

“We know what is best for you!?!?”

Western Benevolence in Systems of Care

**2010 Children’s Behavioral Health Conference-
Reclaiming Lives...Claiming Futures**

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Cultural Introductions



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Living in Today's Realities: The Color of America is Changing



■ White (Non-Hisp)	187.7 million	64.9%
■ Latino/Hispanic	45.5 million	15.1%
■ African American	40.0 million	13.2%
■ Asian American	15.3 million	5.0%
■ American Indian/ Alaska Native	4.5 million	1.5%
■ Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	1.0 million	.3%

People of Color >106 million 35.1%

(Not counting all other ethnic/racial groups)

Who I am and What Society Expects of Me - A Dichotomy

- Strong, multi-ethnic, adopted male
 - Spiritual
- Hard working and opinionated
 - A family-oriented guy

Society expects me:

- To fail
- To get locked up
- To become another statistic

So why are others' expectations of me so low?

Historical Trauma

- “The collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide ” (Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart)
 - Colonialism
 - Imperialism
 - Displacement/Relocation
 - Genocide (disease)
 - Slavery
 - Exploitation
 - Prejudice/Discrimination
 - Mistrust (of dominant culture, adults, etc.)

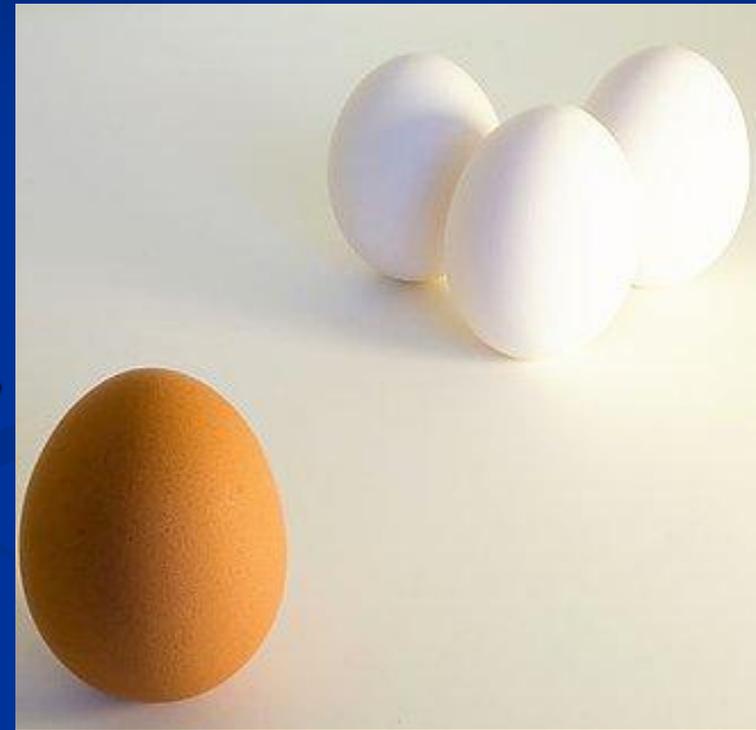
Living in Today's Realities: Racism is Alive and Well

■ Structural Racism

- “Institutional or structural racism is the social, economic, educational, and political forces or policies that operate to foster discriminatory outcomes or give preferences to members of one group over others.”
(NASW 2007)

■ Modern/Symbolic/Aversive Racism

- Racism that is more subtle and easily dismissed
- Examples



Hard Power

- Owned
- Harnessed/Manipulated
- Hierarchical
- Centralized
- Competitive
- Assumes intellectual and moral superiority
- Mistrust
- Top Down
- Outcomes Focused
- Time Driven
- Forced Results

*King, 2007

Soft Power*

- Shared
- Followed
- Egalitarian
- De-centralized
- Collaborative
- Respect and Accept
- Building trust
- Bottom Up
- Process-Oriented
- Being Here and Now
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Trust in the Process and in one another

