

Enacting Social Justice in the Classroom

Adjunct Day & Orientation 2016

Presented by: Cynthia Gómez, Executive Director, Cultural Resource Centers

Source: Readings & Teaching for Diversity & Social Justice

<http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/readingsfordiversity/>

Goal: In this session, faculty will learn how to recognize opportunities to enact social justice learning in the classroom. We will explore student racial identity development, review definitions of oppression, and apply learning through the discussion of case studies. Participants will learn how to navigate challenging topics by making space for students to find their place and voice in the classroom, regardless of subject. There will also be a presentation of campus resources available for further learning opportunities.

Concepts:

- Setting up Agreements - Laying the Foundation
- Oppression Theory 101
- Process of Cultural Competency
- Cumulative Impact
- Tatum's Moving Sidewalk

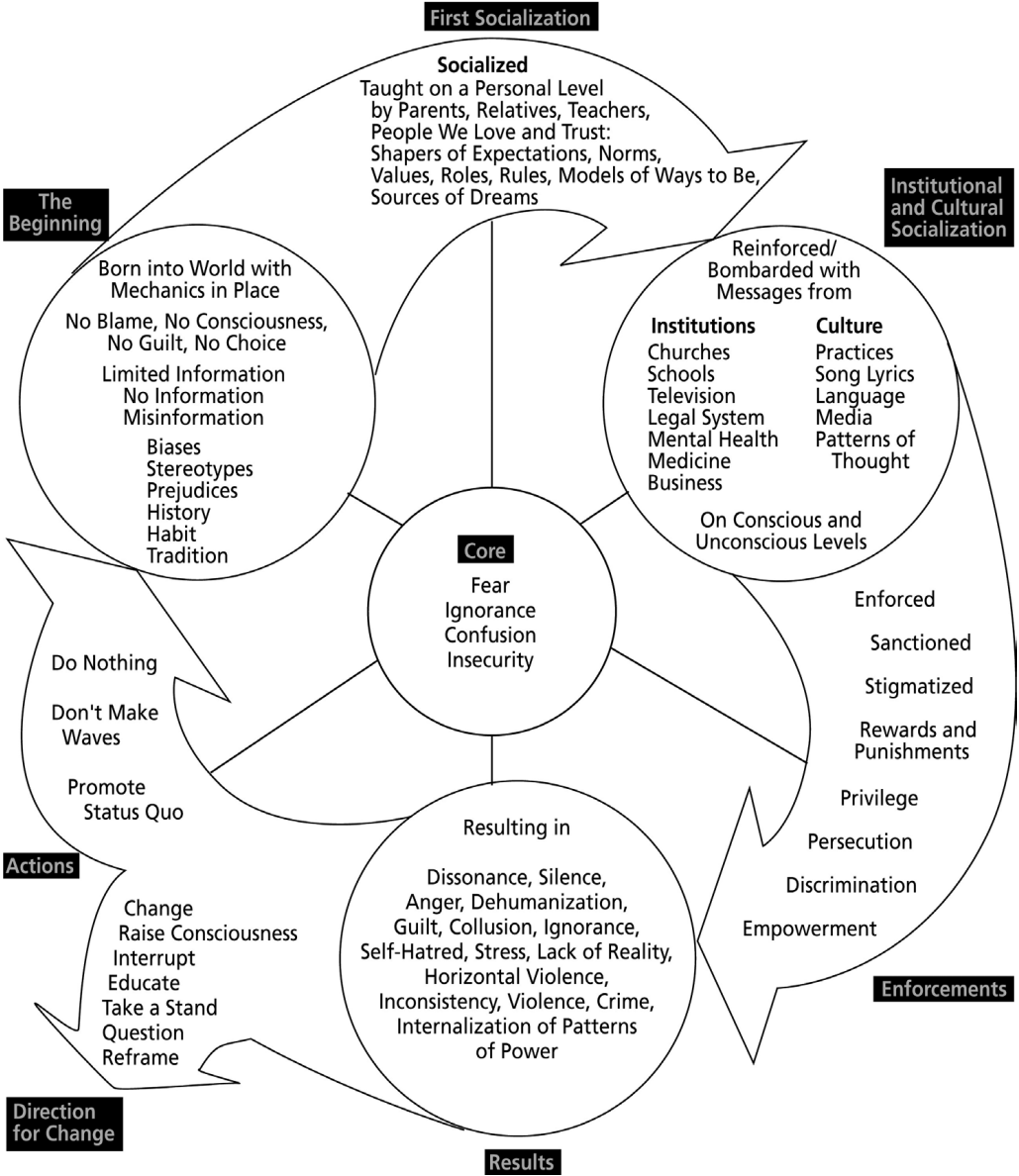
Agenda:

