

# White Anti-Racist People Writing about Whiteness, White Privilege, and White Racial Identity

WHO	WHAT
Andrea Ayvazian	Interrupting the Cycle of Oppression: The Role of Allies as Agents of Change
Elizabeth Denevi	Whiteness: Helping White Students and Educators Understand Their Role in a Multicultural Society in NAIS Magazine, Fall 2001
Louise Derman Sparks	<p>Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children</p> <p>With Olsen Edwards. Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves</p> <p>What if all the kids are white?: Anti-bias multicultural education with young children and families</p>
Paul Gorski paulgorski.efoliomn.com	Narrative on Whiteness and Multicultural Education
Debby Irving	Waking up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race
Gregory Jay	Who Invented White People •Teaching About Whiteness
Judith Katz	White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training

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Frances Kendall	Understanding White Privilege  Barriers to Clarity OR What Keeps White People from being able to see our Whiteness and Therefore our Privilege
Paul Kivel paulkivel.com	Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice
Peggy McIntosh	White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack
Ali Michael alimichael.org	Raising Race Questions: Whiteness and Inquiry in Education
Shelly Tochluk	Witnessing Whiteness: The need to talk about race and how to do it
Tim Wise www.timwise.org	White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son

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# Psychosocial Costs to Perpetrators of Racial Microaggressions

Dr. Derald Wing Sue

## ***Cultural Conditioning***

- bias and prejudice become institutionalized and systemized into the norms, values and beliefs of society
- these beliefs are passed on to generations via socialization and cultural conditioning
- these “normative standards” and beliefs are enforced by society through **education**, mass media, significant others, and institutions

## ***Culture of Silence***

- we do not willingly consent to such heinous actions, therefore, it is desirable to perpetuate a “culture of silence”
- Silencing occurs when:
  - oppressed are not allowed to express their thoughts and outrage
  - their concerns are minimized
  - they are punished for expressing ideas at odds with the dominant group

## ***Whiteness as conferred dominance***

- White American people are socialized into Eurocentric values, beliefs, standards, and norms
- all other group norms are consciously and unconsciously compared to this default set of norms
- dominant culture became institutionalized with resulting psychological, sociological, economical, political, and legal implications
- White supremacy and overt/covert racism become culturally conditioned into the lives of White people, **albeit without their informed consent**

## **Four Psychological Fears or Obstacles to Honest Self-Examination**

### ***Layer One - Fear of Appearing Racist***

- studies indicate that race is among the most automatic and quickest ways to categorize people
- one of the disconcerting microaggressions experienced by people of color from well-intentioned Whites is color-blindness - the avoidance by Whites to acknowledge that they notice a racial difference
- denial is most prevalent in this layer

### ***Layer Two - Fear of Acknowledging One's Racism***

- the resistance to acknowledging racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in oneself is linked to a major conflict dealing with self-image and identity
- White Americans have been taught egalitarian values, that everyone should be treated equally
- harboring anti-minority feelings shatters one's self-concept as a good and moral human being
- anger/defensiveness are most prevalent in this layer

### ***Layer Three - Fear of Acknowledging White Privilege***

- when the first two layers are unmasked, another deeper layer of realization presents itself - the possibility that Whites have benefitted from racism
- strong feelings of guilt are prevalent in this layer

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## ***Layer Four - Fear of Taking Personal Responsibility to End Racism***

- How do you deal with your own racism and the benefits and advantages that have been enjoyed individually and collectively?
- During this time you are aware of systemic societal forces and must decide how and when to act against them
- hopelessness and helplessness are prevalent in this layer

Albert Einstein: **“The world is too dangerous to live in - not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen.”**

Martin Luther king, Jr. **“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”**

## ***The Way Forward The Ethical Mandate***

Racial microaggressions are manifestations of oppression. It reflects a worldview of superiority - inferiority, albeit in a much more subtle but equally harmful manner as overt forms of oppression. It remains invisible because of a cultural conditioning process that allows perpetrators to discriminate without knowledge of their complicity in the inequities visited upon people of color.

