

June 23, 2021

# Understanding the Yellow Brick Road to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion from Those That Helped Pave the Way

The New Jersey Institute of Local Government Attorneys (NJILGA) In  
Association with The New Jersey League of Municipalities

## Welcome and Introduction

Hon. Janice Kovach – President of the New Jersey League of Municipalities

## Moderators

Jason Holt, Esq. – Partner at Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC

Elissa Grodd Schragger, Esq. – Director of Law for the Township of Hamilton

## Panelists

State Senator Ronald L. Rice (28<sup>th</sup> District) – NJ Legislative Black Caucus Chair

Ryan P. Haygood, Esq. – President & CEO of New Jersey Institute for Social Justice

Robyn Gigl, Esq. – Partner at Gluck Walrath, Author, Member of the New Jersey Transgender Equality Taskforce

Captain Marc D. Dashield – Former Princeton and Montclair Business Administrator

Adetoro (Toro) Aboderin, CMFO – Finance Director of the City of Atlantic City

Cynthia S. Brown, CMC – Municipal Clerk for the City of East Orange

Victor A. Afanador, Esq. – Partner at Lite DePalma Greenberg & Afanador



## Hon. Janice Kovach

The League's President, Mayor Janice Kovach has served as Mayor of Clinton Town since 2012.

Prior to joining state government, she was a Councilwoman in the Town of Clinton, serving as the Planning Board Liaison, Chair of the COAH committee, and the Historic Preservation Commission. She resigned her Town Council seat when she assumed the Director's job of the New Jersey Division on Women, serving from August 2006 until September 2010. As the former Director, Ms. Kovach was a member of:

- Domestic Violence Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board
- Gender Parity Council and the NJ Commission on Women Veterans
- Governor's Advisory Council Against Sexual Assault
- Governor's Advisory Council on Domestic Violence
- New Jersey Commission on the Status of Women

As a resident of Clinton, Kovach served as a Trustee of the Red Mill Museum Village and President and Trustee of the CPS Partners in Education Foundation, Inc. In October 2004, she was appointed to the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council and served until May 2010. She is a Leadership NJ Fellow-class of 2009. She was appointed to the Hunterdon County Polytech School Board in March 2011 and served until October 2013. She was a member of the United Way Women's Leadership Council and as an executive board member and chair of the education and training committee of the NJ Women's Political Caucus.

Mayor Kovach is also a Commissioner for the NJ Motion Picture and Television Commission, which provides production tools, financial incentives, and information about productions in the state of New Jersey.

In addition to her role as Mayor, she has taken the passion for her work at the Division and parlayed it into a non-government role, speaking at events about her personal experiences and the role that women can and should play in business, government and politics. In addition, Janice along with her business partner established the River Town Film Festival in 2017. Janice has worked as a consultant for several companies. Previously she was a Director with Prudential, managing a 24/7 call center and a Marketing Project Management Group. She has also held management positions with Fleet and NatWest Banks.

She has a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Thomas Edison State College.



## Jason Holt, Esq.

Jason Holt is a partner with Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC (CSG) in their Real Estate, Development and Land Use Group. He is a seasoned attorney with more than two decades of experience in state and local government, municipal corporations, turnaround strategy, litigation and fiscal management. He has served in such positions as Corporation Counsel to the City of East Orange, City Solicitor and Business Administrator for the City of Atlantic City, Deputy Legislative Counsel to the State legislature and Municipal Court Judge. In his practice, he draws upon his extensive background to help his clients navigate their political, economic and governmental challenges. Further, Jason is a member of the firm's Cannabis Law team.

Outside of his practice, he is a civically engaged member of the State's legal community – participating in various bar associations and committees and serving on CSG's Diversity & Inclusion Committee, the Newark YMCA's Diversity & Inclusion Task Force, Chair of NJILGA's Diversity Committee and Chair of the Legal Redress Committee for the NAACP of the Oranges & Maplewood Branch. It is noteworthy that he also received a United States Congressional Certificate of Recognition for his work in the area of civil rights.

Jason earned his J.D. from Rutgers Law School and his B.S. from Cornell University. He also holds a diplomate in Municipal Law and is the author of various articles concerning state and local government.

To learn more about Jason, please visit Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC's [website](#).



