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Visionaries Global Summit™

Beyond Blame and Shame: New Ideas for Healing Racism

Dereca Blackmon

Dereca: Ago!

Participants: Ame!

Dereca: For those who don't know, ago is an Akan word and it means "Are you listening?" The proper response is ame, which means "Yes, I am listening." Ago!

Participants: Ame!

Dereca: Wonderful. Wow! So excited to be back with you in my new family, Shift Network, and here at the *Visionaries Summit*. Are you having a wonderful time?

Participants: Yeah.

Dereca: Are you having a wonderful time? Okay, it sounds like it's an after-lunch kind of time. We can't have that. As has been said, my name is Dereca Blackmon. I said earlier, but I'll say always, I use she and they pronouns. I like to let you know what gender pronouns I use because you can't tell what gender pronouns, I use by looking at me. I also use she and they pronouns as an active allyship for my friends in the gender nonconforming community or nonbinary community because a lot of the places where I go and speak in the world, people don't introduce themselves with gender pronouns or they've never heard of they/them pronouns or other pronouns besides she and he and him and her, and I think that's important. We're going to talk in these next 40 minutes that we have together about allyship, so I like to model what that looks like. In service to that, I just want to ask us to take a moment and once again just acknowledge the native peoples of this land and just recognize that we are the beneficiaries of a great love and a great sacrifice, and it's ours to be thankful for and to remember and to hold with reverence. Thank you.

What are the little things that we can do that make a difference to be allies to people who are different from ourselves? We just can hold a level of consciousness just to remind each other to be together across our differences, that I don't just have to speak about me. I can speak about communities that I'm not a part of in reverence, in recognition to who they are. That's part of what I want us to do today. But first, I want to tell you a little bit about my story. I'm originally from Detroit, Michigan, which I like to call the Wakanda of the United States. I love being from Detroit because almost everyone in my community was black growing up. It was a wonderful thing to grow up in a community with people who look like me and shared much of my cultural heritage and history. Every mayor that I ever had growing up was black, most of my teachers were black, the police chief was black, the people who committed crimes were black, I had a black dentist. How many people had a black dentist? Okay, one, two maybe, right? Okay, yeah. Oh, I see you, [Participant]. I had a different experience. The students who were media were black, but I went to a high school with 4,000 gifted and talented students and 80% of them were black.

Then I went to boarding school in East Hampton, Massachusetts. Yes, I am an early expert on culture shock. I had that experience, and then I went into my undergraduate education at Stanford. As I got out into the world, I started to hear the stereotypes that people had about black people. Frankly, I was shocked. People said things like, "Well, black people don't ski," and I was like, "Well, I'm from Michigan. Black people have ski clubs." Right? I couldn't understand. Black people don't swim. Now thanks to Stanford, where I work, we win gold medals in swimming. I was just kind of confused. I remember thinking wow, people are really ignorant. I didn't mean it in a pejorative way. I meant it as in, I do not know. Because everything you know about any group of people is limited to your sample size.

Whether it's people with neurodivergent, different kinds of disabilities or abilities. Whether it's people who are trans or people who are black or people who are from certain parts of the world. You only know what your family taught you, what your neighborhood taught you, what the educational system taught you or what the media taught you, and none of those are really good resources. It's a limited sample size. My grandparents were senior members of the Black Square Dancers Club, and even black people don't know that's a thing. But I had a huge sample size. There wasn't anything for me that was inside or outside of blackness. It just was everything. Then I went to college in California at Stanford. When I arrived at Stanford, I was so excited by the activism that was happening on campus. We were changing the core curriculum, which when I arrived there was called Western culture. That was actually what it was called. A group of us students and some faculty, they had the radical notion that there was more that we should learn about than the West. We pushed for a curriculum that was more inclusive called cultures, ideas and values.

