Centering Equity and Inclusion in Cultivating Community

by

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Our first brief, Examining Equitable and Inclusive Organizations in Environmental Education: Perspectives from the Field (Romero, Foreman, Strang, Rodriguez, Payan, & Moore Bailey 2019), drew our attention to an important consideration: that "many equity, inclusion, and diversity initiatives are primarily focused on external-facing programs; that is, organizations are more likely to be thinking about equity, inclusion, and diversity in regard to learning experiences for learners, as opposed to the organizational work environment" (p. 3). The lack of focus on the organizational work environment marginalizes people of color in the field.

The second brief in this series, Intentional Hiring and Recruitment through the Lens of Equity and Inclusion: Insights and Lessons Learned from Crissy Field Center, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (Romero, Foreman, Strang, Maybury, Pepito, & Rocca 2019), highlighted the organizational journey toward mitigating unconscious bias in their recruitment and hiring practices, as a means towards cultivating a workforce that reflects the youth they serve and their organization-wide core values of equity and inclusion.

The third brief in this series, Building Towards an Inclusive Organizational Culture: Insights and Lessons Learned from YES Nature to Neighborhoods (Hernández, Romero, Foreman & Aaholm 2020), highlighted the organizational journey toward building an inclusive organizational culture, as a means towards advancing equity and inclusion within the work environment and enabling the organization to better engage participants and partners.

This fourth brief brings our work full-circle, serving to amplify the perspectives of Professionals of Color who work in outdoor science organizations. In this brief, Jasmin Gonzalez and Martha Arciniega draw on their experiences to highlight ways organizations can center equity and inclusion through cultivating community. We also thank and offer gratitude to Leandra Darden and Gina Carrillo for their review, advice and support of this brief.

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CONTEXT: WORKING TOWARDS EQUITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

The Lawrence Hall of Science and Justice Outside (formally known as Youth Outside) launched a two-year pilot workshop series, Working Towards Equitable Organizations (WTEO), from 2018-2020. This project supported California-based outdoor science organizations to build capacity to foster equitable, inclusive, and culturally relevant work environments and organizations. We believe that equitable, inclusive, and culturally relevant work environments are critical to supporting racially, socio-economically, and culturally diverse leaders in the field of environmental education. In turn, we believe that having more diverse leadership is a critical step towards fostering a more representative, responsive, and relevant environmental education and outdoor science field for all communities and identities. This pilot workshop series specifically focused on supporting organizational leaders to amplify and encourage the voices of educators of color who are significantly underrepresented in the leadership of residential outdoor science schools. WTEO workshops provided professional development to educators of color to pave a way toward leadership positions in outdoor science and environmental education. The design of this workshop series was supported by a study that sought to better understand how environmental education organizations think about and operationalize equity and inclusion in the work environment by gathering perspectives of environmental education organization leaders and educators of color. Findings from this study have been published in a practitioner's brief (available at http://beetlesproject.org/resources/equitable-and-inclusive-work-environments/), along with implications and considerations for the field.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jasmin Gonzalez, M.Sc., is an environmental educator of Cuban, Dominican, and Italian heritage and identifies as Latinx and multi-racial. She has worked in the field of outdoor, environmental, and experiential education for over seven years with various organizations throughout the United States and Latin America. She was a member of the BEETLES WTEO 2020 cohort for the Profxessionals of Color Institute and values bringing attention and action to Equity, Inclusion, & Diversity issues in environmental education.

Martha Arciniega, M.Sc., is an environmental educator of Mexican heritage and identifies as Mexican and Chicana. Martha has worked as a science educator for seven years and and, for three of those years, has worked as an outdoor educator. Martha was a member of the BEETLES WTEO 2020 cohort for the Professionals of Color Institute which created an opportunity for deep reflection of lived experiences and a journey to integrate these values into her work.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) have been systematically excluded from outdoor spaces and recreational activities. For example, it wasn't until the 1964 Civil Rights Act that Black communities could legally use public spaces, which included National and State Parks (Humphrey, 2020). Although there have been efforts to create more inclusive outdoor recreational spaces, BIPOC continue to experience discrimination, and some have lost their lives. Two recent examples include Christian Cooper, a Black birder who had the cops called on him by a white woman while bird watching (CBS News, 2020) and Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man who was killed while exercising outdoors (Sanchez, 2020). Further, when we look within the field of environmental science and education, we continue to see the disproportional underrepresentation of BIPOC in career pathways and positions of leadership (Taylor, 2014).

