



[00:00:00.170] - Kianna Bermudez

Think I'm recording correctly? I'm not sure.

[00:00:01.730] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Yeah, I think you already started it. I think.

[00:00:03.540] - Kianna Bermudez

I think that was the AI guy. I don't think it was real recording. I think we've started though.

[00:00:08.800] - Daon McLarin Johnson

All right.

[00:00:09.440] - Kianna Bermudez

Oh, yes. Raising hands. Good job. We're already getting started with our reaction. Awesome. So, [MENTOR Maryland | DC](#). If you're not familiar with us, we are a capacity building organization. We are the local affiliate. So we service Maryland and DC of a national organization called [MENTOR the National Mentoring Partnership](#). Our goal is to increase the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships across Maryland and DC. And we do that through providing trainings like today, engaging with programs, ensuring y'all have resources, coming out and meeting y'all all over the state, hosting [events](#). We have [no cost consultation](#), but we really want to make sure that we are positioning ourselves as a resource to you. So some of our resources that I'd love to share. As I mentioned, we have our no cost consultation and technical assistance. I believe we might have some of our consultants on the call right now. And some of y'all have also gone through TA. So thanks for coming back and hanging out with us. But it's a great opportunity to just dig deep. If you need any support with like literally anything, recruitment plans, logic models, literally anything. Trainings, we got you. We also have trainings like today, we have customized trainings. We do free trainings once a month. We have our best practices. We'll make sure you get this slide deck so you'll have all these links to click on. But just wanted to point out some of the resources that we can share with you.

[00:01:33.900] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Beautiful. Yeah. And if you want us to come to your region, you got about three or four programs you want to come together and we would love to come and share our trainings with you. Just like we're doing this virtually before we enter into any space, what we typically do, customarily, is we go through our community standards. So we're going to share these with you on the screen. If you can see them, give me a thumbs up. If you can see them, give me a thumbs up. There we go. Get our participation look. Inclusivity. That's what we value it as one of our standards. Our community here is open to all we acknowledge, though we've got deep seated racism, sexism, homo transphobia, misogyny, ableism. All of



that's pervasive with our programs in our spaces. Can I get an amen? And we today we stand against those isms and we actively work to this aim, especially with our young people. So we acknowledge that space flexibility today. Share openly. We are going to have opportunities to share, listen openly, be open. Sometimes our feelings get hurt. We're going to work through that positivity. Be generous with the positive assumptions. I'm staying positive. Even though Queen Anne's knocked us out of the playoffs, I'm going to remain positive. Equanimity, no matter your role. Have you all ever had people come over your house? Have you ever had people come over your house? Anybody had someone come to your house? You know how you want to make sure they feel at home. All right, we want everybody on the call to make everybody feel at home. All right? So everybody's a host today. Intentionality. Look, it's not a safe space. Sometimes it's uncomfortable, but we are going to have brave spaces today. Intentionality. Intentionality. We don't endeavor to have already read that one. Expressivity. We want this community and experience to be supportive and educational. We also want it to be fun. You can tell by me and KB we love to have fun. Civility. This is what my partner told me to include in this slide deck. No fixing, no saving, no advising, no correcting each other. If you all agree to our community standards, can you put a one in the chat or give me a thumbs up and we will keep it moving. All right, I see a couple of thumbs. A couple of ones. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for agreeing to our community standards.

[00:03:59.450] - Kianna Bermudez

Awesome. So before we get into the me, I just want to pause and thank some folks right now. So our friends over at [MENTOR Independence region](#), like I said, we're one of many affiliates of our national organization. One of our affiliates, the independence region, which is out in Philly, which is super close to us, they're our neighbors. They actually created this training, so they're an affiliate as well, and their mission is the same as ours to fuel the quantity and quality of mentoring relationships in their area. And we do that through evidence based practices and all these things. So we are so thankful for them for sharing this training with us so we can share it with y'all. And we also want to thank the Y. This series is also co sponsored by the [Y of central Maryland](#). So we just want to give them a big shout out for being our partners and uplifting this really important work and ensuring that we are able to share trainings with y'all.

