

Race *in the* Workplace

*Zoom in partnership with TIME for Learning invited **Shaun Harper**, one of the world's leading racial equity experts, to join Zoom's Chief Diversity Officer **Damien Hooper-Campbell** for a multi-part series focused on practical approaches to improving and advancing racial equity, diversity, and inclusion in organizations.*

For many leaders, tackling race in the workplace is challenging, and so they have historically chosen avoidance as their primary strategy. Many executives have little to no personal and professional experience talking about racism, and are afraid of being naïve, making mistakes that make them seem insensitive, or worse, racist.

But since the recent murders of many Black people, including George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, avoidance is no longer an option. The issues of police brutality in Black communities, structural and systemic racism, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy, as well as inaction on long-standing racial problems have come to the fore, and corporations have felt compelled to make internal and external statements stating that they are anti-racist and that Black lives matter.

However, these statements have to be more than just words in a moment of crisis. This can't be a moment, it must be a movement that leads to long-term, demonstrable progress on racial equity goals, and increased value on the lives and professional contributions of people of color in the workplace.

This document will summarize the key takeaways from each episode. To watch or learn more about the other episodes in the series, please visit time.com/raceintheworkplace.

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Essential Takeaways: Episode 1

Understanding Your Employees' Experiences with Racism

Before you can actually address how you talk about race in the workplace, you must understand what employees may be dealing with when it comes to racism and develop more empathy for their experiences and the impact they may have.

Racism Outside of Work

It's important to appreciate that employees frequently come to work having experienced frequent racism outside of work—and on those same days, still have to come to work and deliver.

Employees of color often note that they regularly experience the following racist experiences outside of the workplace:

- Discrimination based on ethnic-sounding names
- Racial profiling where they are followed around in stores
- Racial profiling and harassment in police interactions
- Racial discrimination when applying for apartments, loans, and children's schools
- The wrongful arrest and incarceration of family members, deportation of family members, or racial violence and fear

Racism at Work

As we move into the workplace, there are several consistent experiences that we frequently hear from employees of color in organizations across the United States.

Employees of color often note that they routinely experience the following racist experiences in the workplace:

- Mistaken for other colleagues of color who bear no resemblance.
- Have their hair touched without permission or asked if the n-word can be used in their presence.
- Have slang or Spanish spoken to them.
- Expected to speak on behalf of their entire race or all people of color. If Native American or indigenous, being constantly left out of conversations about race entirely.
- Asked where they are REALLY from, which may convey, for example, to Asian Americans that they aren't REALLY American.
- Unable to be their authentic selves at work because of normative cultures of whiteness, which are unwelcoming or unfriendly to other cultures.

- Being both hyper-visible and invisible at the same time—meaning that contributions they make often go unacknowledged but when they are one of the only people of color in a room, they feel hyper-visible.
- Constantly begging for financial resources for employee resource groups (ERG) or diversity committees.
- Witnessing racial stratification where all or the majority of people of color only hold the lowest-level, least-powerful positions. Sometimes this is accompanied by disrespectful mistreatment of employees of color in those roles.
- Seeing career ascension investment inequities where some people, frequently young white men early in their tenure, are “tapped” or invested in considerably by white managers and team leaders.
- Note promotion disparities where white colleagues who are less accomplished or less talented are accelerated into leadership positions much more often than are people of color—and they have to be twice as good to get half as far.
- Learn of pay inequities, frequently along both gender and race lines, where people are underpaid relative to white men who do the same work.
- Experience “Racial Battle Fatigue,” which is the literal exhaustion that ensues among professionals of color when they have to fight over time to get their leaders to make good on the espoused commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

5 Things You Can Do to Demonstrate Care for Employees of Color

1. Ask people of color for feedback and input on how to make the workplace less racist. Ask about their experiences—don’t be defensive, don’t invalidate—and include anonymous options for giving examples and feedback.
2. Routinely assess the workplace racial climate and take meaningful actions to improve it; make demonstrable progress on racial equity goals.
3. Insist on anti-racism and reinforce the message—hold people accountable for racism; hold ourselves and our colleagues accountable for acts of anti-Blackness.
4. Mandate company-wide professional learning experiences on a range of diversity and inclusion topics not just a one-time sensitivity or implicit-bias training.
5. Hire, invest in, and promote people of color by taking strategic recruitment steps and ensuring that they have equitable opportunities for support, advancement, and promotion.

Understanding personal experiences with racism in and out of the workplace is important. Proactively seeking out employees of color to share their stories can help build trust and lead to effective change—and a more open, inclusive environment. By addressing topics like these—understanding employees’ experience with racism, how to talk to employees about racism, and how to recruit and hire professionals of color—we are moving the conversation forward.

Let’s not stop now. Check out more info and takeaways from additional episodes of the Race in the Workplace series, in partnership with Zoom and TIME for Learning at time.com/raceintheworkplace.