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Robin DiAngelo

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INTRODUCTION

Ralina Joseph

Associate Professor and founding and acting director of the Center for Communication, Difference, and Equity

Good evening, everyone. Before I get started, Pam Emerson, we have your wallet and ID so please come up to the podium afterwards, putting that right here. Thank you so much for joining us this evening on this wet and rainy evening to come and learn about white fragility, to become uncomfortable and to learn and grow together. My name is Ralina Joseph, I am an associate professor in the Communication Department and I direct the Center for Communication, Difference and Equity. And before we start tonight's presentation, I'd like to remind you to please turn off your cell phones. Also, to let you know, there will be no photography or audio recording of tonight's lecture. However, if you would like to live tweet it, which a number of my students are, please do, you can hashtag #UWCCD, since we are having a wonderful extended conversation about all of these lectures.

So I want to tell you a little bit about our speaker tonight. Dr. Robin DiAngelo, she is the third speaker of our 11-part year long discussion on privilege. Robin will talk with a topic that clearly resonates with a lot of people in this room because the talk sold out in six hours, which is amazing. I love telling my friends in other cities about this because the problem that they always have is not getting enough people to events. I said, no, no, no, we have the opposite problem. People want to come and talk about things like white fragility.

Dr. DiAngelo, who received her Ph.D. here at the University of Washington under Dr. James Banks in multicultural education, is, as you will soon see, a dynamic and provocative speaker who addresses the highly charged topic of what it means to be white in a society that proclaims race to be meaningless, and yet we know is deeply divided and impacted by race. Speaking as a white person, DiAngelo clearly and compellingly takes her audience through an analysis of white socialization, what she calls white illiteracy. She describes how race shapes the lives of white people, explains what makes racism so hard for whites to see, identifies common white racial patterns and speaks back to popular white narratives that work to deny racism through

forces like, for example, post racialism. With remarkable skill she helps participants to see the quote, water that obscures how racism works in our daily lives. The miseducation about what racism actually is, ideologies such as individualism and colorblindness, defensiveness and the tendency to protect rather than to expand on our worldviews.

DiAngelo's scholarship and research on whiteness studies has been concerned with the challenges of an increasingly white teaching force and increasingly diverse student population. Do we have any K-12 educators in the room here? All right, excellent. In addition to her academic work, DiAngelo has been a workplace diversity and racial justice consultant and trainer for over 20 years. In this capacity, she was appointed to codesign, develop, and deliver the race and social justice initiative for the city of Seattle. DiAngelo has numerous publications and just released her second book, *What Does it Mean to be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*. Her previously coauthored book is entitled, *Is Everyone Really Equal? An Introduction to Social Justice Education*, and that book received the Critics Choice Award by the American Educational Studies Association. Her work on white fragility has also appeared in AlterNet, on Salon, on NPR in ColorLines, in Huffington Post and The Good Men Project, among other places. So please join me in welcoming Dr. Robin DiAngelo.

FEATURED SPEAKER

Robin DiAngelo

Critical Racial and Social Justice Educator

I can't tell you how exciting this is, thank you so much, as a student, you know, as a former student of the UW, it's pretty incredible to be up here in this position. So I want to start out by drawing your attention to the fact that I'm white. And by, by the fact that I'm white, I was raised not to understand what that meant. And it's not a benign or innocent lack of understanding. It's a willful or kind of refusal to know or to understand. I'm very clear today after about 20 years of struggle and practice and study and mistake-making that I'm

white, and that it means something and that it shapes my worldview, it shapes my frame of reference, and it shapes my experience and I move through the world from that position. And it's not just a universal human position, or experience, it is most particularly a white experience in a society that is deeply separate and unequal by race.

So I, while I'm always coming from that position, I just want to be really clear and explicit that that's what I'm speaking to. And from tonight, and when I'm talking about us, and we, I'm talking to the majority of most audiences I'm in front of which are other white people. And people of color have to understand my reality, pretty much from the very beginning in a way that I'm sorry to say I don't have to understand yours, I can be seen as qualified to lead a major institution and not have any understanding whatsoever of the experience or reality of people of color. That's part of what it means to be white in this society.

For, so for people of color, what can be maybe useful about a talk like this is that I'm going to name and admit to things that white people rarely ever name or admit to. And that can help a little bit with the crazy making, hopefully. All right, but I do want to acknowledge that although I have my own way of articulating this, and as an insider to whiteness, I have an understanding of it that people of color really can't have, they have an understanding of it that I will never have. And I want to acknowledge all the incredible, brilliant, patient mentors of color that have stood with me and not given up on me for many, many years, right.

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Okay, so white fragility is the inability to tolerate racial stress, right? Racial stress is triggered when our positions, perspectives or advantages are challenged, and white fragility functions to block that challenge and regain our racial equilibrium. So white people move through an environment which reflects and affirms and insulates us from that stress, and we haven't had to build our stamina. It's a very rare experience to be thrown off balance, racially. And that kind of fragility functions to stop, stop that threat if you will, and, and regain that equilibrium. So in order to kind of get us to, to the place where this is, this is kind of where we're at, we need to start by talking about socialization. Right? So by every measure across every institution in this country, there's racial disparity, and I don't spend time trying to prove that, I think the empirical evidence comes in every day. And I think on some level, we all know that right? Despite ideologies like meritocracy and individualism, I

think we all understand our society is deeply unequal by race across every institution and across every measure. It continues to beautifully reproduce racial inequity. At the same time, what is today's dominant racial narrative? Well, I'm a former professor of education. I used to teach in a large teacher education department or program in western Massachusetts. We put out hundreds of teachers every year. And the program was 98% white. So it was rare for me to ever have a student of color in any class. And we were 10 miles from a city that was 57% black and Latino. And on the first day of class, I would ask my students, write me an anonymous reflection on a couple of key questions related to your racial socialization. How racially diverse were your schools and neighborhoods growing up? What messages have you gotten across your life about race? And what are some of the ways in which your life has been shaped by your race? And what I'm going to show you is representative of the hundreds of these anonymous reflections that I have from our future teachers in their junior and senior years of university soon to be certified as highly educated and go forth and teach in those schools in Springfield.

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"My neighborhood growing up was not racially diverse at all, every family in my neighborhood was also Caucasian. Throughout my time in school, I have continually been taught that skin does not matter." Is that familiar to you? Right, that's today's dominant racial narrative. This is a post-civil rights narrative, not a pre-civil rights narrative. But this is the younger generation, right? The one that when my generation dies off, there'll be no more racism. I'm going to make a case that this is what we call new racism. It's certainly adapted, it's changed. It still functions to produce the same and equitable outcomes. Right. So the question that drives my work as, as was named in the introduction is basically how do we pull this off? How do my students sit in such explicit segregation and make claims like this, so in order to kind of get us to understanding white fragility, we have to understand how we come to be able to pull this off? Right? Why this is so familiar to so many. And I like to say, especially when I'm in this setting, which is University of Washington, that I was an A student, which meant I always sat in the front row. And I would have written about three pages on that question if I was in that class and got asked, but the essential message in that essay would have been this, right. I think it's worth noting that this is all this student can be bothered to write, on the topic. I would have written more but I still would have basically said that. So try to reach for, particularly if you're white, try to reach for where do I recognize that in myself, right. So I'm going to show you things

that are maybe a little more bald, or less sophisticated than some of us might express but hopefully you will still recognize it. Oh, and I should add, trust me, this student has an opinion on racism. Okay. I've never met a white person without an opinion on racism. And yet, this is often the, the foundation from which we, we, you know, with so much confidence, trot forth those opinions.