The way forward is a difficult journey, but the moral and ethical mandate for social justice requires action, not passivity and inaction. Continued work on antiracism has shown the importance of establishing the following conditions to combat racial bias and prejudice. Additionally, each is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition to combat racism. In other words, change is most likely to be positive when all seven conditions exist. Each would require considerable elaboration, but are only briefly listed here. A more thorough description can be found in D. W. Sue (2003)

1. Have intimate contact with people who differ from us in race, culture, ethnicity.
2. Working together in a cooperative rather than a competitive environment.
3. Sharing mutual goals (superordinate goals) as opposed to individual ones.
4. Exchanging and learning accurate information rather than stereotypes or misinformation.
5. Sharing an equal status relationship with other groups instead of an unequal or imbalanced one.
6. Having leadership and authority as supportive of group harmony and welfare.
7. Feeling a sense of unity or spiritual interconnectedness with all humanity

# Racial Microaggressive Process Model

## Dr. Derald Wing Sue

<b>Phase One</b> <b>Potential Microaggressive Incident or Event</b> <i>Verbal - Nonverbal/Behavioral - Environmental</i>
<b>African American Microaggressions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ascription of intellectual inferiority</li><li>• second-class citizen</li><li>• assumption of criminality</li><li>• assumption of inferior status</li><li>• assumed universality of the Black (Latino/a) experience</li><li>• assumed superiority of White cultural values/communication styles</li></ul>

<b>Phase One</b> <b>Potential Microaggressive Incident or Event</b> <i>Verbal - Nonverbal/Behavioral - Environmental</i>
<b>Asian American Microaggressions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• alien in one's own land</li><li>• ascription of intelligence</li><li>• denial of racial reality</li><li>• exoticization of Asian American women</li><li>• invalidation of interethnic differences</li><li>• pathologizing cultural values/communication styles</li><li>• second class citizens</li><li>• invisibility</li></ul>

<b>Phase Two</b> <b>Perception and Questioning</b> <b>of the Incident</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• was the incident racially motivated?</li><li>• what is the relationship with the perpetrator?</li><li>• what is the racial/cultural identity development of the recipient?</li><li>• what is the thematic content of the microaggression?</li><li>• what are the personal experiences of the target?</li></ul>

<b>Phase Three</b> <b>Reaction Process</b> <i>Verbal - Nonverbal/Behavioral - Environmental</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• healthy paranoia</li><li>• sanity check</li><li>• empowering and validating self</li><li>• rescuing offenders</li></ul>

<b>Phase Four</b> <b>Interpretation and Meaning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• you do not belong</li><li>• you are abnormal</li><li>• you are intellectually inferior</li><li>• you are not trustworthy</li><li>• you are all the same</li></ul>

<b>Phase Five</b> <b>Consequences and Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• powerlessness</li><li>• invisibility</li><li>• forced compliance/loss of integrity</li><li>• pressure to represent one's group</li></ul>

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### ***The Way Forward Strength Through Adversity***

#### **Heightened perceptual wisdom**

Considerable evidence suggest that oppressed groups have developed an ability to discern the truth and determine reality better than those who occupy positions of power and privilege. Accurate perception means the ability to read between the lines, to see beyond the obvious, and to become aware of inconsistencies between verbal and nonverbal behaviors of oppressors. Heightened perception and wisdom protects oppressed people from having their experiential realities invalidated.

#### **Nonverbal and contextualized accuracy**

There is a recognition that nonverbal behaviors are more accurate barometers of biased attitudes and actions. It has been suggested that women are better at reading nonverbal behaviors than men and that people of color are also better at reading nonverbal communication than Whites. Communication theory reveals that 30-40% of communication occurs verbally, while the remainder depends on nonverbal/contextual cues; that, nonverbal behaviors are least under conscious control; and messages are more accurate than verbal ones. As healthy functioning is correlated with the ability to accurately read nonverbal communication and discern “the truth,” this suggests that oppressed groups may possess strengths unmatched by oppressors.

#### **Bicultural flexibility**

Because people of color are always exposed to cultural values, beliefs, and standards of the dominant society, they must deal with pressures to conform to the larger standards of those in power. In dealing with forced compliance and pressures to assimilate and acculturate, marginalized groups have developed a bicultural flexibility that allows them to maintain their own sense of integrity. One of the major advantages of being bicultural or multicultural is the ability to see multiple worldviews and more readily understand the other’s point of view.

#### **Collectivistic sense of group identity and peoplehood**

Oppressed groups rely heavily on one another for a collective sense of identity, for validation and confirmation of their experiences, and for sharing with one another healthy coping mechanisms to overcome invalidation. A sense of group identity is forged through common experiences of oppressions and lessons learned that survival depends on one another. Racial and ethnic pride also seems to immunize people of color against forces like racism.

It appears that social support through a sense of belonging, ethnic collectivistic cultural values, extended family systems, communities, and group resources buffer oppressed groups against a hostile society and provide cultural nutrients that validate their worldviews and lifestyles.