In my first year at Stanford, we won a national fight that had been on public television with William Bennett as the Secretary of Education saying Stanford was ruining American education. I was 18 years old and I said, "Yes!" and we won. I remember thinking activism is so fun and easy. That was the beginning of my career in that. Then in my sophomore year, my second year in school, I took a class called Intergroup Communication, which I am now blessed to co-teach with social psychology pioneer Hazel Markus. In this class we talk about identity: race, gender, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation. What happens for each topic you break up into your own group and you come up with anonymous questions for all the other groups, and then each group takes a turn sitting in the middle of the floor and answering those anonymous questions. Wow, right? When I tell people that that happens, they're like, "ooh, that's a very bad idea. I can't imagine how that turns out." Every quarter we have 175. I think this quarter we have 250 students on the waiting list for that class because what we have is a hunger to talk about these issues, and we just want structures where we can talk about them with a level of safety.

On the first day of class, I made a white woman cry. I don't remember exactly what I said. I remember feeling like well, she should cry. Racism sucks and now she understands how I feel. I had this kind of militant apathy about her feelings. And then a funny thing happened. We were in the same group for the entire rest of the course. When we got to socioeconomic status, she shared that she was from Appalachia. If you're not familiar, Appalachia is one of the lowest income communities in the United States and it's predominantly white. I had what I like to call the aha moment, and I hope that sometime in the next 30 minutes you have one too. It was a recognition of what we call the iceberg theory of culture. This much of who a person is is what you see on the surface. The mass of who they are is beyond the surface. I realized that up to that point I thought that everyone white at Stanford was wealthy, and I had an aha. Oh, identity is more complicated than I thought.

There's more to know and see about a person than what I can just see on the surface. That sparked for me this interest, this passion, this curiosity that we could create conversations that went beyond the surface and actually touched on the deep issues and allowed us to connect. This is the thing that I do in the world is to try to get us through this thing that I call diversity fatigue. Diversity fatigue is that phenomenon where you tell someone you're going to talk about diversity and inclusion and I'm like, "Oh, do we have to? I mean aren't we all just all one? Can't we all just rise above all of that sense of separation?" But diversity fatigue comes from the fact that most of our conversations about diversity and inclusion have fallen into one of two categories. Either we have done what I call the check the box training. We got to have some diversity in our program. Let's make sure we get some diversity in the program and let's hope the person doesn't say anything that upsets anybody, the don't rock the boat training.

Then the other kind of training is what I like to call the blame and shame training. That's when we decide who is the enemy or the problem, and we attack them, and then everybody leaves feeling kind of uncomfortable. We in our work at Stanford and the Inclusion Design Group, we had this idea that we could do something different, that we could have hard, deep conversations, and that it would be fun. I know. Shocking, right? That's the bar I'm setting for myself today, that this conversation is going to be hard and deep and at least mildly enjoyable. Can we go with mildly enjoyable? Okay, all right. Part of what I want to talk to you about are some frameworks for how we can think about these things. I want to say that I will take the whole last 15 minutes of my time to take questions, because as interesting as I am, talking with you is more interesting, because that actually is where the learning happens. How we become a learning community is when we interact with each other and we ask the hard questions.

Can you agree to do that with me? Are you going to ask the hard questions? Are you going to take a risk? Okay, good. Here is what I want us to talk about: words. A lot of what gets us hung up in this conversation are words that we use that we have no definitions for. Now, I work at Stanford, and because I work with such brilliant people, I'm not very fond of definitions. Because my students will question me on everything from Wikipedia to their mom's dissertation, and it's exhausting. What I like instead in the work is metaphor. Let me talk about these four words: diversity, inclusion, belonging and equity. Here's what we like to say, and some of you may have heard a version of this. Diversity is being invited to the dance, inclusion is being asked to dance, belonging is being able to dance however you want, and equity is having a turn picking the DJ. What do I mean when I say that? Diversity is a fact, inclusion is a practice, equity is a goal. Let's talk about that.

Diversity is the fact of the world. All we're doing when we try to create inclusion is acknowledging that fact. We understand that there are different people from different races and socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, different abilities and we're learning that for many people there are more genders than two. That's the fact. Now, let me talk to you about this gender thing before I go too far because a lot of folks are still uncomfortable with it. Maybe of you came up to me after the earlier panel and said, "I don't really have this nailed down yet." It's okay. I have had four trans people in the five years that I've been at Stanford, and I could write a whole book about what I didn't understand. We are all in learning community together. But this thing, a lot of times we say, "Oh, this trans, nonbinary, we didn't have that when I was growing up." How many people knew a girl who didn't like to wear dresses? Raise your hand. Look around. A lot of times when I ask that question people, "Oh, that was me. I didn't want to wear a dress." I was called a what? Tomboy. What would happen if there was a boy who wanted to play with dolls or wear a dress? He was called names. It was snatched from him. "This is not something that boys do." We have been given gender as a construct.