## **Elissa Grodd Schragger, Esq.**

Elissa Grodd Schragger was appointed the Director of Law and Township Attorney for the Township of Hamilton in February 2020. Prior to her appointment, she was an attorney with Mason Griffin & Pierson, Esq., where she litigated to the New Jersey Supreme Court affirming that her client, a township, could condemn a mobile home park for the public purpose of deed restricting each lot for affordable housing. She graduated Vassar College in 1993 with honors on her Senior Thesis and after that, she graduated from the University of Miami School of Law in 1996. Upon graduation, she practiced law in Miami: as part of the legal team she defended a subcontractor and its employees criminally charged in connection with the ValuJet crash of 1996 and then defended cruise lines in Jones Act litigation and class actions. She moved to New Jersey in 2001 and continued in her complex civil litigation practice, focusing on fraud and other corporate misfeasance. Since becoming the Director of Law, Ms. Grodd Schragger has overseen the legal aspects of the Township's response to COVID-19 and civil unrest, rewritten significant portions of the Township Code, assisted in finalizing the Township Fire District Consolidation, spearheaded a legal strategy to manage abandoned properties, continues to be involved in rehabilitation projects and brought suit against Trenton Water Works. In her free time, she is President of Mercer County Federation of Democratic Women. She lives with her husband Andy and her two teenage children in Lawrenceville.



## Senator Ronald L. Rice

Senator Ronald L. Rice is one of the most senior ranking legislators in the State of New Jersey, serving as Senator of the 28th Legislative District since November 1986.

He currently Co-Chairs both the Joint Committee on Economic Justice & Equal Employment Opportunity and the Joint Committee on the Public Schools. He is Vice Chair of the Community & Urban Affairs Committee and sits on the Health, Human Services & Senior Citizens Committee, as well as the Joint Committee on Housing Affordability.

Senator Rice has served as Chair of the New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus since 2008 and has held key positions within the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, currently as Co-Chair of the Labor and Workforce Development Policy Committee. In March 2016, he was appointed by Governor Chris Christie to serve on the State Employment and Training Commission.

Senator Rice has sponsored and supported legislation that impacts all facets of life in New Jersey and enhances the well-being of residents from every community and economic status. Chief among his accomplishments are improvements that enrich New Jersey's educational system from early-childhood to college and university level; providing millions of dollars of funding for programs addressing the unique, wide-ranging needs of urban areas; making health care more accessible, affordable and effective for residents of every age and background; providing meaningful growth opportunities for small and large business; and remediating and strengthening the state's mass transit network.

Of particular concern to the senator are issues that expose social injustice and racial bias. He has been an outspoken advocate for the poor and marginalized, the overlooked and neglected. He is especially proud of the attention he brings to the challenges experienced by people of color, and all those in need of a strong, clear voice and unwavering support.

A decorated Vietnam Veteran, the senator holds a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice. He served the Newark Police Department, resigning as detective in 1980. He was the first African American to hold the City of Newark's West Ward Council seat from 1982-98 and served as Deputy Mayor from 2002-06. Once elected to the Senate, he became the first African American to hold an elected office in both state and local government.



## **Ryan P. Haygood, Esq.**

Ryan P. Haygood is a nationally respected civil rights lawyer. As President and CEO of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, he leads a majority-women of color team of racial justice advocates whose cutting-edge work – powered by grassroots organizing, research, writing, policy and legislative advocacy, and litigation – seeks to build reparative systems that create wealth, justice and power for Black, Latina/Latino and other people of color in New Jersey.

Under Ryan’s leadership, the Institute’s advocacy has led to the historic restoration of the vote to 83,000 people on parole and probation, a right New Jersey previously denied since 1844; automatic and online voter registration; ending prison-based gerrymandering for state legislative redistricting; a \$15 minimum wage; a package of racial equity apprenticeship laws to expand New Jersey’s workforce; the development of Newark 2020 – a Newark initiative to connect 2,020 Newark residents to employment by 2020; the reporting of COVID-19 racial data; and New Jersey becoming the first state to test all of its incarcerated youth for COVID-19.

The Institute’s advocacy has also led to the historic announcement that two of New Jersey’s youth prisons would close; community engagement in the development of 15 policing reforms in Newark; an independent state prosecutor for cases involving police misconduct; and the introduction of the first-of-its-kind bill for a reparations task force in New Jersey.

Prior to leading the Institute, Ryan served as Deputy Director of Litigation at the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), where he worked for more than a decade. At LDF, Ryan litigated some of the most important civil rights cases of our time. In two of those cases, he defended a core provision of the Voting Rights Act, widely regarded as one of the nation’s greatest pieces of civil rights legislation, before the United States Supreme Court. Ryan also led a successful challenge to Texas’s racially discriminatory photo ID law, under which a voter could present a concealed-handgun license as a form of identification to vote at the polls but not a student ID. In the first ruling of its kind, a federal district court struck down Texas’s photo ID law as intentionally racially discriminatory, a violation of the Voting Rights Act and an unconstitutional poll tax.