1. Define Oppression
2. Review: [Cycle of Socialization](#)
3. [Identity Matrix & Wheel](#)
4. Review: [Cycle of Liberation](#)
5. Campus Resources: <https://www.pdx.edu/cultural-resource-centers/crc>

An article: <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/tt54-fall-2016/feature/dont-say-nothing>

Appendix 3E

Cycle of Socialization

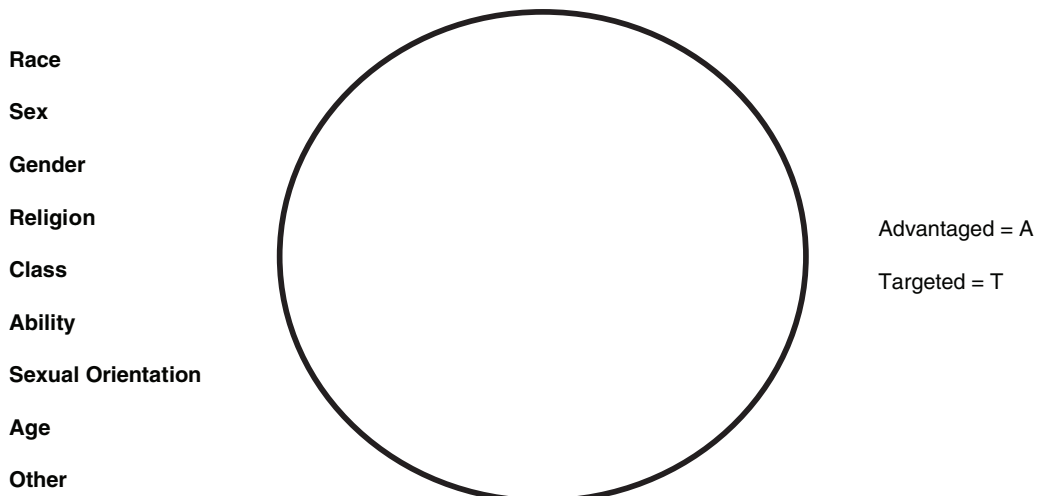


Source: Cycle of Socialization developed by Bobbie Harro
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Social Identity Categories	Privileged Social Groups	Border Social Groups	Targeted Social Groups	Form of Oppression (Ism)
Race	White	Biracial	People of Color (Native, Black, Asian, Latino, Pacific Islander)	Racism or White Supremacy
Sex	Male		Female, Transsexual, Intersex People	Sexism or Patriarchy
Gender	Cis (male and female)	Gender Ambiguous	Transgender, Genderqueer, Gender Non-Conforming, Gender Fluid	Cissexism or Transgender Oppression
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	Bisexual	Lesbian, Gay, Pansexual, Asexual, Queer	Heterosexism
Class	Rich, Upper Class People	Middle Class People	Working Class, Economically Poor People	Classism
Ability/Disability	Temporarily Abled-Bodied People	People with Temporary Disabilities	People with Disabilities	Ableism
Age	Adults	Young Adults	Elders, Young People	Ageism/Adultism
Religion	Protestants	Roman Catholic (Historically)	Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Taoists, Sikhs, Native Religions and Spiritualities, Agnostics, Atheists	Religious Oppression

