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# "FACILITATING STRUCTURED AND MEANINGFUL DIALOGUES ACROSS THE RACIAL DIVIDE: CORNERSTONES, OBSTACLES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES"

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# **"FACILITATING STRUCTURED AND MEANINGFUL DIALOGUES ACROSS THE RACIAL DIVIDE: CORNERSTONES, OBSTACLES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES"**

**PEGGY A. NAGAE, J.D., M.A.**

Consultant, Total Diversity Management, Eugene, Oregon

**JANE DeGIDIO, PH.D.**

Dean of Students, Director of Retention Programs, University of Oregon

**The presenters demonstrate diversity in references to their own ethnic backgrounds, diverse educational experiences and differing fields of expertise.**

People in predominantly white institutions often do not have opportunities for meaningful, personal dialogues about race. Oftentimes, when a topic is brought up in a classroom or a racial crisis occurs, there is no structured approach to those conversations that take place.

As a result many of them turn into debates, diatribes or discussions, but not dialogues, where individuals inquire into assumptions, understand the connections between the parts without focusing on persuading, telling, judging or influencing, and where there is safety for self-disclosure and acknowledge and appreciation. The Nagae Model for Racial Dialogue is a process to accomplish all of the above within a facilitated and structured method to accomplish them.

## **Session objectives include:**

- \* To learn the model of racial dialogue
- \* To explore advantages and disadvantages of being European American/Caucasians, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, multiracial and international students on a predominantly white campus
- \* To practice the technology of racial dialogue as a whole group
- \* To identify the challenges and obstacles of meaningful racial conversations
- \* To reflect upon the work we have done in this arena to date on other campuses and institutions: the resistance and the learning outcomes
- \* To identify skills and qualities needed to do this work

## **Session ground rules include:**

- \* Suspend Judgment
- \* Assume a positive intent
- \* Seek first to understand before being understood
- \* Confidentiality
- \* Suspend need for specific outcomes
- \* Inquire within and reflect upon your assumptions
- \* Silence is okay
- \* Bring humor and laughter on the learning journey

**Session Process:**

1. Discussion on need for racial dialogue: challenges and potential outcomes
2. Introduction of Nagae Model for Racial Dialogue
3. Interactive Segment: Participants will divide into same racial groups: African American, Asian American, European American/Caucasian, Latino/Hispanic, Multi-racial, Native American, and International Students and using the Model of Dialogue will brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages of being within each of the racial/status groups listed above. They will then return to the whole group and experience a large group dialogue about their observations, perceptions, assumptions and learnings. Again, they will use the model for racial dialogue.
4. The large group debrief will include:
  - \* Important questions to raise in facilitating racial dialogues
  - \* Learning outcomes for our campuses
  - \* Next Steps: skill sets and emotional/mental/spiritual qualities for this work including working with resistance, obstacles and fears.

**Other Issues for Discussion:**

- \* Reflections upon the work we have done to date with the model and the dialogues on college campuses and within other organizations, including the difficulty in facilitating authentic personal conversations around race.
- \* Possible obstacles and how to address them
- \* Adaptations to use in gender, sexual orientation, and other dimensions of diversity
- \* A bibliography of the sources
- \* Methods to uplift the spirit when doing this challenging work.

**Methodology/Philosophy:**

The presenters focus their work on all four levels of life: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. The session will reflect this orientation, not only by the content of the presentation, but more importantly, how that content is presented. The presenters will demonstrate diversity in references to their own ethnic backgrounds, diverse educational experiences, and differing fields of expertise. In addition, they will bring a wide variety of personal and professional experiences, examples, and humor and delight!

**Presenters:**

**Peggy Nagae** holds an A.B. Degree, cum laude, in East Asian Studies from Vassar College, a J.D., with honors from Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark College, and a MA. in Spiritual Psychology from the University of Santa Monica. She has served as an affirmative action director at Northwestern School of Law, an Assistant Dean at the University of Oregon School of Law, and an adjunct professor at Seattle University School of law. In addition to practicing law in Portland and Seattle, she was also an administrator at a mid-size litigation firm in Seattle. For the past 10 years, she has been the principal of her own consulting firm, Total Diversity Management, where she specializes in diversity assessments, training and executive coaching. Her other related fields of expertise include conflict resolution, team building, creating healing organizations, strategic planning and spirituality in the workplace. Her clients include

universities, government entities, non-profit organizations, corporations, law firms and community groups. She has also served as the President of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association; the Vice Chair of the American Bar Association Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Profession; and as a member, appointed by President Clinton, to the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund.

**Jane DeGidio** holds a BA. degree from the University of Minnesota in Sociology and a MA and Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Oregon with an emphasis on problems for women and minorities in apprenticeship programs and organizational and career development. She has served for over 30 years in higher education in the capacities of Dean of Students and Director of Retention Programs with a special focus on learning communities for first year students. She also started the U of O Race Task Force with a colleague and has devoted resources to gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender issues at the University. She also teaches classes on institutional white racism, multicultural communication, and leadership for students as well as graduate classes in the area of administration of college student services. Ms. DeGidio was a Fulbright scholar in Swaziland where she functioned as the visiting Dean of Students and has also worked with USIA (United States Information Agency) in Zimbabwe as an organizational consultant at the University of Zimbabwe. Politically active in the community in the areas of women's rights, prisoner's rights and issues of race, she has served on the board of Sponsors (prisoner's rights), the Eugene Women's Commission, where she helped organize the City's sexual assault services. She was also the first woman appointed by the Governor of Oregon to the State Apprenticeship Commission.