



# ROBS-cultural competency

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CRITICALLY RETHINKING DIVERSITY

## Working agreements

- Confidentiality, and confidentiality  
Stay safe, in order to get usefully uncomfortable.  
*People's stories stay; your learning can leave.*
- “Yes, and...” – i.e. “Be kind *and* brave.”
- Make this useful – i.e. “*Look for [your] learning*” (*Fakequity*, 2017).

Questions are...

*welcome*

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A “yes, and...” question: How could political correctness (PC) help *and* hinder us in having a worthwhile conversation today?



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Can we talk about “political correctness”?

- A. Language, actions and policy that **strive not to disparage or disadvantage** a group of people by default/as the status quo
- B. **(Liberal) language, actions and policy** that police *any possible* offense, asserting one right way to think
- C. **A pejorative (conservative) label**—as in, “*You’re just being PC!*”—used to undermine legitimate efforts to address bias and discrimination
- D. A declared “**threat**” to freedom of speech
- E. Code for “**you have no sense of humor**”
- F. An underlying cause of **silence in vital conversations** about equity and inclusion



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## On calling out, calling in and cancel culture

**Calling out/in** is the act of naming how someone's speech or action is inappropriate, problematic or incorrect to you and/or to a community. **Calling out** and **calling in** are distinguished by *intent* and *method*: **calling out** tends to describe acts of publicly shaming someone for specific action or speech, whereas **calling in** describes engaging someone about what they said/did with respect for them, your relationship and the community. **Calling out** stems more from a *punitive justice* mindset, whereas **calling in** is rooted in *restorative justice*, which demands no less accountability from us for our actions and speech while striving to repair relationships and for mutual growth.

**Calling out** is linked to **cancel culture**, which is defined variously as:

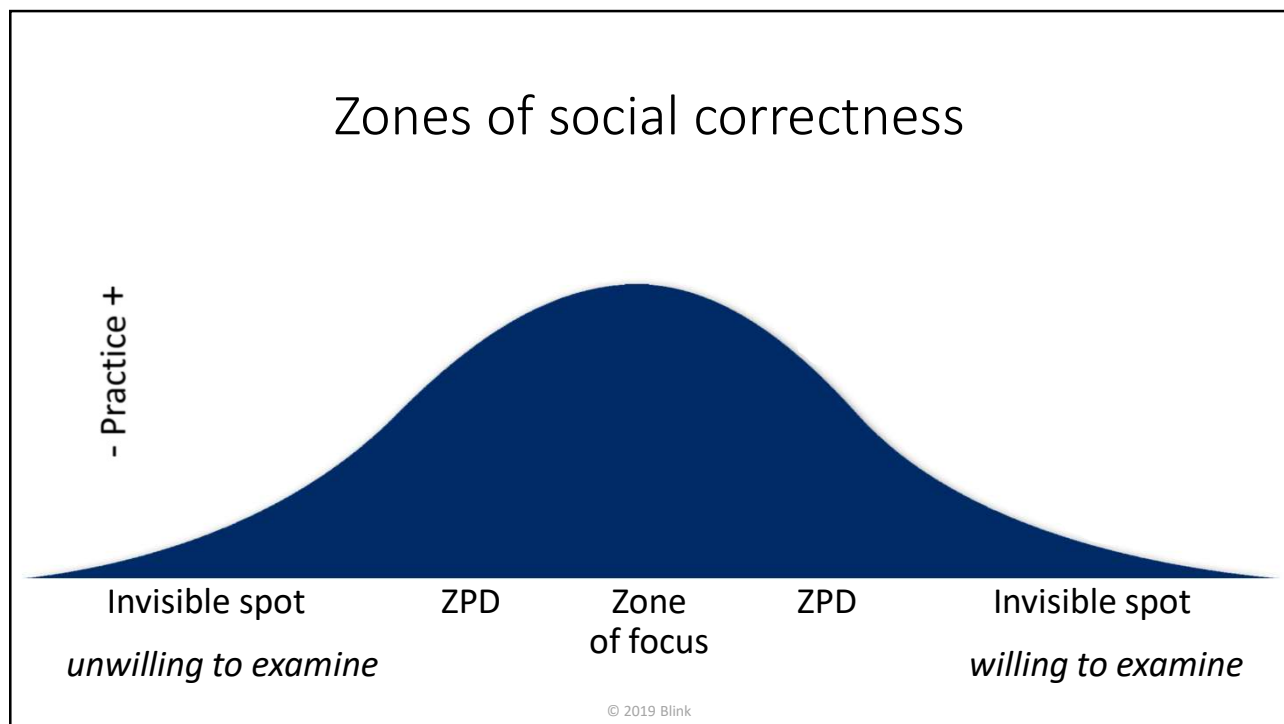
- An outcome of progressive/left-wing/social justice policing and censorship, in the form of political correctness and identity politics – i.e. “outrage culture”;
- An act of resistance to unjust social norms, with roots in the [boycotts of the Civil Rights Movement](#);
- A call for accountability, that is inversely effective, depending on the status of the person getting called out.

Criticism of **cancel culture** often focuses on “cancelling” at an interpersonal level, overlooking the institutional systems that “cancel” entire groups (through systematic, structural discrimination, disenfranchisement and genocide). As sports columnist Sally Jenkins argues, **cancel culture** is *not* demanding that sports teams de-mascotize Native Americans: **cancel culture** “for real” is defining people as mascots in the first place; it's over-riding treaties and sovereignty agreements to build an oil pipeline; it's "superimposing... heroic White narratives" over the narratives, accomplishments and rights of Indigenous peoples.