Now we have people who are rejecting that and saying this is something you have applied to me. This has nothing to do with my biological nature. These are the norms that you've applied to me. We're all caught up on the biology as the indication of gender, but the diversity is that there are more ideas than just those two. Now, I want to talk to you about inclusion because we can invite people to things like this, but whether we ask them to dance, whether we engage with them, that's inclusion. Inclusion is a practice. I'm going to tell you that you are either intentionally inclusive or you're exclusive, period. I'm going to say that again. You are either intentionally inclusive or you're exclusive, period. Because inclusion doesn't just happen. Every single one of us is shaping the culture, the culture of our families, the culture of our organizations, the culture of our neighborhoods, our spiritual communities. You are shaping this culture right here at this summit. Either you are doing that intentionally by including people who are different than you, who may not have as much power or position as you, who may not feel as welcome as you. Either you're doing something that you can name that is including those people or you're just kind of letting the status quo be and the status quo is exclusion. That's the status quo.

For those who saw Rev. Michael this morning, he talked about we can't just be in the status quo. This is the status quo is some people are in and some people are out. Inclusion is a practice. Belonging, however, that's something different. Sometimes we say you can be included, but only if you act like everyone else here. If you act like the people that are at the dance, well then, it's okay, but you can't come out here doing your own dance. What that means for me is I can't show up with my blackness and my womanness and my queerness in this community if you feel like, "Oh, that makes me uncomfortable." Well now, then I really don't belong now, do I? Because I can't dance how I want to dance, I can't talk how I want to talk, I can't be loud. My people are loud. We're loud and I love that, but now there's this new thing that peaceful equals quiet. So then if you get loud and everybody is like, "Oh, she's so loud, so aggressive."

But that's our joy, that's our celebration, and you like it as long as it's on television or it's got a guitar or a drum set. Come on. But I'm loud and I like it. That's belonging when I can show up and be my full self. I just want to be clear though that just because everybody is liking everybody, it's not the same thing as everybody getting paid the same. All right, women? Still not a dollar for a dollar. That's equity. That's when we're talking about sharing the power. Because if I'm the DJ at your event, I bet the music is going to be a little bit different. Now I get to say how everybody gets to dance. That's a different thing. Whoever decides who can be on this stage, whoever decides who can be a member of your community, who is deciding who gets hired at a job and who fits, you understand? We have this thing we call fit, and it's a real thing. You want someone to fit in your community, in your organization.

But sometimes fit is a euphemism for discrimination because what we mean is, we don't want anybody here who's different than the people who are already here. Everything in the science tells us that's not the way we want to be because we thrive on creativity, we thrive on diversity. How do I know that you believe that? Because if you have any kind of organization, it's all over your website. Come on. We value diversity, a world that's for one and everyone and we love all people. Come on, don't say it unless you're going to take those inclusive practices that show that you mean it. How many people have heard of a safe space? Raise your hand if you heard of a safe space. Yes, by now that should be just about everyone because this is such a hot topic. We want to create a safe space. I want to encourage us to create spaces that are both safe and brave. This is a diagram from University of Michigan's Intergroup Dialogue Institute. What folks are saying here is that we've got to do more. In the center you'll see a green area called the comfort zone. What I like to say about that is it's the place where we learn absolutely nothing. Your comfort zone is who your friends are, where you socialize, what news you watch, what your TV shows are, what books you read, maybe it's your family, maybe it's not. That's where you like to be.

A comfort zone is a valuable and important thing. You should have one. But learning by definition means you step into something you do not know, and often doing that means being uncomfortable. My job is to make you uncomfortable. If I'm not doing that, we're not going to have a whole lot of learning. That's what the research shows us. I think somebody said once about ministers that our job is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Here I am. I'm here to afflict all the people that are comfortable. I just want it to be a constructive discomfort, just a space where we get into that learning edge together and we all have something to learn. Now, what I don't want is for anybody to be in the red zone, what we call the danger zone. This is the place where you shut down and it's hard for you to continue. Tell me what happens in your physical body when you feel unsafe or threatened. Palms sweat, contraction, heart pounds, shallow breathing. You know what that feels like.