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So racism is a system, right, and it works on multiple levels across the society and it results in an unequal distribution of resources between white people overall and people of color overall, with white people as the beneficiaries of that distribution. That is not a mainstream definition, mainstream definition of racism is just racial prejudice. A social scientific understanding includes the weight of historic, historical and institutional power. And at the same time, what is, what is the dominant conceptualization of racism? Well certainly not that it's a system. Post civil rights, racism adapted to the challenges by becoming an either or proposition. To be a good moral person and to be complicit with racism became mutually exclusive. Right? And I think this is the root of virtually all white defensiveness on this topic. Have any of you noticed any white defensiveness on this topic? All right, just checking. So we know how to fill this in. Right? So our racist is, it's their bad right? They're bad people and they're ignorant and bigoted and prejudiced, mean spirited, old, Southern. They drive pickup trucks because we got to get a little classism in there and they live in Snohomish, okay or Fife. Okay, and our not racist as is good, right. Educated, progressive, open-minded, well-intended, young, northern, we shop at PCC, not Whole Foods because that's a corporation. And we drive Priuses and we're moving to Portland really soon. Okay.

So this, this is just so incredibly effective at making it virtually impossible to talk to white people about racism as a system, as the water we're all swimming in, as an inevitable and unavoidable internalized dynamic for us, right? So what we need to do is just get rid of this, right? It is not about good and bad people, right? It's not about conscious intention. So this kind of either, or, good, bad, very simple idea about it, only operating on an individual basis manifests in a range of narratives. Okay, and I have this really weird job for a living. I walk into rooms every day that are primarily white and I start talking, not only talking about racism, but pushing white people to connect to it. And in doing this, I hear the same narratives over and over. And as I listened, this image formed in my mind, right, of like a pier or a dock. And what it signifies for me is how

superficial or surface these narratives are, right? It's, it's when you look at that doc, it looks like it's just floating on the water. Right? So let's see if we don't recognize any of these dominant post-civil right narratives:

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I was taught to treat everyone the same. Anybody ever hear that one? I think that's probably the number one. So you ready? No, you weren't. Okay. Not one single person in this room was taught to treat everyone the same. How can I say that when I don't know you because you actually can't do that, it's not humanly possible. Human beings are not objective, can not be objective. We can only understand the world through the cultural filter we've been socialized to interpret experience through. So you can be told, I could lecture you for years. But you can't actually learn it in the sense of being able to do it any more than you can learn not to judge. So when somebody, when a white person says this to me in a conversation about racism, I know that they think they're telling me what? That they're not racist, right? But what they're actually telling me is that they don't understand socialization. They don't have a basic understanding of culture, and they're not particularly self aware. And I actually, and I got a shout out to the people of color in the room: Are you convinced when we say these things? All right. White folks, listen up. Okay. I see people as individuals, I don't care if you're pink, purple, polka dotted. It's in the past. Everyone struggles. You know, if you work hard, my parents weren't racist, that's why I'm not racist. My parents were racist, that's why I'm not racist. It doesn't matter what comes first, what comes second must be, I'm not racist, right? So and so just happened to be black, but it has nothing to do with the tension the entire office feels around her. Okay? This is, this is one that I would really ask you to remove from your vocabulary in conversations about race or racism, anything that begins with "just happened to be" or "regardless of." Basically, what you're doing in that move is positioning some kind of universal experience or reality and you, and you can't do that, there isn't a universal experience or reality. I might not know what race has to do with that conflict, but I have to be willing to grapple with, with its influence on the way I'm perceiving and interacting across race.

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Okay, so these are colorblind, right? These are all colorblind. And I'm going to, I'm going to assume most people in the room understand that while it seemed like a good strategy, it's actually functioned to just deny that anything's going on, right,

to deny racism, to deny inequality, and to pretend as if these things don't matter and we don't notice them. Right? So if we're a little more sophisticated, we don't probably say this. What do we say? What do these PCC shopping and cloth-bag bringing, Prius-driving and liberals say? All right, let's see. I actually love making fun of white progressives because I am one and I really did believe when I started this work that my qualifications were that I was a vegetarian. And whoa, was I in for a huge learning. I actually think, I actually think white progressives are the hardest because the degree to which we think we're good to go because we went on a trip to Costa Rica for a week, we're going to put all our energy into trying to convince you of that too. And, and none of our energy and what we need to be doing for the rest of our lives in this water, is, is deep reflection, struggle and practice, right? So we say things like this: Oh I work in a very diverse environment. Yeah, I have people of color in my family. Oh, I'm not racist, I used to live in New York. I'm like, you're kidding. You used to walk by people of color and you didn't lose your shit? You're amazing. Okay. All right. I actually have heard I used to live in New York as, as evidence okay. Used interchangeably with I used to live in Hawaii because there's no racism in Hawaii. And I used to be in the military. Apparently there's no racism in the military.

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Okay, so how many of you have heard some version of these in a conversation with a white person on racism? Okay, look at that, just like basically everybody because these are the dominant narratives. So let's do a little discourse analysis, right? Let's do what we so rarely do, which is interrogate this and problematized it a little bit. So a white person who invokes one of these narratives is basically giving you their evidence, right? This, this is my evidence and in my mind, what is this my evidence of? What am I trying to make sure you understand? I'm not racist. Okay. That's my evidence. So if that's my evidence, what's my definition of racism? And this is actually a really important thing to be able to do, both with other people, but with yourself too, really think deeply about what you're saying and what you're drawing from, because being able to do this has really helped me figure out, okay, so then now what do I need to speak to? How would I help move this person forward? Right, so what I think the definition that this is rested on is a racist is a person who cannot tolerate the sight of people of color, has conscious dislike, and apparently couldn't walk by them in New York without having, I don't know, moving out of New York. Right, couldn't work three cubicles down from a person of color. Right, just couldn't couldn't be near them. Am I

wrong? Can you see any other meaning that this could have if that's your evidence?

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Okay. So, so on one level, I assure you that even a conscious avowed racist and they're out there, right, white nationalists, you know, someone who absolutely does openly avow white supremacy, trust me, they could live in New York. And they could work near people of color and they could actually have people of color in their family. So just on that basis alone, it's not good evidence. But it also is just a really limited understanding of what racism is, right? It's just reduced to conscious dislike, intentional conscious dislike. And since I'm not aware of any of that, I'm free of it and, and couldn't possibly be complicit with it. So this person doesn't understand institutional racism. This person doesn't understand the power of implicit bias, which actually drives much more of our behavior than anything in our conscious mind. Right.

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Let me, I want to talk about people of color in my family for just a moment. And while I think one of the really most powerful interruptions to the ways that we get socialized as white people is to build authentic, sustained cross-racial relationships, that is not going to free the relationship of racism, right? There will still be racial dynamics you struggle with in your relationship. Because we were raised different. We have different experiences, we receive different messages. People are responding to us differently when we're together versus when we're apart, you will grapple with it in the relationship. So let me ask the folks of color in the room. Do we have relationships with white people that have some racism still in the relationship? Okay. Okay. All right. So we think it'd be able to do this with gender. Right? So how many and I'm going to use cisgender terms, however you identify around these gender terms. How many of the women in the room have a primary partnership with someone identified as male? Okay, so the moment he fell in love with you, his sexism vanished, correct? It didn't? How could, how could he possibly have any sexism, he loves you? Okay? And if you're not sure about your current partner, just think about your ex. All right, do you get my point? You will struggle. Of course you love each other. Fond regard does not remove our deep socialization and we would never say, "Oh, yeah, my marriage or my partnership is free of all gender dynamics," right? So, but when it comes to race, we consistently do this, position it as inoperative if there's fond regard, okay.

