

# Combatting White Saviorism

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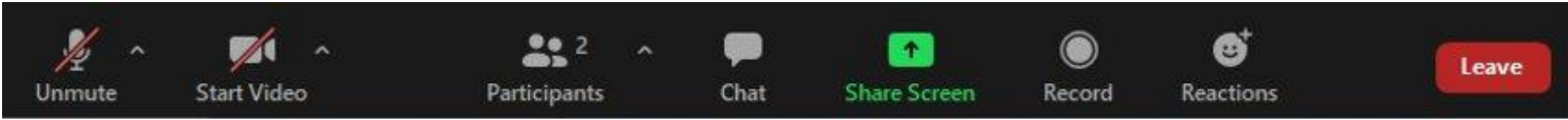


The Y in Central Maryland

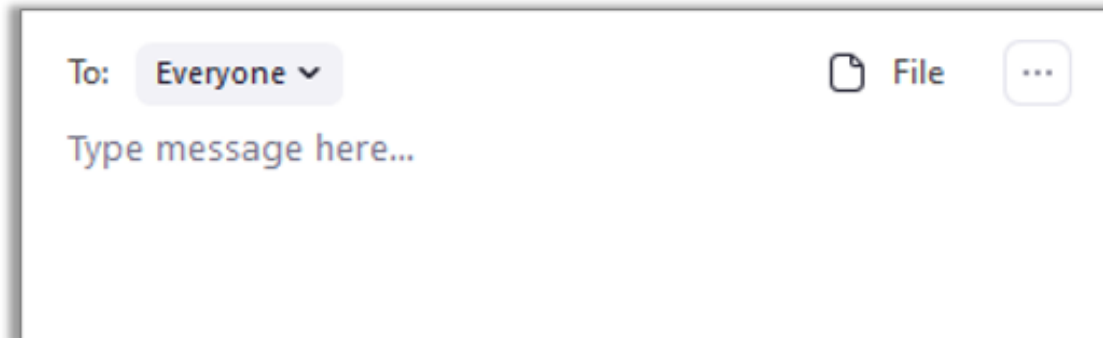
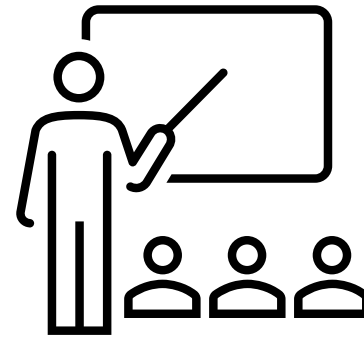
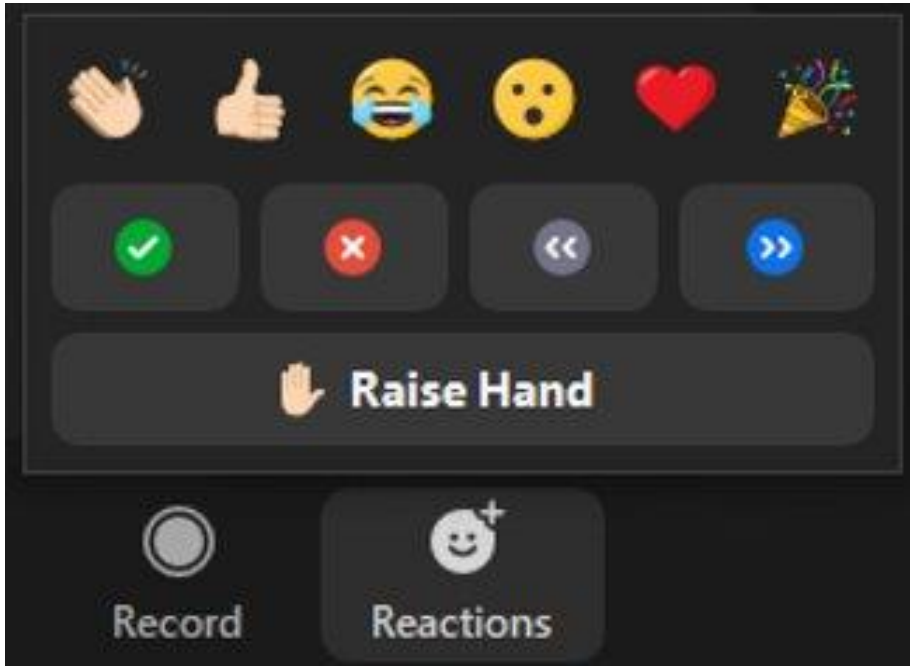


