

## Original HR Complaint filed in response to "White Privilege Training"

On Mon, Mar 15, 2021 at 7:40 AM Dan Concannon <[dconcannon@mansd.org](mailto:dconcannon@mansd.org)> wrote:

To Whom It May Concern:

I am filing a work-related complaint. I am submitting this directly to HR rather than discussing this with my supervisor - 21st Century Director Tom McGee - as the material in question was assigned to me (assigned to all 21st Century Site Coordinators) with his awareness, or possibly at his direction.

On March 1, 2021, I, along with all 21st Century Site Coordinators, received an email from the 21st Century Program Coordinator - Liz Penn - directing me to complete a series of trainings that appear to have been assembled by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. The first training, required to be completed by March 5, 2021, is entitled "White Privilege."

The preview to the training (which can be found here: <https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/webinars/what-is-white-privilege-really>) states, in part: "Deconstructing white privilege in the classroom requires educators and students to understand the origin of whiteness of and how the legacy of white supremacy endures."

In the main audio presentation, of which there is also a transcript, the presenters go on to use the term "whiteness" no less than eighteen times. Regardless of any attempt to rationalize the deployment of this term, or to guide its interpretation, this is an utterly dehumanizing term.

The presentation includes slides such as this:



Aside from the unrelenting use of the intrinsically negative term "whiteness," the presentation also attempts to teach the baffling lesson that a young child mispronouncing another young child's name is racist:

Ronda: He's a person from Sudan and he's a refugee who comes to America looking for safety. And you can imagine when he gets here, how this community pronounces his name or mispronounces his name. And so we really emphasize with children that first day the importance of names. And in some way, you know, it can seem like that's not necessarily directly connected to racism, but it is, so if you zoom out a little bit and understand that being able to name oneself was often denied a people of color, of indigenous people. Their names were changed and renamed, given shorter names, names that some people often say are easier to pronounce. So one of the things that we did with kids on that first day is using the book and the context of "My Name is Sangoel." He teaches people how to say his name correctly. So he comes to school one day and makes it -- wearing a t-shirt, he draws a sun and then a soccer goal and it is very concrete and explicit way.

Ronda: And so we help the kids learned that they too can teach folks how to say their names and it's okay to do that. And they come up with pneumonics to teach people. Something else that we do with them is we have them role play so that they can be prepared when it does happen to them. Right? So we're trying to arm them against this type of racism and so in one of the role plays that we do, we have one of the partners mispronounces the other person's -- one of the partners calls him something else. And so we have the students who say, for example, my name is Ronda and that's what you should call me. Another example that we have is that oftentimes kids when we see a name that's hard for us to pronounce and we then project that onto the child.

Are we seriously meant to apply this lesson that one child unwittingly mispronouncing another child's name is an act of racism? The students I work with are actively learning to read, learning to sound out words, and encouraged to make mistakes so that they can ultimately get it right - but if they mistakenly mispronounce a name, they have committed an act of racism? This is absurd.

There are numerous resources in the training, including "The Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh. I have attached this PDF to this email, rather than taking the time to cite the multitudinous examples of dehumanizing race-based and sex-based generalizations and absurdities found in it.

While this entire training is foundationally outrageous, perhaps the most perplexing component is this article entitled "Saying Goodbye To 2018's Seesaw of Outrage and Numbness" by Deepa Iyer:

<https://diyier.medium.com/saying-goodbye-to-2018s-seesaw-of-outrage-and-numbness-5671aa6768df>

This is an openly political editorial. This is outright propaganda. Regardless of its perspective, it is outrageous that such political content would be mandated as "training" in any capacity, never mind for our work in an educational environment. I am deeply uncomfortable with the entirety of this attempt at socio-political indoctrination.

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines "Harassment," in part, as follows, in italics:

*"Harassment is a form of employment discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, (ADEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, (ADA).*

*Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. Harassment becomes unlawful where 1) enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or 2) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive. Anti-discrimination laws also prohibit harassment against individuals in retaliation for filing a discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or lawsuit under these laws; or opposing employment practices that they reasonably believe discriminate against individuals, in violation of these laws.*

*Petty slights, annoyances, and isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not rise to the level of illegality. To be unlawful, the conduct must create a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people...*"

It is well within reason to consider a work environment in which a required training involves sweeping gender-based and race-based generalizations and characterizations, divisive and offensive racial terminology, and outright political propaganda, to be intimidating, hostile, and offensive.

Manchester School District's Employee Anti-Harassment and Violence Prevention policy ( <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YsNZNxNwiswpWDecqDYHN3Ozn0M0gdkzjRPe9pyt7vo/pub> ) reads, in part, in italics:

*"The Manchester School District is committed to ensuring a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity...*

*The District expects that all relationships among employees will be respectful, professional and free of bias, prejudice and harassment..."*

This policy defines "Harassment" as follows, in italics (underline mine for emphasis):

***"Harassment** is any verbal, written or physical conduct designed to threaten, intimidate, coerce or unreasonably interfere with the work performance of any District employee. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to, a) verbal taunting, b) verbal harassment, which includes comments that are offensive or unwelcomed regarding a person's nationality, origin race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, body, disability or appearance; or c) nonverbal harassment, which includes the distribution, display or discussion of any written or graphic material that ridicules, denigrates, insults, belittles or shows hostility, aversion or disrespect toward an individual or group because of national origin, race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, appearance, disability, sexual identity, marital or other protected status."*

The material in this training directly violates Manchester School District's Employee Anti-Harassment and Violence Prevention policy by exemplifying Example "c" of the District's definition of "Harassment" multiple times in multiple forms.

I would like to know:

1. Does Manchester School District officially require the specific "White Privilege" training presented in this complaint?
2. If Manchester School District does not require this specific "White Privilege" training, does Manchester School District sanction this specific "White Privilege" training, and all of the content within it?
3. If Manchester School District does not require or sanction this specific "White Privilege" training, does Manchester School District require any "White Privilege" training, or sanction the concept of "White Privilege" training?
4. If Manchester School District does not require this specific training, was Manchester School District aware that this training was required of 21st Century Site Coordinators?
5. If Manchester School District does not require this specific training, does not sanction this specific training, and was not aware of this specific training, where does Manchester School District stand regarding this specific training? In essence, does Manchester School District approve or disapprove of this specific training?

I am happy to elaborate further and answer any questions you might have regarding this matter. I ask that our communication is maintained via email so that it is 100% on the record. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to following up.

Thank you,

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Dan Concannon