To counteract such exclusion, many outdoor science organizations have implemented different strategies. They have strived to create opportunities for meaningful experiences in natural settings for students from diverse communities. Outdoor science organizations have also made efforts to interview and hire more diverse field staff. Field staff play a significant role because they connect with students on the ground and find ways to make the experience transformational, unique, and relevant to students' daily lives. Yet, staff diversity alone cannot result in equity and inclusion in environmental education. **Equity, Inclusivity, and Diversity (EI&D)** training add to efforts to counteract exclusion to outdoor recreational spaces and careers. However, EI&D work within environmental education organizations has historically been led by and centered white people (Romero et al., 2019); subsequently this has de-centered BIPOC staff perspectives and needs.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

EI&D is an acronym for Equity, Inclusivity, and Diversity. EI&D is used instead of DEI to emphasize the importance of creating equitable and inclusive environments and systems that in turn support diversity. To learn more, see the work of eXtension Organizing Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at https://dei.extension.org/

We represent staff of color working in the environmental education field. The perspectives of this brief and the values outlined for creating a community that centers equity and inclusion are shaped by the Working Towards Equitable Organizations (WTEO) project. Drawing on our first-hand experiences, the goal of this brief is to bring awareness to the ways that white supremacy culture has shown up in the field of environmental education. We also share ways in which we believe organizations can counteract those experiences as a means towards cultivating more equitable, inclusive, and racially just organizations. However, this is not a comprehensive manual on how to center equity and inclusion, rather a call for environmental organizations to carefully consider how they are centering BIPOC staff in goals/priorities, decision-making, and providing a space of healing.

COVID-19: THE PANDEMIC THAT HIGHLIGHTED AND EXACERBATED RACIAL INJUSTICE

The WTEO project was intended to and continues to facilitate EI&D work within environmental education organizations. Participants of the 2018-2020 WTEO project included staff in leadership positions as well as early-career environmental educators. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations involved in the WTEO project facilitated conversations with staff related to equity in order to name and mitigate systemic barriers within organizations. Conversations included topics like implicit bias, microaggressions, and EI&D specific language. Both leadership staff and educators who participated in the WTEO project began to understand the importance of removing systemic barriers that prevent historically marginalized communities from choosing or sustaining a career path in environmental education organizations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, WTEO continued the conversation with early-career environmental educators

including those who had been furloughed or laid off.

The environmental education field has been highly vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis — shrinking and even disappearing in some places (Collins, et al., 2020). Staff of color were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic because more got ill, lost their job security, and lost people in their community (Li, 2020). COVID-19 is not the only crisis to strike environmental education organizations this year; it has been a time of political upheaval, persistent race-based violence, and reckoning with systemic racism in the United States. Collectively, we have witnessed the exacerbation of inequities that pose barriers and challenges to sustaining progress of EI&D initiatives within organizations.

As environmental education organizations emerge from these moments of crisis, many must rebuild their organizations, staff, and work environments. Staff of color are an essential component of the reintroduction of field programming and it is important to center them within EI&D work. As organizations begin to rehire field staff, it must be a priority for organizational leaders to hire and sustain staff of color that represent varied backgrounds. Equally important is to create a sense of community that is racially equitable and inclusive. Building a community that recognizes and centers around racial equity and inclusion for BIPOC staff positively impacts the mental and physical health of staff and participants, as well as contributes to the dismantling of **white supremacy culture**.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

White Supremacy Culture refers to cultural norms and standards that promote white supremacy thinking. To learn more, we invite you to engage with the work on Tema Okun: https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/

Here the COVID-19 pandemic is highlighted as a key case study in the way organizations respond to unexpected challenges that force change and re-prioritization. How organizations respond to any crisis is indicative of the true importance of equity, inclusion, and diversity work and the value that is put on addressing problems from an institutional level. This brief outlines values for environmental education organizations to rebuild Staff of Color communities with an EI&D lens after a time of crisis — in our current world or any future scenario.