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“Canceling is a way to acknowledge that you don’t have to have the power to change structural inequality. You don’t even have to have the power to change all of public sentiment. But as an individual, you can still have power beyond measure.”

—Anne Charity Hudley, Chair of Linguistics of African America, UC Santa Barbara



“This drives me crazy about my own side these days where I talk to young conservative activists, college students and say ‘Look by all means, fight political correctness if that’s what you want to do.’ But just because being rude is politically incorrect doesn’t mean being rude is good. And **so much of what’s happening I think on both sides of the political aisle is this idea that you can do almost any horrible thing if it annoys the right people.** And that’s a huge part of the defense of Donald Trump, which I just find intellectually bankrupt, which is ‘Well, he’s got the right enemies’ or ‘He’s making the right people upset.’ Well, **you have to look at what is actually upsetting them** [emphasis added].”

—Jonah Goldberg, Senior Editor, *National Review*, 2018

“... a free-for-all is not the same as freedom for all. What truly makes us free is **being bound to others** in mutual aid and obligation, **having to work things out** the best we can in our neighborhoods and towns, as if our fates were entwined – because they are – **as if we could not secede from one another**, because, in the end, we cannot. Binding ourselves this way actually liberates us. It reveals that we are equal in dignity. It reminds us that rights come with responsibilities. It reminds us, in fact, that **rights properly understood are responsibilities** [emphasis added].”

—Eric Liu, Founder, Citizen University, TED2019

## Cultural competency: A working definition

**Cultural competency** grounds policy and practice in the understanding and discernment of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (Gorski, 2013), rather than the memorization and mastery of specific words and rules. **Cultural competency** is “not a state at which one arrives; rather it is a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning... throughout a lifetime” (AEA, 2011) to “bring into check power imbalances, engage in respectful and dynamic partnerships with others, and hold systems and structures accountable” (Tervalon and Garcia) for equity and inclusion.

**Cultural competency** comprises:

- Intentionally growing **oneself**;
- Cultivating relationships with **others**;
- Shaping one’s **environment and context** “toward justice” (Parker, 1871); and
- Learning and practicing **language, tools and skills** to advance equity and inclusion, for mutual individual, community and institutional thriving at the “micro, to mezzo and macro” levels (Chavez, Tervalon, & Murray-Garcia, 2012) of a community.

ROBS-cultural competency:  
 Concepts, language, tools and skills to deliver  
 on ROBS' promise in the experiences and  
 outcomes for each and all in ROBS'  
 intentionally diverse community.

Is there “an agenda” behind cultural  
 competency? Yes. ROBS' mission and core  
 values.

## Social justice: A “yes, and...” working definition

- A. “Anything its champions want it to mean” (Goldberg, 2014)
- B. Specific, often liberal or progressive, stances on social issues (whether a specific choice/action, perspective or framework for understanding)
- C. Individual, collective and institutional striving to realize the core promises of your community for all—not just some—community members to thrive, through ongoing, intentional discernment and action, which requires:
- D. “A recognition that:
  - all people are individuals, but we are also members of socially constructed groups;
  - society is stratified, and social groups are valued unequally;
  - social groups that are valued more highly have greater access to resources and this access is structured into the institutions and cultural norms;
  - social injustice is real and exists today;
  - relations of unequal power are constantly being enacted at both the micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels;
  - we are all socialized to be complicit in these relations;
  - those who claim to be for social justice must strategically act from that claim in ways that challenge social injustice; and
  - this action requires a commitment to an ongoing and lifelong process” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014).



## CC practices, for example

- Noticing reflexive responses and assumptions – *how*: head, heart, gut, impulse to action and *how much*: intensity
- Considering 4-6 perspectives before offering what you think
- Allowing silence
- Breaking silence
- Practicing beginner's and growth mindsets
- Minding my own safety and useful discomfort
- Being prepared to acknowledge hurt, apologize and repair
- Speaking from I, listening for we (which still includes I)

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Tools for conversations about identity slurs  
and/or when slurs come up

If you're aware that a term is a slur or can be used to degrade/name-call, please *don't* use it, especially if other language will convey what is vital for you to say. Why? To strive for mutual safety, and so that you may be heard more effectively.



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## Identity slurs, not all equal

Denotative identity words are sometimes used with derogatory intent, for example: girl, gay, Mexican.

Some denotative words have been overwhelmed by pejorative connotation and usage as identity slurs, for example: lame, retarded.

Some identity words are exclusively or primarily slurs. Their hateful, hurtful connotations are integral to their definitions.

Some identity slurs have institutional and cultural power behind them, and, therefore, their usage perpetuates systemic injustice.

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## When words may also be derogatory

- Do you care? (Honestly.)
- Does it matter to you only if someone is offended?  
And/or does it matter to you, whether or not they let you know?
- Is there another way to say what you're trying to say?  
(Maybe you can create one.)
- Can you begin with your intent and ask for help?



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“Essentially, to be anti-racist is to admit when we’re being racist.”

—Ibram Kendi

Basic when-hurt-happens competencies (if it matters to you):

1. Be prepared to respond and grow when hurt happens in conversations about racism.
2. Acknowledge that harm has/may have just happened.
3. Address not just *what happened*, but with whom.
4. Stop. Reflect on what you/we can do so it doesn’t have to happen *again*.



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## When hurt has just happened



- To you
- By you, and you're aware of it
- By you, and you're *unaware* of it
- With you bystanding, and you're aware of it
- With you bystanding, and you're unaware until someone else names it...
- Notice yourself: head, heart, gut and impulse to action
- Discern what's for you and what's for the group
- Decide whether you *can* and *will* address what happened, even if you don't know *how*
- Offer and ask, including whether and how to strive for repair

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Thank you

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