

Postcard



Welcome to our Postcard from the ROCK. These Postcards feature topical DEI subjects and are designed to be read in just a few minutes.

A QUESTION TO PONDER...

Does Diversity training (e.g. , inclusion, anti-oppression) produce change?

A few years ago, I conducted a consultation with a city's Women's Advisory Committee. Although this was a public event in a racially diverse city, the entire group, except for one person was White. The topic was on racial equity.

As the discussion continued, I marveled at the group's knowledge of and fluency in concepts like gender parity, BIPOC women and anti-oppression. I felt almost intimidated by the power of that room!

Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a racialized Muslim woman (let's call her Jamilla) hesitantly approach the doorway. I coaxed her to come in and sit with the other women.

To shorten the story, here is what happened next. The Advisory Committee would not allow Jamillah a word edgewise. Every time she opened her mouth to speak, they either completed her sentence, or explained, "What Jamilla meant was...". I had to pause the group sometimes so we could hear from Jamillah.

I had an epiphany that evening: these well-intentioned Committee members had obviously done the DEI/anti-oppression training circuit. Yet every action they took—including complaining to the city that I wouldn't let them speak—reeked of oppression. Their knowledge had shifted...but not their actions.

How do you and your organization translate DEI concepts into SHIFT--in thinking, behaviors and systems that enable oppression? Furthermore, amidst the plethora of anti-racism/anti-oppression 'trainings', how many times a day do you hear or read another whisper or social media post questioning the right of Jewish, Indigenous or Muslim people to equal respect—even the right to exist?

September is a good opportunity for such pondering. It's the month of the Jewish High Holiday Yom Kippur; the Muslim eid Milad un Nabi celebrating the birth of the Prophet Mohammad; and in Canada, Indigenous National Truth and Reconciliation Day and Day of remembering the thousands of Indigenous children lost through residential schools.

True SHIFT is not an overnight process. And it will not happen through a workshop. It happens with continuous daily effort to reinforce and convert learning into action; with your people taking ownership as they experience learning in real, down to earth, meaningful, and relateable ways. Here are some ideas to convert learning into SHIFT:

1. Create a process for workshop attendees to share learnings with the team
2. Extract action-oriented learnings and incorporate them into your Communications or Training Plan
3. Seek ways to continuously build on and expand the workshop conversation.

Let's end "Quick Fix" thinking and move to a better way that truly SHIFTS the DEI conversation. Make training more than a "dog and pony show". Utilize tools that reinforce learning and convert learning into action!

Maureen Brown, Founder and Director , ROCK Diversity/Divigo

Further Reading

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/joefolkman/2020/10/08/is-practicing-inclusion-and-valuing-diversity-a-common-blind-spot/>

Thanks for reading our Postcard from the ROCK. If you would like to receive this in another language please contact us at info@rockdiversity.ca

We know you are pressed for time so we offer DEI learning in multiple formats. Our Divigo web app for example, features scenario-based learning; micro-learning;podcasts; inspiration; curated resources; and access to subject matter experts - It's like a diversity consultant in your pocket!



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