[00:04:48.830] - Daon McLarin Johnson

All right, we're going to jump right in. We're going to start off with a story. Are y'all ready? Give me a thumbs up if you're right. All right. This is a story from our mentor independence region. Like I said, like KB said, it's Philly, our partners right up the street. And don't worry, all the names have been changed for anonymity. Here we go. It was the week before Halloween, and I was kicking off the beginning of our school-based mentoring program. The partner school was engaged, and they valued our mentoring program for all of their students. And look, their partner corporation was genuinely interested, invested in building impactful mentoring relationships that benefited the youth. As I entered the school this particular day, I couldn't wait to share the news with the five third graders that they were going to meet their new mentors the next day. Surrounded by bright, smiling faces, I called over Tevin. Tevin is an eight year old young man of african descent, and I wanted to tell him about his new mentor, Tom. Tevin asked me a



million questions, just like a typical eight year old. And he told me jokes and he had me cracking up. And look, this definitely, Tevin said, made my day. And I can't wait, Tevin said, to ask my new mentor all of the scoop on how I can land a job. I laughed and I told Tevin that if he got the scoop on how to land a job that he could clue me in, too. I felt like I was selling my mentor, Tom, who was more reserved than Tevin. Tom was a married dad of five. He was european descent, and he coached various sports in which kids played in his suburban neighborhood. Tom and Tevin only had one shared interest, and that was sports. And they had very different upbringings. But I thought, isn't that what mentoring is about? Aren't we supposed to expose our mentees to new people with different life experiences? And I was worried a little about Tevin's funny and exuberant personality. I thought it might clash with Tom, but I figured I had some experience under my belt and that I could make this match successful. The next day, y'all. Their meeting went better than I expected. Tevin was overjoyed to meet Tom. During the hour that they shared and spent together, I watched Tevin ask a thousand questions, just like I thought. And he shared every detail of his life with his new mentor, Tom. Then came my first conversation with Tom. Tom asked more than once whether or not I knew of any organized sports teams in Tevin's area. I sat on the phone listening as Tom said. I wish I could show Tevin the privilege of having the great sports teams that we have in our neighborhood. I really think it's important for him to have this experience in his life. I asked Tom if Tevin has expressed any interest in joining a sports team, and Tom replied, no, but it would be a worthwhile experience for Kevin. Over the course of their two year mentoring relationship, Tom continued with these suggestions that Tevin should dress more presentable and that Tevin shouldn't talk so loud all the time. And at this point, you all know Tevin was only ten years old. Over the two years of knowing Tevin, during my conversations with him, I noticed that Tevin was beginning to take Tom's advice to heart. I couldn't help but wonder whether Tevin really wanted to dress and speak differently or if he was attempting to assimilate to Tom's viewpoints of what was appropriate. I worried about the impact that this had on Tevin and whether this impact was lasting. I noticed that Tevin had stopped sharing his true thoughts and his feelings with Tom and that their relationship seemed to lack trust. Tevin began to tuck in his shirt. He wore a tie, and he maintained good grades. He never joined any sports teams, and he stopped telling me jokes. And I wondered if Tevin had stopped being himself. Now, through the eyes of my mentoring program, this match was reported positively because Tevin was positively impacted by this mentor. But I knew deep down that Tom's white savior mentality had a negative effect, possibly a lasting impact on Tevin. And it sent the message that being a charismatic, funny, and energetic African American was not enough and that Tevin didn't belong. There's a quote I want to share from Brene Brown. It says, the challenge that all of us face is letting go of helper and fixer as our identity and the source of self worth.

[00:10:43.470] - Kianna Bermudez

Thank you for sharing that day on and for setting the scene for us. So, what are we learning today? I would love to tell you. The objectives for this workshop are that you develop your ability to recognize white saviorism, that you're motivated to take action against it, and that you develop a strength based approach that centers young people, that centers our youth in mentoring relationships in programs. So how are we going to do this? I just want to set some quick ground rules and set some expectations. We know that the topic of race, racism, white supremacy, is super complex. It can be emotionally charged for many of us. So setting some quick ground rules for us, we invite you to differentiate between opinion,