Your job as we explore these hard topics around identity and diversity and inclusion is to calibrate for yourself. No one can know what puts you in the danger zone but you. Take care of yourself. If I say something and it puts in the danger zone, raise your hand, say, "Ouch!" and we'll stop and address that. Or you can step outside and take care of yourself or get some support in whatever way you need to. I can't know what that is for you, but we can be in a community where I can say I care about what it is for you, but I'm going to ask you to do something else. I want you to calibrate the difference between being uncomfortable and unsafe. Because some of us shut down the second we get uncomfortable and then learning stops. Your job is to calibrate the difference between uncomfortable and unsafe. Can you do that? Yeah? Okay.

One more thing I want to say about this, and this is very important in our spiritual communities especially. We have this false belief that everything needs to be equal and that everybody needs to learn the same amount, and we all need to stretch the same amount. That's our idea of fairness, except if you are a person who is living in the danger zone every single day of your life, you need more time in the comfort zone. Let me explain. If you don't feel safe walking alone at night or choosing a bathroom or wearing your hijab or at a traffic stop with the police officer. Or just living in this country or this world today, you are living in the danger zone and you need more time in the comfort zone. Those of us who aren't having those experiences in some aspect of our identity, we need more time in the learning edge learning about the experiences of the danger zone. It's not supposed to be equal. It's not supposed to be equal.

It gets us uncomfortable when people say, "Oh, well, they want a black only group or black lives matter." We're uncomfortable with that. But if black lives matter, we wouldn't have to say so. Nobody is saying all cancer matters, because you understand there's a specific thing that afflicts the specific person that is breast cancer. There's a specific thing that afflicts the black community. It's called racism and we're going to talk about it. Breathe. I know, it's already working. I'm making you uncomfortable. Good. Okay. I don't want to just talk about the problem. I want to talk about what do we do. Here's what we do. This is Dr. Melanie Tervalon. She coined the term cultural humility. How many people remember when we used to call it cultural competence? Remember cultural competence? The problem with cultural competence, Dr. Tervalon found, was that it gave us this false idea that if we got enough training and enough skills we'd be there. "Oh, I've taken the courses and I am culturally competent." That's not how it works. What Dr. Tervalon talks about is a commitment and engagement and a lifelong learning process. How long?

Participant: Lifelong.

Dereca: I'm an old school K-12 teacher. How long?

Participant: Lifelong.

Dereca: Lifelong. This is not some initiative that you're going to have or some speaker you're going to invite or some special day you're going to put on diversity. No, it's a lifelong process of being humble and curious about differences. What does this look like? Sometimes people tell us that we've offended them. Sometimes people say, "That was insulting. I didn't appreciate that." What happens is we get defensive. We start saying, "Oh, no, I think you misunderstood me," or "I think you're blowing that out of proportion," or "You don't know me. Some of my best friends are back in the '60s I marched with. I used to be married too." No one cares because what's happening in that moment is, you're making it about you. That

person who says they've been impacted, the woman who's at the meeting who keeps trying to tell her idea and nobody listens. Then somebody else says the idea and everybody goes, "Oh, that's so excellent" when a man says it. They call that "hepeating" and it's a real thing. I didn't make it up. It's actually been researched and studied. But then you say to the man, "Hey, you keep talking over me," and he says, "No, I'm not," because we don't always see it. You don't have to agree with what the person has said to you. You don't have to understand it.

Sometimes when I talk to people, I ask them about the phrase "articulate." How many people think it's an insult when white people say articulate to a person of color? Raise your hand. How many people don't know what I'm talking about? Why would that be an insult? Because you don't realize that people come up to us and say, "Oh, you're so, wow, just so articulate." You don't know that that's happened to us like 75 times. The next person next to us, the white person next to us, ain't nobody told them they were articulate. Nobody said that. And you're shocked. I had an English teacher tell me articulate is always a compliment. It's okay. You may not understand that. Or when someone walks up to a person and they say, "Oh, you speak English so well." Come on, if you think you can look at somebody and tell what language they speak, I got a history class for you. You cannot look at somebody and tell what language they speak. That is a fundamental misunderstanding of the history of this country, especially. So that thing.