Children are so much more open. This is a very cherished one, too, I'm sure children are born racially open, but the research shows that by age three to four, all children who grow up in this society know the racial order. I'm going to say this a little more bluntly, all children who grew up in this society by age three to four understand that it's better to be white. That is the message coming at all of us 24/7. And when we project this romanticized, racial innocence onto children, we don't prepare them to resist that message.

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I already know all this. Okay? What I will just say about that is, again, you may think you're telling someone that you're good to go but, but the arrogance in this is really, really problematic. I will spend the rest of my life challenging my socialization and I will never be free of it. So that's a very problematic position. We don't like how white our neighborhood is, but we had to move here for the schools. So these are the more progressive white narratives, right? And all of these, both the colorblind on the previous side and these rest on a foundation and in order to understand how, how they function to keep racism going, we've got to understand what is that foundation and it's a different foundation than we had pre-civil rights. So that's what I want to map out. And I want to have you just think to yourselves for just a moment, right, think about your neighborhoods. How racially diverse was your neighborhood growing up? And what messages do we get about race from our neighborhoods? And if you are like most white people, those of you who are white in this country, your answer is most likely, I grew up in a primarily white neighborhood. And I like to put that a little more directly. You probably grew up, you're most likely, if you're white, you most likely grew up in racial segregation.

Most white people do grow up in racial segregation, segregation that we choose, that is the result of decades of policies and procedures, and that we call good. Just think about the power of that message. Good, safe, right? The message of it's normal to live apart. It's natural to live apart. It's maybe, on some level, even right to live apart. But certainly no one's conveyed to us that there's a problem. Right? We get very, very powerful messages from living in segregation. Segregation is not neutral. It is not inactive. It's, it's living. It's socialized in us in every moment. But again, I was taught to see race as only happening if people of color were in the picture. If they're not in the picture, there's no race happening. And we have to start to understand the power of segregation. And then think about the first time we had a teacher of the same race or races if

you're multiracial as you and how often that happened and the first time we had a teacher of a different race as you and how often that happened, and why that might be important. And if you're like most people who grew up in this country, your answer is, if you're white from the time you began, and you could get through graduate school, rarely, if ever, not being racially affirmed at the front of that room. If you're a person of color, your answer is probably rarely, if ever, did I see myself reflected in the front of that room. Our teachers are our role models. They're the holders of knowledge and authority. They shape our worldviews. They decide who's smart, who's well-behaved, who's deserving, who belongs where. The teaching force is getting more, not less white in this country. We are at 83 to 93% white nationwide and our schools are almost back to pre Brown versus segregation, Brown versus —

Audience: Brown versus Board of Education.

Robin DiAngelo: There you go! Levels of segregation. And that white teaching force is not any more or less racist than any other group of white people who grow up in this water. But they're in a very powerful position. They answer these questions very similarly. They grew up in segregation. They've all only ever had white teachers. So where do we get our understanding of people of color? From the most problematic sources, right, media, jokes, omission, television, warnings, but now we're in a position to determine, again, who goes where, and we, we have the school to prison pipeline, and we have empirical evidence that those determinations are made with inequity. Racial inequity.

Seattle Public Schools are currently under federal investigation for racial disparity in their outcomes. Right? So a friend of mine puts it like this, pretty much all of us have been taught by white people who've been taught by white people who've been taught by white people who've been taught by white people who've been taught by white people, using textbooks written for, by, and about white people. You getting the weight of that white worldview, right? It's not about whether I'm friendly. Right? It's deeply internalized. And I have an image that I, that I like to show that I think it's just one image, but it just so nicely captures this dynamic. And keep in mind that that white teaching force is only one thread in one institution.

We didn't talk about testing, tracking, funding, curriculum, location, etc. So you just, to get a sense of what it means to say that racism is institutionalized. So this is the, this year's college Jeopardy champion playoffs. Those are our best and our

brightest, those are college students. And that is the board at the end of the Grand Champion round. So we can see there was one category, not one of them touched. Clearly the hardest, nobody wanted to lose and nobody was going to risk it. Yeah, and I don't feel I can do justice to actually the depth of what this means. I really don't believe that we can understand racism or how we came to be in this moment if we cannot trace the past into the present. If we don't know our history, and this is my history. This is the history of our groups and struggle. You know what it's going to be under that category right? Civil war and civil rights because that's their history. Right? And that happened in a vacuum, I guess. No, that's our history. And it's the history of hundreds and hundreds of years of this country. And yet, I can guarantee you those college students have opinions on racism, I just gotta say it.

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Alright, so Joe Feagin is a sociologist who talks about the white racial frame and it's just kind of the theoretical articulation of those pillars, right. So I, the visual image of the pillars that are propping up the dock. So he talks about is the deeply internalized framework through which whites make racial meaning. And it includes images, interpretations, perceptions, etc., that position whites as superior and that are passed down and reinforced throughout society. And so in, in everything I've done so far, I've tried to help us see a little bit of that frame, right, because when you're, when it's your frame, it's really hard to see, it's like a fish in water that's swimming with the current. So I'm going to start showing you some images that I just think capture the white racial frame. This is on a science website right now. Is this the scientifically perfect face? Wow. Right. And remember that that part of the definition of the white racial frame is and it keeps it in circulation right and passed down through, across time and throughout society.

This is, invokes very old racist science, right, that this is some kind of natural thing, right. This is an ad I saw on a Delta flight last year in the in-flight magazine and the first thing that struck me was wow, look at the racial order in that ad. It's so clear. You have your white woman in the front with red hair wearing green. You have your Asian woman in the middle literally wearing yellow and your black woman in the back wearing Brown. But also notice this is an ad for the purse, look at their hands. What do you notice? The black woman's hands are empty but ads don't depend on you looking at them for more than a couple seconds. But always these messages of relationship, of status, of hierarchy. I think that picture speaks for itself.

The Blind Side was highly acclaimed, Academy Award winning film. I was reading CNN and you know those little sidebars pop up and this one said most beautiful women from around the world and representing South Africa, which is 92% black and I should say not a single Asian woman in this spread. Asian women are the majority of all women on the planet. Right? And I haven't used the word white supremacy yet, but I'm going to, right now, for me, this is such a powerful illustration of white supremacy, white as superior, white as the norm for humanity, as the ideal person. That is the water that we swim in. And I think it's very descriptive.

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So how does race shape our lives? I'm going to use the example of my own life. And I'm confident that most white people in the room can relate to what I'm going to say and no people of color can also say when I'm going to say so first of all, I was born into a society in which I belong. In virtually any situation, the normal, neutral or valuable, I belong, and I moved through the world with a deeply internalized sense of it and expectation of it that I don't think about, but that is in my, my bones and my muscles and my posture and my worldview, what I care about, what I don't care about, right? I belong in that administration meeting. I belong at that church service, at that block party, dealing with my daughter's teachers, her camp counselors. I belong at that wedding. How many of you have been to a wedding, if it wasn't all white, it's pretty close? Okay. Day in and day out belonging. I don't carry that psychic, psychic burden of race. I'm represented in the government. We know what the presidency has looked like and will look like again.

