

# DIVERGENT VOICES IN ANTI- RACISM WORK

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# PERFECTIONISM

- Mistakes are both negative and personal, i.e. they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are -- mistakes.
- Little or no appreciation for the work of others
- Making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong
- Little time, energy, or money put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice

# SENSE OF URGENCY

- Continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- Frequently results in sacrificing potential allies and good process for quick or highly visible results

# DEFENSIVENESS

- the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power rather than to facilitate the best out of each person
- criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate or rude
- people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness
- a lot of energy is spent trying to make sure that people's feelings aren't getting hurt or working around defensive people

# QUANTITY OVER QUALITY

- things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
- little or no value attached to process
- when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), content prevails

# WORSHIP OF THE WRITTEN WORD

- if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist
- those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission

# ONLY ONE RIGHT WAY

- the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it
- when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who know the right way)

# PATERNALISM

- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does and also are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them



# EITHER/OR THINKING

- things are either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us
- closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict
- no sense that things can be both/and
- results in trying to simplify complex things

# POWER HOARDING

- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed, emotional, inexperienced

# FEAR OF OPEN CONFLICT

- people in power are conflict avoidant
- when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue
- equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

# INDIVIDUALISM

- little experience or comfort working as part of a team
- people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone
- accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve
- desire for individual recognition and credit
- competition more highly valued than cooperation

# I'M THE ONLY ONE

- connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, 'I' have to do it
- little or no ability to delegate work to others

# PROGRESS IS BIGGER, MORE

- progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, members, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people ... regardless of how well they are serving them or whether they may be exploited, excluded, or underserved

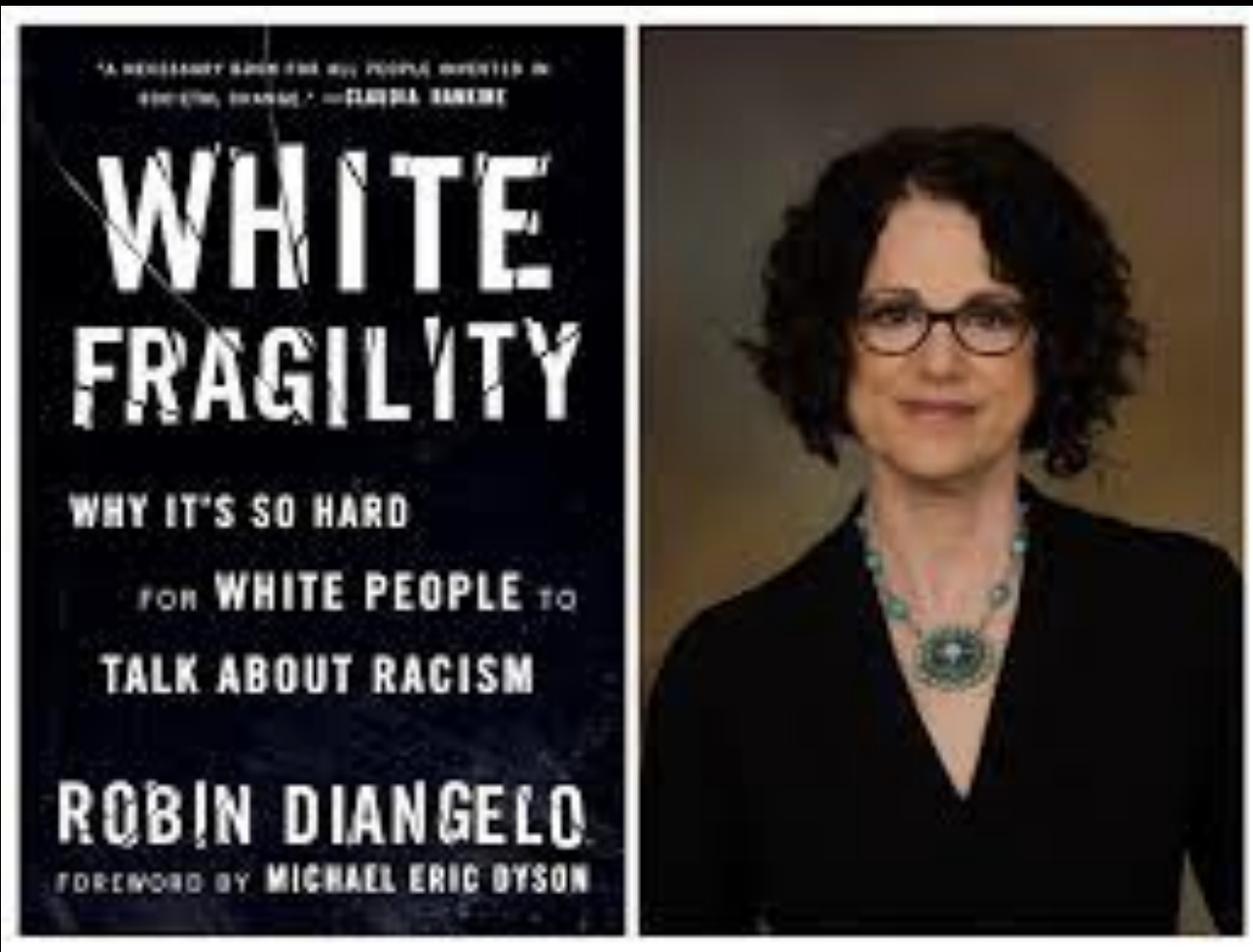
# OBJECTIVITY

- the belief that there is such a thing as being objective
- the belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process
- invalidating people who show emotion
- impatience with any thinking that does not appear logical to those with power

# RIGHT TO COMFORT

- the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort
- scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets people of colour





*"Don't Label Me should be labeled as genius.  
It's an amazing book."* —Chris Rock

# Don't Label Me

How to Do Diversity Without  
Inflaming the Culture Wars



*New York Times* Bestselling Author

Irshad Manji



