

1) White Female – Principal

The majority of our students are African-American and qualify for free/reduced lunch. I knew our students would benefit from having support outside of the school day. We worked with our district to secure afterschool programming for our kids through 21st Century grant funding. The assigned provider for our school was a local church, whose members were predominately white. I witnessed the program manager tell a group of kids, who were goofing around while in line for their afternoon snack, “You need to get it together. I know you don’t have food at home and the only reason you attend this program is for the free meal.”

2) Hispanic Male - Executive Officer, Outside of School Provider

A year ago I was invited to attend a national meeting focused on improving 3rd grade literacy across the nation. Participants were content experts and funders representing a diverse range of multiple educational areas. I was specifically invited to lend the voice of someone who works with low-income communities in after school and summer programs. I was surprised to notice that I was only one of 3 males in the room and only one of 2 people of color. I wondered how were we going to be able to have serious conversations around the challenges that we face around literacy, when communities that need our help are not proportionally represented in developing solutions?

3) African-American Male – District Director

I applied for a position in a district that was 94% white. Out of 75 applicants I was selected as one of two finalists. The final interview set up allowed me to see that my "competition" was a White woman. I left the interview feeling good about my chances. The leader of the district called me later and said, “I have to tell you that you are one of the most impressive people I have ever met and I knew from the first round of interviews that you were the person for the job, but we are going to move forward with the other candidate. Please know that the other candidate is not beating you out of a job. Our district community just isn't ready for what you would bring to it”.

4) Hispanic Female – University Director

As a lecturer in a teacher education program at a state university I stood in front of a class of 30 adult students in a course on multicultural education. The majority appeared to be of northern European descent [white]. I was lecturing on the complexities of creating culturally relevant practices in the classroom using basic words of the field like sociological, interdisciplinary and pedagogical—nothing horribly intellectual—when a white male student raised his hand and in an irritated tone made this abrupt request? *“Can you stop using multisyllabic words so we can understand what you are saying.”* Would the same comment have made if I been an elderly white male professor?

5) Latina/Pilipina Female - Director of Programs

I sit at some high-level tables that have the potential to influence and inform decisions that impact the entire field. More often than not, I am one of few people of color – women of color at that – in the space. I know my voice is important to exercise to ensure the experiences and needs of underrepresented communities are heard, yet there are times when I feel my voice is silenced. At a state-level committee meeting, I offered an idea and it went unacknowledged, yet the same idea was heard and even championed when it came from a white man. I know that I must speak up and make myself heard, but it is experiences like these that keep those internal barriers intact. I can feel my temperature rising, and my heart beat faster when I have something to say, but I’m also thinking, “Does it even matter? I won’t be heard anyway.” And then I silence myself.

6) White Male – Principal

I am constantly faced with the dilemma of who are the best providers to support the needs of my predominately Africa American middle school students. Most of the providers that come forward are from the African American faith community. While well intentioned, their programming is lacking. It seems to be more of a jobs program for the church community than it is a program to support the development of middle school students. Last year I selected as one of my after school providers, a program focused on STEM activities and run by a two young, white males associated with the university. The kids loved the program and chose it over the church sponsored programs. I was publicly berated by the pastors of my local church community for allowing this program into the building. They said, “What could those two white boys know about the needs of our children?”

7) Latino Male – Professional Development Trainer

A district we were working with has had massive demographic shifts over the last five years - moving from primarily White to Latino. I was with a White co-trainer, working with three school leadership teams (92% White and 8% Latino). The White co-trainer described the changing demographics as, "Our communities are changing. I get it. Now, we have kids who can't speak the language. Now, we have kids who get their electricity from an extension cord connected to their neighbors house. Now, we have kids who live with multiple families in one home. How can we expect them to do homework?" The trainees heads nodded in agreement.