

**6 I'S OF
INTERRUPTING
WHITE PRIVILEGE**

Anti-Racism: A “How To” Guide

This article is supported by the following resources: 6 I's of Interrupting White Privilege [Checklist and Worksheet](#). Both resources are designed to work together with this article to deepen your reflection and strengthen your action. This and other resources can be accessed by contacting the author, Dr. Gilo Kwesi Logan at: www.DrLoganSpeaks.com

Being antiracist requires we intentionally act to combat racism. Whether we are [White](#) or [BIPOC](#) (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color), the responsibility to be antiracist lies with each one of us individually. Therefore, we each must play our part—no matter how big or small—when we encounter incidents and situations involving racism. However, the mere thought of trying to combat the albatross of racial oppression by ourselves can trigger many things within us including confusion, doubt, anxiety, and fear, all of which can contribute to inaction and overreaction.

Making it Manageable

To make it more manageable, we can begin by breaking racism down into one of its many manifestations, White privilege, and then ask ourselves, “what am I supposed to do in any given situation?” Whether you are a person who is White or BIPOC, there are specific factors to consider when confronting White privilege. First, we must have a working definition of [White Privilege](#)—which is an unacknowledged system of advantage, favoritism, benefit, license, or exemption for no reason attributed to merit or ability, but to membership in the White race.

A Lens for Self-Examination

What I suggest is an analytic framework, a lens, through which we can examine the question of “what am I supposed to do”

when confronted with racism involving White privilege? More important than me telling you what you should and should not do and how you should and should not do it—given the multitude of situations in which racial privilege occurs and the various intersecting identities we as participants or observers hold in these situations—clients of mine have found it more beneficial to be provided a lens through which they can examine and determine for themselves the best approach for each individual to take to interrupt White privilege in any given situation. This tool will help ground you in a balance between what is true, right, and best for you and the situation.

When acting against White privilege on an individual level, there are six factors we all should consider—regardless of our race. Whether we are contemplating how we should respond to a current situation or reflecting on past experiences we have had (as perpetrator, observer, or target), or preparing for future scenarios, processing through these six factors will help you sort through cognitive dissonance and self-doubt and discover a deeper sense of clarity and conviction in your chosen actions.

The 6 I's of Interrupting White Privilege

Once you've identified that White privilege is occurring in a given scenario, turn to these steps to help you make sense of them. I call these the six I's of interrupting White privilege. First, you must know your **identity**, then check your **integrity**, clear your **intentions**, decide to **intervene**, be sensitive of your **impact**, and **introspect** so that you continue to learn, grow, and become stronger in being antiracist. Some

of these factors may challenge you. Others may make you uncomfortable. Processing through all these factors will help you align your actions in ways that are consistent with and representative of the best of who you are and what you believe in.

Whether you are a person who is White or BIPOC, here is what you should consider in most any situation:



The 6 I's of Interrupting White Privilege

01

Identity

What are your intersecting identities and what role do they play in the situation?

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02

Integrity

Are you clear on what is right vs. wrong in this situation?

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03

Intention

What do you aim to accomplish and why?

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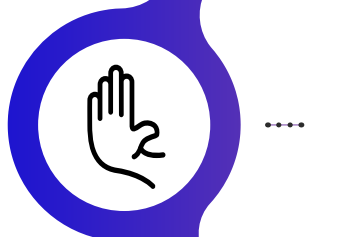


04

Intervention

What actions can and will you take?

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05

Impact

What is the impact of your action on others and yourself?

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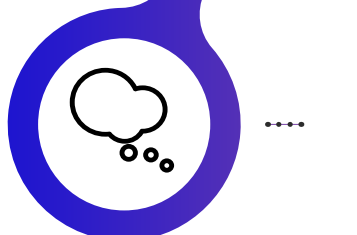


06

Introspection

What meaning do you make of your experience?

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Interrupting White Privilege: In Practice

To illustrate this lens in use, here is a composite scenario involving White privilege based on clients with whom I have worked: *A board member on a predominantly White board wants to challenge White Privilege on the board, challenge the board to diversify, and lift the voices of board members who are BIPOC*

1. Identity

What are your intersecting identities and what role do they play in the situation?

