RACE BASED CAUCUSING

The work of anti-racism is full of challenges and paradoxes. One of the challenges is how to work collectively towards liberation when internalized racial superiority and internalized racial oppression come into the room with all of us. This reality requires us to design processes that help create a better foundation from where we can do our collective work. Race based caucusing is one of those processes.

Race based caucusing is an effective and well established practice that has been in use for decades by different groups across the country. In fact, it is now recognized as a critical tool in facilitating the best possible environment to engage in anti-racist organizing across racial lines.

Race based caucusing allows white people and people of color to work in a safe setting on issues pertaining just to their racialized groups. So, white people can concentrate in gaining a deeper understanding of how white privilege impacts their individual and collective experiences, how to support each other’s growth, and how to “normalize” their anti-racist identity, among other things. People of color can tackle issues such as internalized oppression, intra and inter group tensions, and collusion with white supremacy, among other things. All done in a supportive and caring environment that also challenges participants when necessary. And, empowering individuals to take charge of their own growth by suggesting topics for discussion.

The benefit of having these conversations in separate caucuses is that we avoid the defensiveness, criticism, judgement, etc. that often surfaces when we engage in mixed race dialogues. White folks don’t feel attacked or unsure in sharing what they are thinking and feeling, and people of color don’t have to justify or explain how they feel. Having these separate session facilitates the work that we must do as a collective. Finally, it is important to note that race based caucusing is not designed to substitute our collective work. As mentioned before, this is one of the many tools that collective anti-racist organizing must use in order to be effective. As a matter of fact, when one accounts for all the activities that should encompass an anti-racist organizing strategy, the time spent in race based caucusing amounts for a very small part of that strategy. The majority of the time will still be spent working in mixed race spaces.