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# Logistics



*We appreciate your space and grace in this virtual environment!*





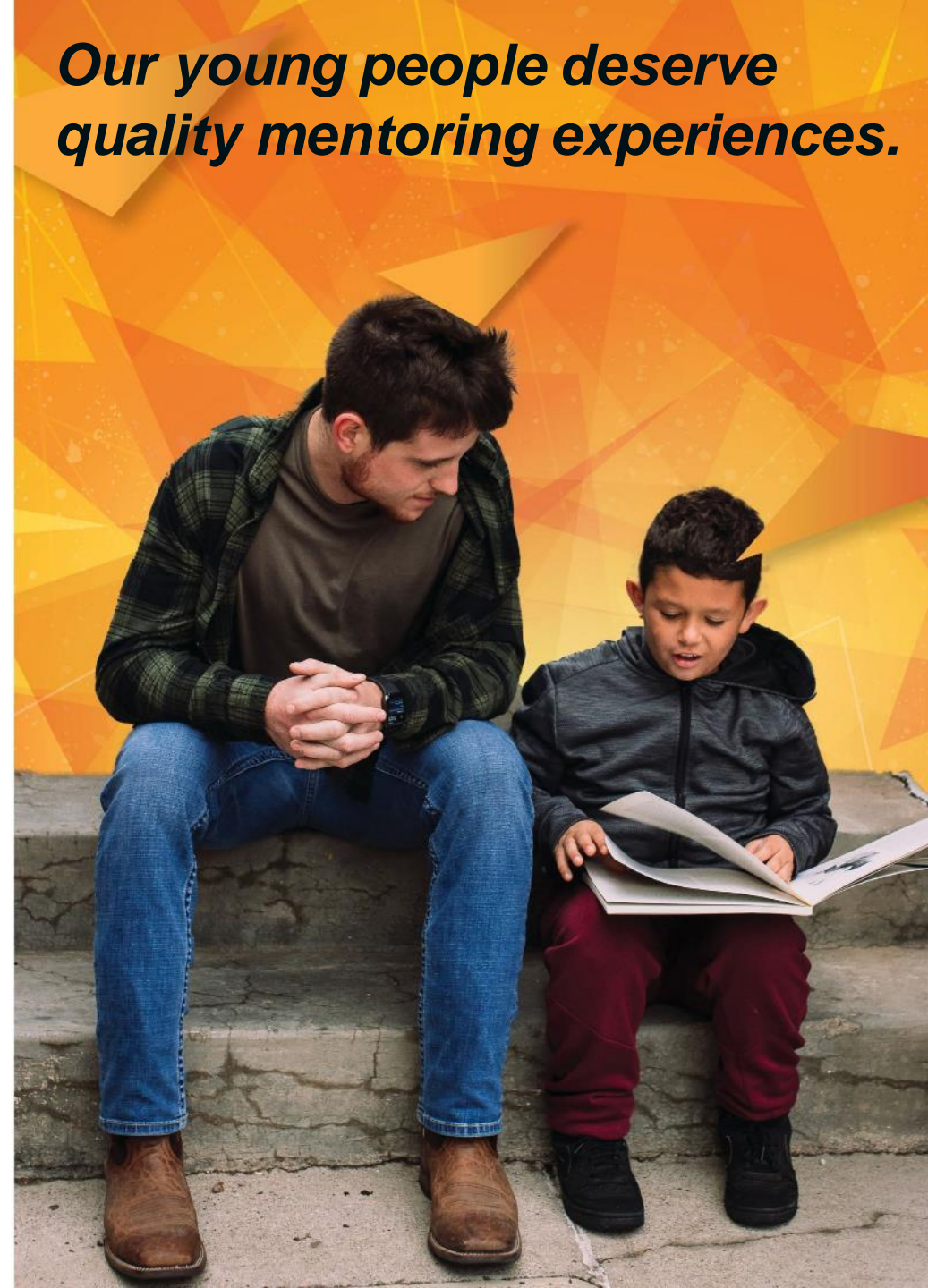
Since Maryland's affiliate of [MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership](#) launched in 2018, **MENTOR Maryland | DC** has sought to uplift the urgency of a march toward quality mentoring. We officially expanded into DC in 2021.

