# Common Racist Behaviors and Attitudes of Some/Many White People

(Compiled in 2004 or so)

**Directions ~ Review these common group dynamics:**

* 1. Check-off any dynamics which you have observed or heard a credible story about.
  2. Make a note next to the dynamics that you have personally experienced, felt, or done.
  3. Add any additional common patterns/dynamics you have witnessed or experienced.

**Some/Many White People Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):**

1. Believe they have “earned” what they have, rather than acknowledge the extensive white privilege and unearned advantages they receive; believe that if People of Color just worked harder…

2. Not notice the daily indignities that People of Color experience; deny them and rationalize them away with PLEs (Perfectly Logical Explanations)

3. Work to maintain the status quo and protect the advantages and privileges they receive

4. Believe that white cultural norms, practices and values are superior and better

5. Internalize the negative stereotypes about People of Color and believe that white people are smarter and superior to People of Color

6. Want People of Color to conform and assimilate to white cultural norms and practices

7. Accept and feel safer around People of Color who have assimilated and are “closer to white”

8. Blame People of Color for the barriers and challenges they experience; believe that if they “worked harder” they could “pull themselves up by their bootstraps”

9. Believe that People of Color are not competent and are only hired/promoted to fill quotas

10. Interrupt and talk over People of Color

11. Resent taking direction from a Person of Color

12. Dismiss and minimize frustrations of People of Color and categorize the person raising issues as militant, angry, having an “attitude,” working their agenda, not a team player...

13. Focus on their “good intent” as white people, rather than on the negative impact of their behavior

14. Focus on how much progress we have made, rather than on how much more needs to change

15. Want People of Color to “get over it” and move on quickly

16. Get defensive when People of Color express their frustrations with current organizational and societal dynamics

17. “Walk on eggshells” and act more distant and formal with People of Color

18. Segregate themselves from People of Color and rarely develop authentic relationships across race

19. Exaggerate the level of intimacy they have with individual People of Color

20. Fear that they will be seen and “found out” as a racist, having racial prejudice

21. Focus on themselves as an individual (I’m not racist; I’m a good white), and refuse to acknowledge the cultural and institutional racism People of Color experience daily

22. Pressure and punish white people who actively work to dismantle racism to conform and collude with the racist status quo; criticize, gossip about, and find fault with white change agents

23. Expect People of Color to be the “diversity expert” and take the lead in raising and addressing racism as their “second (unpaid) job”

24. Minimize, under-value, ignore, overlook and discount the talents, competencies and contributions of People of Color

25. Rephrase and reword the comments of People of Color

26. Ask People of Color to repeat what they have just said

27. Assume the white teacher/coach/facilitator/employee, etc., is in charge/the leader; assume People of Color are in service roles

28. Rationalize away racist treatment of People of Color as individual incidents or the result of something the Person of Color did/failed to do

29. Dismiss the racist experiences of People of Color with comments such as: That happens to me too...You’re too sensitive...That happened because of \_\_\_\_\_, it has nothing to do with race!

30. Judge a Person of Color as over-reacting and too emotional when they are responding to the cumulative impact of multiple recent racist incidents

31. Accuse People of Color of “playing the race card” whenever they challenge racist policies and practices; instead of exploring the probability of negative differential impact based on race, or that racist attitudes and beliefs are operating

32. If confronted by a Person of Color, shut down and focus on what to avoid saying or doing in the future, rather than engaging and learning from the interaction

33. Look to People of Color for direction, education, coaching on how to act & what not to do

34. Compete with other white people to be “the good white:” the best ally, the one People of Color let into their circle, etc.

35. If a white person makes a racist comment or action, aggressively confront them and pile on the feedback to distance from them and prove who is a better ally

36. Seek approval, validation, and recognition from People of Color

37. If confronted by a Person of Color, view it as an “attack” and focus on and critique HOW they engaged, not the original comments or behaviors

38. Disengage if feel any anxiety or discomfort

39. Avoid confronting other white people on their racist attitudes and behaviors

40. When trying to help People of Color, feel angry if they don’t enthusiastically appreciate the help

41. Believe there is one “right” way, meaning “my way” or the “white way”

42. Engage in “tone policing” of People of Color

***More productive approaches:***

43. Track patterns of differential treatment of People of Color and intervene to stop inappropriate actions and educate others

44. Continually learn more about the experiences of People of Color and racism

45. Recognize when People of Color might be reacting out of cumulative impact, and offer space to talk about issues and their experiences

46. Analyze policies and practices to assess any differential impact on People of Color and intervene to create change

47. Constantly track daily organizational activities to ensure fairness, respect, and inclusion for all people with respect to group dynamics, communication, task assignments, professional development opportunities, decision-making, conflict management, mentoring, networking, etc.

**Compiled By: Kathy Obear,** [**Kathy@drkathyobear.com**](mailto:Kathy@drkathyobear.com)[**www.drkathyobear.com**](http://www.drkathyobear.com)