This is the House of Representatives. It's 83% white and when I'm about to show you are images from the halls of power in this country, and where you see the yellow border around the picture, those are the people of color in this group. These are the US senators. These are the leaders of the largest US companies. This is the US Supreme Court. US governors, US top military advisors. People who decide which TV shows we see, people who choose which movies get made, people with the most influence over which books we read. If you felt the weight of the teaching force, just keep adding, right. People who decide which music gets produced, people who decide what news is covered.

Owners of men's pro basketball teams, owners of men's pro football teams, owners of men's pro baseball teams, presidents of Ivy League universities. Institutionalized power and privilege. Now you have to trust, you're just going to have to believe me

that I'm not attached to the fact that this is a Republican. This picture just so captures what it means to be white. It does, it captures the world that I, that I move in, right? The belonging, the networking, the opportunity, the segregation, right? The inclusion, the lack of a sense of, of loss, right, the separation, this is, this is what it means to be white. And can you imagine the opportunities available, available to you, if you interned for Paul Ryan? This is his incoming group of interns.

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I was raised Catholic. I don't know that there's a more powerful image than God. Even God is white. Right? There's God creating man. There's Jesus and Mary. Constant messages that it's better to be white. I referred to this earlier when I said children absorb these messages, they don't miss them. Everything I'm showing you is meant to illustrate those messages. But I pulled from these because they surround us every day at the checkout counter. Here we have under best hair, we have Halle Berry. Her hair is straightened. It's a really strong message to black women in particular. That's last year's world's most beautiful woman. Here is the sexiest man alive. Yes, this, this dude right here. And this year's world's most beautiful woman, right? White as the ideal for humanity. I was racially affirmed throughout my childhood and I thought that I'll just capture it with that picture right there. No little girl misses the message. These are this year's top five runner ups for Miss Teen USA. And yes, they are different girls. Wooh, and I know they are but I have to look really close. Okay. All right. Again, white as ideal. I'm wanting us to see that you can't miss internalizing this and of course it's going to manifest when we get challenged. And just this, this is the group of the contestants. And as often happens, right, one, maybe two girls of color in the back or to the sides, right. This is, this is what it means to be white.

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These are shows that I think many of us grew up with. I grew up with them. My daughter grew up with them. They take place across the decades. They're all about ideal friendship, right? So we have Seinfeld in the 80s, Sex in the City in the 90s, Friends in the 2000s, that's Gossip Girl, and there's Girls, again, every one of these shows is about ideal friendship. And every one of these shows takes place in New York City, arguably the most racially diverse city in the nation. And so the message again and again, is even amongst diversity, there's no actual value in integration, in an integrated life, that this is the ideal life even amongst diversity. So I want to close this section by saying probably the most powerful way that my life has been shaped by my race is

that I could be born into and by the way this picture was taken in Columbia City. Zip code 98118, formerly the most diverse neighborhood in Seattle, okay, I could be born into, I could learn, I could play, I could worship, I could study, I could love, I could work, and I could die in racial segregation. And not one person who's ever loved me or mentored or taught me has ever conveyed to me that I've lost anything. I think this is the deepest message of all.

This is the deepest message of those good neighborhoods we grew up in and those good schools we go to. I want, I want us to notice we call segregation good, right. We measure the value of our spaces by the absence of people of color. I know what a good school is, that's racial discourse. And I know what a good neighborhood is. And if I just follow the trajectory that my loving parents laid out for me, I could easily go to my grave without really knowing or having very many authentic, sustained cross racial relationships. And again, no one suggested to me that I've lost anything. The fundamental message of segregation is that there's no inherent value in the perspectives or experiences of people of color. And that is a message that I couldn't help but internalize, but it's going to come out. It's going to come out now because I'm going to be sitting at the tables of power, the tables where decisions get made that affect other people's life. And I'm going to have a real hard time one noticing that other voices are missing or comprehending those voices if they fundamentally challenge my worldview.

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So if we go back and we think what is kind of holding up new racism? Eduardo Bonilla-Silva is a sociologist who's, who's has a book whose title says it all: *Racism without Racists*. We have racism, but nobody's racist anymore. Right? So how do we do that? I think these are the foundations, the good bad binary, to just make it an either or and exempt us if we see ourselves as open. Deep implicit bias that we can't help but absorb. And it's not just once, right, it's 24/7 across our lives, these messages are coming at us. This deep sense of ourselves as unique individuals outside of all this, right, hey, if you just heard this part about my life, you'd know why I'm different from other white people, right? Universalism, the sense that we can represent everybody because we're unbiased. Internalized superiority, which again, you can't help but absorb and on some level investment in the racial order, often unconscious. So when I said it was a kind of kind of willful not knowing, a refusal to know, I think that's rooted in this investment in a system that has served me and affirmed me so deeply. Now, I want you

to know that that investment is not acceptable to me, and I've committed my life to challenging it. But just good intentions alone are not enough to do that, right. I cannot be complacent about it. And then the power of segregation to hold it all in place. This society is set up to reproduce racial inequality. It does it beautifully, and it's done it for a very, very long time and all's it depends on are white people being really nice and carrying on. You don't need to do anything, just be, you know, smile at that co-worker every now and then, go to lunch. Because niceness is not courageous. Niceness will not get racism on the table and it won't keep it on the table when everybody wants to take it off the table. And I'm not saying don't be nice because I guess it'd be better to be nice than not nice. But niceness is actually collusion because it's not interrupting. Right.

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All right, so we have this racial insulation, right, and internalized superiority and it results in very common patterns. Right, one of the challenges for us as white people because we have such a sense of ourselves as individuals is to be willing to go into that group place and look at the reality that there are very predictable patterns because we're still swimming, regardless of what my personal narrative is, I'm still swimming in this water, and it still takes place in this water. Right? So we have patterns like this, preference for racial segregation, and no sense of loss about that. A lack of understanding of what racism is, seeing ourselves as individuals outside of socialization, not understanding that we bring our history with us. Assuming everyone is having our experience or could have our experience, arrogance, lack of humility and unwillingness to listen, dismissing what we don't understand, apathy towards racial injustice, wanting to jump over the hard personal work and get to solutions. Confusing not agreeing with not understanding. Right?

I disagree. No, maybe I don't understand. Maybe you're not in a position to agree or disagree. Needing to maintain white solidarity. White solidarity is the unspoken rule among whites that we'll keep each other comfortable around our racism, not, not challenge each other and privilege our own feelings over racial injustice, basically. So needing to maintain that, our highest priority being just saving face and looking good and having that be more important to us than actually interrupting racial injustice, focusing on intentions over impact. And defensiveness about any connection to racism. So when challenged, this white fragility emerges, right, I'm hoping I've painted a picture of what kind of sets us up, so and why we

respond so poorly. And keep in mind that white fragility is not weakness, per se, right? It's actually a very powerful means of everyday white racial control. Right, as it leverages historical and institutional power to maintain our positions. It functions as a kind of bullying, to be honest, it's like, I'm going to make it so miserable for you to try to call me in on anything that I'm doing that you're just not going to do it anymore. And if I need to cry and be weak and get all the resources back to me, as everybody comforts me, I'll do that. If I need to get my backup and, you know, get aggressive with you, I'll do that, right. So it's a kind of fragility in that I cannot handle the challenge, but it's not weak in that it's a very powerful way to stop. Right, to stop the challenge. So I'm going to show you now, excuse me, play for you now a clip. This is, comes out of a radio interview. There's a young woman who has a woman of color who has a show outside of the Boston, excuse me, the Toronto Globe and Mail. She has a podcast called Color Code where she talks about issues of race and racism. And she was asked to be on a, on a talk show with a white male newscaster discussing some aspect of multiculturalism in Canada. Right. So what you're going to hear is an edited down version. And when you hear a beep, that's where we did the edits, just to be transparent. But it's a four minute clip that I just think beautifully illustrates what we've talked about thus far.