I want to get to questions, but I got to do a couple more things. There's about to be a quiz. We're going to do a little activity. I'm going to take two minutes to do it. Look at all these categories. They are some of the social identity groups. You're about to have a quiz, so pay attention. I'm going to give you two seconds to look at these categories, and then I want you to answer this question. Which three words best describe your social identity? Now I don't want the category. I don't want you to say gender. I want you to say your gender. Now, what you're going to do is not worry what the three words are. You can change them tomorrow, but right now you're going to tell your neighbor three words. Now, before you start talking, everyone I give this assignment to fails. I hope you can do it with me today because I want to get to your questions. You're going to turn to your neighbor, you're going to say three words, and then you're going to fall silent. You're going to turn to your neighbor, you're going to say three words and then you're going to fall silent. You have 20 seconds. Go. Three words. Okay, three words and then fall silent. Three words and then fall silent.

Now, I need to tell you, you didn't do so bad. I'm not go talk about my students in the law school at Stanford. It's a whole paragraph. Okay. Raise your hand if you said a word that describes your race. Hands down. Raise your hand if you said a word that describes your gender. Hands down. Raise your hand if you said a word that describes your sexual orientation. Down. Socioeconomic status? Down. Marital or parenting status? Down. Raise your hand if you said a word that

describes whether you have a physical disability or you are what my friends in the disability community call TAB, which stands for temporarily able bodied. If you said a word that describes your physical ability status or your TAB status, raise your hand. Okay, in a room of about 300, I sometimes will have one. Here is what I want to tell you. I'm going to argue that your physical ability status is one of your most defining characteristics. If you're in a wheelchair or deaf or blind, this whole presentation is something you have to prepare for. That fact that you don't think about it is the dreaded P word. What's the P word? Privilege. It's a privilege to not have to think about your physical ability status. See, we're scared of the P word because it's been used to describe white and male and wealth and people go, "I'm not privileged. I'm white, but I grew up low-income." That's not apples to apples, because there's people of color who grew up low-income and they didn't have the same experience as white people who grew up low-income, let me tell you. That's why there are two sides of the tracks. You know what I'm talking about, right?

You not thinking about something is a sign of your privilege. This is one of my favorite cartoons I got from Dr. Tervalon. It says, "Privilege. I'm right there in the room and no one even acknowledges me." Because we don't want to talk about it. We all have privileges. Speaking English is a privilege. Living in the United States is a privilege. Being cisgender, which means your gender matches your sex, is a privilege. We all have these privileges, educational privilege. I've had these experiences. I was in ministerial school and there was a woman there who didn't like me, and I thought it was because I was black. She said, "No. It's because you come in here with your Stanford sweatshirt on and you think you're so much smarter than everybody." I was like, "Huh? What? Should I not wear my sweatshirt? Should I turn it inside out? What does that mean?" Then I suddenly began to realize I had an educational privilege. Those things would show up when I introduce myself. At Stanford when I first tried to work there, "I'm Dereca Blackmon, class of '91."

Now, nobody else was saying where they went to undergraduate at 40 years old, but why was I doing that? Because I wanted to offset some of those red zone experiences. When I sign up my kids for school, you better believe I play dereca@stanfordalumni.org because I knew that they might be walking into an environment where they weren't expected to be brilliant. Now did I perpetuate that privilege? I sure did. It's complicated. What we do with our privilege is important. It's not privilege that's bad. It's what we do with it. This is what I want to give you as an invitation. Be brave, be humble and be persistent. Thank you. Now we have time for a few questions. Why don't we just have anyone who has a question just come this way please so we can do it in the nine minutes and 13 seconds that we have? I'm going to ask you to use the mic as a respect for our people who have different hearing levels. That's another aspect of diversity that I'm learning to embrace.

Participant: I am [Participant] from Sacramento. My question is, really genuinely, lifelong curiosity. But then I have been told that it's not up to the disempowered group to educate me. What do I do with that?

