

JUSTICE 2024

Working for More Racial Justice

Participant Materials

Workshop Objectives

- Understand who the dominant group is, why Indigenous, Black and racialized people are a non-dominant group.
- Use the Equity Lens to challenge “normal” life.
- Identify why allyship is necessary for equality.
- Determine specific behaviour required of allies.
- Create a check list of allies in the local union.
- Create a check list of actions Indigenous, Black and racialized workers and allies can undertake in the local union and in the workplace.

The Equity Lensⁱ

The “equity lens” is a tool to help uncover how racism and sexism work whether we know it or not. An “equity lens” also points to ways to address this.

This tool provides some guidance in situations that for some people seem “normal” or “neutral.” And for dominant groups, privilege usually appears as “normal” or “neutral.”

There are six aspects of inequality in “normal” situations

1. **Racism and sexism ARE the norm**, not aberrations. Racial and gender equality work must uncover what is systemic and “normal” in everyday union work; otherwise racism and sexism will be reproduced.
2. **The differential impact** of racism and sexism on Indigenous, Black or racialized workers, on white people and men, and on the union **is what exposes seemingly “neutral” practices**. We need to be on the look-out for this.
3. **Assumptions are always at work about who and what matters, about who and what is “normal.”** We need to be alert to our own assumptions and those of co-workers and the organizations we work with.
4. Indigenous, Black and racialized workers routinely have **less influence and voice and this affects our union’s ability to make equitable decisions**. We should be critical of justifications such as “they don’t come to meetings,” or “they aren’t interested” as unhelpful in uncovering why this disparity in influence exists.
5. **A key result** of union work done in an anti-racist, anti-sexist way should be **more equitable influence of Indigenous, Black and**

racialized workers in our union. We should assess progress with this yardstick in mind.

6. Part of racial and gender equality work is to **challenge the widespread belief (and practices stemming from it) that only Indigenous, Black and racialized workers benefit** from racial and gender justice. This belief isolates Indigenous, Black and racialized workers, discredits their experience, silences their complaints, divides us, and deprives our union of experience and solidarity. Our work needs to challenge the notion that increased equality is at the long-term expense of white workers and men.

Group work

In your group, write down the number of your group at the top of your table's flipchart, then do the exercise. The facilitator will tell you when to post your flipchart.

Group 1

Racism and sexism ARE the norm, not aberrations. Racial and gender equality work must uncover what is systemic and "normal" in everyday union work; otherwise racism and sexism will be reproduced.

Question: In the union as a whole, it is "normally" (and statistically) true that the majority of local executives, shop stewards and committee members are white men. How does this "normality" reproduce racism and sexism in positions of leadership in most local unions?

Discuss and write three points on your table's flipchart.

Group 2

The differential impact of racism and sexism on Indigenous, Black and racialized workers, on white people and men, and on the union **is what exposes seemingly "neutral" practices**. We need to be on the lookout for this.

Question: In the union as a whole, the democratic ("neutral") practice of local union elections produces a majority of white male executives.

a) What impact does this have on Indigenous, Black and racialized workers?

Write three points

b) If white men are numerically, politically, influentially and culturally dominant, is the democratic practice of local union elections "neutral"? Write either yes or no

Group 3

Assumptions are always at work about who and what matters, about who and what is “normal.” We need to be alert to our own assumptions and those of co-workers and the organizations we work with.

Instructions:

1) Draw a table with two columns on your table’s flipchart, as below

Normal	Changed behaviour of “normal” with influence of Indigenous, Black and racialized workers

2) For the left column, work quickly and brainstorm ten assumptions about “normal” behaviour for a local union president. Do not discuss any assumption. You are not analyzing assumptions. Just write them down.

3) For the right column, choose three assumptions from the left column. In the right column, for each assumption, discuss and write down how

the normal *behaviour* would change if influenced by Indigenous, Black or racialized worker.

Group 4

Indigenous, Black and racialized workers routinely have **less influence and voice and this affects our union's ability to make equitable decisions**. We should be critical of justifications such as “they don't come to meetings,” or “they aren't interested” as unhelpful in uncovering why this disparity in influence exists.

Question: If Indigenous, Black and racialized workers had *more* influence and voice in our union's ability to make equitable decisions, what would be different about decisions to deal with:

- Agenda items at monthly local membership meetings, particularly with issues of interest to white, racialized and indigenous women?
- Harassment, sexual harassment and violence in the union and the workplace?
- Collective bargaining language, including things such as
 - Childcare?
 - Parental leave?
 - Domestic violence?
 - Improved benefit plans?
 - Religious practices or holidays?

Write down at one point for every bulleted item. If you have time, add more points to the bulleted items.

Group 5

A key result of union work done in an anti-racist, anti-sexist way should be **more equitable influence of racialized workers and women workers** in our union. We should assess progress with this yardstick in mind.

Question: Identify at least three ways to measure progress of more equitable influence of Indigenous, Black and racialized workers in the union.