Racism, Structural Racism and Hard Power in My Life

- Life Examples

Two Co-Existing Paradigms

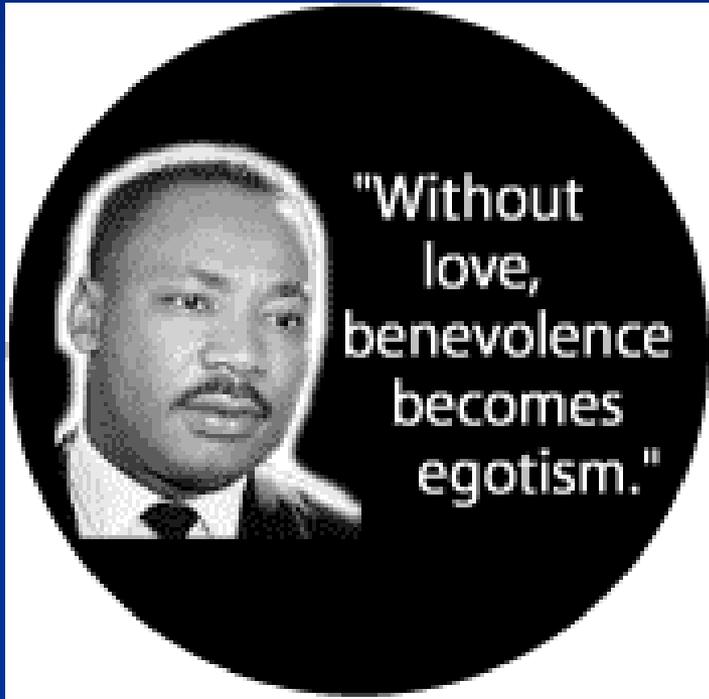
Western Education

- Didactic
- Scientific
- Sectarian
- Experimental
- Absolute
- Objectified
- Written
- Institutional
- Societal
- Experts

Indigenous Learning

- Communal
- Organic
- Cosmic
- Experiential
- Relative
- Relational
- Oral
- Indigenous
- Cultural
- Learners

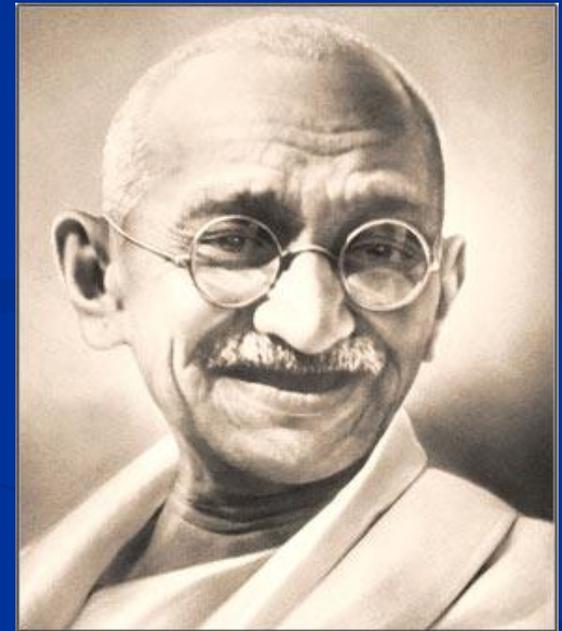
Western Benevolence



- An entity with power views another entity with less power from a position of superiority for the purpose of maintaining the power differential intact for current or future self-interest or control.
- Similar to the dynamic of a perpetrator and a victim/survivor

Loss of Cultural Humility

- Loss of Cultural Humility as a function of Dominant Power & Privilege:
A story about trauma
- The Missionary Perspective
 - The youth perspective
- How did it happen? – “Pity” gone awry
- Can we recoup cultural humility?



What Have We Forgotten?

- “Silence perpetuates trauma”*
- “The truth hurts, but silence kills”**
- What we can do
 - Tell the truth
 - Acknowledge the pain
 - Witness - listen
 - Make Amends-Reconciliation
 - Practice what we preach



*C. Boyes-Watson, 2008

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report

Western Benevolence in Systems of Care

- Reflecting and critically questioning our values and principles
 - Are they universal?
 - Are they appropriate for everyone?
 - Are they amenable to modification and individualization, dependent on the culture and context?
 - Are we open to the discussion?
- What can we do as individuals and systems reflecting upon our personal and professional western benevolence? - Maybe we don't always know what is best for you!
- Learn from our younger generations

A Community Raises a Child: Western Benevolence From a Young Adult Perspective

- Don't assume you know because you are an adult (your position of power)
- Listen, for the less you speak the more you can hear and begin to understand - cultural humility
- Youth need to ask questions
 - “A closed mouth doesn't get fed”
- External and internal stimuli affects the development of individuals – Your impact is significant even if you don't realize it

Spiritual Healing-An Example of Cultural Humility in Action

- Drummings known as tambours
 - Dance for each Ocha and muerto
 - Offerings
 - A community of different houses or families
- Spiritual cleansings
- Learning ebos and language
 - Yoruba
 - Spanish
- Advice through readings and misas

Spirituality

- Saved my life
- Helps direct me along my path
 - Discover who I am
- Helps me to remember where I came from
- Helps me teach others how to better themselves
- Helps me to advocate for myself and others so the positive changes we want and need can be achieved

How we can be “healers” again

- No need for pity
- The “healer” is in a reciprocal relationship
- Acknowledge that we are learners learning and not just teachers teaching or therapists “therapizing”
- Return to benevolence as “humanity’s disposition to do good”
- Remember “indigenous strength and resiliency” (strength-based approach)



**“It is not the malicious
acts that will do us in ...
but the appalling silence and
indifference of good people.”**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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