If you are a White board member, you should take into consideration your identity, noting that you are part of the racial majority on the board and that you unknowingly may be part of perpetuating White dominance in that space. Consider how your and others' lived experience with White privilege has impacted perceptions and judgments of the board's racial makeup. How long has the board been predominantly White and how long were you oblivious to this? Have you spoken out about it? If not, why not? Is it accepted as normal or not seen as problematic? To not notice this, accept it as normal, or to not feel to do anything about it is a part of White privilege

What you say to other board members who are White is likely to be heard differently (i.e., less defensively) than if said by a board member who is BIPOC. Intersecting identities are also a consideration; if you are an older White male, your voice will be heard differently than if you are a younger White female. Also, think about what you were taught people of your identity should

do in situations like this. Were you taught to assume or defer to authority or people who are BIPOC, or wait for someone else to say or do something? Or that the lack of diversity on the board is because of fewer BIPOC in your field, or because it is the result of the issues of people who are BIPOC and hence, it is for them to address? Were you taught not to stir things up? Think about what outcomes these might render.

Although racism impacts people who are BIPOC, racism is the problem of White people, and it is for White people to address. First, you must identify White privilege not as something out there in the world but as something within your own experience and your own life and understand your relationship to it and responsibility to use your White privilege to help interrupt it.

If you are a board member who is BIPOC, you should take into consideration not just your race but your racial identity. Have you been socialized to believe subconsciously it is normal, right, or even preferred to have a predominantly White board? That it is the status quo and not to be interrupted? Do you accept this, and if so, why? Is your focus to be accepted, or to confront the disproportionate balance in power? Might you have been taught to not offend your White colleagues and not to make them feel uncomfortable, accommodating their obliviousness or inaction?

Or do you feel like you do not fit in and are in a place of resisting or rebelling—even if subtly—in your role as a board member to where it shows itself in different, subtle, and maybe even unintended and detrimental ways? Has your disassociation moved you to self-isolation or segregation from the larger group?

For everyone: Although racism is a problem of White people, racist ideas and behaviors can be internalized by people who are BIPOC in ways to where they are complicit in the problem —by allowing it to exist unchallenged. Surely, you must pick and choose your battles and, at the same time, work to be true to the reality of racism and find ways to be your authentic self in interrupting it. What role does your identity, particularly your racial identity, play in the situation?

Now that you are clearer on what to consider in terms of what role your identity plays in the situation, you need to be clear on why you should act. This speaks to your integrity.

2. Integrity

Are you clear on what is right versus what is wrong for you to do in the situation?

If you are a White board member, you must become clear on what you believe is right versus wrong action to take in calling out and addressing the disproportionate racial composition or imbalance of power on the board. You need to be very intentional towards figuring out—given your White identity and the privilege it affords—the right course of action to take and determine what your purpose is for acting. Discovering this purpose will later anchor your decision making and help sustain you when facing resistance..

What do you believe in or value that is being infringed upon by the reality of the board being majority White? Do you value proportionate representation? Or the quality that diverse experiences and perspectives bring? Creative problem solving? Fairness? Is it important to you that the board represent the community it serves? To be able to claim these values yet not be compelled to act on them epitomizes White privilege.

The simple question is, is it right, is it helpful or harmful, is it fair, for the board to be predominantly White? If it is not right, then as a White person it is your responsibility—not someone who is BIPOC—to challenge the fact that the board is predominantly White and do something about it. Use your position as an “insider” to speak truth to power. Why? Not to be a [savior](#), but because it is necessary and it is right. It is OK to leverage your privilege for what is right. In the world of antiracism, it is expected.

If you are a board member who is BIPOC, you too must invest in figuring out—given your minority status on the board—what is within your capacity for you to say or do. Because of the history of racism in the US, many BIPOC feel a sense of responsibility to “fight the good fight” and play your part in “the struggle.” If this is your case—fine. However, given the power differentials that may exist between board members who are White and those who are BIPOC, it is even more critical that you be smart (and not be blamed) when picking and choosing your battles.

