

Accountability for Action

Introduction to Recommended Blog Posts

Unlearning whiteness, and white supremacy, is always a work in progress. For white people, especially, it is a lifelong process of unlearning and relearning because whiteness is built into every nook and cranny of our societal systems and personal psyches. Friends, colleagues and collaborators have given and continue to give me unique, significant and not-always-comfortable access into this work over the course of my career.

For five years, I co-chaired the accountability and action initiative of the White Privilege Conference (WPC) for conference founder Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr. You can read about the theoretical model we developed and tested for WPC in Volume 8, No. 1 (2018) of the *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege Journal*. www.wpcjournal.com

The first of the following blog posts, “From Inclusion to Accountability”, was an effort to synthesize accountability concepts that have always been part and parcel of my organizational consulting work with critical principles that must be emphasized in white anti-racist organizing and in the work of dismantling privilege and oppression. The late Lila Cabbil’s thinking shaped the theoretical framework developed for WPC and underlies many of the latter concepts. This work progresses now at WPC under the leadership of Dr. Vanessa Roberts.

The second blog post, “Critical Conversations For White People,” describes Robin DiAngelo’s concept of white fragility and offers ways to transform fragility into white accountability.

The third, written by Lori Lakin Hutcherson, Editor-in-Chief for *Good Black News*, was published first in *GBN* under the title “What I Said When My White Friend Asked for My Black Opinion on White Privilege.” It may best be read once as an entire piece, then perhaps used in segments as a daily reflection for white people seeking to better understand.

The final article, speaks to an artistic representation of what it means to truly support and elevate voices of lived experience.

These posts are about ideas. Hopefully, they prompt thinking and discussion that leads to some different ways of understanding and doing things in companies and communities. They are, more fundamentally, about relationships. They describe some outcomes of and options for shared leadership, for both listening to and working with and for people whose experience has been most affected by systems of privilege and oppression.

Two years ago, I attended a Black Lives Matter demonstration in Colorado Springs. It was organized by people I did not know. This is unusual in our ultra-conservative white town. These young people drew a crowd of well over 200, in which I was one of only three or four white people. It was not for me to speak, be noticed, direct or control. I was there to listen. To witness. And to be in relationship.

From those new relationships, then, I learned other ways to support. In personally expressing appreciation for the words of the speakers and the work of the organizers, I learned more about who they are, how to connect, what they need and how I can best support. I've promoted their work to others, elevated their voices where I could and, in one case, shared a perspective that added a dimension to someone's experience of their own leadership. These things, in turn, strengthened my own skills while humbling and filling my heart.

So it is that I thank all of my colleagues and teachers along the way: for their perspectives, insights and honesty; for their willingness to share experience and call out my assumptions and sometimes, for their willingness to tangle with me until I untangled the elements of my own unconscious bias. That work is difficult, because who likes to have their own blind spots exposed? But it is exhausting beyond measure to those whose own lives, and the lives of those they love, are constantly threatened by the active presence of white supremacy in this country.

The only real thanks can be continued work for equity and justice through self and social transformation, and through meaningful and sustained action.

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