A passionate advocate, Ryan speaks and writes regularly on issues concerning race, law, social justice, democracy and power. Ryan received his J.D. from the University of Colorado School of Law and B.A. in American History and Political Science cum laude from Colorado College, where he was nominated for the Rhodes scholarship and earned academic and athletic All-American and hall of fame honors as a football player.



## [Robyn B. Gigl, Esq.](#)

Robyn is a partner at Gluck Walrath, LLP in Freehold, New Jersey. Her practice involves handling complex litigation including employment law and commercial litigation.

Robyn is a member of the New Jersey Supreme Court's Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of Garden State Equality. Robyn is a Past Chair of the LGBT Rights Section of the Bar Association as well as being a member of the Diversity Committee. Robyn has also been appointed to the NJSBA's Commission on Racial Equality in

the Law.

In 2019, Robyn was appointed by Governor Murphy and the State Legislature as one of seventeen members of the New Jersey Transgender Equality Taskforce.

Robyn's first novel, *By Way of Sorrow*, was published by Kensington Books in March 2021. Her Second novel, *Survivor's Guilt*, will be released on January 25, 2022. Robyn is a frequent writer and speaker on LGBTQ issues.

Robyn has been honored by the ACLU-NJ and the Pride Network for her work on behalf of the LGBTQ community. She is AV Preeminent® Rated by Martindale-Hubbell and has been selected since 2010 as a New Jersey Super Lawyer and has also been selected as one of the Top 50 Women Lawyers in New Jersey. Robyn was recently named by the New Jersey Law Journal as one of the Top Women in the Law for 2020 and to Insider NJ's LGBTQ Top 100 Power List.

Robyn is a graduate of Stonehill College, and Villanova University School of Law where she was a Member of the *Villanova Law Review*.



## Captain Marc D. Dashield

Marc D. Dashield is a retired business administrator for the Municipality of Princeton, with two decades of experience specializing in fiscal management, economic development, community/business revitalization, and labor relations.

Among Dashield's accomplishments, he served as the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Administrative Officer for diverse communities, including the City of Plainfield, Montclair, and Princeton. He also served in senior management positions in zoning/planning, finance, and policy development in the City of Elizabeth, Township of Franklin (Somerset County), and N. J. Department of Education.

Captain Dashield served as an Army Reserve officer and was deployed during Operation Desert Storm as a Civil Affairs liaison officer supporting allied forces in Saudi Arabia.

Dashield was an adjunct professor teaching public administration, conflict resolution, local government in New Jersey at Kean University. Dashield is a long-time member of various professional organizations, including the National Forum of Black Public Administrators and the New Jersey Municipal Manager Association. He served on the Executive Board of the Mid Jersey Joint Insurance Fund and as a member of the New Jersey League of Municipalities Legislative Committee.

Marc Dashield holds a master's degree in Public Administration and a Certified Municipal Finance Officer for twenty years.



## Adetoro (Toro) Aboderin, CMFO

Adetoro (Toro) Aboderin, serves as Chief Financial Officer for the City of Atlantic City where she also managed all aspects of the City's finances. Prior to Atlantic City, Toro served as Chief Financial Officer for the City of Ventnor City for 10 years and prior to that she worked her way from Accountant to Principal Accountant with the County of Atlantic.

Toro received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting from Stockton University in 1996, a Certificate in Client/Server Technology from Penn State School of Graduate Studies in 2001, a Certificate in Human Resource Management from Villanova University in 2015. She is a Certified Municipal Finance Officer.

Toro serves as the Vice Chairperson on the Atlantic County Solid Waste Advisory Council. She serves as the Financial Secretary, Sunday School Teacher, Bus Captain and in many other Ministries in her Church. She enjoys spending time with her husband and three children.



## Cynthia S. Brown, CMC

Cynthia S. Brown was appointed City Clerk by the East Orange City Council in 1998 after a long and distinguished career in municipal government. As the City Clerk, she holds one of the four State statutory positions required for municipal government to operate.

Clerk Brown's primary responsibilities as established by the State of New Jersey include serving as the Secretary to the municipal corporation and the custodian of the municipal seal and of all minutes, books, deeds, bonds, contracts and archival records of the City of East Orange. She also serves as the Secretary to the Governing Body for the East Orange City Council. In this capacity she prepares the meeting agendas, is present at all meetings of the City Council, keeps a journal of the proceedings of every meeting, maintains the original copies of all legislation enacted by the Council including resolutions and ordinances and records the minutes of every meeting. Brown serves as the Chief Administrative Officer in all local elections. She is the Administrative Officer responsible for the acceptance of applications for various licenses and permits and is the coordinator and Records Manager responsible for implementing local archives and records retention programs for the City.