Dereca: Absolutely. Thank you. Please do not ask people to educate you who are not educators. I don't feel like explaining my hair every single day, and please don't touch it without asking. It's a labor. If I'm here and I just want to be a participant, it's a labor if you come up to me and ask me a whole bunch of questions. But see, I'm not here to just be a participant. I'm here to be an educator. Ask me questions. Let's make a whole line of those. But sometimes we expect people to do the labor of educating us about themselves without them volunteering for that. "Oh, tell me about this. Tell me about that." We're honestly curious, but I'm going to tell you something. Google it. If you don't know what's cisgender or gender pronouns or nonbinary, you can Google it. Remember the old days we had to go to library card catalog, microfeeds, blah, blah, blah? You got a smart phone. Just go ahead and type "articulate is an insult" and see what happens. We can get our own education and we can take the risk to be brave enough to go into communities where people are willing to educate us. But we're going to have to get outside our comfort zone to go into an Asian community and learn from somebody who wants to educate us instead of expecting our Asian friends to educate us. You got to take a risk. Don't ask for us to be the chocolate caramel chip in your cookie if you're not willing to be the white chunk in the dark chocolate cookie. You understand what I'm saying? You got to go out there and be uncomfortable. All right, who's next?

Participant: Hi, my name is [Participant].

Dereca: Hi, [Participant].

Participant: I am a transformational psychologist as well as a college professor. My question goes back to the practice you were talking about where you had people sit in the middle representing something and then other people ask them questions. Could you talk a little more about that? Because I'd like to bring it to my class on diverse inclusive relationship.

Dereca: Absolutely. In short, I would tell you let's talk after this, a whole website and it comes out of University of Michigan's Intergroup Dialogue Institute. What I will say is that it is a very deep practice and we want to not just subject people to it without studying that practice. As an educator, I'm sure I can link you with the resources and you can take it on. But sometimes I tell that story and people are like, "Oh, we should do that at our church." Hold on. Just make sure you get all the information. I will definitely share that with you.

Participant: Hi, my name is [Participant].

Dereca: Hi, [Participant].

Participant: I am, at least on the outside, a prototypical middle-class white woman.

Dereca: All right, on the outside; iceberg, a word to it.

Participant: First of all, a quick little share is I just got a hearing aid, and so I really appreciate what the difference is when you can't hear. Last year I was here and couldn't hear half the time.

Dereca: Appreciate that.

Participant: When I was in elementary school, I grew up in a community that was built by Joseph Eichler. He had a vision of diverse community with a community center and this is in the early '60s, so a community center and an elementary school in every little community. I was blessed to go to elementary school and junior high school with a very diverse group.

Dereca: Wonderful.

Participant: I had friends that were of all nationalities and all races. But as we got into high school, everybody kind of went different directions. I didn't really understand why that was. I've been involved in spiritual communities and so forth, but I've lived mainly in Marin and Sonoma and I badly want a more diverse group of friends, but I don't know how to find them.

Dereca: I really, really appreciate this question. It's so important. I really want to acknowledge your courage for coming to ask this, because we talked about being brave. We're going to have to actually step into the place where we ask sometimes the scary questions. How do I make more friends? Somebody told me once that you know if you're living Dr. King's dream not by what you believe in but by who has been in your house. Uh-oh, uh-oh. Dang! I thought I was a King supporter. This question really has to do with the last point that I was making. How often are we going out into communities and being the only one and listening to and learning about other people's communities? There are so many of us who put on these events and put on these conferences and put on these forums and classes to say, "Here, come. Come and learn about." Then we don't see folks coming. We don't see a lot of them.

Now, the Bay Area is a little bit different, but it's hard. Like how do I come here and make friends? I got to take a risk. I got to be brave. I got to stop and talk to people afterwards. It's the same process, but it's the same kind of risk. When you have privilege, it's hard to take that risk. The expression is if you have privilege, equality looks like injustice. If you privilege, equality looks like injustice because

it's hard. You're like, I don't want to go there and have people treat me unfairly or somebody might be mean to me. Or I did go one time and this person said, "What are you doing here?" You can't give up after one time. Let me tell you that if I gave up after one of these summits coming to somebody saying something wild and difficult to me, I would never be as tough like this. I was in one of my most beloved spiritual communities just a month ago and had somebody say one of the most horrible racially motivating things to intentionally hurt me ever. But I'm going to keep coming back because that's what we do when we really want that opportunity. I know we have two minutes, so I'm going to get these succinct questions. Why don't I hear all the questions and then I'll do my best to answer as many as I can in the two minutes? Really quick, all the questions.

