

Whites Receiving Feedback on Racism and Responding from the Mainstream Framework: Above & Below

Feelings:

Behaviors

Singled out	Attacked	Silenced	Crying	Leaving	Withdrawing	Arguing	Denying
Shamed	Guilty	Accused	Insulted	Judged	Focusing on Intentions	Seeking absolution	Avoiding
Angry	Scared	Outraged					

Claims:

I know POC	This is not welcoming to me
I marched in the '60s	If I say the wrong thing I'll get fired
I took this in college	You are making me feel guilty
The real oppression is class	You are elitist
You are judging me	I just said one little innocent thing
You don't know me	Some people just find offense where there is none
You are generalizing	You hurt my feelings
That is just your opinion	You misunderstood me
I disagree	Where is your empathy?
How dare you assume I would be racist?	I don't feel safe
You don't do this the right way	The problem is your tone
You're playing the race card	I was taught to treat everyone equally

Underlying beliefs (*do not need to be conscious or intentional*):

Racism is simply personal prejudice
 Racism is only enacted occasionally, and rarely if ever by me
 As a white person, I will be the judge of whether racism has occurred
 My learning is finished / I know all I need to know
 Racism can only be intentional; not having intended racism cancels it out
 Having suffered relieves me of racism or racial privilege
 White people who experience another form of oppression cannot experience racial privilege
 If I am a good person I can't be racist
 My unexamined perspective is equal to people of color's
 I am entitled to remain comfortable
 How I am perceived by others is the most important issue
 As a white person I know the best way to challenge racism
 This process needs to feel good / be comfortable. If not, it's being done wrong
 It's not kind to point out racism
 Race privilege is something one is aware of and can feel
 Racism is conscious bias. I have none: I am not racist
 Racists are bad individuals, so you are saying that I am a bad person
 If you knew me or understood me you'd know I can't be racist
 If I have friends of color I can't be racist
 There is no problem / society is fine the way it is
 Racism is a simple problem ("People just need to ...")
 My world view is objective and the only one operating
 If I can't see it, it isn't legitimate
 If you have more knowledge on the subject than I do, you think you're better than me
 Judging is wrong; it is possible not to judge
 I am superior

How it functions

Maintains white solidarity	Closes off self-reflection	Minimizes
Silences the discussion	Makes white people the victims	Hijacks the discussion
Protects one's worldview	Takes race off the table	Protects white privilege
Focuses on messenger, not message	Rallies more resources to white people	
Protects racism		

Whites Receiving Feedback on Racism and Responding from an Anti-Racist Framework: Above & Below

Feelings:

Behaviors

Gratitude	Excitement	Discomfort	Guilt	Reflecting	Apology	Listening	Processing
Embarrassment	Motivation		Humility	Seeking more understanding		Grappling	Believing
	Compassion	Curiosity					

Claims:

Thank you
 YES! I am opening and shifting
 Its my responsibility to resist defensiveness and complacency
 Man, this is hard
 Wow, hard but so stimulating and important
 I better get on this
 Oops!
 It can't be avoided
 It's personal but not *strictly* personal
 There is no right way to do it; I will focus on the message not the messenger
 I need to build my capacity to endure discomfort / bear witness to the pain of racism
 I have some work to do

Underlying beliefs

BEING GOOD OR BAD IS NOT RELEVANT
 Racism is a multi-layered system
 All of us are socialized into it
 Racism cannot be avoided
 Whites have blind spots on racism / I have blind spots on racism / it's hard to see or recognize
 Racism is complex / I don't have to understand it for it to be valid
 Whites are unconsciously invested in racism / I am unconsciously invested in racism
 Bias is implicit / unconscious; I don't expect to be aware of mine without a lot of on-going effort
 Receiving feedback is a gift
 Feedback from POC indicates trust
 Feedback on white racism is difficult to give; how I receive feedback is not as relevant as the feedback itself
 Authentic anti-racism is rarely comfortable. Discomfort is key to my growth and thus desirable
 White comfort maintains the racial status quo, so discomfort is necessary and important
 I must not confuse comfort with safety / As a white person I am safe in discussions of racism
 The antidote to guilt is action
 It takes courage to break with white solidarity
 It takes courage to lead other whites in this work; how can I support those that do?
 The only way out is through
 I bring my group's history with me; History matters
 Given my socialization, it is much more likely that I am the one who doesn't understand the issue
 Racism hurts (even kills) people of color 24/7. Interrupting it is more important than my feelings, ego, or self-image

How it functions

Minimizes defensiveness
 Demonstrates curiosity and humility
 Stretches one's worldview
 Puts what one professes into practice
 Interrupts privilege-protecting comfort
 Interrupts racism

Demonstrates vulnerability
 Allows for growth
 Ensures action
 Builds authentic relationships / trust
 Interrupts internalized superiority