Group 6

Part of racial and gender equality work is to **challenge the widespread belief (and practices stemming from it) that only Indigenous, Black and racialized workers benefit** from racial and gender justice. This belief isolates Indigenous, Black and racialized workers, discredits their experience, silences their complaints, divides us, and deprives our union of experience and solidarity. Our work needs to challenge the notion that increased equality is at the long-term expense of white workers and men.

Question: If equality of Indigenous, Black and racialized workers can be achieved in the union, how would this benefit all men in the union?

Write down at least three benefits.

What is Allyship?

Definition:

"When a **person of privilege** works in solidarity and partnership with a **marginalized group** of people to help take down the systems that challenge that group's basic rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society."ⁱⁱ ...in other words, **both the marginalized group and its allies challenge things that appear to be “normal.”**

Actions and behaviour:ⁱⁱⁱ

- **Actively acknowledge our privileges and openly discuss them:**

We recognize that as recipients of privilege we will always be capable of perpetuating systems of oppression from which our privilege came.

- **Listen more and speak less:**

We hold back on our ideas and opinions, and resist the urge to “save” the people we seek to work with as they will figure out their own solutions that meet their needs.

- **Take guidance and direction from marginalized people we work with (not the other way around).**

- **Educate ourselves about our own privilege without expecting marginalized groups to educate us:**

Marginalized groups do not need the double burden of dealing with their own oppression *and* educating privileged groups about the very privilege that is oppressing the marginalized group.

- **Build our capacity to receive criticism:**

Develop honesty and accept accountability for mistakes that come with privilege with our mistakes.

- **Acknowledge and accept that allyship is an emotional process:**

Understand that we will feel uncomfortable, challenged, and hurt.

- **Needs of marginalized groups are primary – needs of allies are secondary:**

Do not expect the people we seek to work with to provide emotional support to allies.

- **Decline awards or special recognition for confronting issues that marginalized people have to live with every day. An ally is an ally. An ally is not a “white hero.”**

Privileged groups provide benefits to its own members for “good work” in social justice. At the same time, privileged groups fail to dismantle systemic (normal) structures that cause marginalization in the first place.

Personal Reflection: For white people as allies

The initial step of allyship is extremely personal. The exercise below will help you with this initial step.

- Read slowly through the six questions below. Do this twice.
- In the space provided, write answers for questions 1 through 3.
- In the space provided, write an answer for one question of your choice from questions 4 through 6.
- When you have finished, take a large yellow post-it note and write out what you are experiencing as a result of answering the four questions. **Do not put your name on the post-it note.** The facilitator will ask you to post your post-it note to the wall.

1. How does my privilege take up space physically?
2. How does my privilege take up space verbally?
3. When is it appropriate as a person of privilege to take up space physically and/or verbally?
4. How do I find out more about people I seek to work with?
5. What are my assumptions about what is “normal” and how did these assumptions develop?
6. When allies work with marginalized groups, who determines the boundaries?

Question 1: How does my privilege take up space physically?

Question 3: When is it appropriate as a person of privilege to take up space physically and/or verbally?

Personal Reflection: For Indigenous, Black or racialized people assessing how to work with allies

The initial step of accepting allyship is extremely personal. The exercise below will help you with this initial step. Debriefing question “How did this exercise help you – first to allies, then to marginalized.

- Read slowly through the six questions below. Do this twice.
- In the space provided, write answers for questions 1 through 3.
- In the space provided, write an answer for one question of your choice from questions 4 through 6 .
- When you have finished, take a large green post-it note and write out what you are experiencing as a result of answering the four questions. **Do not put your name on the post-it note.** The facilitator will ask you to post your post-it note to the wall.

When addressing an ally:

1. What would it require of me to demand more physical space?
2. What would it require of me to demand more verbal space?
3. When is it appropriate for an ally to take up your space physically and/or verbally?
4. How would I deal with an ally who gets angry about my demands?
5. What are an ally’s assumptions about what is “normal” that I need to challenge?
6. When I work with an ally, what would they need to do to earn my trust?

Create a Community of Allies for More Racial Justice using LTAA

LTAA is an acronym for:

- 1) The List
- 2) The Things
- 3) The Ask
- 4) The Action

LTAA Table

The List	The Things	
Name the most likely people you would approach to create a community of allies.	Identify three things that stood out for you from this workshop 1	What would you tell people on the list about:
	2	
	3	

	The Ask
	Related to all or any of the three things above, how would you ask them to be an ally to do one thing (you determine what) that will create more racial justice in our union?
	The Action
	How shall we do what is asked for? E.g., observe practices of allyship to make a plan and to act on the plan.

ⁱ Adapted from *Dancing on Live Embers: Challenging Racism in Organizations*, Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas, Between the Lines Publications, 2006.

ⁱⁱ <https://theantioppressionnetwork.com/allyship/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from www.peernetbc.com/what-is-allyship