For everyone: It is human nature to be more willing to stand for what we believe is right, versus taking a stand because we simply want to do it or because someone else expects or asks us to.

This sense of conviction affords us strength to take greater risks, to step outside our comfort zone, to stand strong in the face of opposition, to hold true even when we are among the minority, and even to sacrifice certain privileges we have like (in the cases of a White person) White privilege or (in the case of a person who is BIPOC) the privilege to serve on a board. Conviction lessens cognitive dissonance. However, sometimes you might not be totally convicted and must accept incompleteness. It is not about perfection, but progress. Within yourself you still must honestly answer the simple question—what is the right thing to do

Now that you understand your identity and are clear why you should act based on your identity, next you need to explore what you hope to accomplish by acting. This speaks to your intentions.

3. Intention

Are you clear on what you aim to accomplish and why you aim to accomplish it?

If you are a White board member, be clear on what you want to accomplish by acting. Do you intend to start a board discussion, reevaluate board member criteria or the recruitment process, develop a strategy or commitment to an equity statement, suggest an equity subcommittee, recruit board members to diversify the board, or address racial bias and racial insensitivity among board leadership? Pick what is within your capacity, what is appropriate for the situation, and what aligns with your integrity and conviction—you cannot unravel over 400 years of racial oppression in one action.

Anticipate possible outcomes so that you are more prepared to face them. What compels you to act, and towards what end?

Ask yourself if you are acting toward a positive goal or a retributive goal—whether you are trying in good faith to make the board more equitable or whether you are acting in a way that lifts BIPOC voices up while shaming or discrediting others. Your responsibility is not to try and [save board members who are BIPOC](#). Rather, use your privilege for the benefit of your board and those you serve, and to help create an inclusive space for BIPOCs. Do not speak for them but you can speak with them... and listen to them (and believe them).

If you are a board member who is BIPOC, be clear on your reason for acting. Are you doing so by default because of the inaction of your White colleagues? Because they assume you will? If this is the case, ask yourself if there is really any conviction in that. Likewise, ask if you are acting toward a positive goal or a retributive goal.

For everyone: The key is to intend action, not perfection (which contributes to inaction). Be clear on your purpose and – although you may be working against a negative situation – keep your intentions clear of negativity. What do you want to accomplish and why you want you accomplish it? However, conviction does not always breed clarity – accept unclarity and accept your own sense of right and wrong.

Knowing who you are in the situation, why you are compelled to act, and what you are wanting to accomplish, it is time to decide to act and to do so unapologetically.

4. Intervention

What actions can and will you take?

If you are a White board member, it is of critical importance that—in your good intention—you do not speak for your BIPOC colleagues.

Do not assume what their experience is or what they think about the board being predominantly White, how they feel about it, what they see as the core issues, what they believe needs to be done about it, or what role—if any—they may want to play or not play in addressing the situation. Most BIPOC professionals who serve on boards are used to being the only racial minority, or one of a few on the board (and unfortunately too many have grown to accept this as being normal).

It is important to first develop relationships with your BIPOC colleagues (which should have been done prior to an incident), build trust, understand the racial or ethnic dynamics on the board, ask their permission before intervening on their behalf, and accept and not take it personally if or when they do not trust you because you are White, do not want you intervening on their behalf, or do not want to get involved. Remember, it is not their fault the board is predominantly White and hence, it is not their responsibility to fix it. This way of thinking speaks to a White privilege mentality.

Likewise, you cannot speak for all your White colleagues, but you can speak from your own experience.

If you are a board member who is BIPOC, make sure you are not being made to feel that it is solely your responsibility to diversify the board and amplify BIPOC voices. Do not play into a situation where (unless you are in this role) it is perceived that you are the spokesperson for all people who are BIPOC. Do not fall victim to [tokenism](#).

