

GUIDELINES FOR ANTI-RACIST STUDENT INTERACTIONS

If you are White, and the student is BIPOC:

- Do **not** automatically use a personal experience that worked for you as a solution to a given situation. Chances are there was a lot of privilege built into what worked for you. You HAD good choices, which made it easier to MAKE good choices.
- Do **not** say “I understand.” because most likely you don’t. (Please review White Privilege)

INSTEAD, really listen to the student. By listening you can seek to understand and by asking questions you are more likely to come up with a helpful solution that will work for the student. This allows the student to be heard and for them to have support finding a workable solution.

Helpful phrases in conversations with students who are BIPOC:

- “How can I support you right now?”
- “I’m listening.”
- “I will have to think about some solutions but I’m glad you told me.”
- “How would you like to move forward? What would help you do that?”
- “What is the number one thing that would help this situation right now and can I help facilitate that for you?”
- “I want you to know I acknowledge that the anti-blackness/police brutality/explicit racism (say that, not just “what’s happening”) in society right now must be traumatizing for you. I am here as a resource for support.”

Students who are BIPOC, especially Black students, are entering the fall semester with a level of trauma as their baseline. Thus, the question, “How are you?” may be more loaded than you think.

INSTEAD, be aware of this baseline level of trauma.

- Make sure that when asking, you create the space to really listen to the student, if they choose to share their feelings with you.
- Consider alternative forms of polite social greetings that don’t have the same level of stress (e.g., “Nice to see you.”)

Note: BIPOC students have shared that one of the most difficult parts of being in our department is that faculty act like nothing is happening and everything is fine (i.e., cheerful), even when there are big societal events that are traumatizing to them personally. Acknowledge that it’s happening without getting emotional (i.e., don’t highlight your feelings – keep the conversation focused on the student) and say that you are here if the student needs a listening ear or support in other ways.

Students are waiting to see if we care. They want to feel that they matter to us in their home department. They want to know that their experiences are acknowledged, and we BELIEVE them. Do we? This is where our work starts.

This last page is for something that we should **NEVER** say, “All Lives Matter.” Here’s why. This phrase

is a reaction to the statement “Black Lives Matter,” which is necessary to point out in the current context in which Black Americans are being murdered by the police and enduring displays and actions of White Supremacy. As such, this phrase becomes racist, as it is not a neutral statement, but rather tries to negate the Black Lives Matter movement.

Imagine your child dying and you are giving a eulogy explaining what your own child meant to you and how special your child was, and then someone grabs the mic and says “actually all children are special...”

That’s what “all lives matter” sounds like.

@roguepaq

Go to Twitter and read posts tagged #BlackintheIvory. These are personal experiences that Black folks in academia shared – and remember these are the “safe” stories. There are many accounts worse than these that folks don’t feel comfortable sharing publicly. The work is hard, and you won’t always feel comfortable, but that discomfort is how we grow.