Participant: Okay, great. I'll try to be quick. My name is [Participant]. I'm very blessed and fortunate to work as a training consultant for the California District Attorneys Association where I train law enforcement prosecutors, which in that realm there's not a lot of people that look like me.

Dereca: Absolutely. Thank you.

Participant: Thank you. I appreciate that. When I'm attending my brunches and stuff with my home girls, it seems like we all at one point have experienced in a previous career, and it's still happening to women of color. Where we're excelling in a certain position and an incident might happen to where we may make someone else feel uncomfortable. Then all of a sudden, we're being hit with the "Oh, we don't think that you're a right fit for the company." I wanted to hear.

Dereca: Right, so we need to talk about what do we do when we experience these micro aggressions or macro assaults. Absolutely.

Participant: Yes, exactly.

Dereca: Okay, really quick. Two more questions, and then I have about 63 seconds.

Participant: Okay. My name is [Participant].

Dereca: Hi, [Participant].

Participant: Hi, thank you. This is the exact talk I wanted and was afraid of.

Dereca: All right, yes, yes! Come on, [Participant]. What's your question?

Participant: My question, I was recently at a talk about decolonization of the yoga bhakti world.

Dereca: Ooh, yes.

Participant: Oh, yeah. What was presented was that those of us in the room, including me, do not see white people. I found that to be very uprooting.

Dereca: Now say that those of us in the room do not see white people.

Participant: We don't see white people.

Dereca: Oh, yeah.

Participant: Because I walk in the room and I see everyone who is not white.

Dereca: Is not white. Of course, yes.

Participant: I just want to mention that.

Dereca: That's that privilege we were talking about, but let's talk some more about it. Yes, quickly.

Participant: [Participant]. I don't mind being a white chocolate chip, but I also want to respect that sometimes that's not a welcome space to be.

Dereca: Come on, that's true.

Participant: So how do you ask that question.

Dereca: Absolutely.

Participant: To say like is it okay if I enter the space because I want to?

Dereca: Just like that, [Participant]. That's an easy one. Just like that. My English teacher used to say, "I'm trying to say," he would say, "Say that." Just like that. "Hey, is this good? I'd like to come and support an event. Is this a good space for me to come to?" Just ask people, but you build relationship with people. I'm overtime, so I want to quickly say this. We need to talk more about how to take care of ourselves when we're experiencing these microaggressions and these macroassaults. It needs to be our first priority. When I walked about more time in the comfort zone, don't challenge these systems alone. Take very good care of yourself and don't apologize for that. Find environments and connect to communities where you can be supported. We have to do the work for ourselves. I'm going to say this, because I always say it, to ask people of color in the United States to solve the problem of racism is cruel and unusual. It's cruel and unusual. We didn't create the system.

We're willing to partner with you, so you don't get misguided and try to do the infantilization charity thing where you take care of us in ways, we don't want to be taken care of, but we do need you to do the work. White people, stop coming to our communities all the time and be like, "We want to help you." No, help yourselves. White friends help your white friends. Have a conversation with your grandparents and your siblings who don't want to talk about this, who are voting people in office who make it harder for us to live in this country. Do something about that because I can't do something about that, but we need to take care of ourselves more. I'm going to have to go because I know somebody is getting ready to wave at me. One more time really quickly. Only see white people. Okay, it's the privilege thing. You only see white people because that is your frame of reference. You're not thinking about being white. If you live in the United States and you're not thinking about money, you're not poor. You're not thinking about race, it's because you're white. You're not thinking about gender, it's because you're a man. That's just what it is. You don't think about it because you don't have to. We have to. It's our safety. It keeps us out of the danger zone. I want to thank you all for the bravery that you expressed and for having me here. I love you and I can't wait to build this new world with you. Thank you.

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