Although it may not be your responsibility to teach White people, it is your responsibility to communicate with them and engage in difficult conversations about race with them. Speak from your

experience. And remember that although you may be working against a negative situation—keep your intentions clear of negativity. Stay positive, constructive, and do not lose yourself in the situation. You do not need to always speak in a singular voice. Identify and leverage relationships with White allies and accomplices as well as with your BIPOC colleagues of other races.

For everyone: It is important you understand the racial dynamics at play beyond (if this applies to your board) the Black/White binary—beyond just Black and White people, as race and racism is not only between Black and White people. Often, we know the right thing to do but find it is a question of our ability and willingness to step outside our comfort zone to do the right thing. Ask yourself what actions you can take and among those options, decide on which action you will take, then—based on your conviction and your intention—prepare to do it.

First, determine your sphere of influence and capacity to act. This may be based on several factors including your race, ethnicity, age, gender, social class, position on the board, seniority, relationships, etc. Be realistic about your ability to act and your power in the situation, and carefully consider limitations and opportunities in determining the best possible action moving forward. You must strike a balance between what is the right thing that should be done for you and for the situation.

Remember, it is about action, not perfection—accept imperfection. Conviction strengthens action. But—and we'll get into this in the next section—always remember that what we intend in our actions can differ from the impact of our actions.

5. Impact

What is the impact of your action on others and on yourself?

If you are a White board member, it is important to understand there can be a difference between what you intended to do and the impact your actions have on others and on the situation. Many White people feel their intentions supersede any potential negative impact of their actions, that they should be given a pass due to having good intentions. However, BIPOC are forced to live with the negative impact of White people's actions, despite their best intentions

Although you have some capacity to determine the impact of your actions on yourself, you do not have the power to determine the outcomes of your actions on others. You need to hear from those in charge, your colleagues, and most importantly those impacted by your intervention. In this situation, you especially need to take into consideration the impacts on BIPOC board members.

In asking for the opinions of others did you unknowingly approach a colleague who is BIPOC in a way that makes them feel you want them to be the spokesperson for their race? In trying to learn more about the situation did you put the responsibility of your learning on people who are BIPOC? In your efforts to diversify the board did you inadvertently put the problem in the hands of people who are BIPOC to fix? Did you want to facilitate constructive discussion about how to recruit more people who are BIPOC to the board but start an argument? In your desire to be more inclusive did your White privilege reveal the assumption that people who happen to be BIPOC are “not a good fit” for the board or that it is the

responsibility of people who are BIPOC to find interest in your board versus your board members reaching out to diverse communities, establish relationships with members from those communities, and make changes to be more inclusive on the terms of people who are BIPOC and not solely on assumed white norms? Might the requirements for membership on your board—requirements set by a predominantly White board (with White bias, prejudice, norms, etc.)—create obstacles for diversifying membership?

If you are a person who is BIPOC member, it is important that you too understand there often is a difference between intentions and actions. In the situation, if the outcome you wanted is not the outcome that happened, be mindful that—even though it is not your responsibility to get White people to understand the impact of their actions—it often will help those who are well intentioned to introspect on their actions, their understanding of race and racism, and what they might need to consider in their journey of becoming better people and hence, a better colleague in the situation.

In order to maintain a working relationship while challenging your colleagues, you can consider “sandwiching” your feedback, meaning to first acknowledge their good intentions then respectfully call out the negative impact of their actions, and end by acknowledging that the negative impact their actions may have had may not have been what they intended but it is the reality.

Although how you feel about the situation may be totally valid, it is important to be sensitive to how you express those feelings and the fact that doing so negatively may cause more damage to the situation (and to the person) than good including what it

may leave behind for other BIPOC who come after you.

For everyone: Know that for most people in similar situations, our natural focus is on our intentions—as that is what is within us—more than our impact; this is the same across racial groups.

This is where your observation skills and listening come into play. You need to assess positive and negative impacts, the difference between intention and reality, if matters are better or worse than before, and if progress in any manner has been made. Ask yourself: were any of your thoughts, words, or actions inconsistent with what you intended? Were they incongruent with whom you see yourself to be and what you believe is right? If so, what will you do about it?