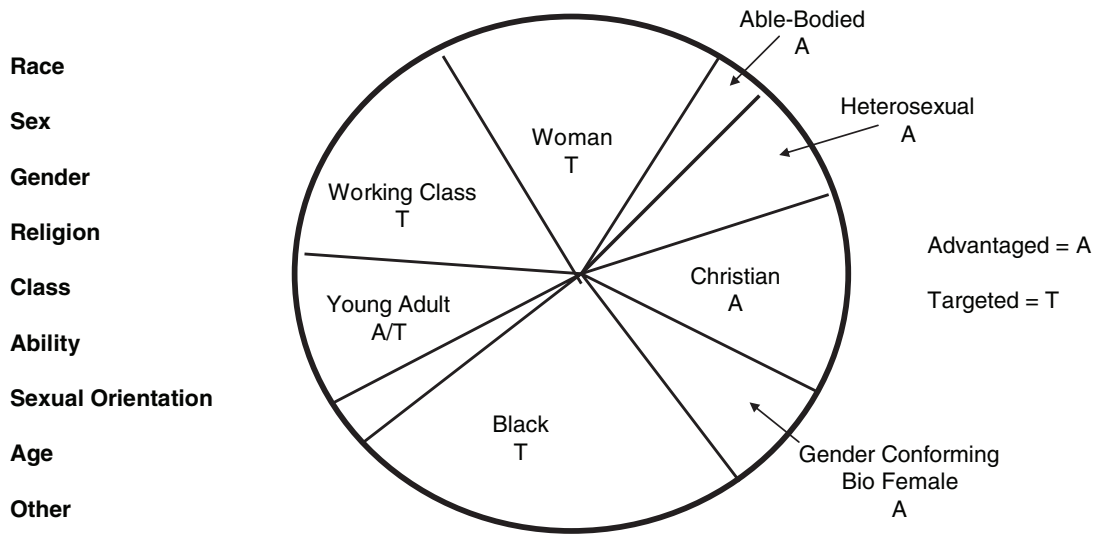
Appendix 3K

Identity Wheel



Create your identity wheel by indicating your targeted and advantaged social group memberships. Make the identity "slice" a size that reflects your awareness of that social group membership. Memberships that you are more aware of will be a bigger slice than those you are less aware of.