Cynthia S. Brown was born in Newark, New Jersey and educated in the Newark Public School System. She is a graduate of Weequahic High School in Newark. After graduation, she attended The Berkeley Secretarial School in East Orange and completed the Professional Secretarial Program. Upon completion of her studies at Berkeley she worked for the East Orange-based insurance firm, Rosenthal & Associates.

Brown joined East Orange City government in 1974 as a Clerk Stenographer in the City's Department of Neighborhood Facilities. During her tenure she rose steadily through the ranks earning certification as a Principal Clerk Stenographer and as an Administrative Clerk. Former Mayor John C. Hatcher, Jr. appointed her Rent Leveling Administrator where she oversaw tenant complaints, researched rent control issues and assisted in compiling the City's laws concerning rent control. She also investigated and rendered decisions on the numerous complaints received and scheduled and participated in Rent Control Hearings.

After serving as the Rent Leveling Administrator, Brown was appointed by the East Orange City Council to serve as the Director of the Administrative Office of City Council. In this capacity she oversaw the daily operation of the City Council Office. At the completion of this appointment, she returned to a Civil Service position as an Administrative Clerk in the Office of The East Orange City Clerk. Former Mayor Cardell Cooper appointed her Deputy City Clerk and she was re-appointed by former Mayor Robert L. Bowser. While serving as Deputy City Clerk she enrolled in the Municipal Clerk's Program at the Rutgers University Center for Government Studies and received certification as a Registered Municipal Clerk with the State of New Jersey in 1997. She

became certified as a Certified Municipal Clerk with the International Municipal Clerks' Association in 2000 and has served on their Membership Committee. In 1998 she was appointed City Clerk by the East Orange City Council and was re-appointed to this position in 2001. She has held various positions on the Executive Board of the Essex County Municipal Clerks Association and in 2004, served as the President. She is an active Member of the New Jersey State Municipal Clerks' Association and served on the Fundraising, Public Relations and Scholarship Committees. She served as the Scholarship Chair for the years 2015 & 2016.

Brown is the first Muslim appointed as a Municipal Clerk. She is one of the founding members and past President of the Coalition of Muslims in Government, Inc. (COMIG). Brown is currently an Executive Board Member of The Council on American-Islamic Relations-NJ (CAIR), a non-profit civil rights and advocacy group. She is active in the Muslim Community in Essex County and at Masjid As'Haabul Yameen in East Orange. She is a past honoree of the League of Muslim Voters in Essex County, a recipient of Assemblywoman Sheila Y. Oliver's 2015 Shirley Chisholm Award, a recipient of an Award of Appreciation from Alpha & Omega Lodge #1AF & AM/Lily of the Valleys Chapter 1, an Unsung Hero at the Annual Freedom Fund Dinner of the The NAACP of the Oranges & Maplewod and has received many other Awards of Appreciation from various organizations throughout the Metropolitan area.

Brown received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Rutgers University and is the proud Mother of daughter Najah H. Akbar and Grandmother to Na'ilah and Halim.



## **Victor A. Afanador, Esq.**

Victor A. Afanador is a seasoned trial attorney/oral advocate, commercial litigator and negotiator. He manages a litigation practice group representing public and private clients in a wide variety of areas including: employment litigation defense (LAD and CEPA), labor counseling and negotiations, public entity tort liability defense (Title 59), police-related state and federal civil rights defense, constitutional civil rights defense, rent control litigation, federal and state criminal defense, condemnation/redevelopment law and complex commercial litigation.

In federal and state jury and bench trials/hearings, Victor has successfully tried to verdict a broad range of civil rights, employment, class action, rent control, redevelopment law and criminal matters. He has often served as an appellate practitioner preparing legal briefs and orally advocating before the New Jersey Supreme Court, the Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit Court. His experience provided him with the opportunity to gain significant United States Supreme Court experience in litigating, editing and oral argument preparation. This forged his ability to be assigned to personally represent a myriad of high-ranking public officials in employment discrimination and civil rights related cases.

Victor was appointed by the Essex County executive in September of 2005 to serve as a commissioner on the Essex County Board of Public Utilities. He is a member of the New Jersey State Bar Association, the Essex County Bar Association, the Passaic County Bar Association and the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey. Most notably in 2018 he was selected to serve as Treasurer and executive board member for the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey and Co-Chair of the ReNew Committee's Volunteer Lawyers Program, which organizes law firms and lawyers to serve on a volunteer basis to assist federally convicted individuals in addressing their legal issues while re-entering society after serving prison terms.