Our mission is to increase the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships across the country and to **close the mentoring gap**, we know programs can only do this when they feel supported, empowered and have the tools and resources to sufficiently carry out safe and effective mentoring relationships.

[MENTOR Maryland | DC](#) is a non-partisan organization that galvanizes the Maryland mentoring movement. We serve as community-based experts and create statewide infrastructure to expand quality relationships for young people.

We fulfill this role by training, research, public awareness, mentor recruitment, and advocacy. MENTOR Maryland | DC provides the critical link between MENTOR's national efforts and local organizations and programs that foster and support quality mentoring relationships across the state.

***Our young people deserve quality mentoring experiences.***



# Offerings from MENTOR MD|DC

**Connection to National Mentoring Partnership; resources, best practices, trainings, etc. (including National Mentoring Summit) – [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)**

**FREE Program Consulting/Technical Assistance via NMRC (National Mentoring Resource Center) – [www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org)**

**Access to Mentoring Connector – <https://mentormddc.org/mentoringconnector/>**

**Local, Customized Trainings, Roundtables, Communities Of Practice – <https://mentormddc.org/events/>**

**Mentoring Best Practices: [The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#)**

**Access to NQMS (National Quality Mentoring System)**

**Connection To Funding Opportunities – [www.grants.maryland.gov](http://www.grants.maryland.gov)**

**Access to <https://www.mentoring.org/resource/start-a-program/>**



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# Community Standards



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# MENTOR MD|DC Community Standards

- **Inclusivity.** Our community is open to ALL - but we also acknowledge the deep-seated racism, sexism, homo and transphobia, misogyny, and ableism that is pervasive in our country. We stand against these isms and actively work to this aim, especially with our youth. This means we must acknowledge that we also approach our work differently and beautifully.
- **Flexibility.** Share openly. Listen more openly. But be open when your sharing might hurt.
- **Positivity.** Be generous with positive assumptions but don't be afraid to ask genuine questions.
- **Equanimity.** No matter your role here today, be a host.
- **Intentionality.** We don't endeavor to create safe or comfortable spaces, but rather brave spaces where discomfort can be explored, and beliefs and practices challenged.
- **Expressivity.** We want this community and experience to be supportive and educational, but also fun! Please bring your full (present) self - it is welcome!
- **Civility.** No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.



**AGREE?**





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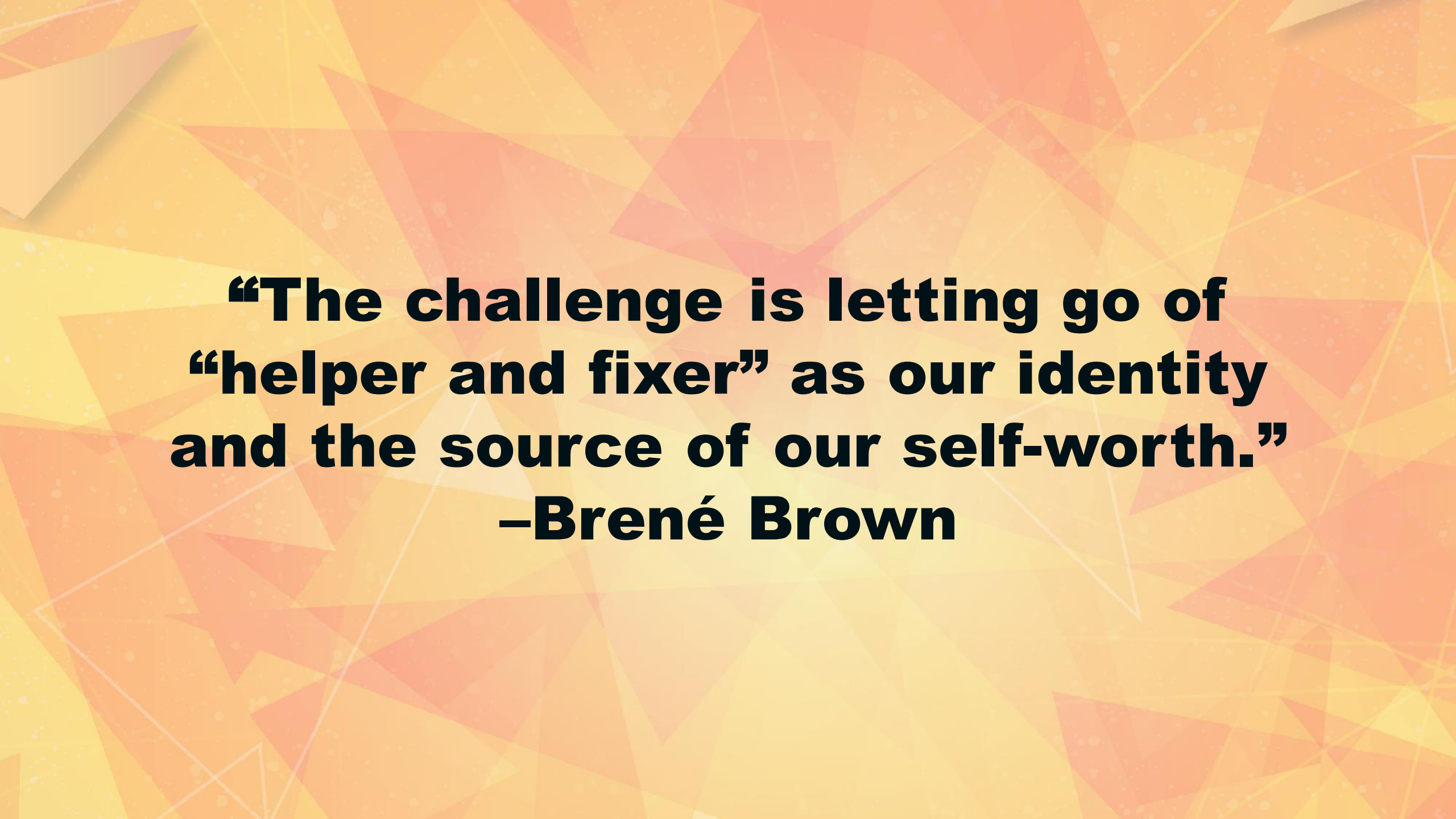


