

## **Racism and the Benefit of the Doubt: Exercises and Discussions**

Amanda Udis-Kessler, Director of Assessment and Program Review, Colorado College, October 27, 2021

### **1. Five-Minute Writing Exercise**

Write down one or two real-life examples of how bad-faith treatment by white people has harmed members of BIPOC communities. These can be commonly known examples or can be from your own life, but each example should address the following:

- Whether someone with institutional decision-making authority was involved (if so, what specific authority did they have and how did they use it?)
- The specific bad-faith assumption(s) involved (to the extent that you know or could guess it/them)
- Which, if any, meta-assumptions were involved (competence/incompetence, morality/immorality, harmlessness, dangerousness)

### **2. Ten-Minute Pairs Discussion**

Share one or both of your examples with someone sitting near you. Divide your time fairly.

Take the last minute or two to discuss what you can learn about racism from considering all your examples taken together.

### 3. Fifteen-Minute Small Groups Exercise

You will work in three groups, each with a different focus. You can choose which group you wish to join. Group 1 will discuss decision-making authority, Group 2 will discuss good-faith and bad-faith assumptions, and Group 3 will discuss the self-fulfilling prophecy. Please refer to your PowerPoint handout for details about each of these topics.

Each group should spend three to five minutes reading and thinking about the initial prompts and ten to twelve minutes discussing your observations. Please divide your time fairly in the discussion.

#### Group 1: Decision-Making Authority

Identify any kinds of formal, institutionally supported decision-making authority that you hold, whether at Colorado College or anywhere else (in a political, civic, or religious organization, for example). This authority might involve making the kinds of decisions mentioned in the presentation or might include other kinds of decision-making.

Decisions I am authorized to make in an institutional setting:

Consider honestly whether your decision-making authority ever involves decisions that could have racist impacts (even in the absence of any racist intentions). If you have a concrete example of a situation in which you made a decision that had a racist impact, you are welcome to share it, but even theoretical examples of potentially racist decisions are helpful to unearth and discuss.

Decisions I have made or might make that could have had/could have a racist impact:

Share your observations across the group.

## Group 2: Good-Faith and Bad-Faith Assumptions

Consider the lists of good-faith and bad-faith assumptions included in your PowerPoint handout. Can you identify a specific example of a time when you were aware of holding one or more of these assumptions in a racial context? Consider particularly an example of when you made a good-faith assumption about a white person or when you made a bad-faith assumption about a member of a BIPOC community. This example could involve thoughts you had without acting on them or could involve a behavior or interaction.

An example of racialized good-faith or bad-faith assumptions I have made:

(If relevant) How this good-faith or bad-faith assumption played out in my behavior in or an interaction:

Share your observations across the group.

### Group 3: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Consider the three slides on the self-fulfilling prophecy included in your PowerPoint handout. Can you come up with a real-life example of a self-fulfilling prophecy that played out in a racialized way, in which the outcome gave white people the benefit of the doubt while withholding the benefit of the doubt from people from BIPOC communities? If possible, use a higher education example, but if you cannot come up with one, another example is fine.

My example of a real-life, racialized self-fulfilling prophecy:

In your own words, explain why racialized self-fulfilling prophecies are so harmful:

Share your observations across the group.

#### **4. Ten-Minute Writing Exercise**

Please carry out this exercise if you are white or benefit from white privilege because you are perceived as white. If you are a member of a BIPOC community and perceived as such, please use the next 20 minutes in any way that is relaxing, productive, or restorative for you, whether that means considering your own work against racism or doing something else.

Please use the three PowerPoint slides on white work against racism to identify three concrete personal steps you can take immediately against racism. The prompts below, taken from the slides, may be of some help. (You might find the “Where We Start” handout useful as well, as it provides concrete suggestions for this kind of work.)

My concrete next step in educating myself about this history and present reality of U.S. racism will be to (read, watch, listen to, and/or talk with...):

My concrete next step in getting comfortable with the discomfort of addressing racism and my role in it as a white/white-perceived person will be to:

My concrete next step in monitoring my own assumptions and actions for good-faith and bad-faith assumptions will be to:

My concrete next step in using my institutionally legitimated decision-making authority to support BIPOC individuals and communities will be to:

My concrete next step in using my resources (including money), talents, time, energy, gifts, and passion to support BIPOC individuals and communities will be to:

(If helpful) For me, the most appropriate place to start is with my:

#### **5. Ten-Minute Small Groups Discussion**

Find two or three other people with whom to talk. Share at least one of the personal next steps you just wrote down with the group. Please divide your time fairly in the discussion.