Victor is a 2003 graduate of the Leadership Newark Fellowship Program, has served on the board of directors of African Globe Theatreworks (a professional theater company based in Newark, New Jersey), and serves as a member of the board for Aspira, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to developing the educational and leadership capacity of Latino youth.

He was born and raised in the great City of Newark, NJ, with a firm family foundation that guided him through his educational development. As such, he truly understands and appreciates the struggles of growing up in an inner city with little financial means. He tries to use his professional journey as a foundation for giving back to the greater Newark Community and its law schools by serving as a mentor to many and committing to local educational advancement organizations.

## **Relevant Research**

**[Workforce: Latinx: Identifying Terminology for Workplace Inclusivity](#)**

**[Newsweek: France Bans Gender-Neutral Language in Schools, citing 'Harm' to Learning](#)**

**[The Atlantic: America's 'Great Chief Justice' was an Unrepentant Slaveholder](#)**

## **Recommended Readings**

***Allies & Advocates: Creating an Inclusive & Equitable Culture* by Amber Cabral**

***Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent* by Isabel Wilkerson**

***The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* by Richard Rothstein**

***Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics Are Remaking America* - William H. Frey**

***How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning With the History of Slavery Across America* by Clint Smith**

***The New Jim Crow (Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness)* by Michelle Alexander**

***Unapologetically Ambitious: Take Risks, Break Barriers and Create Success on Your Own Terms* by Shellye Archambeau**

## Useful Definitions & Guidelines in Dealing with LGBTQ Issues

**GENDER:** Means a person's sex-related or gender-related characteristics, including one's gender identity. For legal purposes, "gender" has the same meaning as "sex".

**GENDER IDENTITY:** A person's innate, deeply held knowledge of their own gender as a man, a woman, or some other status, which may or may not correspond with their external body or sex assigned at birth (i.e. listed on their birth certificate). All people have a gender identity, not just transgender people.

**SEX (or GENDER) Assigned at Birth:** Means the sex that someone was thought to be at birth, typically recorded on their original birth certificate. The sex and / or gender someone was assigned at birth may or may not match their gender identity.

**GENDER EXPRESSION:** The external manifestation of a person's gender identity, which may or may not conform to the socially-defined behaviors and external characteristics that are commonly referred to as either masculine or feminine. These behaviors and characteristics are expressed through movement, dress, grooming, hairstyles, jewelry, mannerisms, physical characteristics, social interactions, and speech patterns (voice).

**GENDER NON-CONFORMING:** A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations and/or stereotypes related to gender. Not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender.

**GENDERQUEER:** Terms used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term may be used by individuals whose gender identity and/or role does not conform to a binary understanding of gender as limited to the categories of man or woman, male or female.

**NON-BINARY:** People whose gender identity is neither male or female often use the term non-binary to describe themselves. Other terms people may use include genderqueer, agender, gender fluid, gender expansive or others. All of these terms speak to an experience of gender identity that is not simply male or female. Non-binary individuals may use the pronouns "they", "them", "theirs" to refer to themselves.

<http://writing.umn.edu/sws/quickhelp/grammar/nonbinary.html>

**INTERSEX:** A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the medical definitions of female or male. These characteristics may include, but are not necessarily limited to, internal reproductive organs, external genitalia, and sex chromosomes.

<http://www.isna.org>

**TRANSGENDER:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/ or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth (i.e., the sex listed on their birth certificates). *Not all transgender people want to live as the sex opposite of the one they were assigned at birth.* The preferred use of the word transgender is as an adjective and not a noun or verb. (*Tony is a transgender man. NOT Tony is a transgender, OR Tony is transgendered.*)

**TRANSGENDER MAN:** A term for a transgender individual who, assigned female at birth, identifies as a man. This is sometimes shortened to transman.

**TRANSGENDER WOMAN:** A term for a transgender individual who, assigned male at birth, identifies as a woman. This is sometimes shortened to transwoman.

**CISGENDER:** A term for individuals whose gender identity, expression, or behavior conforms with those typically associated with their sex and/or gender assigned at birth.

**GENDER Confirmation, Gender Affirmation or Transition:** When an individual begins to live as the sex different from the one assigned at birth that process is referred to as going through the gender confirmation or gender affirmation process. It is also referred to as transitioning. Gender transitions are individual and may involve different steps for every person. The steps each person takes depends on their individual needs and access to resources. Medical procedures may be part of the gender confirmation process, but are not necessary, for someone to transition.