CENTERING & PRIORITIZING EQUITY WORK

The COVID-19 global health crisis caused many environmental education organizations to cancel programming and close their doors, leaving many in survival mode (Collins et al., 2020). This sudden shift in priorities resulted in many organizations de-centering their equity and inclusion work, if they had even begun that journey. Surveys and interviews of WTEO organizations revealed that for many of them, COVID-19 was a reason that their "plans halted" in continuing to advance their EI&D initiatives (Romero & Pande, 2021). When WTEO BIPOC environmental educators were asked how COVID-19 impacted the EI&D work that had been in process at their workplace, one participant shared: "it crumbled... everything crumbled".

Because survival of the organization was on the line, many BIPOC staff observed their organizations justifying the reduction of resources for newly-implemented programs or "side projects" like EI&D. Simultaneously, staff that identify as BIPOC were disproportionately impacted by furloughs, terminations, and reduced hours. In response to the shift in priorities, a participant of the focus group shared:

> *"Not everyone has a safety net to fall back on. You're saying these things are important to you, but you're not even taking care of the people of color, the few people of color that you have on staff right now."*

The feelings expressed by this participant are a prime example of **performative activism** — of organizations saying "we care" and then showing they don't by the ensuing actions — which rings of hypocrisy in the eyes of BIPOC staff. In short, too many organizations chose not to truly center or prioritize equity work in the face of this crisis. While we recognize the

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Performative Allyship/Activism refers to when a group, organization or business expresses disingenuous solidarity with a cause in order to "protect the company brand". To explore this more, read this article by Carmen Morris: https://www.forbes.com/sites/carmen-morris/2020/11/26/performative-allyship-what-are-the-signs-and-why-leaders-get-exposed/?sh=494aaec622ec

COVID-19 pandemic has brought a lot of instability and uncertainty within the field, this experience is reflective of a systemic issue related to a consistent sense of urgency. The field of environmental education, over the past few years, has quickly jumped into EI&D work where we have observed many organizations moving quickly to "solve" problems of inequity and exclusion. In the focus group of environmental educators, one participant questioned how much urgency there is behind efforts and whether it is motivated primarily because equity and inclusion are "buzzword[s]" in the field. In addition, focus groups have indicated that often, EI&D efforts are exclusive and led by white leadership (Romero, et al., 2019). Understandably, this can lead staff to doubt the true impetus behind EI&D efforts, and further reifies the marginalization and exclusion of BIPOC staff

White supremacy culture often focuses on the "either/or" mentality as well as the belief that there is only one right way of doing things (Okun, 1999). This mentality is shown in the statement above, in which the organization EI&D work "crumbled" and chose survival without continued work in implementing EI&D values. An antidote to that perspective is to view things through the lens of "both/and" instead of "either/or" and explore different ways of doing things. The lens of "both/and" offers up the possibility of more than one idea co-existing. EI&D values can co-exist with the rebuilding and reopening of environmental education organizations. As opposed to going along with the idea that survival must come before EI&D work, these two issues can be reframed as solutions.

As organizations move forward, simply hiring more BIPOC staff without investing monetary resources into EI&D work will not instantly achieve equity and inclusivity in the workplace (Sabharwal, 2014; Toomey, 2018). And, yet, we continue to see this as a deeply problematic part of environmental education wherein organizations think hiring more BIPOC staff will fix the inequities. Instead, organizations must truly embody equity and inclusion within the fabric of their organizations (Hofbauer & Podsiadlowski, 2014).