Looking back on the process so far, you have reflected on your identity and the position it puts you in this situation. You have reflected on why (based on who you are and what is important to you) you have taken action, and you have reflected on the impacts of your action. Now it is time to introspect.

6. Introspection

What meaning do you make of your experience?

If you are a White board member, you must identify White privilege not as something out there in the world but as something within your own experience and understand your relationship to it and your responsibility to use your White privilege to help interrupt White privilege. You also need to be mindful of and sensitive to [White fragility](#) (a term coined by author & educator Robin DiAngelo) and [White rage](#) and ways they may play out for you that are detrimental to the board, to others, and to

yourself when people challenge your White privilege, try having open and honest discussions about race and racism with you, or recommend ways for the board to operate that challenge the status quo.

If you are a person who is BIPOC, you too must identify White privilege not only as something that White people have but as something within your own experience that impacts you. Introspect on your relationship to it and how you have or have not responded to it in the past, in the current situation, and how you may in the future. You also need to be mindful of the insecurity and [rage](#) those experiences with White privilege in the past can muster up within you today and tomorrow in ways that may be detrimental to the board, to others, and yourself. Consider ways this may play out when serving on a board with White dominance, interacting with White board members who display White fragility, or when White people try having—with good intent—open, honest, genuine discussion about race and racism with you.

As well, examine ways racism may be internalized in your thoughts, words, and actions. Racism is not only something in the world and in organizations and systems. It is also within us and needs to be excavated. Just as White people can internalize a racial identity of racial superiority, those who are BIPOC can internalize a racial identity of racial inferiority. Often these are identities we unknowingly and unwillingly hold and hence, they have unintended consequences for us all.

For everyone: It is important to understand the difference between reflection and introspection. In reflection you are shedding light on serving on a predominantly White board, the impact it may have on others, may be saying or

not saying and doing or not doing to address the problem.

In introspection, you are shedding light on yourself. Introspect on the meaning of the experience—not only the impact it had on others but what impact it had on you and what meaning you make from your experience. What worked and what did not work? What did you learn? What remains for you to learn? What biases, assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices (yours and others') might have been at play? Think back on the role of your identity, integrity, intentions, intervention, and the impact you had on the situation.

What are you doing that you should stop doing, do less of, or change? What are you not doing that you need to do? How has your racial identity and the lived experiences it has given you played out in the situation? What areas of your identity need to be developed? Have your actions—or lack thereof—revealed to you insecurity you may have about your desire or ability to do the right thing? Additionally, introspect on any number of the questions that have been posed in the previous five elements of this framework.

After engaging in this six-part process, the next step is to circle forward through the process again beginning with step 1—exploring your identity, this time with a renewed and deeper sense of what is required of us all to confront White privilege when we are inevitably faced with it again.

The Process May Be Linear or Cyclical

It is important to know that working through these six factors is not always a linear process and is often cyclical. For example, when considering what action to take (#4 Intervention) you may need to circle back to questions about your identity

(#1 Identity). Or when trying to make meaning of your experience (#6 Introspection) you may need circle back on questions about your integrity (#2 Integrity). Or based on the outcome (#5 Impact) you may need to circle back on the actions you decided to take and why you took them (#3 Intention).

Conclusion

Being anti-racist requires we take the initiative to combat racism when and where we feel convicted as advocates for anti-racism. In this sense, we must be opportunistic, but we must be prepared. This six-part framework can help you examine and determine for yourself the best approach for you to act to interrupt White privilege in any given situation.

Whether you are contemplating how you should respond to a current situation involving White privilege or reflecting on past experiences you have had (as perpetrator, observer, or target), or preparing for future scenarios, processing through these six factors will help you sort through cognitive dissonance and self-doubt and discover a deeper sense of clarity and conviction in your chosen actions.

Genuine and sustained engagement with this process will help strengthen you to have relationships with people of different races that are strong enough to where we can disagree with each other, be in conflict, and even risk hurting each other, and yet remain in relationship with one another through disagreements, difficult conversations, and potential hurt. But we must be prepared.