

The Conspiracy of Silence

3 PROTOCOLS OF WHITE / WESTERN CULTURE THAT IMPEDE AUTHENTIC DIALOGUE ON RACE

by Dr. Derald Wing Sue

1

The **POLITENESS** Protocol:

We must be nice and polite. We must take care not to offend others. We must keep conversations light, friendly, and noncontroversial. We must avoid conflict.

We must embody different selves to maintain social harmony:

Authentic Self

Who I really am:

My actual beliefs, attitudes, ideas, and fears related to race

+

the language I use to express them when I'm not conscious or not worried about being judged

Ideal Self

Who I want to be:

The beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and emotions I want to have about race

Sometimes I deceive myself, confusing my ideal self with my authentic self

Tactical Self

Who I present to others:

I use techniques to curate my image and ingratiate myself.

I might express my authentic OR my ideal beliefs and emotions about race, depending on audience.

The **ACADEMIC** Protocol:

We must separate the mind from the body. We must be objective. We must be rational. We must prioritize concrete, observable evidence. We must pursue a linear, logical path towards truth. We must create binaries and seek universality.

We must obey these basic mandates of Western science:

2

Empiricism over Experience

The personal and the intimate become intellectualized and sterilized.

Storytelling is not considered evidence.

Intuition is dismissed.

Reason over Emotion

Emotions are considered **Disruptive**, **Dysfunctional**, and **Disrespectful**.

It is assumed that learning occurs only when topics are discussed calmly.

Reductionism over Complexity

Phenomena must be broken down into distinct and separate units and categories.

Contradictions, ambiguities, and irresolvability are undesirable.

3

The **COLOR-BLIND** Protocol:

We must pretend that racial difference does not exist, that we are not aware of racial difference, or that we are not affected by racial difference. We must maintain innocence, naiveté, and oblivion with regards to racial difference.

We must continuously practice these forms of evasion:

Color Evasion

"I don't see color!"

"Color doesn't matter"

"We're all the same"

"There's only one race -- the human race"

"I don't perceive difference"

Implicit idea:

being a human = being White

Stereotype Evasion

"I don't have any preconceived ideas about other races"

Consciously: reject stereotypes, deny prejudice

Unconsciously: respond on basis of unacknowledged biases

Power Evasion

"I don't have any special advantages or power because of my race"

"Anyone can make it with hard work"

"I earned everything I have"

If I don't **know** about racial oppression, I don't have to **do** anything about it.