



REFLECTING ON OUR BIASES

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ERIE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION-BENCH BAR CONFERENCE

THE PRIVILEGE POLL

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WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO ANSWER EACH
OF THE QUESTION POSED IN THE POLL



ELISE MICHAUX

ABOUT ME

- Daughter of a pastor & teacher
- Grew up in a small, majority-white town
- **Education**
 - BA - English Literature
 - MA - Student Affairs in Higher Education
 - PhD - Organizational Learning & Leadership
 - "Tokenism or True Change: A Phenomenological Study of CDOs"
- Queer, Black, Christian, Woman
- **Boards**
 - Chair, Fairness Pennsylvania Institute
 - Board Member, Greater Erie Alliance for Equity
 - Board Member, OpenedEyes
- **Past work**
 - Westmoreland Museum of Art
 - U.S. Steel
 - Erie Insurance



PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

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GROUND RULES

CONFIDENTIALITY & TRUST

What is shared in this space stays in this space

RESPECT FOR ALL PERSPECTIVES

Speak and listen with respect, valuing each person's experiences and views

NON-JUDGMENTAL APPROACH

Avoid assumptions or judgments about others' experiences

KEEP THE FOCUS ON GROWTH & LEARNING

Approach the discussion with a focus on learning, growth, and positive change

USE "I" STATEMENTS

Speak from personal experience using "I" statements

NO INTERRUPTIONS

Allow each person to complete their thought before responding

BE OPEN TO DISCOMFORT

Recognize that some topics may be uncomfortable but are important for growth

ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT

Assume that everyone is here with positive intentions

PRIVILEGE

WHAT IS PRIVILEGE

Privilege refers to the **unearned advantages** or **benefits** that individuals receive in society based on **certain aspects of their identity, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or ability**. These advantages are **often invisible** to those who have them, as they are built into the structures, practices, and assumptions of society.

For example, someone may not face obstacles or prejudice based on their race, while others might.

- Privilege **doesn't** mean that someone hasn't faced challenges in life, but rather that **certain aspects of their identity have not contributed additional barriers**.
- Recognizing privilege involves understanding how societal systems work to benefit certain groups in ways that are often subtle or unseen, yet impactful.

QUESTIONS

- Has anyone ever assumed that your significant other was of the opposite sex?
- Are you the first person in your immediate family to work in a degree-required or professional position?
- Have others ever implied that you received a job offer or promotion because of your gender, race, or ethnicity?

PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Inclusive leadership is a style of leadership that **actively seeks to create a culture** where all individuals feel **valued, respected, and empowered** to contribute fully. Inclusive leaders intentionally work to **understand, appreciate, and leverage diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and talents** within their teams.

This approach involves not only **welcoming diversity** but also **recognizing and addressing biases, promoting equitable opportunities**, and fostering a safe environment where everyone can voice their ideas. Inclusive leaders are **empathetic, open-minded, and committed to continuous learning**, ensuring that **all** team members feel they belong and are integral to the organization's success.

QUESTIONS

- Have you ever been asked to prepare materials for a meeting but excluded from presenting them due to gender or age?
- Has anyone ever assumed you lack knowledge of technology or computer applications due to your age?
- Has a client ever requested to meet with another attorney after you introduced yourself?

UNDERSTANDING IMPLICIT BIAS

IMPLICIT BIAS

Implicit Bias is the **unconscious** attitudes, stereotypes, or assumptions that **influence our understanding, actions, and decisions about others**. These biases are **automatic** and **often operate without our awareness**, arising from the associations we've internalized over time due to culture, media, and personal experiences.

Implicit biases can affect how we **perceive and interact** with people based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or appearance, even if we consciously reject stereotypes or believe in equality. Importantly, **everyone has implicit biases**, and becoming aware of them is the first step toward minimizing their impact on our personal and professional interactions.

QUESTIONS

- Have you ever been mistaken for a paralegal or assistant rather than an attorney?
- Has anyone ever mispronounced your name in a professional setting?
- Have you overheard a joke or comment related to race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, or sexual orientation that made you uncomfortable?
- Have you ever been the only person of your background (e.g. POC, female) in the room and felt unheard, unseen or uncomfortable?

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

HOW DO WE MAKE IT BETTER

- **Foster Open Dialogue & Empathy-Building Activities**
 - Create regular opportunities for open discussions, workshops, or activities that allow employees to share experiences related to privilege, bias, and inclusion.
- **Implement Clear Policies to Address Bias & Microaggressions**
 - Establish and communicate policies that outline how the organization will address biases, microaggressions, and other exclusionary behaviors.
- **Promote Inclusive Language & Accurate Addressing**
 - Encourage the use of inclusive language in all interactions and ensure colleagues address each other correctly in terms of name pronunciation, titles, and preferred pronouns.
- **Provide Equal Access to Growth & Development Opportunities**
 - Ensure that professional development, networking, and career-advancing activities are available to all employees **equally**, with transparent criteria for participation.
- **Encourage & Train for Inclusive Leadership**
 - Provide training on inclusive leadership practices and encourage leaders to actively seek input from all team members, especially those who may feel marginalized

WHAT NEXT?

HOW DO I DO BETTER?

- **This is life-long work; we never necessarily “arrive”**
 - You’re still going to get it wrong
 - Be open to feedback and continuing to learn
- **Who are you following?**
 - What are you reading/watching/listening to?
- **Reflect, Assess & Refine**
 - What are policies that you can implement to foster a sense of belonging?
 - Is a climate survey part of your culture?
 - Who’s missing around the table?
- **Identify quick wins**
 - Do you have your pronouns in your email signature?
 - Can your website be translated to a different language?
 - Do you email after traditional work hours on a regular basis?

THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

