



Beyond the Battle Lines: Channeling Curiosity, Humility, and Platinum Empathy During Racial Strife

By Tiye Sherrod, M.S.E.



What Do You Do???

1 | 'Black Lives Matter'
or 'All Lives Matter'

You are working an event selling Black Lives Matter t-shirts when a stranger passes by and gets upset that your organization is selling shirts. She says to you 'All Lives Matter!' How do you handle this?

2 | Book Club

You are in a book club talking about race relations. A person admits a loved one was sued for racial discrimination and doesn't like to hire people of color as a result. You point out that this is indeed racism and the person gets angry. What do you do?

3 | Can I Touch Your
Hair?

You change your hairstyle and when you arrive at work, several people notice and comment on the change. One person asks to touch your hair and when you say no, they accuse you of being overly sensitive. What do you say?

Black Lives Matter or All Lives Matter

My Frustrations

- Repeatedly having to explain the difference between these concepts.
- Perceived implicit bias being displayed by the individual who happened to be White.
- Racial battle fatigue.

Frustrations Expressed by Other Individual

- Felt as though the statement 'Black Lives Matter' meant that other people did not.
- Strong supporter of law enforcement and feels protests/slogan is disrespectful.

Professional Book Club

My Frustrations

- Felt as though the person was being inauthentic in their allyship.
- Felt attacked for repeating and questioning information she chose to divulge.

Frustrations Expressed by Other Individual

- Felt as though her husband's character was being attacked.
- Felt as though she and her family were being called racist.

Can I Touch Your Hair?

My Frustrations

- Personal space is violated.
- Felt like I was on 'display'.
- Frustrated about having to explain my discontent with the actions of this person.

Frustrations Expressed by Other Individual

- Seemed surprised at my discontent.
- Didn't understand what the issue was.

How Does Privilege Impact Our Conversations???

Like with any form of privilege, racial privilege is impacted by the following factors as society evolves. Although people with societal privilege do not intend to be hurtful, these elements are often part of the underlying conversation.

Pervasiveness

Hierarchical Systems

Cumulative

Hegemonic and Normalizing

Durable and Mutating

Internalized

Restrictive

Intersecting



Curiosity, Humility, and Platinum Empathy

A New Way to Communicate

When situations such as this happen, one way to achieve effective interpersonal communication is by using the tools of curiosity, humility, and platinum empathy. This method allows for speaking your authentic truth while leaving space for dialogue over debate.

Curiosity

Curiosity Requires:

- Asking questions to better understand.
- Asking questions to establish shared meaning.
- Asking questions to diffuse a contentious situation.

Black Lives Matter or All Lives Matter:

- Can you help me understand why you feel that way?
- That's a common misconception, would you allow me to elaborate further?

Humility

Humility Requires:

- Taking a deep breath.
- Holding onto your beliefs 'lightly'.
- Active Listening

Book Club:

- Assume positive intent (although it's really hard)
- Asking yourself: 'Is there something I'm missing?'

Platinum Empathy

Platinum Empathy Requires:

- Moving beyond the 'Golden Rule'.
- Stretching past your comfort zone.

Can I Touch Your Hair:

- Asking to be treated how 'you' want to be treated.
- Avoiding defensiveness. (If you're the offender)



Questions???

Influential Works

Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice (2016) by Adams, Bell, Goodman, and Joshi

White Racial Consciousness Model (1994) by Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson

Personal Communicating and Racial Equity (2016) by Dr. John Stewart

35 Dumb Things Well-Intended People Say (2016) by Dr. Maura Cullen

Strangers in Their Own Land (2016) by Arlie Hochschild

Dear White America (2016) by Tim Wise