

# APPROACHES TO POWER INEQUITY WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

## Social Justice Approach

- ◆ Acknowledges systems of oppression and structural and institutional barriers based on racial, ethnic, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, immigration status, and other differences
- ◆ Understands race, gender, and other aspects of identity to be socially constructed, tied to complex histories, and playing significant roles in how resources and power are distributed
- ◆ Acknowledges the existence of privilege (advantages, access, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of marginalized groups) and the opportunity to challenge oppression from a place of privilege—as an ally
- ◆ Committed to an ongoing process of self-education and coalition-building in order to create open and supportive environments and take collective, collaborative action for systemic change.



## Cultural Competency Approach

- ◆ Focuses attention on valuing unique worldviews of different communities
- ◆ Advocates that people and groups develop their capacity or ability to work effectively across difference by growing culture-specific awareness, knowledge, and skills
- ◆ May rely on generalizations around cultural identity as a means to understand groups and offer a sense of access



## Multiculturalist Approach

- ◆ Encourages tolerance and conflict-free diversity, often highlights achievements as a way to downplay systemic or structural barriers and inequalities
- ◆ Highlights cultural life, cultural expression, cuisine, dress
- ◆ Downplays race in favor of talking about and celebrating culture



## Neutrality Approach

- ◆ Dismisses significance of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, immigration status, ability, age
- ◆ Thinks that not seeing race, ethnicity, or “color” is equivalent to not being racist
- ◆ Asserts that everyone is “on the same playing field,” and has equal access to opportunity and advancement based on merit



## Exclusionary Approach

- ◆ Either proactively or inadvertently reinforces exclusion, disempowerment, marginalization, or discrimination of people of color, LGBTQ\* people, women, or other marginalized groups of people
- ◆ Requires those groups to assimilate to norms defined by dominant groups, if they are to participate at all
- ◆ Tries to maintain the status quo for the dominant group

**By no means a comprehensive list, and the categories above are not static or mutually exclusive.**

### Sources

[Adapted by AORTA from a handout from Leadership Development in Intergroup Relations/ Asian Americans Advancing Justice]  
Blum, L.A., 1992, “Antiracism, Multiculturalism, and Interracial Community: Three Educational Values for a Multicultural Society” Office of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Massachusetts, Boston.  
“Conceptual Frameworks/Models, Guiding Values and Principles” *National Center for Cultural Competence*.  
Eng, David L., “The End(s) of Race” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 123 (2008): 1479-93.  
Naber, Nadine C., “So Our History Doesn’t Become Your Future: The Local and Global Politics of Coalition Building Post September 11<sup>th</sup>” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 5, no. 3 (2002): 217-242.  
Song, Sarah. “Multiculturalism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2010 Edition), Edward N Zalta (ed.).  
Stacks, Jonathan. Andrés Meléndez Salgado, and Sara Holmes. “Cultural Competence and Social Justice: A Partnership for Change” *Transitions: Serving Youth of Color*. Volume 15, No. 3, January 2004.

ANTI-OPPRESSION RESOURCE AND TRAINING ALLIANCE

[www.aortacollective.org](http://www.aortacollective.org)