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REGION

# Stories of White Saviorism

## “Tevin & Tom”





**“The challenge is letting go of  
“helper and fixer” as our identity  
and the source of our self-worth.”  
–Brené Brown**

# Learning Objectives

**By the end of this session, participants will:**

- 1.** Be able to recognize white saviorism (saviorism)
- 2.** Be motivated to take action against white saviorism
- 3.** Develop a strengths-based approach that centers youth in mentoring relationships and programs



# Ground Rules

- Hold Your Opinions Lightly And With Humility
- Notice Your Own Defensive Reactions
- Recognize Your Own Social Positions
- Accept Discomfort As Necessary For Growth
- Push Your Learning Edge

Source: Sensoy, Ö., DiAngelo, R. (2014). *Respect Differences? Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education*. *Democracy and Education*, 22 (2), Article 1.



# Poll Question

## What Is Your Role In Mentoring?



# What is White Saviorism?

“There is much more to doing good work than ‘making a difference.’ There is the principle of first do no harm. There is the idea that those who are being helped ought to be consulted over the matters that concern them.” –  
Teju Cole

Teju Cole. Nigerian-American writer, photographer and art historian.  
Image credit: Teju Cole/Martin Lengemann



# **What is White Saviorism?**

A white person endeavoring to help a person of color with a self-serving motivation to appear noble, courageous, and morally superior to other white people including the underlying beliefs that people of color need saving and white people are the most qualified and capable of saving them.



# Saviorism...

Saviorism refers to the belief or practice of portraying oneself as a savior or hero who can rescue or save others from their problems or challenges. This mindset often involves a sense of superiority and the assumption that one's actions are necessary or beneficial for the well-being of those being "saved." Saviorism can sometimes lead to paternalistic attitudes, disempowerment of others, and a lack of consideration for diverse perspectives and autonomy.

