

Race and Power: Keeping it Real Amid the Mess

An Online Experiential Learning Event

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Overt and covert dynamics of race and power have us in a mess, both in larger society and in our organizations, communities, families, and selves. Working effectively in this mess requires courage, authenticity, accountability, and the will to speak to what we see, hear, think, and feel.

“Race and Power: Keeping It Real Amid the Mess” is a Group Relations conference. As such, it will be an opportunity to grapple with its title themes—and their connection to leadership, authorization, and representation—in the context of a temporary system, using here-and-now experience to explore whole group dynamics at both the conscious and unconscious levels. We will not work with these themes “out there,” but rather “in here” within the groups we form during the event.

In Group Relations conferences focused on race, there repeatedly occur certain patterns of behavior that keep participants and staff from deeper levels of learning, leading to stuckness. Just a few of these patterns are the attempt to address race as a large societal challenge while ignoring the very human desires, strivings and fears alive in the here and now; the construction of white people as the source and embodiment of all evil; the explicit or implicit request by some white people that BIPOC educate them on race, especially by sharing experiences of pain; the weaponization of experiences of pain, especially in the service of the very human dynamic of competition; and the unwillingness of participants and staff to call out and examine key behaviors observed through the lens of group dynamics when the subgroups enacting those behaviors are BIPOC. Because we believe that these patterns mirror ones that keep all of us stuck vis-à-vis race in our organizations and communities, the staff of this conference will, for the sake of participant and staff learning, pay particular attention to and call out these patterns as they arise in the here and now.

Over the course of a four-day event, we cannot solve or end the mess in which overt and covert dynamics of race and power have us. What we can do is engage in demanding experiential learning that may help us to work more effectively amid the mess by growing our understanding and expanding our options for action. We invite you to join us on this journey.

