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People of Color in Leadership Roles

Being the Instrument for Change

This session was created for People of Color to have a space to create ideas for further inclusion and empowerment in their cooperative communities. We will focus on sharing techniques to further the People of Color voice and involvement in the student cooperative movement. We will be brainstorming solutions to increase involvement and inclusive practices in house politics, food discussion, and culture. There will be a series of discussion questions and activities prompting participants to think about how they would like to see their cooperative grow to be inclusive to all forms of diversity.

Notes: For this session, I will be facilitating the topics and discussion. Everyone is encouraged to exercise their right to participate and to add questions for further discussion. This discussion was designed for full participation and collaboration. Don't feel pressured to be articulate or to have an opinion about a certain topic, but feel free to suggest topics that you are comfortable with, in order to further the overall goal and theme.

Materials Needed:

- Parchment Paper
- Pens
- Markers

Logistics:

General Housekeeping.

Brief Introduction about Objective and Goals.

A Little about Me

Intro around the group

Raising Inner Awareness:

Leadership

1. Who are the faces of leadership in your cooperative?
2. Have you ever held a position of leadership? If not, why?
 - a. What inspired you to take on your role? What about the position is discouraging?

- b. What would you consider to change your mind about taking on a leadership role?
3. What are the major obstacles in house politics that you notice that are deterring factors as house leader and as a person of color?
4. Describe the power dynamics in your cooperative.
5. What is the formal process for house nominations? Who tends to facilitate house meetings? What issue(s) often fuels unorganized and house conflicts? How are these issues resolved?
6. Who is missing from house meetings?
7. Describe a moment where you felt out of place in your cooperative due to your race and/ or ethnicity.
 - a. We are all walking houses of intersectionality. What other identities become the focus of your discomfort or anxiety in your cooperative (sexual orientation, disabilities, etc.)?
8. What is your vision for the future as a leader of your cooperative and your community?

Comfort and Safety

1. Have frequently do you recognize infractions against member comfort and safe space?
2. Do you raise awareness to these issues? If you don't, why not?
3. Do you feel like you are able to be yourself as a person of color in your cooperative? What is a major fear that you have when considering sharing your life experiences with others, who identify differently than you or have differences in cultural upbringing?
4. Think of ways that we as a group and social network can support each other when getting your instrumental goals and needs met.

Planning for the Future:

Activity and Personal Reflection

1. What have you done/ what can you do to encourage people of color in your community to take on roles of leadership?

Take a moment to reflect about a time where you had self-doubts about your abilities as a leader of color in your cooperative. What did you struggle with the most? Did you feel like your efforts and presence was appreciated/ respected? What accomplishment resonates with you the most?

Now think about what you would tell past yourself today, having had your leadership experience with your cooperative. What will you tell new members (particularly people of color) who are considering a role of leadership?