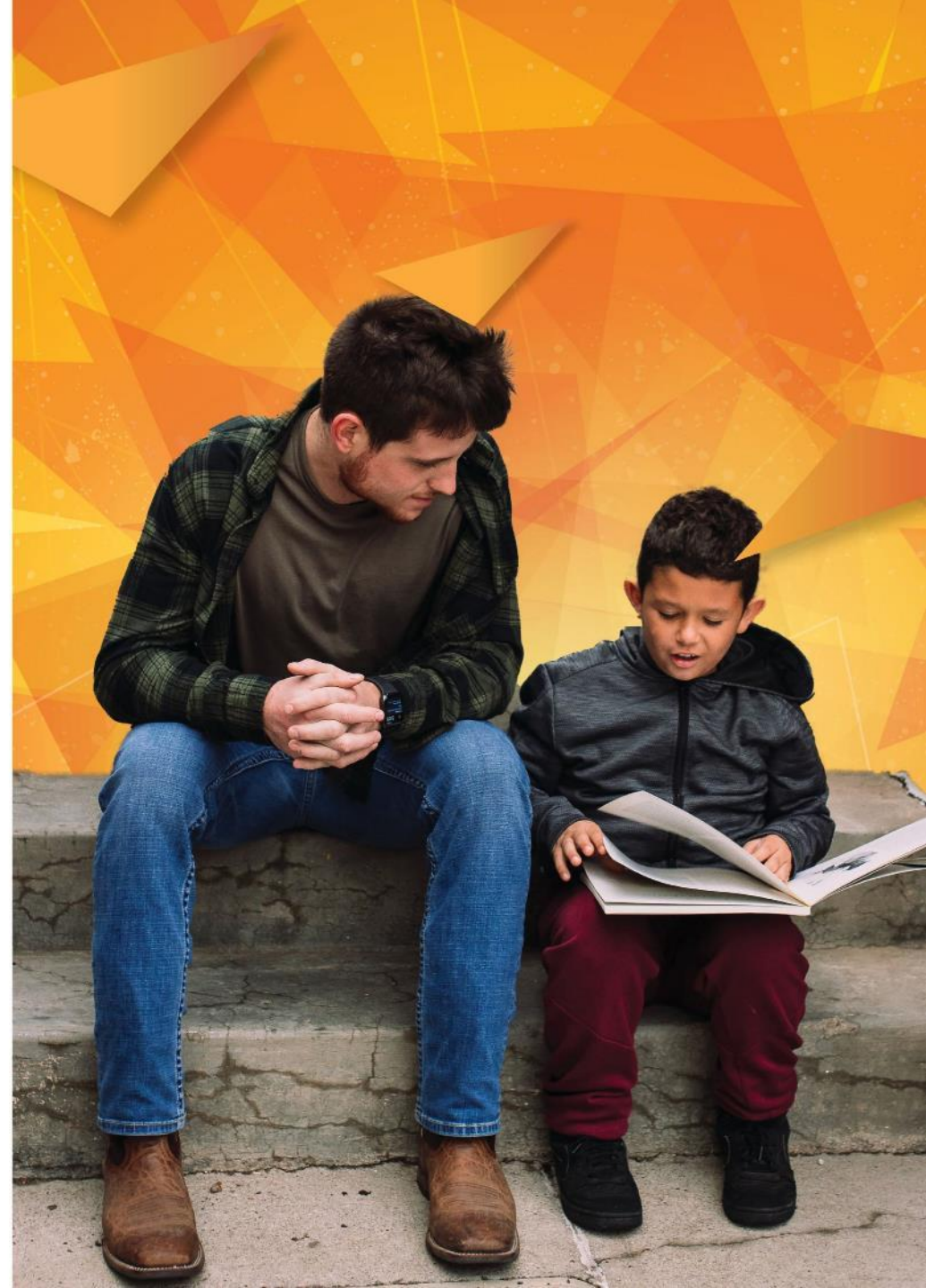


# **Positive Racial Identity**

A positive racial identity supports a positive self-perception and a sense of belonging to one's own racial group.

## **Cultural Mistrust**

a response to historical and personal oppression in which members of one culture do not trust another. Cultural mistrust acknowledges the history of harm to people of other cultures, often perpetrated by white people.



JEAN E. RHODES

Older

and

Wiser

New Ideas for Youth Mentoring  
in the 21st Century

*“These struggles are persisting against a background of record inequality, imbalanced opportunities, climbing rates of youth distress...”*

- Dr. Jean E. Rhodes



**As mentors we have a responsibility to know the individuals with whom we're building relationships, and as mentoring programs we have a responsibility to know the communities we intend to support including their specific history with white saviorism.**





**LATE NIGHT** WITH **SETH MEYERS**

**How have you  
seen the white  
savior narrative  
play out in  
mentoring  
relationships or  
programs?**



Image credit: Lloyd Bishop/NBC

# White Savior Narratives in Mentoring

- Individual people of color can overcome their circumstances, but usually only with the help of white people
- Urban spaces and the people of color living in them are inherently threatening, dangerous, and criminal
- White people are willing to deal with individual “deserving” people of color, but whites do not become a part of people of color’s communities in any meaningful way (beyond charity work)
- White people who are willing to save or help people of color, at seemingly great personal cost, are noble and courageous
- White people who are willing to “deal with” individual people of color are morally superior to other white people

