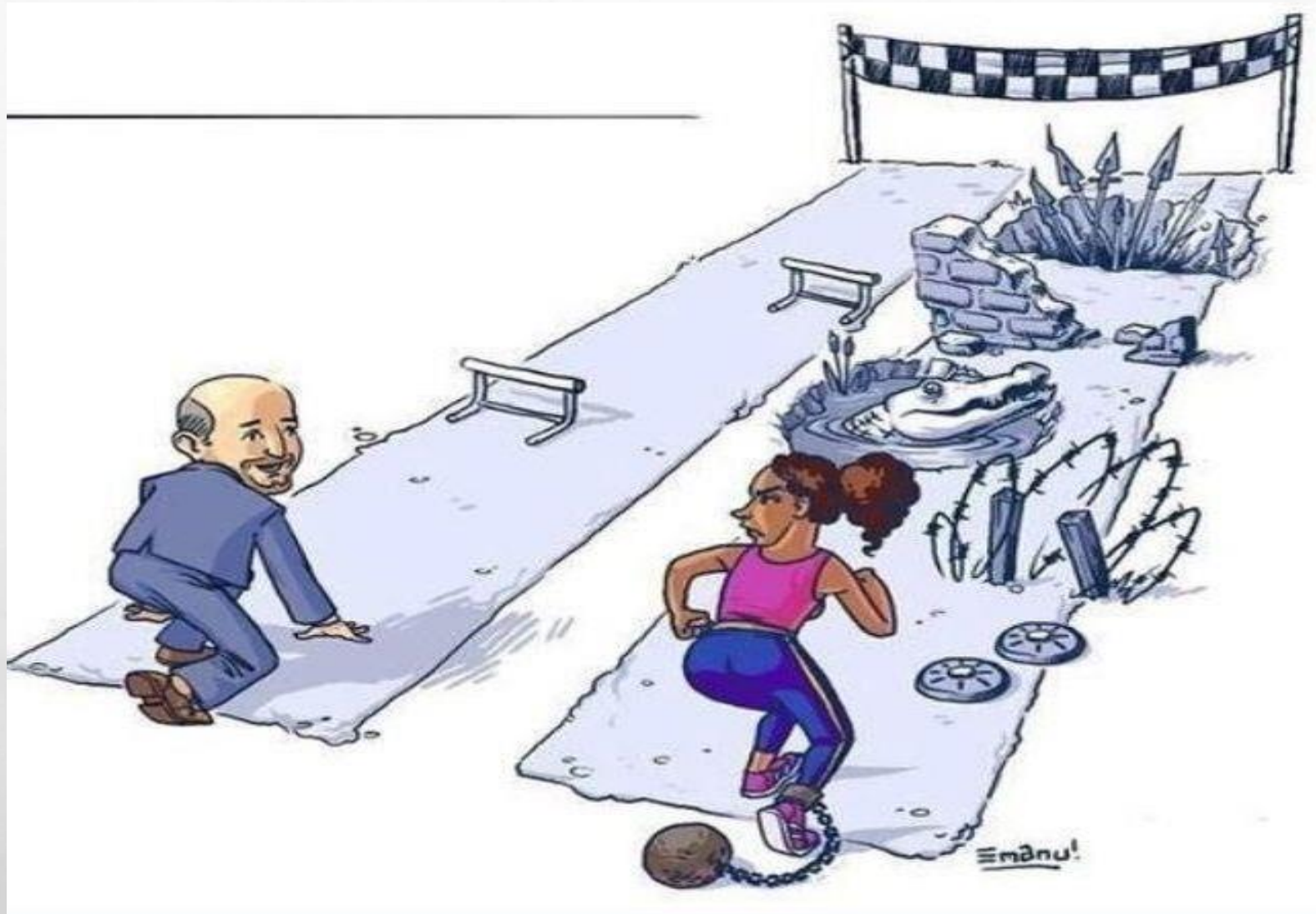




**ENGAGING
DIFFICULT
DIALOGUE IN THE
CLASSROOM**





HOW YOU FEEL



VS



HOW YOU LOOK

**WHAT WILL YOUR
SPACES REFLECT?**



I believe that education is the greatest equalizer; thus, I will continue to fight to equalize the playing field in an educational atmosphere that is not always level!

— *Erin Gruwell* —

AZ QUOTES

ENGAGING IN DIFFICULT DIALOGUE

WHAT CONCERNS YOU?



SETTING THE STAGE

- **REINFORCE COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION REGULARLY**
 - **SYLLABI, WELCOME MESSAGES, BLACKBOARD, ASSIGNMENTS/INSTRUCTIONS, DIALOGUE GUIDELINES**
 - **PREPARE THEM IN ADVANCE FOR DIFFICULT DIALOGUES**
 - **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AS A BENEFIT/SKILLSET (PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BENEFITS)**
 - **CREATIVELY ENGAGE CURRENT EVENTS**
 - **DIVERSITY IN READINGS, AUTHORS, ETC.**
- **GROUP NORMS /COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS**
- **DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT**

BASIC TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE FACILITATION

*C*onsider different perspectives.

