once you answer #5, stop doing those things. Diversifying your faculty isn't about adding Black people - it's about transforming the systems and processes that perpetuate white privilege. You have to fix the root problem before you can make meaningful progress.
7. Ask tough questions about your curriculum. Does it prepare students to be agents of change after graduation?
8. Look at your school's marketing materials. Are the handful of Black students in your school repeatedly tapped to be in photos? That's not being inclusive in your advertising, that's using Black students to make your school look more diverse. Stop that. Fight for your school to become so diverse that a photo of a randomly-selected group of students will ALWAYS have Black students in it. THAT'S diversity.
9. Don't expect Black colleagues to share your passion for fighting racism. They're tired...they LIVE this sh*t...every...single...day.
10. Don't expect praise or kudos for fighting white privilege. As white people, we don't get a cookie for dismantling the system we've benefited from our entire lives. We shouldn't get pats on the back for being decent human beings. And we

shouldn't get irritated if Black colleagues are less than convinced of our sincerity or commitment to the cause. They have a right to be skeptical -- white people haven't exactly proven ourselves to be reliable allies. We shove our way to the front of the line, center ourselves in the fight, and suck all the air out of the room with our earnest, rosy-cheeked, well-intentioned, white savior bullsh*t.

11. If Black colleagues & students seem angry when discussions about race come up, recognize that this is simply a sign THEY AREN'T DEAD. Because, of COURSE they're angry. Listen to them. Learn from them - but don't ask them to teach you. Seriously, don't. They are TIRED.
12. Recognize that you aren't "woke." You will never be woke. Ever. Neither will I. "Woke" implies a destination. The best we can aspire to is to constantly strive to awaken. It's a journey, and it never ends. If you think you're woke, you're still asleep.
13. Lastly, do everything you can to help Black faculty and students succeed. It's literally the least you can do. So do it.