Source: Sensoy, Ö., DiAngelo, R. (2012). *Is Everybody Really Equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Critical Social Justice Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

# Impacts of White Saviorism in Mentoring

Reinforcement of a sense of inferiority in young people of color

Damage to young people of color's racial identity

Young people of color are left with even fewer tools to support their identity development

Young people of color believe white culture is “right” and “superior”

Source: Lindwall, J. (2017). *Will I be Able to Understand My Mentee? Examining the Potential Risk of the Dominant Culture Mentoring Marginalized Youth*. *Journal of Youth Development*, 12(1), 72-91.

# Impacts of White Saviorism in Mentoring

- Young people of color believe that the only path to success (and survival) is to assimilate to white culture
- Young people of color abandon their racial identity out of fear it will keep them from succeeding (and surviving)
- Young people of color lose connections with family and community members and ultimately their sense of belonging

Source: Lindwall, J. (2017). *Will I be Able to Understand My Mentee? Examining the Potential Risk of the Dominant Culture Mentoring Marginalized Youth*. *Journal of Youth Development*, 12(1), 72-91.

**Would anyone be willing to share an example of an impact white saviorism had on a young person of color that you have experienced or witnessed?**



Image credit: Lloyd Bishop/NBC



*Though most mentors would not make overtly racist comments, the damage occurs when a relationship perpetuates the assumption that there is a cultural identity that is “right” and “superior” and that all other groups must conform to it.”*

- Dr. Jen Lindwall



**Q1 – Have you ever recognized a white savior mentality in one of your mentors or staff persons?**



**Q2 – Have planned or attended a fundraising event and recognized the white savior narrative being used to tell a program’s story?**

# COMBATTING WHITE SAVIORITY IN MENTORS AND MENTORING PROGRAMS



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**Julie, a 31-year-old white woman volunteering as a mentor in the Friends Forever Mentoring Program has been paired with her mentee Gabby, an eighteen-year-old Latinx youth. Early on in their relationship, Gabby told Julie about her love of animals and goal of becoming a veterinary technician. In support of Gabby achieving this goal, Julie encouraged Gabby to enroll in college. Julie has helped Gabby obtain sufficient financial aid and gain admission to her first choice – a college in another state. On the day Julie has planned to help Gabby move into her dorm room at her new school, Gabby calls Julie and tells Julie she has decided not to go. Gabby explains that her family needs her at home to help provide and care for her three younger siblings. Julie tries to convince Gabby to pursue her dreams and at least try college, but is unable to persuade Gabby. Desperate and exasperated, Julie calls her program coordinator at Friends Forever and says that Gabby’s mother is trying to sabotage Gabby.**



**John is a 67-year-old white man who has been paired with his mentee Chris, a fifteen-year-old Black youth, in the ABC Mentoring Program for two years. At ABC's annual fundraising event, John and Chris are asked to speak to a large crowd of potential donors. Prior to the event, an ABC staff member asks other staff about Chris' background and coaches Chris in writing his story. The ABC staff member encourages Chris to include his experiences in juvenile court prior to his involvement with the ABC Mentoring Program.**

**During the fundraising event after Chris reads his brief story, his mentor John speaks at length about Chris. John states that before Chris met him, Chris was skipping school, failing classes, and hanging out with the “wrong crowd.” While speaking John refers to Chris' mother, who has been invited to the event by the mentoring program though not to speak and states, “I don't know how she does it as a single mom – especially in *their* neighborhood.” John states that he took so much for granted before meeting Chris and just wants to see Chris graduate from high school.**



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# Strategies to Combat White Saviorism

