

Identifying & Dismantling Tokenism in the Workplace



CT RACE EQUITY NETWORK

December 13, 2022
11a-12:30p

Housekeeping

Mute

Feel free to come off of mute to ask questions, give comments, and engage in discussions.

Camera

If you're able and comfortable, use the camera.





CT RACE EQUITY NETWORK

Speakers

Phylicia Adams, *Corporation for Supportive Housing*

Carline Charmelus, *Partnership for Strong Communities*

Amber Freeman, *Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness*

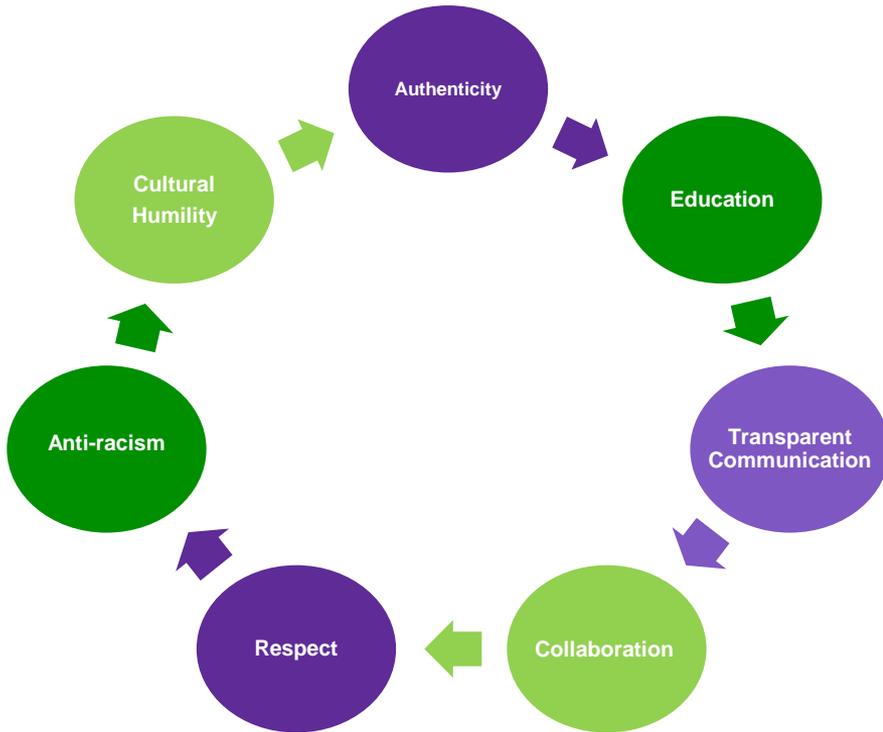
Jenita Hayes, *Thought Partner Solutions*

Agenda

1. Overview of CT Race Equity Network- Who we are? Focus areas of work
2. What is “Tokenism”? How does it show up in the homelessness and housing space?
3. How can we mitigate tokenism in our work, practices, and organizations?



Overview of CT Race Equity Network (CT REN)



Purpose: Advance the work of centering race equity in efforts to address housing and homelessness disparities in Connecticut

Provide a platform for partners to share, collaboratively develop, and coordinate anti-racist policies and procedures that advance racially equitable housing outcomes.



Diversity

Includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued.

Inclusion

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making

What is Tokenism?

“The practice of doing something (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group) only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly”

(Merriam Webster).

“Tokenism is, simply, covert racism. **Racism** requires those in power to maintain their privilege by exercising social, economic, and/or political muscle against people of color (POC). Tokenism achieves the same while giving those in power the appearance of being non-racist and even champions of diversity because they recruit and use POC as racialized props.”

[Glossary | Racial Equity Tools](#)



**THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN INCLUSIVE
REPRESENTATION
& TOKENISM**


TikTok
@benjy_lookbook





Pair/Small Group Conversation - 7 minutes

- Share your name & organization
- Why did you decide to attend this workshop today?
- Your initial reaction to the definitions and video clip(s)



Group report out

- What did you learn?
- What stood out during your pair conversation?



Intent vs Impact Dialogue

- **Intent:** *what we mean* by our words or actions.
- **Impact:** how those words or actions are *experienced, felt or understood* by either the person they are directed to, or others.



“Tokenism is being employed when an organization is not willing to acknowledge, address and find solutions to fix the racial imbalance in their workplace at the root. When this happens, all other activities are merely cosmetic and will appear as a *token* gesture or a check the box exercise. We know that racism presents in various ways, through systems and processes, both intentionally and unintentionally. Building true equity, inclusion and diversity in the workplace requires attention and genuine action, in an embedded and sustainable way.”

- Lalitha Stables

How Does Tokenism Show Up?

1. Company marketing and branding - Diversity on the company website, which does not reflect the true makeup of the organization
2. Symbolic diversity - Individuals are hired into roles to check a box, diversity in campaigns or isolated work areas
3. Lack of support - Hiring racially marginalized people to lead diversity, equity and inclusion efforts without providing them with the team or support systems that will allow them to be successful
4. Being the Representative - Expecting people to speak on behalf of their community, and to mentor employees from a similar background



Common Ways People of Color are Tokenized in Nonprofits

1. Recruiting BiPOC to formal leadership positions, but keeping all the power
2. The paid staff in charge of messaging are White, and volunteer storytellers are BiPOC
3. BiPOC are only hired for BiPOC “stuff”
4. An organizational culture that promotes White dominance is created and maintained



Common Ways People of Color are Tokenized in Nonprofits

5. Special “Diversity Councils” are convened but BiPOC leadership on an organization's Board is not built
6. BiPOC are used as the mouthpiece and shield against other BiPOC
7. You intuitively know the nonprofit space would benefit from more BiPOC leaders, but you don't really know *why*.



Impact of Tokenism

Failure to address tokenism in the workplace can diminish employees' sense of belonging, which can have significant impacts on motivation, morale and ultimately retention/turnover.

Ignores qualified candidates from marginalized groups

Crowds out diverse thought

Puts undue stress on tokenized individuals

Forgets about Intersectionality

Reinforces existing power structures

Work may fail due to lack of support or bad HR practices

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MULTICULTURAL ESSENTIALS

TOKENISM

nikki lemer

Next Steps

How to mitigate tokenism in our work, practice, and organization

1. Assess the landscape
2. Commit to embodying the value of inclusion
3. Continue to take steps to create a better work environment
4. Check in



Measuring Inclusion

1. Fair treatment: Employees at my organization who help the organization achieve its strategic objectives are rewarded and recognized fairly.

2. Integrating differences: Employees at my organization respect and value each other's opinions.

3. Decision making: Members of my team fairly consider ideas and suggestions offered by other team members.

4. Psychological safety: I feel welcome to express my true feelings at work.

5. Trust: Communication we receive from the organization is honest and open.

6. Belonging: People in my organization care about me.

7. Diversity: Managers at my organization are as diverse as the broader workforce.

Call to Action

- Become a member of CT REN
- **Join us** for future CT REN webinars, training, and discussions.
- **Continue education** and **participation** in anti-racism conversations and discussions.
- Sign up for CT REN's distribution list for new research, training, and professional development opportunities.
- Begin taking **ACTION** steps!



Questions



For any additional training, technical assistance needs, membership information, etc. please email:

ct.renetwork@gmail.com