Organizations can start by asking questions like: *How can we retain BIPOC staff to make meaningful progress on goals, learn from mistakes, and garner experience in affecting change?* By expanding the center of what is important, organizations can outline specific practices that embody the values they claim to hold: *What are the daily, weekly, monthly, and annual practices that center EI&D and move forward on goals, even in a crisis?* This doesn't necessitate a sudden increase in workload, nor a dedicated EI&D team. It's about everyone in the organization serving the mission, but doing it better, more thoroughly, and with a broadened perspective. This can be compared to how a baby learns to walk as they grow up: they still are doing different tasks and activities every day (eating, drinking, playing, etc.) but eventually they learn to walk because they've been building muscles and skills *simultaneously, the whole time*. All of the activities they are participating in contribute in some way to eventually getting on their own two feet, and the "work" of learning to walk is seamlessly intertwined with their general progress and development. Environmental education programs can achieve equitable practice—doing the "work" to walk—by situating active and sustainable changes to how the organization operates.

That could mean asking for staff input on budgeting for compensation to create bilingual materials and providing clarity as to how that responsibility fits within larger goals and individuals' role in them. BIPOC staff have often already been working on these issues without recognition or additional compensation, such as creating curriculum and delivering programs in multiple languages or managing cultural conflicts in field groups. If staff understand more about their own responsibilities and the value they bring to the organization, it can foster a dialogue to prevent overwhelming workloads and have their work more effectively woven into other organization-wide EI&D efforts and program delivery. Prioritizing work such as this that helps meet EI&D goals of inclusivity and is equitable to those that contribute a unique skill that serves the mission.

In addition, it is essential to recognize the humanity of those serving the organization's mission and approach meeting the needs of individual staff in an equitable way, especially during a time of heightened anxiety around safety measures and job security. Organizations must take a holistic approach. For instance, actionable places to start would be providing equitable pay for staff who are bilingual and use that skill in their work, for those who must travel further distances to serve program needs, and for folks who are subject to the emotional labor of working in a predominantly white space. This is also an opportunity to hire more BIPOC intentionally and make the workplace more inviting and warm for BIPOC staff by engaging in deeper, internal, personal work around EI&D and reconstructing the power dynamics within the organizations.

TRANSPARENCY, INCLUSIVE DECISION MAKING, & ACCESS TO POWER

Another characteristic of white supremacy culture is a sense of urgency (Okun, 1999) wherein all decisions are treated as high-pressure and time-sensitive- that the highest-value work is the quickest to be done. The sense of urgency too often costs meaningful collaboration, especially with BIPOC, in favor of immediate action. This has critical implications, particularly in moments of true crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, as organizations were faced with financial turmoil, leaders felt a true sense of urgency to protect their employees' health, as well as to fight for their programs' survival. This left little to no room for methodical, inclusive decision-making processes. While global happenings like this are unpredictable and out of personal control, how we communicate and talk about these events both internally and externally is well within our means. Frequently, the sense of urgency imposed directly counters opportunities to support community and center humanity. When organizations take the time to involve their staff in decision making despite pressing circumstances, they demonstrate that they value the people that comprise the organization over getting things done immediately.

Leaders can include the people impacted by their decisions in a host of ways. For example, leadership might preemptively create conversation around potential issues or conduct surveys of staff, in order to better understand staff perspectives and priorities. Being inclusive in this way may require creative strategies to share information with people while not disclosing sensitive information on the side of the decision makers. Bringing people in intentionally, instead of as an afterthought, emphasizes appreciation for their contributions. By contrast, asking for feedback after decisions have already been made creates a false sense of transparency. It's important for decision-makers to be inclusive and clear about how feedback will be considered or incorporated in the decision-making process.

If people in positions of power are hesitant to share information, that merits inquiry: *Are they afraid of being challenged or losing their power? Are they afraid their decisions will be questioned or that inequities in the process will be revealed?* Reluctance to be transparent may imply an adversarial relationship between staff and leadership as opposed to one of collaboration. There are costs when an organization lacks transparency and does not incorporate BIPOC staff feedback in the decision-making process. However, the gains have the potential to include trust-building, community, equity, inclusion, retention of BIPOC staff, and inspiration. One of the WTEO participants shared their perspective on how decisions were made about COVID-19 furloughs and layoffs:

> *"...what I've seen from the very top, the people that were making decisions on who to cut, we were told that not even our own personal managers were in the decisions to choose staffing. Like to me that still is mind blowing..."*