## IN MENTORS

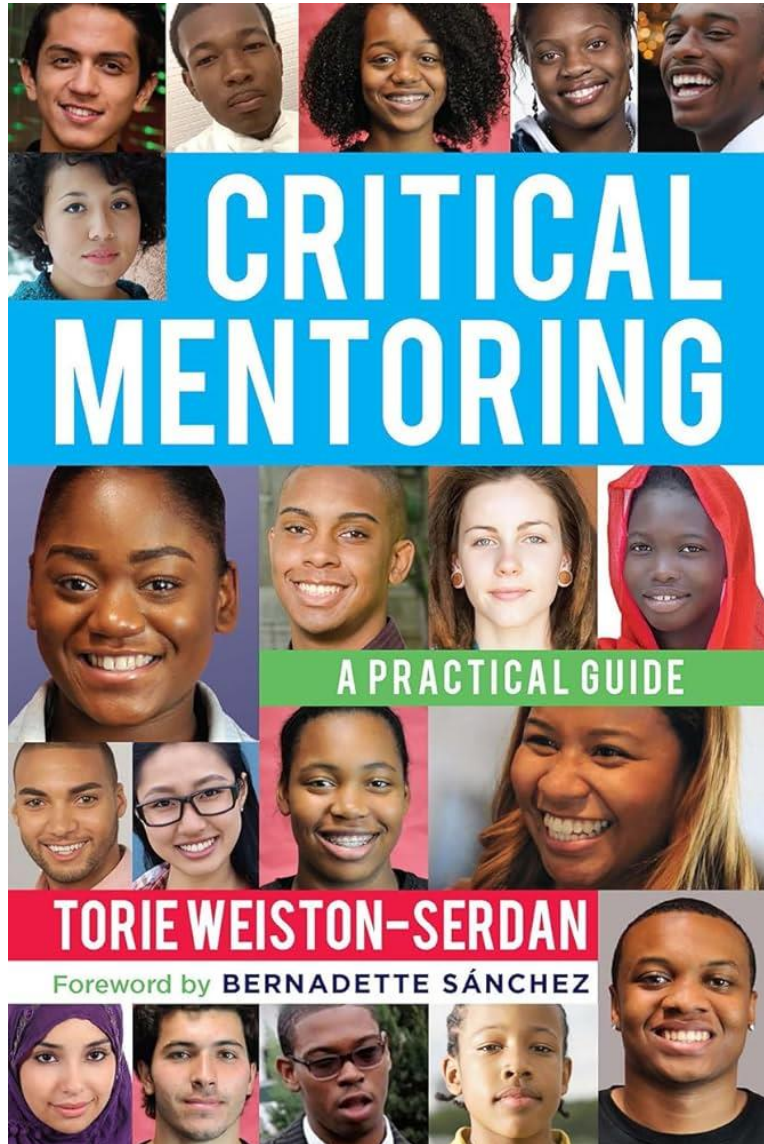
- Positive Youth Development
  - Strengths-based approach
  - Capitalizes on preexisting assets and resources
- Developmental Relationships Framework
  - Centers youth in adult-youth relationships
  - Emphasizes sharing power

## IN MENTORING PROGRAMS

- Marketing
- Recruiting and selecting board, staff, and mentors
- Screening mentors
- Matching
- Training mentors, board, and staff
- Ongoing monitoring and support
- Facilitating relationship closure
- Collaborating with program participants & community partners



- Move the focus from the mentor's intentions to the impact of their actions on the youth and their family and community.
- Coach the mentor to focus on the youth's strengths, assets, and interests (and having fun!)



*“The desire to make mentoring and youth development work more culturally relevant is instrumental in making mentoring more critical.*

*Without an authentic connection to the community, we all lose out on valuable relationships, opportunities for collaborative work, and the creation of pipelines that pave the way for systemic change.”*

- Dr. Torie Weiston-Serdan

# There's Hope!

Mentors are uniquely positioned to help young people develop positive racial identities and cultivate a sense of belonging and connectedness to their communities by:

- Acknowledging young peoples' racial context
- Creating space for young people to express their feelings and affirming them
- Asking young people what they need from us

# Our Next Training...



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***TRANSITIONING WITH PURPOSE:  
MENTORSHIP CLOSURE FOR LASTING IMPACT***

***Tuesday, March 19, 2024 @ 10:30 AM***

Learn how to navigate mentorship closure discover how to conclude mentoring relationships positively, ensuring a lasting impact through purposeful transitions.

***[bit.ly/mentorshipclosure2024](https://bit.ly/mentorshipclosure2024)***

# Thank you!

“Show me a successful individual and I'll show you someone who had real positive influence in their life. I don't care what you do for a living- if you do it well, I'm sure there was someone cheering you on or showing the way. A mentor.”

— Denzel Washington

Stay in Touch!

[www.mentormddc.org](http://www.mentormddc.org)

@MENTORMDDC

Take our survey!



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