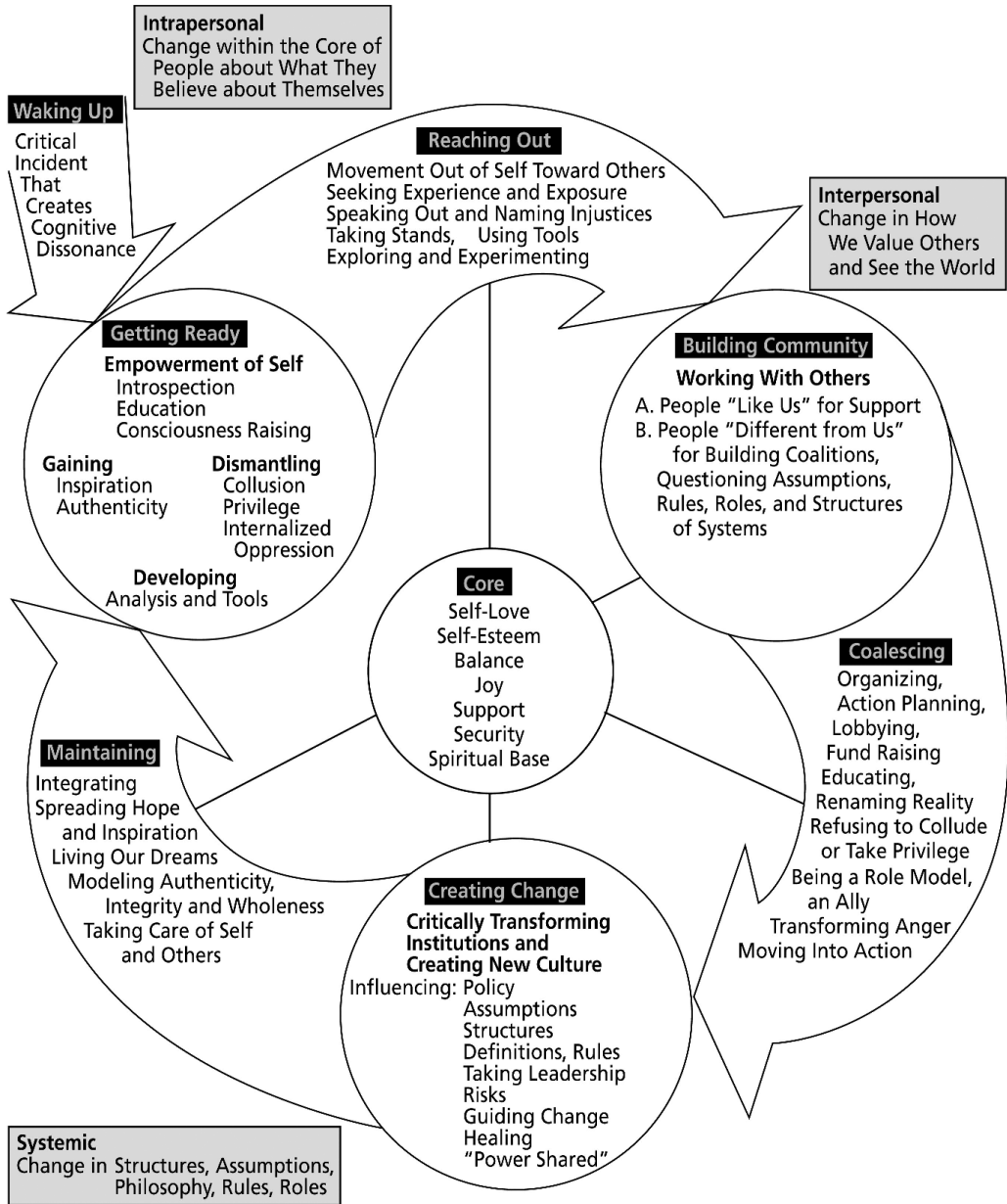
Sample Identity Wheel



Create your identity wheel by indicating your targeted and advantaged social group memberships. Make the identity "slice" a size that reflects your awareness of that social group membership. Memberships that you are more aware of will be a bigger slice than those you are less aware of.

Appendix 3F

Cycle of Liberation



Source: Developed by Bobbie Harro



TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Don't Say Nothing

Number 54: Fall 2016

As educators we (sometimes unknowingly) step into roles of advocate, caretaker, guide, and even mother or father to students. Students pay attention to everything we say and do. They particularly pay attention to our silence.

We may be uncomfortable talking about race, but we can no longer afford to be silent. We have chosen a profession, which—like parenting—requires that our comforts come second to those of children.

Many black and brown students are educated in school systems and classrooms where they, despite making up the racial majority, are taught how to understand a world by a staff comprised of a powerful minority. When their teachers choose to remain silent about moments of racial tension or violence—violence that may well touch students' own communities or families—these children are overtly reminded of their inferior place in society.

Even as a black teacher, I have to set a tone for my students that signals that it's safe to talk about race. Even with me, students of color are afraid to say the word *white* or to name the blatant racism of slavery and Jim Crow. If that's the case, imagine how much more difficult it is for them to engage in dialogue about mass incarceration rates; the militarism of police; the killing of innocent black men and women; cycles of poverty; the destruction of our bodies, minds and souls; the lack of access to healthy food and quality schools; and gentrification. These are all symptoms of a type of racism that remains deadly to this day because, despite bodies lying in the street, we refuse to talk about it.

White teachers must also broach these topics with white children attending white schools. These students *need* to learn about the destructive power of racism and brutality that have plagued our country for centuries. They should also understand that Alton Sterling, Philando Castile and Trayvon Martin were preceded in death by Emmett Till, Jimmie Lee Jackson and countless others whose stories and deaths we must also teach. Our lack of instruction becomes deadly when we allow fear and discomfort to indirectly allow white students to labor under false, privileged assumptions.

Moreover, the silence on the part of white teachers who teach black and brown children is insulting. Imagine seeing white people, the perceived dominant race, loving and appreciating black culture when it is pretty—enjoying the music, food, culture and beauty of our people—but remaining silent about our oppression and refusing to see how the beauty of our culture was largely born out of necessity. It hurts students when their teachers only acknowledge what black people have done *for* this country and not what this country has done to them.



Illustration by Alex Williamson

From left to right: Emmett Till, Jimmie Lee Jackson, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile

But how encouraging is it to know that we stand in a powerful and political position where we can directly influence and break this silence?



Begin by confronting your own biases—about yourself, your students, your fellow educators, the world. This process is essential; if educators don't do this, think about how much

damage we could do to the open, vulnerable minds of our students. In particular, examine your feelings about the police. And, regardless of your personal feelings about law enforcement, it is critical to understand that many black and brown students have incredibly negative perceptions about the police. This difficult understanding on the part of teachers can hopefully lead to dialogue and healing in schools.