This underscores both a lack of transparency in the decision-making process and **paternalism**. The managers were not included either. By adequately valuing staff of color as assets that bring unique, necessary skills and perspectives, a cultural shift can begin that contradicts the idea of paternalism- that those that challenge the norm are ill-informed and that those in power know what's best. Paternalism

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Paternalism is the idea that people with power make decisions that impact those without power while not including those without power in the decision-making process. This can be compared to a parent-child relationship in which the parent makes decisions for the child under the idea that the parent knows best. This translates within spaces where there are differential power dynamics, for example, between an employer and an employee. To learn more, read the work of Tema Okun: https://.whitesupremacyculture.info/one-right-way.html

and power hoarding can be damaging- isolating different components of how programs run can lead to confusion and a divided community within an organization (Okun, 1999). There is evidence indicating a relationship between shared leadership and innovative behavior, increasing the ability to adapt to change as well as employee integrity (Hoch, 2012). Moving away from traditional leadership hierarchies contributes to a cultural shift to build trust with staff and makes measurable impacts on organization-specific EI&D goals.

By being transparent about the thoughts around decisions such as this, organizations build trust and create understanding around processes that are often kept unduly private. The impacts of no transparency for BIPOC staff includes a sense of devastation and feeling undervalued. A participant shared how that impacted them:

"...that lack of transparency and communication on why decisions are being made and where, like, are you considering how this impacts your Staff of Color? Like, you're talking about how you value this. Like where you're not only worrying about our job, but also the fact that we're getting furloughed again in the, like, after this three month period, and we might not have anywhere to live."

Events in 2020 around race issues in the U.S., including attacks on the Black, Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islander communities, inflicted **secondary trauma** (Mcann & Pearlman, 1990) on staff, especially those who identify as BIPOC, and made EI&D conversations pressing for our organizations to address. Taking the time to discuss these issues as an organization and not letting institutional inertia take over can seem challenging, yet it is essential to create a dynamic where action is actually taken on new ideas. Organizations acting with a sense of urgency simultaneously leaves folks not in leadership feeling left out, confused about priorities, and wondering how/why decisions were made. This lack of inclusivity in the decision-making process of staff of color means that organizations may not realize the capacity of their staff to help address the issues they are facing.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Secondary trauma is the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first hand trauma experiences of another. To explore this further, we invite you to read the work of The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/secondary-traumatic-stress

Instead, we must empower people at all levels- including staff, students and partners- to challenge white supremacy culture and to bring new ideas to the table. Without a cultural shift that centers transparency and a "both/and" approach over "either/or" thinking, challenges to the status quo by BIPOC staff might be misunderstood as going against the organization, creating tension and triggering defensiveness from leadership. It furthers the mission of many environmental education organizations to practice inquiry and discovery by creating support systems for new ways to do things and make diversifying leadership roles a common practice. When leaders create a culture that encourages challenges to the status quo, they can effectively utilize the assets of BIPOC staff to help address organizational issues. Leaders can put methods in place to consistently take in and support new and creative ideas and think about how their potential setbacks can be pivoted to solutions. For example, with many schools going remote or doing hybrid learning for the 2020-2021 school year, some environmental education organizations successfully leveraged

relationships with school systems to get students outdoors in a safe way to countereact the increased time they spent on the computer. There is a stronger desire and willingness to participate in these programs more than ever before, and capitalizing on staff skills and relationships is an important step in realizing this goal. A concerted effort to produce high quality programming and to deepen relationships is a more inclusive and sustainable way of operating, as opposed to producing with the mentality of "quantity over quality" (Okun, 1999) and making monetary gains, which can lead to net negative gains in EI&D work.