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Man on radio speaking: I want to be able to go into these cultures, these minorities and be part of their culture, and have them be part of what I would call my culture, the Canadian culture, somebody who was born and raised here. Now, is this something that, am I off? Am I expecting too much? Or, or am I asking the wrong question? (Beep)

Woman on radio speaking: Honestly, if you've never actually been turned away, you know, that might just be your perception.

Man on radio speaking: No, I think, I'm sorry to interrupt you. But I actually, in fact, have been turned away, not, not, not at the door per se. But when I'm out in the community, and there are identifiable groups that are not interested in communicating, for example, or conversing in the lineup at the grocery store, or don't want anything to do with the larger community. (beep) And I think what Canadians want is a little bit more assimilation, a little bit more effort in being involved in the community at large.

Woman on radio speaking: I'm not really, I mean, first of all, those people are Canadians. So if they don't want that as Canadians and they're also Canadians, I also don't really, like, if someone, if one person doesn't want to talk to you in line at the grocery store, you know, maybe they're having a bad day. And I don't think that it's appropriate to say therefore all the people of that race (beep) don't want to interact with you or all of Canada. (Beep)

Man on radio speaking: Well, no, I think you're, I think you're misunderstanding what I'm saying, is that I am not suggesting that one incidence in a line at a grocery store, maybe I'm not painting a good enough picture for you to, to follow what I'm saying (Beep). And what I come across on almost a daily basis is people that are visible minorities that have moved to this country from elsewhere that don't want anything to do with me. Maybe, maybe it is me, maybe, maybe I'm so butt ugly that they don't want to talk to me. But for goodness sakes, have you seen how beautiful my children are? They don't want to talk to my kids either.

Woman on radio speaking: But how do you know that they're immigrants? (Beep)

Man on radio speaking: Okay, well, I guess you caught me on that one. I, I plead complete guilt here. And now I guess I'm, I guess I'm just a racist now. Is this what you're saying?

Woman on radio speaking: I didn't say that.

Man on radio speaking: Is this what you're inferring?

Woman on radio speaking: No that's not what —

Man on radio speaking: You're inferring that I have a lack of understanding of what the issues are.

Woman on radio speaking: No, I'm saying that you're making a lot of, you are making assumptions that those people aren't born in Canada, that they don't want to interact with you and that if one person doesn't want to interact with you they're representative of —

Man on radio speaking: No, no, I think you're, you're narrow-casting here, I'm sorry. You're, you're making something out of nothing. There's nothing to what you're saying.

Woman on radio speaking: You're saying people are rude to you and you don't know how to deal with it and you're blaming their race.

Man on radio speaking: No, I think, no, I think you're wrong. I think you're really wrong,

Woman on radio speaking: Well I can tell that you think I'm wrong. But I think you also, there's a concept called white fragility, which is that you know, when white people have to deal with when you're not the person in power, that makes you uncomfortable —

Man on radio speaking: How do you know I'm white? How do you know I'm white, what makes you think I'm white?

Woman on the radio speaking: Because I looked you up before I talked to you.

Man on radio speaking: Yeah?

Woman on radio speaking: Yeah.

Man on radio speaking: And so what, what does it mean, so does it mean that because the color of my skin doesn't match yours or somebody else's that I'm, maybe I'm from somewhere else, maybe I'm from far, far away, I could be from any country in the world.

Woman on radio speaking: I think that if you're from other countries, you would probably be more sympathetic to what it's like to be an immigrant. But you could.

Man on radio speaking: You are so wrong. You don't know me. I, I am very sympathetic.

Woman on the radio speaking: You don't know those people. You don't know the people that you are accusing of not being friendly to you, when maybe they're just having, maybe their mom is sick, and they don't feel like talking to a stranger at the grocery. They're just people.

Man on radio speaking: Wow, you really know how to trivialize things, don't you? (Beep) I want them to, to participate in the politics of the community. I want them to,

Woman on radio speaking: They are.

Man on radio speaking: I want them to volunteer at the community center like I do.

Woman on radio speaking: I'm sure they volunteer at their own —

Man on radio speaking: How can you be sure? Do you go to the same Community Center? Have you ever been to Metro Vancouver?

Woman on radio speaking: Yes. (Beep)

Man on radio speaking: I think we're going to agree to disagree. Thank you very much for your time. It was great talking to you.

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Robin DiAngelo: All right. Well, I hope that didn't traumatize anybody. I'm so sorry. But it is just such a clear example, right, as he escalates, as he starts to get a little irrational, as he starts to get aggressive, his complete lack of thoughtfulness about his position in relation to this, this woman of color, the defensiveness, the arrogance, etc, right. And I thought, there's lots of ways that white fragility manifests, but this one, is an example of it not coming out as a kind of falling apart, but as a kind of, I will, I will push you to silence and if you look it up, you actually, she, she does a show on it and following that her and another woman of color talk about what it was like to, to experience that. And so and what happened afterwards. So you could, you could look it up.

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Right. So it is inevitable, I hope it, I hope in my short time with you, I've made a case that it is inevitable that white people internalize a racist view of the world, on the world, right? We internalize a white supremacist frame or frame of reference. And I don't mean that, you know, in terms of KKK, but white as superior. And so we are going to, that is going to come out. It's going to come out in all kinds of ways and often very subtle and unconscious ways. And we're going to need feedback on occasion, right? So I want to ask another one of those big questions of the folks of color in the room: How often have you given white people feedback, when you choose to do that, it's not all on you. But I imagine there have been situations in which you have, you have chosen to give us feedback. How often has that happened and gone well for you? So I often hear a lot of never or rarely, if ever, okay, and so I mean the white people that are in the room, we need to hear that. There's a lot of us in here, right? Rarely, if ever, right. And so what are the kinds of feelings that we have when given feedback? Feelings like this: We feel attacked, silenced, shamed, accused, insulted, judged angry, scared, outraged. Right if you've ever seen these feelings, okay. And then what kind of behaviors do we have when we feel that way? Well, we withdraw, we cry, we go

silent, argue, deny, focus on intention, seek forgiveness, explain and insist on misunderstanding. And what kind of claims do we make to, to justify such behavior? I know people of color. I marched in the 60s. I'm getting to an age where I, is there anyone close to my age who didn't march in the 60s? And wow. Okay, so before I kind of poke some holes in this one, let me say, thank goodness, white folks marched in the 60s. I do not mean to underplay that or undermine that. It was incredibly important and had a huge impact. It's exactly what we needed to be doing. Right. Okay. Do you think also possibly that what, when all those white folks went down to the south to march into 60s that maybe some racism might have been running from them? Maybe some condescension, some patronizing, some white savior stuff? Do you think that it was just beautiful and that we weren't running any of even our liberal progressive racism? Okay, I'm sure that folks were. Okay. That's the first thing.

But the second thing is, that's pretty amazing. How long ago was that? 60 years. So you're certified for the next 60 years. It's like, no recertifications necessary. You're just, you marched in the 60s, you are free of racism, and there's been no evolution in our understanding of racism in those 60 years, right. Okay. Took it in college. Hey, I was a minority in Japan. So I know what it's like. The real oppression is class. Right? You misunderstood me. You're playing the race card. If you knew me or understood me, you, you'd know I can't be racist. And of course, I'd say if you knew or understood yourself, you know, you couldn't possibly be free of some problematic racial frameworks. This is not welcoming to me. You're making me feel guilty. It was just a little innocent thing. Some people just find a fence where there is none. You hurt my feelings. I don't feel safe. Like I'm going to take a moment on that one.

