Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture that show up in our organizations

One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multicultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly multi-cultural organization.

Perfectionism: little appreciation expressed among people for the work that others are doing; it is more common to point out either the person or their work is inadequate.

Sense of Urgency: a continued sense of urgency makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, or to consider consequences.

Defensiveness: the organizational structure is set up and much energy is spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it.

Quantity over Quality: things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than the quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict.

Worship of the Written Word: if it's not on a memo/email, etc. it doesn't exist. The organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared.

Only One Right Way: the belief that there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it. When they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them, not with us.

Paternalism: decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it. Those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power.

Either/Or Thinking: things are either/or; good or bad; right or wrong; with us or against us; there is no sense that things can be both/and.

Power Hording: little, if any, value around sharing power. Power is seen as limited, and only so much to go around. Those in power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done.

Fear of Open Conflict: people in power are afraid of expressed conflict and try to ignore it or run from it. When someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person raising the issue.

Individualism: little experience or comfort working as part of a team. Accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve.

I'm the Only One: connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, "I have to do it." Little or no ability to delegate work to others.

Progress is Bigger, More: progress is an organization which expands, adds staff, adds projects, or develops the ability to serve more people, regardless of how well they are serving them.

Objectivity: the belief that there is such a thing as being objective or neutral. The belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process.

Right to Comfort: the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort; scapegoating those who cause discomfort.

Put together by Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones for a complete look at this go to:

http://cwsworkshop.org/PARC_site_B/dr-culture.html.