Power sharing can be included in the organization's values, establishing an understanding that challenges to leadership can be uncomfortable, but are not personal, and can lead to positive change. Providing additional training and compensation to staff of color who are interested in leading EI&D work would be a possible way to power share that is equitable and inclusive. One of the WTEO participants shared that within their organization, they were put in a position of leadership for EI&D work during COVID-19 closures and that they were not compensated for the additional work, *"Well I mean, what are they going to do? Increase my pay during a pandemic when they fired a bunch of people?"* Compensating staff of color for leading EI&D work, including in times of budget cuts, is equitable and inclusive. It shows that the organization values staff of color and the work they do. Not compensating or providing additional training to lead, would be extractive and exploitative, further upholding white supremacy culture. It is important to note that we are not advocating for organizations and white leaders to place the burden of change on staff of color. Rather, we hold that by distributing power and decision-making, organizations can disrupt white supremacy culture in a way that invites and welcomes multiple voices and perspectives of staff--- and should staff of color choose to engage in this work, organizations must compensate them for their additional contributions and labor.

COUNTERSPACES: HEALING & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Creating spaces of affinity and healing wherein white fragility is de-centered provides an opportunity for BIPOC staff to re-charge, to gain support to continue in the work, and to heal from historic and secondary trauma. In reference to a pre-COVID Professionals of Color Institute, one focus group participant shared:

> *"[It] really allowed for there to be more honest conversation around white supremacy culture, because you didn't have to worry about fragile white people in power in the room who were reacting to the same content and reacting defensively, saying "Oh, no, but I'm a good person..."*

Affinity spaces facilitate the conversations about EI&D and are healing and productive for both BIPOC and white people. They can help everyone feel like they are seen and heard because it provides a safe space for staff to express their needs and guides the conversations to start where that specific affinity group is on their journey of understanding EI&D lenses. For BIPOC, affinity spaces can examine the impact of centered whiteness and how we've internalized white supremacy culture. For white people, these spaces can be a place they learn to identify white supremacy culture and work towards creating a more healthy white identity.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Affinity group/space: a designated "safe space," where everyone in that group shares a particular identity. This identity can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, physical/mental ability, socio-economic class, family structure, religion, etc. Affinity groups can be a place for people who hold marginalized identities to come together to feel less isolated and more connected. To learn more about the role of affinity spaces, check out the work of Racial Equity Tools: https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/act/strategies/caucus-and-affinity-groups

Focusing only on recruitment results in high turnover rates, inconsistent programming, and unsatisfied staff-access to affinity spaces whereas continued support can increase staff retention and improve the overall well-being of BIPOC staff. Mental health impacts are not to be overlooked- missed work due to the constant need of BIPOC staff to code-switch and cater/tend to white defensiveness can put undue stress on other educators/instructors that need to fill in.

A sense of community and belonging brought on by a consistently equitable culture is a key factor in retaining BIPOC staff, encouraging them to grow within the organization, and taking on new leadership roles. Creating healthy work environments requires people to center relationships, build trust, and practice compassion for themselves and others. Centering relational work, too, is foundational to EI&D because then people can be called in, learn together, and can have affinity spaces to discuss issues relevant to them.

When people do move on from the organization, exit interviews with EI&D questions can provide a discourse about what the driving forces for folks to leave an organization are. Organization leaders can learn what they are seeking elsewhere, what they were unable to get from the organization, and can get feedback on how that organization may have tools for improvement.

BIPOC staff that were not laid off were dealing with issues associated with the decrease of BIPOC peers. And if their organization was prioritizing EI&D work, they were often tasked with continuing or even leading that work. Although the job description of an environmental educator does not frequently include working on organization-wide EI&D issues, the staff that identify as BIPOC tend to do the majority of that work. It is often seen as their duty to speak up and keep the work on track, while they're not always provided the resources, let alone compensated for that additional work. This work is not only difficult professionally, but also personally when **emotional labor** (Grandey, 2021) is involved.

During the WTEO, a participant shared their experience in regards to the significant role they had taken within their organization to drive EI&D work and said, *"That's my energy. Right. That's my emotional load."* Even though committing to EI&D work is taxing on BIPOC staff, particularly when in an organization that predominantly has white leadership, many see the importance of this work. A participant of the WTEO commented in regards to helping to lead EI&D across the organization that, *"...I know I'm helping you. I'm helping you to carry the burden."* The energy, emotional load, and potential secondary trauma in addition to the skill it takes to navigate EI&D work needs to be compensated monetarily.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Emotional labor refers to the management and regulation of emotions that occurs in the workplace in order to achieve a professional goal and expectations. To learn more, see the work of Dr. Alicia Grandey of the WELD Lab: https://weld.la.psu.edu/what-is-emotional-labor/