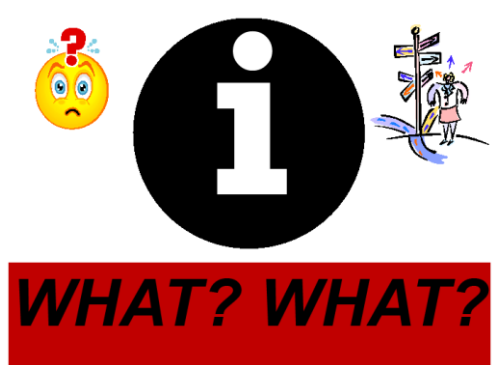
*A*lways be authentic.

*R*emember your lens.

*D*ig deeper by asking questions.

*S*tay with the process.

SAMPLE DIALOGUE NORMS



SILENCE ISN'T ALWAYS GOLDEN

- **HURTFUL BEHAVIOR IS CONDONED**
- **APPEARANCE OF COMPLICITY**
- **PERPETRATOR IS EMPOWERED**
- **YOU CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING AND/OR MAINTAINING A TOXIC CLIMATE**
- **YOU AREN'T MODELING RISK-TAKING**
- **YOU RISK LOSING TRUST AND RESPECT OF THOSE WHO ARE HARMED**

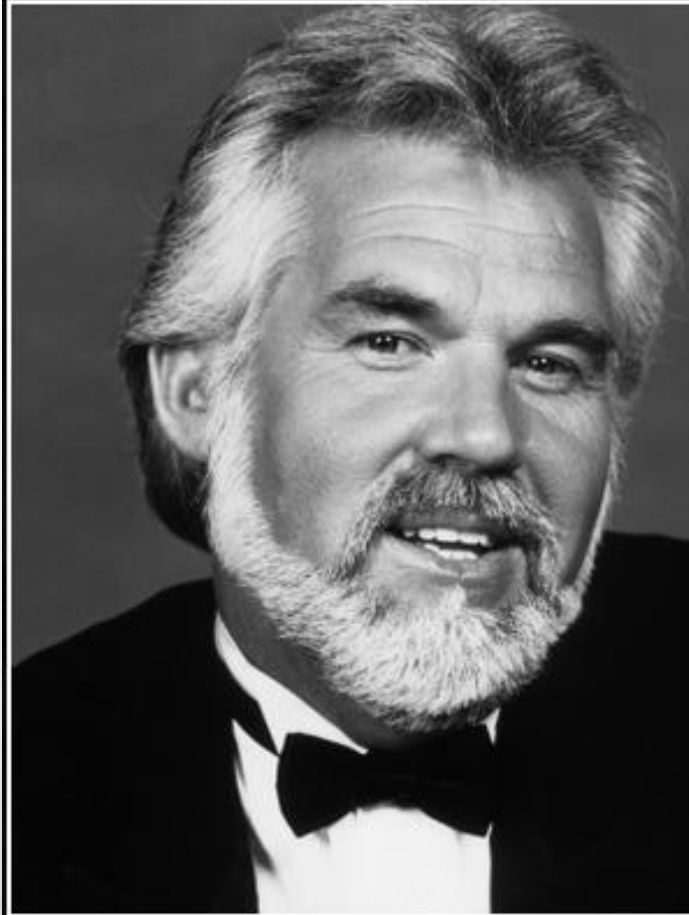
silence speaks louder than
words sometimes.

- Unknown



WHERE DO I BEGIN?

- **BE WILLING AND COMMITTED TO CREATING AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**
- **MODEL AUTHENTIC AND TRANSPARENT DIALOGUE**
- **BE HONEST ABOUT AREAS OF DISCOMFORT**
- **OWN YOUR PRIVILEGE**
- **EXPLORE AND UNPACK YOUR BIASES**
- **EXPLORE MEANINGFUL WAYS OF ENGAGING, EVEN WHEN YOU DISAGREE**
- **ENGAGE RESOURCES (DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER, DIVERSITY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, LGBTQ CENTER, RELIGIOUS STUDIES, ETC.)**



You gotta know when to hold 'em,
know when to fold 'em, know when
to walk away, know when to run.

— *Kenny Rogers* —

AZ QUOTES

WHAT IF I MESS UP?

- **YOU WILL! PERHAPS MORE THAN ONCE....**
- **CRIME VS COVER-UP**
 - **OWN YOUR MESS**
 - **RESIST THE URGE TO DEFEND OR DISAGREE**
 - **LISTEN ACTIVELY FOR UNDERSTANDING**
 - **LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES!**



An all-white freshman class is discussing why poverty disproportionately affects communities of color. Many students bring in information from the readings linking low economic status to lack of jobs, transportation, childcare, and quality education, one student argues forcefully that while all these can make life difficult, anyone with enough initiative can find a job. In her own small town, she says, individual effort is still considered a moral virtue. Her uncle used to be on welfare because of his laziness and drinking habits. Finally, through his own efforts, he pulled himself together and has now won the respect of the family.

