

Antiracism Toolkits for Developing Equitable Workplaces

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Racism and discrimination have been at the forefront of the U.S. national conversation this year, but prominent scholarly publishing professionals have been calling for change in our industry for much longer. This presentation brought together 3 members of the Toolkits for Equity Project to discuss a new resource to address racism, discrimination, and bias in scholarly publishing.

“Antiracism Toolkits for Developing Equitable Workplaces,” moderated by Melanie Dolechek and jointly presented by Randy Townsend and Niccole Coggins, gave an overview of the *Antiracism Toolkit for Allies*.¹ The toolkit is intended to help White scholarly publishing professionals recognize and address internal and external bias against Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), with the goal of becoming better allies to BIPOC and working to create more equitable workplaces.

Melanie Dolechek introduced the presentation by referencing 2 *Scholarly Kitchen* posts detailing personal experiences of people of color in scholarly publishing, as well as a survey on diversity in publishing, published by Lee & Low Books. The blog posts highlighted examples of BIPOC’s experiences of racism in the workplace, and the survey identified, statistically, the homogeneity of publishing professionals, who are mostly White.²⁻⁴ Dolechek emphasized that change in our workplaces is clearly needed, and that equity must be built from top-down, bottom-up, and interpersonally in order to create change.

To that end, Randy Townsend introduced the *Antiracism Toolkit for Allies*, pointing out that since White workers are the majority, their participation in building equity is

critical for meaningful change. The toolkit was inspired by the work of the American Alliance of Museums’ LGBTQ+ Alliance and their guides for transgender inclusion as well as the Racial Equity Institute, and attempts to create a common framework, language, and best practices for allies’ involvement in antiracist work. One critical aspect of this is the toolkit’s appendix outlining the history of white supremacy in the United States, which connects that history to U.S. economic history, and gives allies a common starting point for discussing racism, past and present.

Niccole Coggins gave an overview of the 5 steps to becoming a better ally, which are outlined in detail in the toolkit:

- **Step 1.** Become conscious of White advantage. Focus on the advantage that dominant groups hold rather than the disadvantage that marginalized groups hold. Coggins encouraged attendees to use Peggy McIntosh’s “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” as a resource.
- **Step 2.** Listen to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color without judgment or defensiveness. Use the L.A.R.A. approach to **L**isten with empathy, **A**ffirm to build connection, **R**eplay to address the speaker’s concerns, and **A**sk questions or add information to further affirm. Coggins encouraged attendees to follow the advice of Franchesca Ramsey: Acknowledge your mistake, thank the person, don’t just apologize—change your behavior, and mitigate the impact of your action.
- **Step 3.** Move out of social segregation and develop truth-telling relationships of accountability with diverse groups of people. Take steps to reach out to a wider range of vendors and potential hires. Check in with your coworkers if you see or commit a microaggression; listen to and amplify BIPOC concerns in the workplace.

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- **Step 4.** Take action to interrupt racism and White advantage at all levels. You can disrupt racism by giving the affected individual a chance to respond, addressing the offender, and checking in with the individual afterward to ask what you can do to help. Coggins encouraged attendees to visit <https://www.ihollaback.org/> for more bystander intervention tactics.
- **Step 5.** Create work communities where everyone thrives. Replace cultures of perfectionism with cultures of appreciation and growth. Perfectionism is a characteristic of White supremacy culture; for more on this topic, Coggins encouraged attendees to look up Tema Okun's writing on White supremacy culture. Develop a learning organization where mistakes are opportunities to learn.

The *Antiracism Toolkit for Allies* is the first in a series of toolkits intended to address multiple aspects of antiracist work. Subsequent toolkits will address antiracism for organizations and antiracism for BIPOC, and the projects will be managed by the Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications (C4DISC).⁵ Both Coggins and Townsend stressed that the toolkit is only a starting point for publishing professionals, one tool in

many that can help scholarly publishers address racism in their work. Using the strategies outlined in the toolkit might require some uncomfortable conversations, but like any tool, Townsend said, using it becomes more comfortable with practice.

References and Links

1. Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications. Antiracism toolkit for allies. [accessed December 21, 2020]. https://c4disc.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/toolkits-for-equity_antiracism_allies.pdf
2. Society for Scholarly Publishing. On being excluded: testimonies by people of color in scholarly Publishing. *Scholarly Kitchen*. [accessed December 21, 2020]. <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2018/04/04/excluded-testimonies-people-color-scholarly-publishing/>
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4. Lee & Low Books. Where is the diversity in publishing? The 2019 diversity baseline survey results. [accessed December 21, 2020]. <https://blog.leeandlow.com/2020/01/28/2019diversitybaselinesurvey/>
5. Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications. Joint statement of principles. [accessed December 21, 2020]. <https://c4disc.org/principles/>

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