

Levels and Types of Oppression: Examples

Individual Conscious

- using racial slurs, telling a “good fag joke”
- defacing property/possessions of people of color
- believing Whites are intellectually superior

Individual Unconscious

- laughing at racist or heterosexist jokes (supporting the conscious racism, heterosexism of others)
- pointing out that people of color sit together at lunch or socialize together (perceiving this as separatism) while ignoring groups of Whites that sit together and have their own social groups
- expecting people from oppressed groups to teach the oppressive groups about their oppressive behaviors, not taking responsibility for learning how one’s actions may be hurting others

Institutional Conscious

- internment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during WWII
- instructing sales personnel to watch Black people carefully in the store for fear of robbery
- forced sterilization of poor Black, Hispanic, and Native American women by the US government

Institutional Unconscious

- assuming that White staff can meet the needs of all people but staff of color can only meet the needs of other people of color
- destroying inadequate housing in poor Black neighborhoods and replacing it with commercial facilities/upper income housing
- making AIDS testing mandatory
- including only the White cultural perspective in the development of standardized tests

Cultural Conscious

- Into the 1950s, Native American children were sent to schools off of their reservations where they were made to speak only English, prevented from and punished for speaking their own language.
- The Reagan Administration eliminated bilingual education in US public schools.

Cultural Unconscious

- Language: The English language associates white with good, righteous, pure and black with evil, dirty, death, disgrace.
- Holidays: Columbus Day and Thanksgiving are celebrated as national holidays instead of days of national mourning.