In addition to creating and maintaining affinity groups, providing **self-care** time and support is necessary to make it sustainable for team members of color to provide input on EI&D goals. Reassuring staff that self-care is valued in the workplace can be done by providing scheduled time within the work day or having self-care days that staff can take off work to reboot. It is important to create a culture of self-care while also keeping in mind that the entire responsibility for navigating workplace wellness is not solely the employee's responsibility (Moss, 2020). One way to approach this is for employers to research what aspects of the work environment can be improved in order to co-create an environment and culture that recognizes stressors directly related to EI&D.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Self care refers to the self-initiated practice(s) that promoe well-being for the individual in order to mitigate stressors. To read more, see Jennifer Moss' paper: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0890117120920488b

CONCLUSION

In times of crisis and otherwise, everyone is entitled to a safe work environment. That is not synonymous with a work environment where norms are not challenged and power is not questioned. Safety is a right, but comfort is a privilege- one that BIPOC folks are often not afforded unless a concerted effort is made to provide a sense of community and care. In this time of uncertainty and physical disconnection, organizations are confronted with their own missteps, as well as an opportunity to re-emerge better by promoting new perspectives. There has been an inherent transformation through the tumult of the pandemic, and creating space for processing and having humility in the face of crises is a place to start.

If organizations are concerned with EI&D, they must first set up a framework to prioritize the lived experiences of individuals from vulnerable communities (Yu, 2019). This supports engaging staff in a meaningful way to help the organization grow from transparency and inclusive processes. Valuing and listening to BIPOC staff leads to the creation of a safe and supportive work environment that utilizes a growth mindset to take on the complex and nuanced issues of equity, inclusion, diversity, and justice. Creating a place for these ideas to thrive and cultivating community around these ideals can lead to improved ability to meet the organization's mission, as well as to personally and professionally benefit everyone involved. Reflecting and implementing values that prioritize and center equity with environmental organizations is overdue and our chance is now.

FINAL RECOMENDATIONS

In this brief, we share our perspectives about how-white supremacy continues to manifest in outdoor science organizations, and strategies that can support organizations in disrupting oppressive and marginalizing practices. Here we summarize some of the strategies we have highlighted in this brief. With that said, we hold that in this work there is not a universal approach to mitigating pervasive racial inequities. We encourage organizations to critically reflect on their practices and embrace difficult conversations as a means towards advancing a more equitable, inclusive, and racially just organization, for BIPOC staff.

- Support self-care time so team members, especially those that identify as BIPOC, can sustainably provide input on EI&D goals and progress.
- Clearly tie EI&D goals to the mission statement of the organization and outline milestones for keeping track of established goals, progress, and assessment, especially during times of crisis.
- Create affinity spaces for both BIPOC and white people in order to encourage healing. BIPOC need a space where white fragility is less centered to allow them to re-charge and gain support for historic and secondary trauma. White people need affinity spaces to recognize their whiteness and process their feelings.
- Create healthy work environments where people can be called in, can learn together, and can be comfortable with talking about uncomfortable topics.
- Foster a sense of community and belonging by being consistently equitable in all aspects of the organization.
- Work to demonstrate the value of BIPOC staff by encouraging them to share new ideas, and take on new leadership roles, even if they counter pre-established norms.
- Compensate staff for unique skills they bring to the table and use in their work (i.e. bilingualism).
- Create conversation around potential issues ahead of time. One strategy to include people impacted by leadership's decisions is to conduct surveys of staff to better understand their perspectives and priorities.
- Include power sharing in the organization's values. Establishing an understanding that challenges leadership can be uncomfortable, but is not personal, and can lead to positive change.
- During exit interviews, inquire folks about what the driving forces were for them to leave the organization.
- Don't ask BIPOC staff within the organization to educate white staff about systemic inequities or share about their own personal experiences.
- Provide resources to all members of the organization on what they can do to dismantle white supremacy culture and create discourse around the topic.

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