Confronting Whiteness
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Intros:
1. Name
2. Racial Identity
3. What is “whiteness”?
Topics to be Covered

- What is whiteness?
- What are habits?
- What are the three habits of whiteness?
- How can we embody new habits?
In colonial America “white” first emerged as a legal category in the 1690s

- Defined negatively - whiteness as not being anything but European
- The advantage of whiteness - not having rights and privileges taken away.

Micah
Definition: Habit

unconscious reactions to our environment developed through repeated activity.
Three Habits of Whiteness

1. White antipathy to “strangeness”
   - Creation of “the other” and normalizing “whiteness”
Examples of “othering”

Other examples?

- Ethnic food aisles
- “Skin tone” colors in makeup, crayons, bandaids, undergarments match white skin
- White dolls (no other choice)
- Movie superheroes are majority white
- Speaking “proper English”
- Products being under lock and key - have to ask for access

Micah
Three Habits of Whiteness

White habits of “entitlement”

- Striving to feel pride in your “superior” racial group
Examples of “superiority”

Other examples?
- Celebrating Columbus Day
- Disney Princesses
- Pedagogy
- Whitewashing history
- “Salvation” story of Europeans “saving” Indigenous Americans
- “Civil” dialogue
- Majority of statues and monuments in US
- Use of Confederate flag

Alicia
Three Habits of Whiteness

White habits of guilt

- Feeling empty when white racial identity is recognized
- Whiteness does not represent positive history or traits
Examples of emptiness

Other examples?
- Spiritual emptiness leads to cultural appropriation
- Wearing cultures as costumes
- Celebrating Cesar Chavez Day - intent versus impact: how are we celebrating and educating?
“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

-Maya Angelou
White antipathy to “strangeness” & creation of “other”

We can embody new habits by...

In our personal lives:
- Work through Layla Saad’s *Me and White Supremacy*
- Investigate/change white supremacist language that we use
- Challenge “traditional” anything (practices, policies, stories, etc.)
- Learn all the histories, not just white American history

At Chico State:
- Challenge “traditional” hiring practices
- Require demonstrated diversity
- Write job descriptions that emphasize inclusive pedagogies
- Examine racially coded language in hiring process (“They aren’t a good fit”)

Alicia
White habit of “entitlement” - superiority complex

We can embody new habits by...

In our personal lives:
- What is my intent when I do antiracist work?
- How can I de-center myself from this meeting, conversation, curriculum, etc.?
- Make space for BIPOC perspectives
- Listen to BIPOC and believe them

At Chico State:
- Be careful about optical allyship
- Examine intent of diversity work (is it white-centered? Why are we doing this?)
- Examine curriculum - is it white centered? What other perspectives could you include?
- How can I make my space more inviting and safe for BIPOC?

Micah
3

White habit of guilt - feeling empty with white racial identity

We can embody new habits by...

**In our personal lives:**
- Acknowledge your own racial identity
- Look to positive antiracist role models within your racial group
- Sit in your racial discomfort and watch it with curiosity
- Look to your own ethnic identity for fulfillment

**At Chico State:**
- Join the Good Ancestor Project
- Challenge white silence
- Continue to listen and learn from our colleagues of color, AND don’t continuously burden them with this work
- Speak up for policy change in your area
- Continue these conversations in your area
Inspiration

ANTI-RACISM IN U.S. HISTORY
THE FIRST TWO HUNDRED YEARS
Herbert Aptheker

THE FEARLESS
Benjamin Lay

The Quaker Dwarf Who Became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist
With a new preface
Marcus Rediker
Author of "The Slave Ship"
“White people cannot, in the generality, be taken as models of how to live. Rather, the white man is himself in sore need of new standards which will release him from his confusion and place him once again in fruitful communion with the depths of his own being.”

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
Anne Braden

- White antiracist activist
- Embodied “new habits of whiteness”
Questions?
Comments?
Thank you!