

DR. KESHO Y. SCOTT

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PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY

She is an internationally renowned Diversity Trainer/Consultant, an Associate Professor of American Studies and Sociology at Grinnell College, and an award-winning writer. Kesho was a founding member of International Capacity Building Services, a cultural competency training team that specializes in facilitating both “unlearning isms” and Human Rights workshops as well various seminars and training programs that have been successfully adapted for audiences throughout the United States and abroad. In over two decades of developing unlearning racism work, Kesho has led hundreds of professional and community-based workshops; she has been keynote speaker for national conferences as well as a participant on several dozen national and local radio debates, discussions and public service announcements. Grounded in this extensive experience, Kesho developed an “affirmative duty” technique for facilitating unlearning racism workshops. It is a method that helps shift participants’ awareness, commitment and skill-set toward being actively and personally anti-racist and anti-sexist, rather than remaining merely passive observers.

Kesho’s breadth of expertise has led her to the international lecture circuit as a sought-after keynote speaker. Her work and unique methodology has also attracted media attention including appearances on the Oprah Winfrey Show, Sonya Live and CNN. Kesho, an accomplished writer, has won an American Book Award (for *Tight Spaces*, 1988) and a Human Rights Award (for *The Habit of Survival: Black Women in America*, 1991). Currently, Kesho is completing her next book entitled, *Unlearning Racism in a Global Age*, which outlines the unlearning racism process and includes her personal notes from the “field” for challenging individual and institutional practices of intolerance and “isms.” Moreover, she is editing a love story manuscript, a work of historical fiction about two “freedom fighters” who met in Ghana in the 1970’s, then reunited after 25 years of complete separation. In 2001, Kesho won a Fulbright Fellowship to teach research and write in Addis Abba, Ethiopia. Kesho has a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Iowa, a M.A in Sociology from the University of Detroit, and BA in Sociology from Wayne State University in Detroit.

Unlearning "ISMS": Breaking the Habits of Racism, Sexism, Hate and Other

Forms of Exclusion

MISSION STATEMENT

My mission is to provide services to the public and private sectors in order to help them create an "ISM"-free society. I believe we can expand the capacity of individuals, government, corporations and institutions to increase their effectiveness in unlearning all "isms" and to break the racism habit. As a result, stakeholders will work in concert to rebuild relationships, communities and a world that is free of racism, sexism, classism and their unchecked consequences, including defensiveness, despair, discrimination, anger and negativity.

DIVERSITY TRAINING

It provides services to the public and private sectors in order to help them break the racism habit from the "inside-out." My work focuses on habit, because racism has such deep roots in our culture and society that it has risen to the level of individual and societal habit. Sometimes this evolution is called "institutional racism." Today most people experience racism and other "isms," like sexism, classism, and heterosexism, as a byproduct of their everyday lives: getting and holding a job, buying a home, parenting, experiences with police, and a general lack of community services and other life-enhancing opportunities, especially educational. This does not mean, however, that acts of hate and violence have disappeared; they have not. My work is grounded in the fundamental principle that all manifestations of racism are learned, and therefore they can be unlearned. What does it mean to learn racism, and other "isms," and is it realistic to think that we can unlearn something that has such deep roots in our culture, society and everyday lives?

LEARNING PROCESS

The learning process is conscious, unconscious, intended, unintended, explicit and implicit, and therefore, learning is culture-driven, ideological and environmental. In essence, learning is simply the acquisition of knowledge required for survival, production and progress. Learning happens with or without formal training, without ever enrolling in "Racism 101." We all learn the racism habit, because learning involves something as simple as a reflex or as complex as a sequence of actions. Learning is permanent until we interrupt it and replace it with a new consciousness and ideology as well as a new set of behaviors, attitudes and understandings. Most often, learning takes place without instructions, but even after we have learned something we may not act immediately based on what we have learned due to a lack of a specific stimuli or situation. Moreover, learning is a selective process. All of us have been exposed to this kind of selective learning process, lessons of good and bad and right or wrong, and we have experienced those lessons reinforced through a formal and informal system of rewards or punishments. People learn from people, and we all learn from our previous awareness. We learn from "society" and what the voices and actions of "society" have instructed us to do and not do. Individuals and society can acquire alternative responses through a well-conceived unlearning process.

UNLEARNING PROCESS

The unlearning process is the reversing, negating, and extinguishing of previously learned behaviors, attitudes and understandings. Unlearning is most effective when there is conscious intent and when old response patterns are replaced by new responses that are incompatible with the old ones. Accordingly, counter-conditioning must have instructions that reinforce the new repertoire of behaviors. We must be reconditioned through training to overcome the defensiveness, despair, anger and negativity associated with efforts to break the racism habit. Unlearning is also a de-sensitization process. When applied to the "isms," it provides all of us with the skills to overcome our fear of eliminating old behaviors and attitudes while simultaneously experiencing, through observation, imitation and participation, the successes of a new way of relating. Therefore, unlearning always involves internalizing at the experiential level: consciousness raising, self-evaluation, environmental re-evaluation, "dramatic" relief and self-liberation; as well as internalizing at the behavioral level: application, increasing new rewards, decreasing punishments, and changing internal "triggers." With skilled teaching and training, these newly learned behaviors and attitudes are socially supported and corrective.

GENERIC OUTLINE OF THE UNLEARNING 'ISMS' WORKSHOP

1. Introduction to "Ism" Process
2. Origins of "Isms"
3. Goals of workshop – cultural competency
4. Learning and Unlearning Process
5. Concept of Cultural Baggage – Individual, Family, Community, Institutions, and Society.
6. Definition of "Isms" and Notion of 'being raced.'
7. Social structure – Historical, Cultural, and Political, Margin/Center, "Unequal Playing Field" model.
8. Definitions of Cultural Hydraulic-Social Oppression, Privilege/ Non-privilege Systems.
9. Multicultural Illiterate – Blank Slate, and Karate Stance, Social Un-preparedness (Community, Workplace, Classroom, and Inter and Intra-Personal Relationships).
10. Internalized Oppression – Emotional Baggage, Body Language, Self-Esteem Register, and "Acted Out."
11. Balance of Power – Targeted and Non-targeted.
12. U.S. Race Relations Timeline
13. Correcting mistaken ideas – Individual Self-Reflection
14. Demonstration in Front of Group/Speak Out – Demonstration of IO, Target Group.
15. Diversity Goals for a Multi-cultural America – Changing Race and Ethnic Demographic in the Workplace, Community, and Nation.

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**All workshops are designed based on pre-workshops interviews.

BOTTOMLINE RESULTS

I have been at the forefront of providing teaching and training diversity skills to stakeholders with a-variety of tools beyond those previously learned. These tools work internally at the experiential and behavioral levels. Working from the "inside-out" ensures long-term results to break the racism habit and to produce environments where everyone participates in this effort through first finding the safety inside themselves to do so.

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FEE STRUCTURE

Fee structure available upon request.