I like to just ask, so what does safety mean from a position of historical social institutional power and privilege? What does it mean to feel safe from that position? That's another one that we need to stop saying. Because it perverts the true history of historic violence. A history of imprisonment, execution, torture, experimentation, right? A deep history. When we say I don't feel safe to simply have a discussion of racism, right? We're perfectly safe. We may not be comfortable, that's, that's different. The problem is your tone. I know what it is to be oppressed.

Okay, have you heard these claims? Okay, these are the claims right, in you, I'm hoping you can see that the paradigm we're operating from would lead us to this. And it, that's why it works so beautifully. So what are the underlying beliefs? Right? So if

that's what's on the surface, what, what are the underlying beliefs that we're drawing from? Well, basically, as a white person, I will be the judge of whether racism has occurred. I mean, isn't that what we're saying? From my position in this water, I'll decide, right? My learning's finished, I know all I need to know.

Racism can only be intentional so not having intended it cancels it out. White people who experience another form of oppression or have suffered cannot have racial privilege. If I'm a good person, I can't be racist. My unexamined perspective is equal to an informed one. I'm entitled to remain comfortable. So if I'm not comfortable, you're doing it wrong. My, my dear mentor and friend Darlene Flynn says, if you're not comfortable, wait, if you're comfortable talking about racism, you're not talking about racism. All right, as a white person, I know the best way to challenge racism, you're doing it wrong. If you knew me or understood me, if I can't see it, it isn't legitimate. If I have friends of color, I can't be racist or, or have done anything in that moment. My worldview is objective and yours isn't. Can, can you see that these have to be the underlying assumptions, if those are the behaviors and the claims? Okay.

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So how does this function? Well, it maintains white solidarity. It closes off self reflection, minimizes, silences the discussion, makes white people the victims, protects our limited worldview, takes race off the table, focuses on the messenger, not the message, and rallies more resources to white people, protects racism. So if we have what I think of as an anti-racist framework, a framework that understands the inevitability and is committed to, to a lifelong process of working to challenge it, you're going to get very, very different responses, right? You're going to get feelings like this: gratitude. I mean how revolutionary to actually feel grateful that someone helped you see something you were doing that you weren't aware you were doing and would never want to do. Right?

Maybe even excited because you're starting to know what you didn't know. Yes, guilt, yes, embarrassment. It's not comfortable, but motivating. You feel humility, compassion, curiosity. And what I mean by curiosity is I care to know, I care to understand the impact I just had on you. So the framework we're in now basically has us all I care to know is that you stop saying that had anything to do with race. Okay. And then you get behaviors like reflection, listening, processing, seeking to understand, staying engaged, grappling, apologizing, believing

and claims like this: thank you. It's my responsibility to resist defensiveness and complacency, that's on me. It's not on you to say it just right so I don't feel anything. Right. It's on me to receive it, to bear witness, to build my capacity to do that. Yeah, it's hard, but it's important. It's inevitable that I'm going to step in it. It's personal, but it's not strictly personal. I'm a product of my society. There's no right way to do this. It's hard to do. I'm going to focus on the message, not the messenger. I need to build my capacity to endure discomfort and bear witness. I got some work to do.

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So what are the underlying beliefs that would enable us to have those kinds of responses? And what my favorite thing to do is have us go around and read them out loud, but it's a little bit, I don't think this setup is conducive for that. So I will read these and you just, the folks of color, imagine all the white people in unison, saying this. Being good or bad is not relevant. Racism is a multi-layered system infused in everything. White's have some blinders on racism. I have some blinders on racism. Racism is complex, I don't have to understand it for it to be valid. White comfort maintains the racial status quo, discomfort is necessary and important. I must not confuse comfort with safety. I am safe in discussions of racism. The antidote to guilt is action. I bring my group's history with me, I cannot be expected to be just seen as an individual. History matters. The question is not if but how. The way out is through.

Whites are unconsciously invested in racism. I am unconsciously invested in racism. Bias is implicit, unconscious. I don't expect to be aware of mine without a lot of ongoing effort. Feedback from people of color indicates trust. It's a huge risk, because it so seldom goes well. And if we could, if we could recognize that, right, and just assume that person sees something in you that says maybe I can go there with this person. Feedback on what racism is difficult to give, how I receive feedback is not, how I receive feedback is not as relevant as the feedback itself. It takes courage to break with white solidarity. How do I support those that do? By the way, giving another white person feedback or calling them on racism is breaking with white solidarity. So work with them. Given socialization, it's more likely that I am the one who doesn't understand the issue. Racism hurts, even kills people of color 24/7. Interrupting it is more important than my feelings, ego or self image.

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So what would it be like for the folks of color in the room if this was really where we were coming from? All right, I asked that question recently. I said what would it be like if you could just give white people feedback on our inevitable and often unaware racism and we received that feedback with grace, reflected on it and sought to behave that, sought to change the behavior. And recently a man of color in one of my sessions said to me, "it would be revolutionary." And I really want the white people to hear that. Revolutionary that we would receive with grace, reflect and seek to change the behavior. That's how difficult we are. That's a frickin revolution.

Okay. And that's how easy this is. But we can't get there from the dominant paradigm and we can't get there from just self image and good intentions and friendliness, right? It's lifelong work and struggle and practice. So how would that function? Well, it minimizes defensiveness, it demonstrates vulnerability. It demonstrates curiosity and humility. It allows for growth. It stretches one's worldview, ensures action, puts what one professes into practice, builds authentic relationships and trust. I wish white people understood you are more likely to have the relationship go deeper if you're willing to make mistakes and receive that feedback than insist that it didn't happen. That will not build trust. You might stop getting feedback. But that will not mean, it will probably mean the relationship is not as close as you think it is. Okay. Interrupts privilege, protecting comfort, interrupts internalized superiority, interrupts racism.

So how might we begin? Be willing to tolerate the discomfort associated with an honest examination, begin to challenge your own racial reality, acknowledge yourself as having a limited and particular perspective, begin to understand people of color's racial realities through authentic interaction rather than through the media or unequal relationships and take action to address your internalized racism, the racism of other whites, and our institutions. So thank you very much.

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Q&A SESSION

Ralina Joseph: So thank you so much for this amazing, compelling, intriguing talk. If you have questions that you would like to ask, there are two ways for you to ask those questions. You may line up at either of the microphones over on either side here, or you can send an email to

maylask@uw.edu. Maylask@uw.edu. So we have our first question via email here. And the first question asks, as white people are forced to confront racism because of demographic change, like immigration, some have reacted by embracing white identity and becoming white nationalists, which, which this person calls the alt right. As the country becomes less white demographically, do you think this response will continue?

Robin DiAngelo: Yes. So there's two parts I think of in that question. The first part is it's about power, not numbers. So when you hear people say, oh, by this year, there's going to be more people of color. I don't think that is going to change, that's what's going to change this system. Right? I mean, blacks were the vast majority under apartheid in South Africa. Women are the majority of the planet, the poor are the majority of the planet. It's about power. Okay. So as those, as the demographics, demographic shifts happen, I don't think power will shift anywhere, anywhere near as quickly, right, as can be seen, visually from some of those images that I showed you, and yes, it will still trigger a sense of threat, right, that our positions are, you know, under, under question, and you probably will see more white nationalism, I'm sorry to say.