**GENDER DYSPHORIA:** A strong and persistent cross-gender identification and persistent discomfort with one's sex or sense of inappropriateness in the gender role or sex which causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Some, but not all, transgender individuals have gender dysphoria.

**Gender Confirming Surgery or Gender Affirming Surgery:** Terms that refer to various surgical procedures that change one's body to align gender identity and presentation. Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact, there are many different surgeries.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** A term describing a person's attraction to members of the same gender and/or different gender. Sexual orientation and gender identity are different concepts.

**GAY:** Refers to a person who identifies as a male who is emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender. "Gay" is also sometimes used as an umbrella term for people who are emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted to those of the same gender.

**LESBIAN:** Means a person who identifies as a female and is emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted primarily to members of the same gender.

**BISEXUAL:** Means a person who is emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted to both sexes.

**QUESTIONING:** Term used to describe a person who is unsure and is questioning their sexual orientation, or in some cases their gender identity.

**HETEROSEXUAL / STRAIGHT:** Terms used to describe a person who is emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted to persons of the opposite sex.

**LATINX:** A gender neutral or non-binary alternative - used to refer to a person of Latin American origin or descent. Used as an alternative to Latino (masculine) or Latina (feminine).

**Mx:** An honorific that does not indicate gender; an alternative to gender based honorifics such as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. A gender neutral title.

## LGBTQ Cultural Competency Etiquette

**Words NOT to use with a Transgender Individual:** because they are out dated or considered offensive – “trannie”, “tranny”, “it”, “transvestite”, “sex change”, “sex change operation”.

**Use of the word “transgender”:** The preferred use of the word transgender is as an adjective and not a noun or a verb. (*Tony is a transgender man.* **NOT** *Tony is a transgender.* **OR** *Tony is transgendering*).

**Whenever possible, use a transgender person’s chosen name even if it is not their legal name.** Often transgender people cannot afford a legal name change or are not yet old enough to change their name legally. They should be afforded the same respect for their chosen name as anyone else who lives by a name other than their birth name (e.g. celebrities).

### Words not to use with Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Individuals:

- **OFFENSIVE:** “Homosexual” (n. or adj.)
- **PREFERRED:** “Gay” (adj.); “Gay Man” or “Lesbian” (n.); “Gay Person / People”.

*Please use gay or lesbian to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. Because of the clinical history of the word “homosexual”, it is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically / emotionally disordered – notions discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Please avoid using “homosexual” except in direct quotes. Please also avoid using “homosexual” as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word “gay”.*

- **OFFENSIVE:** “Sexual Preference”.
- **PREFERRED:** “Sexual Orientation” or “Orientation”.

*The term “sexual preference” is typically used to suggest that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured”. Sexual Orientation is the accurate description of an individual’s enduring physical, romantic and / or emotional attraction to members of the same and / or opposite sex and is inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, as well as straight men and women.*

- **OFFENSIVE:** “Homosexual Relationship/ Relationships”, “Homosexual Couple”, “Homosexual Sex”, etc.
- **PREFERRED:** “Relationship”, “Couple” (or if necessary, “Gay Couple”), “Sex”, etc.

*Identifying a same-sex couple as a “homosexual couple”, characterizing their relationship as “a homosexual relationship”, or identifying their intimacy as “homosexual sex” is extremely offensive and should be avoided. These constructions are frequently used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate gay people, couples and relationships.*

*As a rule, try to avoid labeling an activity, emotion or relationship gay, lesbian or bisexual unless you would call the same activity, emotion or relationship “straight” if engaged in by someone of another orientation. In most cases, your listeners will be able to discern people’s sexes and / or orientations through the names of the parties involved, your depictions of their relationships, and your use of pronouns.*

- **OFFENSIVE:** “Gay Lifestyle” or “Homosexual Lifestyle”.
- **PREFERRED:** “Gay Lives”, “Gay and Lesbian Lives”.

*There is no single lesbian, gay or bisexual lifestyle. Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are diverse in the ways they lead their lives. The phrase “gay lifestyle” is used to denigrate lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals suggesting that their orientation is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured”.*

- **OFFENSIVE:** “Admitted / Avowed Homosexual”.
- **PREFERRED:** “Openly Lesbian”, “Openly Gay”, “Openly Bisexual” or simply “Out”.