The other students argue forcefully against generalizing from this one example, but the conservative student stands her ground, continuing to argue that only the development of character and moral virtue will solve the problems of poverty. The white instructor, who has until now stayed out of the discussion, asks the class to think about the assumptions about race in this argument. He assigns a short reaction paper to help students think in more depth about what they have learned from the discussion. In her paper, the conservative student continues to argue in favor of individual effort and concludes by saying, “I knew when I came to this liberal university that my views would not be respected.”

How would you advise the instructor to work with this student?

IT IS THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS AND YOU ASK THE STUDENTS TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES. THE FIRST 20 STUDENTS SHARE THEIR NAME AND MAJOR.

THE NEXT STUDENT SAYS, “HI, MY NAME IS CHRIS AND MY PRONOUNS ARE THEM, THEY, AND THEIRS.”

YOU NOTICE SEVERAL OF YOUR STUDENTS SNICKERING AND GIGGLING.

THE NEXT STUDENT SAYS, “HI, MY NAME IS MARCUS AND I AM 100% ALL MAN.”

THE OTHER STUDENTS BURST OUT LAUGHING AND YOU ATTEMPT TO GAIN CONTROL BY SAYING, “ALRIGHT, THAT IS ENOUGH. HOW DO YOU ALL THINK YOU ARE MAKING CHRIS FEEL? CHRIS, I AM SO SORRY ABOUT THAT, ARE YOU OK? I THINK EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU OWES CHRIS AN APOLOGY!”

WHAT FEEDBACK WOULD YOU PROVIDE THIS INSTRUCTOR?

A WHITE INSTRUCTOR IN A REQUIRED UPPER LEVEL COURSE ON ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING DECIDES TO FOCUS ONE OF HER ASSIGNED PAPERS ON MODERN FORMS OF RACISM. AS SHE DISTRIBUTES ARTICLES ON WHITE PRIVILEGE TO HER PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CLASS, A FEW STUDENTS GLANCE AT EACH OTHER AND ROLL THEIR EYES. HANDS GO UP. “DO WE HAVE TO WRITE ON THIS TOPIC?” “ WE ALREADY DID OUR RACE AND ETHNICITY REQUIREMENT LAST YEAR.” LATER, ONE OF THE STUDENTS COMES TO THE INSTRUCTOR’S OFFICE HOURS AND SAYS THIS TOPIC HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH HER SINCE SHE COMES FROM AN ALL-WHITE RURAL AREA TO WHICH SHE EXPECTS TO GO BACK AND LIVE FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE.

WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE THE INSTRUCTOR TO SAY TO THIS STUDENT? HOW MIGHT THE INSTRUCTOR DEAL WITH THE RESISTANCE AND ANXIETY THE REST OF THE CLASS IS FEELING?

THE INSTRUCTOR WALKS INTO CLASS ABOUT 5 MINUTES LATE AND NOTICES SEVERAL SMALL DISCUSSIONS TAKING PLACE. YOU CAN FEEL THE TENSION IN THE AIR. YOU CALL THE CLASS TO ORDER AND ASK “WHAT IS ALL OF THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE ABOUT? SEEMS LIKE YOU ALL ARE ENGAGED IN A SERIOUS DISCUSSION, CARE TO SHARE?” THE CLASS GOES SILENT AND STUDENTS START LOOKING AROUND AT THEIR PEERS.

STUDENT A: “IT’S NOTHING, WE WERE JUST KILLING TIME.”

STUDENT B (LATINX STUDENT): “NO!!! I THINK WE SHOULD CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION. IT SEEMS HE HAS A PROBLEM WITH MY SWEATSHIRT.” (LET US BUILD BRIDGES, NOT WALLS).

STUDENT A: “IT’S NOT THAT, I MEAN, I DON’T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH IMMIGRANTS. MY BEST FRIEND IS MEXICAN. I JUST THINK PEOPLE SHOULD DO THINGS LEGALLY! I ALWAYS HEAR PEOPLE TALK ABOUT HOW MESSED UP AMERICA IS. IF THEY DON’T LIKE IT HERE, WHY ARE THEY HERE?”

INSTRUCTOR: (TOTALLY CAUGHT OFF GUARD) “OK, OK, OK, LET’S NOT GET INTO POLITICS, WE HAVE AN EXAM IN A FEW WEEKS.”

STUDENT B: (VISIBLY UPSET, GATHERS THEIR STUFF AND STORMS OUT OF CLASS)

INSTRUCTOR: (SAYS TO ANOTHER INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SITTING CLOSE BY) “PLEASE GO CHECK ON HER.”



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