



To Winters Group Clients and Friends:

## STAY STRONG IN THE WAKE OF BACKLASH TO ANTI-RACISM EFFORTS

For many of us, 2020 has been a challenging year. As we continue to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ) within our organizations and personal lives amidst a global pandemic, the emotional labor is magnified significantly.

We are in the throes of a new movement for equity and justice and our work is under attack. This is nothing new, but social media allows for the proliferation of untruths, hate and general backlash through media in ways that were not possible during the civil rights movement of the 60's. A few weeks ago, a well-known conservative news media host, whom I intentionally choose not to amplify in this message, hosted a guest who is campaigning to stop anti-racism training, calling it an existential threat to the American way and encouraging conservatives to start fighting back. The rhetoric is hateful, harmful and untrue. President Trump followed with a ban on anti-racism training in all government agencies calling it anti-American and divisive. In response, last week he signed an executive order to establish a national commission to promote patriotic education. He is calling it the [1776 commission](#).

We are starting to see resistance from employees in organizations who are sending explicit messages to leaders to discontinue what they are calling "critical race theory" training. The backlash is being coordinated by far-right group(s) who are encouraging employees to disrupt DEIJ efforts. One such letter started like this:

*"We are writing on behalf of many employees to urge you to immediately discontinue your plans to implement Critical Race Theory training. This training is racist and in violation of Title 7."*

The memo, which is lengthy and appears to be a "template" compares the Black Lives Matter movement to the KKK, claiming that they are both hate groups.



On Twitter, this advice was posted for those seeking to actively disrupt training sessions. The thread includes tactics for derailing anti-racism sessions. Facilitators and leaders must be aware of and prepared to respond.

**Here are some counter measures:**

1. Communicate your intentions directly, broadly and often. The theme of the messaging should include:
  - a. We will not discontinue diversity, equity and inclusion plans.
  - b. We will not respond to anonymous letters. If you have a concern, we are more than willing to talk with you through our regular channels of communication.
  - c. We are embarking on a journey of justice, inclusion and equity that will benefit all employees. This course of action aligned with our values.
  - d. We will not tolerate actions that undermine our goal to create inclusion and equity or that is harmful to any of our employees.
  - e. If our plan is contrary to your values and beliefs, then maybe this is not the organization for you.
  - f. When you attend training sessions, we expect you to be respectful, listen and learn. There will be consequences for intentional disruptions or derailment.
2. Provide all leaders a communication “playbook” with the above type message for how to respond to the backlash. Convene a town hall for all leaders to share your position and provide an overview of the “playbook.”
3. Provide resources to your HR community to support leaders in addressing instances of resistance.
4. Note: As we get closer to the election, we anticipate there will be more resistance and even violence. Plan to give your employees election day off (paid) –not just in anticipation of conflict, but also because ‘work’ should not be a barrier to them fulfilling their constitutional right.
5. Be prepared to address the unrest based on the election regardless of who wins. Provide employees in advance with what your expectations are for how they will behave, linking to your values.
6. Stay the course. Let us know how we might be able to help.

Yours inclusively,

Mary-Frances Winters  
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