*Dated term used to describe those who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual in their personal, public, and / or professional lives. The words “admitted” or “avowed” suggest that being gay is somehow shameful or inherently secretive. You may also simply describe the person as being out, for example: “Ricky Martin is an out pop star from Puerto Rico”.*

- **OFFENSIVE:** “Gay Agenda” or “Homosexual Agenda”.
- Notions of a so-called “homosexual agenda” are rhetorical inventions of anti-LGBTQ extremists seeking to create a climate of fear by portraying the pursuit of equal opportunity of LGBTQ people as sinister (see AP Reuters, & New York Times Style).*

- **OFFENSIVE:** “Fag”, “Faggot”, “Dyke”, “Homo”, “Sodomite”, and similar epithets.

*These derogatory terms should be treated in the same manner as vulgar epithets used to target other groups. They should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. So that such words are not give credibility in the media, it is preferred that reporters say, “The person used a derogatory word for a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person”.*

- **OFFENSIVE:** “Deviant”, “Disordered”, “Dysfunctional”, “Diseased”, “Perverted”, and similar descriptions.

*The notion that being LGBTQ is a psychological disorder was discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Today, words such as “deviant”, “diseased” and “disordered” often are used to portray LGBTQ people as less than human, mentally ill, or as a danger to society. Words such as these should be avoided in stories about the LGBTQ community. If they must be used, they should be quoted directly in a way that clearly reveals the bias of the person being quoted.*

- **BISEXUAL:** Do not imply that being bisexual is a phase and that bisexuals are “on their way” to being gay or lesbian. People who self-identify as bisexual are not confused, indecisive, or lying. Studies show that bisexuality and the numerous identities under the bisexual umbrella are distinct sexual orientations and not experimental or transitional stages.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### *Best Practices*

Whenever possible, ask everyone you encounter which pronouns they use in advance of meeting with them or going on the record or using a particular pronoun. This information could be gathered on a sign-in sheet or when checking in with staff.

If it is not possible, avoid the use of pronouns all together. For example, use the person’s title (“Defendant”, “Counsel”) and their last name if you feel this is necessary to further identify them. Default to the use of “they” as a singular pronoun, such as “Counsel, have you had the opportunity to confer with opposing counsel? They have not checked in with my staff. Plaintiff Smith is present in the courtroom but Attorney Jones is running late.”

If someone has specifically asked for the use of a particular pronoun, you should use it when referring to them, even if you think a different pronoun fits them.

If you mistakenly use the wrong pronoun, correct the mistake respectfully and move on quickly.

*This resource card was compiled by the NJSBA LGBT Rights Section for its May 16, 2019 CLE program with acknowledgment to Robyn Gigl, Esq., for the original version.*

# White Supremacy Culture

From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture which show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being pro-actively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. They are damaging to both people of color and to white people. Organizations that are people of color led or a majority people of color can also demonstrate many damaging characteristics of white supremacy culture.

## Perfectionism

- little appreciation expressed among people for the work that others are doing; appreciation that is expressed usually directed to those who get most of the credit anyway
- more common is to point out either how the person or work is inadequate
- or even more common, to talk to others about the inadequacies of a person or their work without ever talking directly to them
- mistakes are seen as personal, i.e. they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are ó mistakes
- making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong
- little time, energy, or money put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice, in other words little or no learning from mistakes
- tendency to identify what's wrong; little ability to identify, name, and appreciate what's right

**antidotes: develop a culture of appreciation, where the organization takes time to make sure that people's work and efforts are appreciated; develop a learning organization, where it is expected that everyone will make mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning; create an environment where people can recognize that mistakes sometimes lead to positive results; separate the person from the mistake; when offering feedback, always speak to the things that went well before offering criticism; ask people to offer specific suggestions for how to do things differently when offering criticism**

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## Sense of Urgency

- continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)
- reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

**antidotes: realistic workplans; leadership which understands that things take longer than anyone expects; discuss and plan for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time; learn from past experience how long things take; write realistic funding proposals with realistic time frames; be clear about how you will make good decisions in an atmosphere of urgency**

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## Defensiveness

- the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it
- because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude)
- people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, making it very difficult to raise these ideas
- a lot of energy in the organization is spent trying to make sure that people's feelings aren't getting hurt or working around defensive people
- the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture

**antidotes: understand that structure cannot in and of itself facilitate or prevent abuse; understand the link between defensiveness and fear (of losing power, losing face, losing comfort, losing privilege); work on your own defensiveness; name defensiveness as a problem when it is one; give people credit for being able to handle more than you think; discuss the ways in which defensiveness or resistance to new ideas gets in the way of the mission**

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## Quantity Over Quality

- all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals
- things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
- little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value
- discomfort with emotion and feelings
- no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people's need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)

