



Beyond the Commitment: *Culturally Responsive Learning and Unlearning at Work*

REFLECTION AND
DISCUSSION



Prepared by:





Beyond the Commitment: *Culturally Responsive Learning and Unlearning at Work*

How to use this guide

These questions are organized in three parts:

1. *Modeling our commitment as leaders*
2. *Self-reflection using [Tema Okun's White Supremacy Culture framework](#)*
3. *Collaboration with our teams and partners.*

The prompts are meant to be sat with, not rushed through. We encourage opportunities of self-reflection, moments of reflection amongst other leaders, and/or as a facilitated group discussion.

There are no right answers here. The goal is honesty. Notice what is true for us right now, without judgment, so we can choose consciously what to keep, what to compost, and what to build in its place.





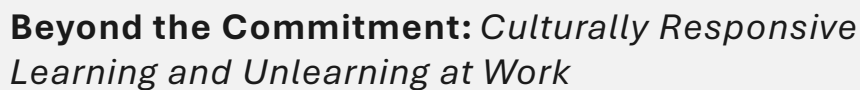
Modeling Our Commitment as Leaders

Our stated commitments to equity and inclusion are tested in what we actually do. In our hiring, promotion, retention, representation, and the everyday decisions we make.

Noticing What's Changed

- What have I noticed in my own workplace lately? Consider changes in how people talk about equity and inclusion, and in what actually happens day to day?
- What has changed in how we talk about this work, and what has stayed exactly the same?
- Do I hold any fears about this work right now? Have I said them out loud to anyone or only carried them privately?
- How am I talking about my fears, if at all? Does the way I talk about them build trust, or does it (even unintentionally) shut down honest conversation?

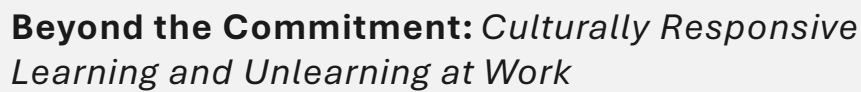
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Alignment Between Words and Actions

- Where do our practices genuinely match our language and where is the gap widest?
- What data do we track on hiring, promotion, retention, and representation? Do we look at it often enough to catch a problem before it becomes a pattern?
- If someone shadowed me for a month, what would they conclude I actually prioritize, regardless of what I say I prioritize?

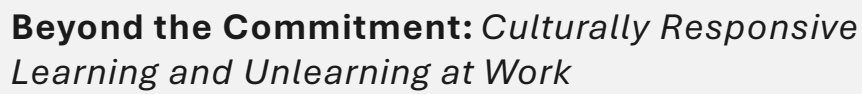
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Culture in Action

- When did I last reread our mission and vision statement closely, rather than reciting it from memory?
- Which parts of our mission and vision are easy to live out, and which require real effort or discomfort?
- Is our culture something we protect only when it's convenient, or something we hold onto especially when it's hard?
- What is one specific behavior I could model this month that would visibly connect our stated values to daily action?

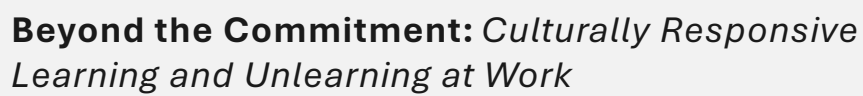
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Courageous Leadership

- ## NOTES

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Cultural Responsiveness

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Self-Reflection Through **Tema Okun's Lens**

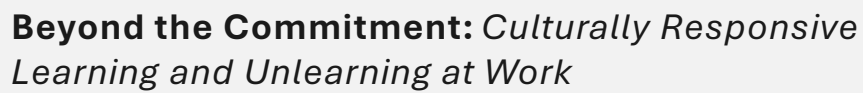
In 1999, Tema Okun, building on the work of Kenneth Jones and others, named a set of organizational norms that are often used as standards without ever being consciously chosen by a group. She's explicit that these patterns can show up in any organization, regardless of who leads it. Use these questions to notice where they show up.

<https://www.dismantlingracism.org/>

Naming Power

- Where does power in our organization sit formally (titles, budget authority) versus informally (whose opinion tends to carry a room)?
- Who is regularly asked to explain or justify their perspective, and who is not?
- What kind of power do I personally hold that I may not have fully named to myself?
- Do I ever experience a suggestion for change as a threat to my leadership, rather than as information? What do I do in that moment?
- Is power-sharing named anywhere in our values or expectations of leaders or is it assumed?

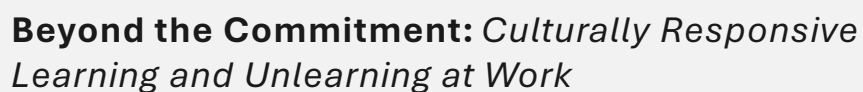
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Perfectionism

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Quantity Over Quality, and Other Patterns

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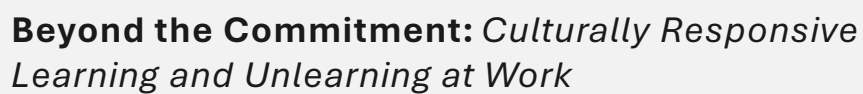
Self-Reflection Through Tema Okun's Lens

What's Hard to Sit With — What's Easier

- Which of these patterns is hardest for me to sit with when I notice it in myself?
- Which one is easier to name in others than in myself? Why might that be?
- What's one workplace norm on this list that has genuinely served us, and is worth keeping in some form?
- What could we leverage from these workplace norms? What can we compost, keeping what serves growth and releasing what doesn't to help us flow differently?



“Compost” is a deliberate metaphor, not everything gets discarded. Some of what's uncomfortable can still nourish what comes next. Naming these patterns isn't about blame — it's about noticing what we've inherited, so we can choose consciously what to keep, what to compost, and what to build in its place.

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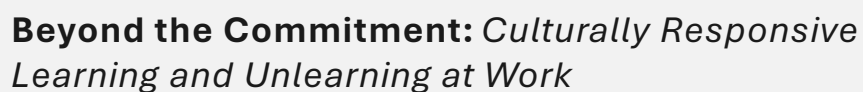
Showing Up Collaboratively — With Our Teams and Partners

Consistency in this work rarely happens alone. These questions turn from internal reflection toward how we build, share, and sustain this commitment with the people around us.

With Our Teams

- Who in my organization has knowledge or a perspective I have never formally asked to learn from?
- Would I be willing to be mentored by someone earlier in their career, or with less positional authority than me? What would that require of my ego?
- What institutional knowledge could we lose in a time of change if we don't intentionally capture and pass it on?
- Who else needs to be part of this conversation for real change to be possible and how do I bring them in meaningfully without tokenizing them?

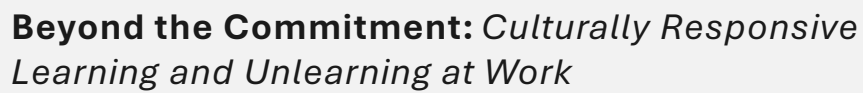
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Across Entities and Partners

- Which peer organizations could we realistically collaborate with, and what has kept us from reaching out so far?
- Is our learning and development for equity and inclusion a one-time training, or a sustained practice? How would our staff answer that question?
- What would change if we treated inclusion learning with the same rigor and budget as technical or compliance training?

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Making the Work Sustainable

- When was the last time our team genuinely enjoyed a conversation or activity about culture and inclusion? What made it work?
- Are we over-relying on mandatory training and under-investing in voluntary, creative engagement?
- How do I personally bring energy (not just obligation) to this work in front of my team?

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