Ralina Joseph: It's certainly what we're seeing right now.

Robin DiAngelo: Yes.

Ralina Joseph: I think we have some folks over there. Yeah.

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(1:13:20) Participant 1: So, Dr. King said that there's two most, the two most dangerous things in the world are people that are conscientiously stupid and people that are sincerely ignorant. And what I'm wondering is that, in a system that protects and sustains white supremacy, how do we disrupt that with our youth?

Robin DiAngelo: Can you, I actually am hearing impaired, can you, can you repeat the first part again?

Participant 1: Yeah, so I said that Dr. King said that the two most dangerous things in the world are people that are conscientiously stupid and sincerely ignorant. So I'm wondering with those two things in mind, how do we disrupt a system that perpetuates white supremacy with our youth when our adults that are teaching our youth have this, you know, mindset?

Robin DiAngelo: Yeah, I mean, I'd like to think in some, in some way that this work is a model of that right like this, raising consciousness, having people see this and kind of being willing to work with each other and spread that, right. I mean, the, I can't tell you how many times I hear it, it's focusing on race that divides us, right? We're already divided, right? It's not focusing on race that protects it. So we have to break with that. I want to emphasize that the, the ignorance is again, it's a willful kind of ignorance, right? We work really hard not to see this. I mean, I'm wondering, do some of the people of color in the room just think, are you kidding me that you guys don't know this? Does that come up for you? Like, how do you not know this? Right? And I can kind of, I can connect to it inside myself. It's this kind of confusing stew of the one hand, we really are taught not to see it. And when we're young, and we try to see it, we get hushed and we get shamed, and so it gets submerged. And on the other hand, we know, we do know, but we could never admit that we know. And so we get this both obliviousness and this knowing we can't admit to and it makes us irrational. Have you noticed that? So you just got to keep waking people up, right? Wherever, wherever your influence is. Yeah. Thank you.

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(1:15:52) Participant 2: Professor DiAngelo, it's a privilege. First, I want to give a shout out to all of my people of color who have, who are here. We're all on Duwamish land. Black folk, brown folk, indigenous folk, east Asian folk, thank you for being here. I think it takes a lot of courage because like my brother said, I think this is fairly traumatizing and triggering for us. But I think it's an act of selflessness for people of color to be here. So thank you. I thank you. My question for you professor is actually, I was hoping you could talk about tonight, we spoke about what. We spoke about what white fragility is. But what I was hoping the audience could also hear from you is why, why should white folks care about any of this? What is the point of them?

Robin DiAngelo: It's a question that lots of folks have, right, like when you can, you can hear all this and say, why wouldn't we care right? For me, it's, it's to align what I profess to believe with the actual practice of my life. I can't go to bed at night and sleep knowing that those things are not aligned. I can't look at myself in the mirror. Sadly, many of us can. And I think it's, it probably is motivated, different people get motivated in different ways. For me, that's the bottom line, but a huge piece of it had to do with actually building cross-racial friendships. Right, seeing the humanity of people of color, seeing and being by their sides and seeing and hearing and witnessing what their

experience is and segregation also sets us up not, not to see and therefore not to really care. Right that apathy. So if we don't break with that it's not as hopeful that we're going to be motivated to do the really hard work. Yeah. And you know, we and if you can draw, so I, I grew up in poverty, very, very clear, explicit, lots of shame. And a, from a really early age, I had a deep sense of being less than. I always knew I was white, however, I'm never going to tell you I was poor, therefore, I didn't have white privilege, right? In a lot of ways, I think poor whites use their whiteness to realign themselves with the dominant culture that their poverty separates them from, right, really clear that that happened for me. But when I got to the point when I realized you are colluding with someone else's oppression, you are benefiting from someone else feeling that way then that was not acceptable to me. So that also helped motivate me. Yeah. Hi.

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(1:18:30) Ralina Joseph: Can I give you, I'll give you a question actually from online here. Okay. So we have a student who really wants for you to share your thoughts on the term reverse racism.

Robin DiAngelo: Alright, so you, umm alright so, I'm only kind of like this because usually I have some time to lay it out, but basically, there's no such thing. The terms are nonsensical and need to be removed from any discussion of prejudice, discrimination and racism. Okay, prejudice and discrimination, all humans have prejudice and all humans discriminate. So the, the term reverse is nonsensical in that context, right? What are you talking about? Everybody, everybody has it. That's like, to be like saying reverse judgment or something. It's just right. And by definition, racism is a group's collective prejudice and discrimination, implicit and explicit bias backed by legal authority and institutional control. It is not a fluid system. It does not change overnight. And so reverse is nonsensical in that context also.

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(1:20:00) Participant 3: Hello. So I'm kind of nervous because usually I'm online. I just wanted to let everybody know that I moderate for the Twitter group White Nonsense Round Up. We also have Facebook and Instagram. We serve two purposes, we educate other white people. If you ever have questions without shame, without any kind of judgment, we'd love to talk to you about any issues, as a white person, also people of color, please tag us in your post when you're dealing with ignorant white people, people who are harassing you, people who are saying

things, people were dealing with, you know, questions like reverse racism, white fragility, all that just tag us like our page and tag us and we'll jump in, we have, I think we're like 45 volunteers over on Facebook. We've got five on Twitter, we're 24/7. So anyways, just wanted to plug us and thank you for the lecture.

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(1:20:50) Participant 4: Hi, thank you so much. So for Professor Joseph's class, part of what we're doing is thinking about constructing a toolkit for interrupting privilege. And so my question to you for all the people of color who are very frequent, frequently burdened with the task of having these conversations with our white friends, white family members, teachers, peers, do you have any, any sort of like quick suggestions or quick plugs of how we can start these conversations, or even engage in these conversations with people that are close to us?

Robin DiAngelo: Well, okay, if we picture the the tape that we heard, I think that that woman who made a valiant effort to to stay, you know, calm and to kind of give counter information and examples, and it just wasn't going to be happening so that, I think there's a time when the best strategy is to say I'm not, you know, I'm not doing this or you know, no, you're wrong. Other times to hang in there, right. That's kind of choose your battles and those are decisions you make in the moment. And sometimes, I think it's an effective strategy to just tap one of your white allies and say go deal with that person. They are going to hear it from you better than me and I don't want to take that on, that's your job. You go do it. That was a, that really built up, you know, I mean, I am conflict avoidant like any other white Catholic female, you know that's how I was raised. And, and I can remember in the early days doing this work and we'd be doing a training, there'd be some hostile like guy like you heard, and the women of color would take me aside and say, go talk to him and I cannot tell you how bad I did not want to go talk to him. I was like, oh my god, I mean, I got my own dad issues, right. That was my dad, but it was like, put your white hat on and go do it. And I would do it right, and, and after a while, it gets easier. So there's a range of strategies and i but i think that's that's a key one, too.

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(1:23:25) Ralina Joseph: So, we have a question about where do Asian Americans fit into this conversation?

Robin DiAngelo: Well, racism plays out really differently for different groups. And part of being what, what I think of as racially literate is to understand the different ways that different groups have been oppressed under white supremacy. And they're not the same, right? So when I have like 45 minutes, right, I kind of talk in big pictures. But there's something so specific to the way racism manifests for indigenous peoples, right, ranging from the fact of the land that we're on, the incredible weight of federal recognition in order to get access to your rights, that kind of invisibility, the ways in which indigenous peoples are really at the bottom of all the measurements, and yet we don't talk about it and include it in that way. And so I don't know how to say what is the place other than I'm sure in trying to talk to white folks, you're going to deal with white fragility too. But if I'm talking to white folks about how do we raise our literacy, we have to again understand our history and what's unique and specific about that, how it manifests.

