

# Interrupting Racism

An Interactive Workshop

# The Five Steps

- H
- O
- N
- D
- A

So just think “HONDA.” Like the car.

# 1. H is for “Halt!”

- Yo!
- Wait!
- Hang on!
- Wait-wait-wait-wait...
- Just a sec!
- Stop!
  
- “Excuse me” is actually an apology. Other choices are better. You’re not apologizing.

## 2. O is for “Own the Problem”

- “I’m uncomfortable with what you just said...”
- “I’m uncomfortable with what just happened.”
- “I’m uncomfortable with what is happening now.”
- “I’m uncomfortable with something that happened yesterday during the potluck.”
- “I’m uncomfortable with something that you said at last year’s Thanksgiving dinner.”

\*It’s never too late to confront something that is still bothering you.

### 3. N is for “Name What They Did”

- You just referred to your sister-in-law as a ‘Jewish American princess.’”
  - “You just used the n-word to describe a co-worker.”
  - “You just said you don’t think of Robert as Black.”
- \*Just the facts. Everyone present should be able to agree with your description of what happened or was said, even if it did not offend them. Be **FACTUAL**.

# WHY Step Three?

Because you may have heard it wrong or you may have heard it out of context.

Give them a chance to correct you.

## 4. D is for “Describe How It Made You Feel and Why”

- Stay on your side of the street: you, your feelings, your analysis.
  - Use “I” statements, not “you” statements.
  - Do NOT tell them about themselves.
  - Do NOT ascribe motives to them.
- \* You are speaking without preparation here. It’s probably going to be messy. THAT’S OKAY.

# The Secret to Step Four

- You are confronting because you need to hear yourself speak up. You are doing this for yourself. You are not trying to change the other person. That may or may not happen. You have no control over that. You DO have control over how you represent yourself. Put your attention there.
- How do *you* like it when other people try to change you? How do *you* react when other people try to change you?



Good to remember...

“It’s easy to be objective when you’re not the one being hurt.” –Andrea Dworkin

Go easy on yourself for Step 4.

# A Word About Respect

- It is very difficult to get people to act respectfully when you are addressing them with disrespect.
- Disrespectful behavior includes trying to change them, trying to shame them, using disrespectful language, telling them about themselves (analyzing their behavior), getting in their business, threatening them, mocking them.

## 5. A is for “Accountability”

- “I need you to take responsibility for your words.”
- “I understand that you don’t see a problem with what you said/did/the joke but I am still uncomfortable.” (You can repeat this. “Yes, I understand that... and I am STILL uncomfortable.”)
- “I am uncomfortable that this was said in a workplace environment, and I am not hearing you take responsibility for your words. I am going to need to take this to the supervisor.”

## 5. A is for “Accountability” (cont’d.)

- “If you continue to use the n-word at this dinner, I will need to leave.”
- “I am uncomfortable that you are not taking responsibility for your words. I am going to hang up now.”

\*If your Accountability Step has a consequence, be sure that you carry through with it.

# What about the enablers?

- “Aunt Betty, I understand that you feel Uncle Frank doesn’t mean what he says, and I am still uncomfortable hearing the n-word used. I will need to leave if I hear it again. I am sorry if that is upsetting to you. Hearing that word is deeply upsetting to me.”

# Backlash

- I did it wrong.
- I made a mess.
- People think I'm a prude/a jerk/a political correctness policeperson.
- I ruined the party/dinner/lecture.
- I embarrassed my friend/partner/date.
- I insulted the host.
- I made a mountain out of a molehill.
- Nobody likes me.
- What is wrong with me anyway?
- Never again.

# But... you may have had this effect:

- “I still don’t see what’s wrong with that joke, but that was so unpleasant, I probably won’t tell it again... at least not at Thanksgiving.”
- “Wow. Uncle Jack was awesome. I think I can tell him I’m gay.”
- “I’m being harassed at work. I think I want to ask Sally for support.”
- “Wow. I never heard anyone in the family ever stand up to Frank like that before. Maybe I could...”

# And whatever else...

- You did something.
- You are part of the solution.
- You interrupted racism.
- The bigger the backlash, the more you can know

**YOU NAILED IT!**



Thank you for coming to this  
workshop!