Once you've done the inner work of evaluating your own comfort levels and examining your biases, start the conversation. You might begin by admitting to students that—like them—you are scared, frustrated, angry, confused,

hurt or uncomfortable. Students at any age understand these feelings and will appreciate your humility, compassion and vulnerability, especially black and brown students. This is how you lay the foundation.

Next, you might begin to explain why you are feeling this way, although many students will already know why. And then, after you begin the conversation, step back, sit down and be quiet. Let your students lead. Let them speak and ask questions. Allow them, for once, the opportunity to be “in front” of what they are feeling rather than reacting to it.

I like to use the practice of a silent dialogue. During this year’s recent killings, I opened with a question and placed large chart paper on the floor on which I wrote questions and asked students to respond silently (with the exception of clarifying questions or making sure that students were up-to-date on current events). I allowed students to express themselves freely and respond to each other on the paper. This is a tactic that may be helpful if you are truly uncomfortable and don’t know where to begin.

Some students wanted to discuss aloud, so we did. I jumped in only to guide or challenge statements that were not aiding the dialogue in a positive way, but I did this in a way that affirmed the students.

This is a beautiful practice. Students come into the classroom with ideas, hearts, passions, mindsets and understandings about their own humanity. They have been students of the news and their families’ stories and experiences without you; they don’t necessarily need you to understand certain aspects of the world. So if you feel that the conversation is too heavy or that the weight of having to end racism is in your lesson plan, humble yourself and relax. It isn’t. Your students need you to allow them space, not to fix the world.

Literature teachers like myself have all the tools necessary to break the silence. Literature is about discussion, awareness and critical thinking. Writers throughout history have used their pens and pencils to challenge the very structures that still harm our students today. They have done the work for us. Choose a revolutionary book and *really* teach it. Create units around James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Michelle Alexander and Ta-Nehisi Coates, who, like Baldwin, forewarns all black sons of the dark hours that might soon overtake them.

History teachers, teach about what *actually* propelled and sustained the civil rights movement—how the boycotts hit white people in their pockets and black activists used the media to show the world the brutality of white supremacist police officers—as opposed to a simplified and erroneous account of a docile Rosa Parks who was simply too tired to give up her seat. Remind students that the outrage and outcry of Trayvon Martin’s and Alton Sterling’s families echo the cries of Emmett Till’s mother whose screams exceeded grief, all of them revealing an acknowledgment that their loved ones had become martyrs.

Science teachers, have students research how science was used to justify the myths that promoted black inferiority. This could be followed by a unit on the black scientists whose contributions have greatly advanced the field. Include the Tuskegee experiments and facts about Henrietta Lacks’ death so that students understand that black bodies have too often been used, manipulated and destroyed.

Be on guard against false narratives about how all white people are bad or racists and all African Americans are saints or martyrs. We also cannot remain silent about incidents like the attacks on police in Dallas and Baton Rouge. Teach about the white people who marched with Dr. King and lift their voices in the Black Lives Matter movement today. Teach about white parents who cry out over the lives of slain black children as they would grieve for their own. This is essential if we are to allow our children, and our world, to heal. Teaching as an act of resistance and teaching as an act of healing are not mutually exclusive.

Finally, learn from and for your students. Hear their needs, listen to their struggles—and don’t shy away just because you may not understand them. Immerse yourself in literature that matters and that sharpens your zeal for human rights, social justice and teaching. Connect yourself with others who are doing this work.

And when you don’t have the words and can’t plan the lessons, don’t just say nothing; say exactly what you are feeling. That will mean more to your students than you may ever know.

>> Explore more [resources](#) on race, racism and police violence.

>> [Click here](#) for the PDF version of this story.

Beverly Tatum

"because racism is so ingrained in the fabric of American institutions, it is easily self-perpetuating. All that is required to maintain it, is business as usual...[when] people do not disrupt unfair systems of privilege, they are—willingly or unwillingly—on the moving sidewalk, receiving White privilege and inadvertently enabling racism" (p. 11).

If we stand still and do nothing, we actually help perpetuate the momentum of racism. We must actively walk against its motion to prevent its consequences.

"sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in" (p. 6).

Tatum, B. D. (1997). "Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?": And other conversations about race. New York, NY: Basic Books.