Ralina Joseph: And the question, I'm sorry for not being clear, was actually about Asian Americans. Okay.

Robin DiAngelo: Oh I thought you said Indigenous. Ok.

Ralina Joseph: But that I mean, that was really edifying as well. Right?

Robin DiAngelo: Well, I see my beloved friend there, so I thought maybe it was your question. Where do Asian Americans fit in, it actually, it's really similar that you, you are set up in, all groups are set up in relationship to whiteness, right. And in a lot of ways, Asian, Asian heritage people have been used as that wedge, in particular between black and white. And so we don't want to minimize the way racism manifests for Asian heritage people. Again, it manifests differently. It does manifest, but I do think there's a place where Asian heritage, people have to really look deeply and honestly about how they were set up to perpetrate anti-black sentiment, to really look at, have I allowed myself to be put in a position that actually functions to align me with whiteness and to further put down black people, quite frankly, right? When I grew up, was I warned away from black spaces? What kind of relationships do I have? Do I also live in in racial segregation? Where really are my, where should I be aligning and where have I been aligning? Those are hard questions, but I think they need to be looked at.

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Ralina Joseph: One of our, our speakers over here.

(1:26:23) Participant 5: Hi, my name is Tyrone Brown. I'm actually a staff member at Seattle University. My sister invited me tonight and I'm really glad that I came. So thank you, Professor DiAngelo. I have a question and a slight statement. I was really struck, statement wise, struck by something you shared I think in relation to, what it reminded me of is my aha moment years ago where I realized that, because I had always been taught by white teachers, you know, and school or what have you, that I always look to white people for the answers to questions and things. But then as an adult realized, in some respects, white people don't have the answers, or sometimes they're just as clueless as the rest of us. Yeah. And so kind of letting go of that, but it was also scary in a lot of respects. So I'll just place that there. But my question is, I do a lot of activism, mainly related to the Black Lives Matter movement. And recently, I've been doing some personal reflection, especially what's going on with the Native American community and especially in North Dakota, and not that I'm a martyr or hero, but I'm going to go to North Dakota, I'd like, need to go and see for myself and understand what that really is. But for me, and this is the question wise, I realized that in turns of a lot of things you're talking about tonight, white fragility is being played on an extreme level there. And I don't understand that, because it's North Dakota, and a predominantly white state. And so I'm, I think I came tonight, and I was trying to understand what I should or shouldn't be doing, to maybe help people understand maybe the role that how white fragility and other things are manifesting itself in relation to what is happening to another group of minoritized people. So yeah, see what I'm struggling with?

Robin DiAngelo: Yeah, but I actually think you just so, so, so beautifully, even just raising that, it's a question for reflection, right? Just to be thinking about, I don't have kind of an immediate response, but what an important way to be thinking about it right? And then how can I support another group who's dealing with a particular manifestation of it? Yeah.

Participant 5: Yeah. And by the way, I didn't expect you to have the answer, once again. But, but hearing you tonight does posit some knowledge that I needed.

Robin DiAngelo: Thank you. I'm really glad, glad to hear that.

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(1:29:00) Participant 6: Hey, can you hear me?

Robin DiAngelo: Yeah.

Participant 6: So I once had a white student ask me this question regarding if whiteness has been defined by racial domination, how could she as a white student who identifies as white ever disassociate whiteness from her white racial identity without destroying herself in the process? And the reason why I asked that is because students of color have also asked this question, if I'm only a reaction, given the fact, the importance of whiteness in creating racial categories themselves, what, what does an anti-racist world look like? Can I really define myself without whiteness there? So I feel like there's two similar questions embodied in that. The fact is, how can racial identity work without racism always being in the background?

Robin DiAngelo: Yeah, that's a really deep, very deep question. Yeah, racial, racial categories are inherently based on oppression, right? There is no white identity that's not oppressive because it is a function. Right? I have ethnic identity, but my racial identity is inherently a manifestation of white supremacy. Right? And I can't be white without you, right, not being white. Right? White, white people need people of color to be that other for which we can rise above, right? Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark*, just beautifully talks about the white need to split off from ourselves, the aspects that we can't look at and then project those onto people of color. Right? So yeah, there's this kind of sick kind of relationship. And I don't know what it would look like, because we haven't seen it, right. But at some level a kind of, in a, in an abstract way I can see you do have to kind of destroy that identity, because there's just no non-oppressive way to be white in this sense of racial, racialization.

Participant 6: Thank you.

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(1:31:37) Ralina Joseph: So I have, there's a number of questions from our teachers here. And there's a couple of them that center on this question of how educators in mostly white schools can educate their white students about things like racism and oppression without overburdening the very few students of color who are there and force them into the position of having to educate their white classmates?

Robin DiAngelo: Oh, you know, these are the big, big, big questions. So the first, the first thing I want to say as white educators is not to assume that you're, you're kind of good to go and now you just have to teach the kids, right? That a friend of mine, Darlene Flynn, uses the analogy of when you're on the

airplane and they say you need to put your oxygen mask first, and then turn and put it on more vulnerable people, our oxygen masks on, I'm not confident that white teachers are, have their oxygen masks on and now can just teach their students, right, so you have to be engaged in really deep difficult ongoing work. And as it becomes integrated into your worldview, it won't be anything extra or on the side, you know, ethnic authors week, it'll just be how you see the world and how you do everything, right? And it comes through and everything. And the way it's set up now it's this kind of this extra thing, or how do I do that thing? So I guess I just want to start there and urge you to start there and to just trust that as it gets more internalized for you, it will manifest in everything that you do. And then there's lots of great books out there. Okay. There's one called, *What if all the Kids are White?* By I think Derman-Sparks, who, you know, so there's a lot of resources out there, but that's where I would want you to put the emphasis, and certainly, I would hope, and anything gets built into the question that you would know you would never have your students of color, do some kind of teaching on, you know, but you will also want to create opportunities for people to share their experiences.

Ralina Joseph: We've time for one final question.

Robin DiAngelo: One more.

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(1:33:39) Participant 7: First off, thank you so much for sharing those tools. I, I think that, a very meaningful talk. Thank you so very much for that. I, the, we've got probably 500 probably much more activated white individuals than we had at the beginning of this talk. And my question that I have for you is, with the tools that you've just outlined for us, and with many of the, the bases that you were discussing with regards to the acceptance of our inherent racism, and I guess my question is, what, what would be your recommended steps now, I like, you know, if we're looking for quick bullet points getting started along with this path towards helping to combat this implicit racism and make society, you know, help combat this.

Robin DiAngelo: Yeah, well, you, you actually gave me the opportunity, just to just to reiterate how liberating it is to start from the premise that you're totally infused with a racist worldview and investment and you have racist patterns, right? And once you start from there, then you stop putting your energy into trying to defend or deflect or deny, and you start putting your energy into identifying and, and kind of challenging and repairing right. And actually, I think the first

step is to, is to take the initiative to go find out what to do, you know what I mean? Right, rather than me, to give you that, to break with whiteness is to actually break with apathy. Right? It's to break with, well wasn't that an interesting talk and now I'm just going to carry on and nothing's going to be any different, right? So go home tonight. Get on that internet and just, just read. There's just so much good research. But seriously, the taking initiative is breaking with whiteness. So I mean search Showing Up for Racial Justice is a fantastic organization. There's lots going on. So seek it out. Thank you.

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