

Tools for Undoing Racism

This handbook offers ways to create an anti-racist organization.

Reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Inside Out: The Equity Leader's Guide to Undoing Institutional Racism. By Caprice D. Hollins. Softcover. 261 pages. New Society Publishers, newsociety.com.

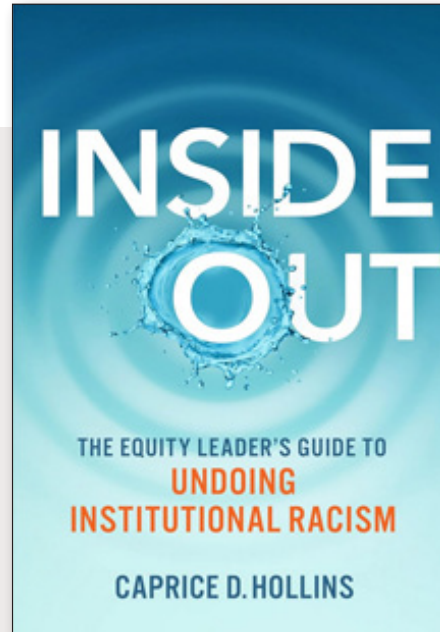
While *Inside Out* is written for equity leaders – people who have been hired to improve an organization's racial equity – anyone, at any organization, can benefit from the book's lessons about race. Caprice Hollins starts by describing how to address racism without deflecting conversations about it. She explains how words and tones can create barriers in communicating.

Engaging with each other authentically will help break down systems of institutionalized racism. For example, we can begin by asking questions to help understand where people are coming from. Asking from curiosity, not control, means that no one is expected to be an expert in someone else's cultural experiences.

The process of dismantling long-held, institutionalized practices and policies is ongoing and may move forward in fits and starts. It is, of course, not solo work. Mistakes are to be expected and fatigue may set in, frustrating progress. So, Hollins offers many options to take care of yourself and stay physically and emotionally healthy so that you can meet daily challenges. She explains the meaning and use of each of her suggested care techniques.

Fortunately, Hollins' strategies can be adapted to apply to many other issues that create barriers to access, opportunity, and effective organizations, including gender preference, sexism, ableism, ageism, and other identity oppression concerns. Her book works for all of us who want to learn ways to strengthen social-justice education within our organizations.

Terrence Fernsler, MNPL, PhD, has been a nonprofit professional for over 40 years. He is currently an instructor and advisor in the James Madison University Nonprofit Studies minor program, and instructor in Nonprofit Management and Leadership for the Master of Public Administration program in the Bush School of Government and Policy's Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy at Texas A&M University.



Courageous Conversations about Race

In *Inside Out*, Caprice Hollins provides a framework for talking about race. Her counsel includes the following:

Be prepared for emotional reactions.

Conversations about race will bring up powerful feelings. Accept that tears, anger, and frustration may be part of the process. “Allow what is happening to be part of the experience rather than trying to fix it or make it go away,” Hollins urges.

Rather than attacking or avoiding someone who offends or upsets you, “lean in and ask questions with genuine curiosity,” suggests Hollins. If you lash out or go silent, you won’t move the conversation forward. Instead, engage the other person in pursuit of deepening your understanding and becoming allies.

Embrace discomfort. These meaningful conversations won’t be easy. But if you wait until you feel comfortable, nothing will be accomplished. It’s by taking the risk to make yourself vulnerable that learning and growth occur.

Thank people for sharing their stories with you. Let them know that their words touched your heart and will stay with you. It likely took a lot for them to open up to you, and it’s important to make it clear how much you appreciate them giving you their trust.

