## Biases

Walter, A. W., Ruiz, Y., Tourse, R. W. C., Kress, H., Morningstar, B., MacArthur, B., & Daniels, A. (2017). Leadership matters: How hidden biases perpetuate institutional racism in organizations. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance, 41*(3), 213–221.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This article describes the biases that can create barriers to organizational change and gives pointed recommendations for confronting and changing institutionalized racism and biases in the organization.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

Social work is a reflection of our larger society, which contains three main forms of biases:
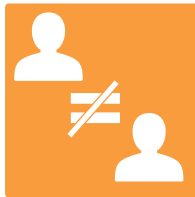
INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM
The combination of policies, practices, or procedures embedded in bureaucratic structure that systematically lead to unequal outcomes for groups of people. This can be seen when the organizational environment reflects and protects the cultural assumptions of the dominant group, so that the practices of that group are seen as the norm to which all others should conform.

BLIND SPOTS
The ways in which most of us are susceptible to unconscious biases toward stigmatized groups and individuals. These biases can mislead individuals and organizations into committing profound errors of judgment at work and in their personal lives.
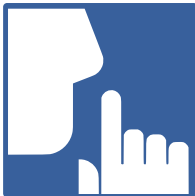
THE COLOR BIND
In order to get rid of racial bias, race must be talked about, but one of the norms in our society is not to talk about race.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

WHAT STEPS SHOULD LEADERSHIP TAKE TO ADDRESS HIDDEN BIASES IN THE WORKPLACE?

1. Recognize that individuals have conscious and unconscious biases, demonstrate a commitment to diversity, and practice cultural humility and awareness.

2. Openly and explicitly address the organization's intention to optimize cultural diversity and avoid the hazards of institutional biases and racism at all levels. Creating teams to identify structural and operational bias within the organization can assist in recognizing and mitigating the impact of biases.

3. Create a senior management position for a diversity officer. The diversity officer should set up educational programs and evaluation protocols that establish standards of cultural awareness.

4. Create and articulate distinct, functional, and inclusive strategies promoting equity and cultural diversity. These strategies will be based on partnerships with employees and the larger community to address the issues that they deem important.

5. Be mindful of succession planning at all times. Organizational practices should include mentoring and training professionals from communities of color, recruiting graduating students and young professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds, and advertising in media that are accessible to individuals from underrepresented racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.

For more resources on this topic, visit: https://ncwwi.org/index.php/special-collections/ncwwi-racial-equity