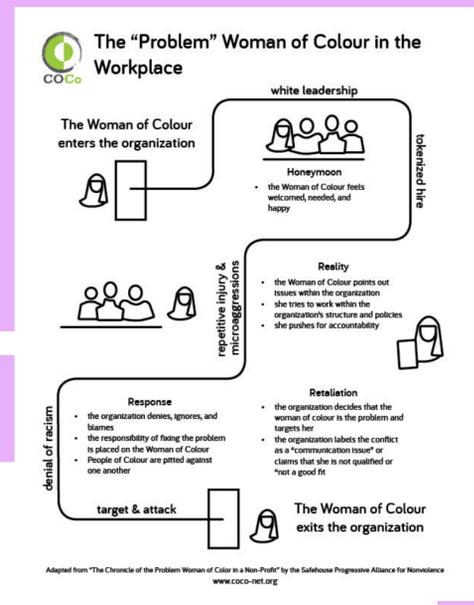




Words from the WELL

WELLcome to the Well: Black Women as Re(Sisters) in Educational Spaces



Honeymoon: The Woman of Color feels welcomed, needed, and happy

Disruptions

- Build community with People of Color to better assess the environment
 - Remember: Color, Culture, and Consciousness
- Build a broader alliance of white allies and multi-racial spaces
 - This will help you to lay the groundwork and assess the environment from multiple perspectives
- Use this moment of spotlight to recognize the other Black women in the building. In what ways is their work going unrecognized?
- Caution being pigeon-holed into roles, particularly mammy-ing.
 - Consider: How are they using you and what does this mean for the expectations placed on Black women to come? What are you agreeing to take on?
- Clearly identify your self care plan
 - The three R's of Self Care: Refuge, Reflection, Refuel
 - Ask all of the questions about organizational practices now! "I'm just curious... why do we....?"

Reality: The woman of color points out issues within the organization. She tries to work within the organization's structures and policies. She pushes for accountability

Disruptions

- Document what's happening
- Of the allies that you've cultivated, determine which group(s) you can intentionally utilize for support (Black women, white allies, or multi-racial coalition)
 - Note: It may not be in the best interest of other POC to be co-conspirators in this moment
- Create a clear plan
 - Understand your sphere of influence
 - Celebrate the small wins. It doesn't happen overnight
 - Consider the delivery of information. What do you know to be true and how do you help others understand it to also be true for themselves?
- Center your own wellness
 - Note: This is the stage where emotions may be rising for you. How are you listening to what those emotions are telling you?
 - How much are you willing to sacrifice of yourself? For who?
 - There's a difference between pushing the work forward and pushing yourself over a ledge

Response: The organization denies, ignores and blames; the responsibility of fixing the problem is placed on the woman of color; people of color are pitted against one another

Disruptions

- Tag in an accomplice
- Highlight PGPs (principles of good practice) as well as what other schools are doing as a form of validation
- If within your means, bring in an outside expert
- Fall back; this is about winning the war, not the battle. This is not a failure; it's not a reflection of your incompetence. This is strategic planning and self care.
- Be in community with other People of Color. Remember: Pitting People of Color against one another is an intentional strategy of whiteness.
 - Who are you checking in with regularly to affirm your greatness and to help you not feel isolated (whether that person is in the building or not)?
 - Women of Color who are in conflict with other WOC may be acting in whiteness or have white supervisors who make it difficult to show up authentically

Retaliation: The organization decides that the woman of color is the problem and targets her, the organization labels the conflict as a "communication issue" or claims that she is not qualified or not a good fit

Disruptions

- Gather your documents detailing your employment experience
- Tag in white accomplices, especially those positioned differently from you who might be in a safer place to push forward
- Find empirical/scholarly evidence validating your experiences. This is not because your story is not credible, but because white people are prone to believe information that comes from the Ivory Tower
- GET OUT!
 - Refer back to how much of yourself you're willing to give
 - Recognize that the kids are not enough reason to stay
 - Don't remain loyal to an institution that isn't loyal to you
 - It is a tool of white supremacy for your employer to make you think that you need them and this job. You don't!