**antidotes: include process or quality goals in your planning; make sure your organization has a values statement which expresses the ways in which you want to do your work; make sure this is a living document and that people are using it in their day to day work; look for ways to measure process goals (for example if you have a goal of inclusivity, think about ways you can measure whether or not you have achieved that goal); learn to recognize those times when you need to get off the agenda in order to address people's underlying concerns**

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## Worship of the Written Word

- if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist
- the organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared
- those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission  
antidotes: take the time to analyze how people inside and outside the organization get and share information; figure out which things need to be written down and come up with alternative ways to document what is happening; work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization (for example, the ability to build relationships with those who are important to the organization's mission)
- only one right way

- the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it
- when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who know the right way)
- similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good

**antidotes: accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; once the group has made a decision about which way will be taken, honor that decision and see what you and the organization will learn from taking that way, even and especially if it is not the way you would have chosen; work on developing the ability to notice when people do things differently and how those different ways might improve your approach; look for the tendency for a group or a person to keep pushing the same point over and over out of a belief that there is only one right way and then name it; when working with communities from a different culture than yours or your organization's, be clear that you have some learning to do about the community's ways of doing; never assume that you or your organization know what's best for the community in isolation from meaningful relationships with that community**

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## Paternalism

- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does
- those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them

**antidotes: make sure that everyone knows and understands who makes what decisions in the organization; make sure everyone knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in the organization; include people who are affected by decisions in the decision-making**

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## Either/Or Thinking

- things are either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us
- closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict
- no sense that things can be both/and
- results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education
- creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people are felt they have to make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources

**antidotes: notice when people use either/or language and push to come up with more than two alternatives; notice when people are simplifying complex issues, particularly when the stakes seem high or an urgent decision needs to be made; slow it down and encourage people to do a deeper analysis; when people are faced with an urgent decision, take a break and give people some breathing room to think creatively; avoid making decisions under extreme pressure**

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### **Power Hoarding**

- little, if any, value around sharing power
- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

**antidotes: include power sharing in your organization's values statement; discuss what good leadership looks like and make sure people understand that a good leader develops the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and challenges to your leadership can be healthy and productive; make sure the organization is focused on the mission**

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### **Fear of Open Conflict**

- people in power are scared of conflict and try to ignore it or run from it
- when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem
- emphasis on being polite
- equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

**antidotes: role play ways to handle conflict before conflict happens; distinguish between being polite and raising hard issues; don't require those who raise hard issues to raise them in "acceptable" ways, especially if you are using the ways in which issues are raised as an excuse not to address the issues being raised; once a conflict is resolved, take the opportunity to revisit it and see how it might have been handled differently**

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## **Individualism**

- little experience or comfort working as part of a team
- people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone
- accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve
- desire for individual recognition and credit
- leads to isolation
- competition more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate
- creates a lack of accountability, as the organization values those who can get things done on their own without needing supervision or guidance  
antidotes: include teamwork as an important value in your values statement; make sure the organization is working towards shared goals and people understand how working together will improve performance; evaluate people's ability to work in a team as well as their ability to get the job done; make sure that credit is given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals; create a culture where people bring problems to the group; use staff meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities

- I'm the only one
- connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, "I" have to do it
- little or no ability to delegate work to others

**antidotes: evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals**

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### **Progress is Bigger, More**

- observed in systems of accountability and ways we determine success
- progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people (regardless of how well they are serving them)
- gives no value, not even negative value, to its cost, for example, increased accountability to funders as the budget grows, ways in which those we serve may be exploited, excluded, or underserved as we focus on how many we are serving instead of quality of service or values created by the ways in which we serve

**antidotes: create Seventh Generation thinking by asking how the actions of the group now will affect people seven generations from now; make sure that any cost/benefit analysis includes all the costs, not just the financial ones, for example the cost in morale, the cost in credibility, the cost in the use of resources; include process goals in your planning, for example make sure that your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do; ask those you work with and for to evaluate your performance**

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### **Objectivity**

- the belief that there is such a thing as being objective
- the belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process
- invalidating people who show emotion
- requiring people to think in a linear fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways

- impatience with any thinking that does not appear “logical” to those with power

**antidotes: realize that everybody has a world view and that everybody’s world view affects the way they understand things; realize this means you too; push yourself to sit with discomfort when people are expressing themselves in ways which are not familiar to you; assume that everybody has a valid point and your job is to understand what that point is**

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### **Right to Comfort**

- the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing “logic” over emotion)
- scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets people of color

**antidotes: understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning; welcome it as much as you can; deepen your political analysis of racism and oppression so you have a strong understanding of how your personal experience and feelings fit into a larger picture; don't take everything personally**

*One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multicultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly multi-cultural organization.*