which we all have, and informed knowledge, which comes from our sustained experience, study, practice. So, holding our opinions lightly and with humility and sharing experiences rather than opinions, we feel good about that. Give me some thumbs up. Cool. I got some head nods and thumbs up. Thank you all. We also invite you to notice your own defensive reactions and attempt to use these as reactions, as entry points of gaining deeper self knowledge. So when you have that reaction, dig in and say, turn to wonder. Ask, why am I having that? Rather than as a rationale for closing off, we also invite you to recognize how your own social positions, our race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and all the other isms that I can't think of, how they inform our perspectives and our reactions to myself, to you, to other participants. So just make sure you're keeping those in check. We also invite you to differentiate between safety and comfort. Daon touched on this in our community standards as well. But we should learn to accept discomfort is necessary for growth and accept that anxiety and non closure are part of this work honestly, and that's okay. And lastly, we invite you to push your learning edge. So, for example, if you're thinking, I already know this, why am I even here? I invite you to ask yourself, how can I take this deeper? Or how am I applying this in practice to what I already know? We also just want to make some things clear from the top. The people who are targeted by white saviorism. So black people, indigenous people, people of color, BIPOC folk are not responsible for initiating these conversations.

[00:13:02.180] - Kianna Bermudez

We are not responsible for repairing the harm caused by white saviorism or for solving the problems created by white saviorism. We'd also like to acknowledge the urgent need for broad social change, which includes so many things that I can't fit into one little blurb, but that might look like tax law reform, school zoning, criminal justice reform in order to create racial equity. We also very much want to acknowledge that mentors of color, so many of us on this call, can and do harm youth of color through saviorism. However, while that's a very important topic as well, the purpose of this session today is to explore how white saviorism specifically and its specific impacts on folks. And lastly, as we know conversations about race, they may be more harmful than beneficial to young people of color if we are not able to effectively affirm, attend to, and support young people in expressing their feelings. So that's something we're going to work on today. It's critical that as mentors, we're exploring our own biases. We all have them, exploring our own emotional triggers, and limitations before entering into a conversation with a young person, especially about a challenging topic such as this.

[00:14:11.010] - Kianna Bermudez

So thanks for hanging tight with me as we went through some ground rules and some clarifying items. But no, we did this at the top. I still want to know who's in here today. We're going to launch a quick poll. Now that we got through all the logistical things, I want to know who's here today. Let me know. All right. I can see them rolling in. We got some program leaders, some program staff, some mentors. Thank you, mentors, for all the work that you're doing.

[00:14:44.170] - Daon McLarin Johnson

It's good.

[00:14:45.450] - Kianna Bermudez

All right. Percentages are changing. I'll leave it up for another 10 seconds in case anyone hasn't gotten to select. Cool. All right. And I'm closing out. It looks like most of you were able to thank you all for being here. You all should be able to see who all is in here. Awesome.

[00:15:06.210] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Got it?

[00:15:07.510] - Kianna Bermudez

Yeah. Thanks to all our program staff, our mentors and program leaders for being here.

[00:15:16.710] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Let's jump into a definition for white saviorism. On the screen, you've got a quote by Teju Cole. Any of you guys familiar with this brother? He's got some incredible work. He has a quote. It says, there is much more to doing good work than making a difference. There is a principle of first doing no harm. There is the idea that those who are being helped ought to be consulted over the matters that concern them. That leads us into our definition for white saviorism. Hey, B, did we drop the definitions in the chat?

[00:15:59.340] - Kianna Bermudez

We'll be dropping the workbook shortly.

[00:16:03.400] - Daon McLarin Johnson

All right, so we'll get that. We'll have all these definitions to you, and it'll be in the form of a workbook. Here's our definition for white saviorism. It's when a white person endeavors to help a person of color. Here's the thing. This is the rub. It's not necessarily helping them. It's the motivation behind it. 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 that white people are the most qualified and capable of saving them. So, once again, it's not necessarily the help in and of itself. It's the motivation behind the help. Y'all got that? Yeah. So here's the thing that I talked to KB and Renee, who is also our training coordinator, because on this call, we have also some black and brown folk as well. And as we noted when we first started, black and brown leaders and practitioners also have their own biases. And so we also wanted to throw up this definition for saviorism. And saviorism refers to the belief or practice of portraying oneself as a savior. And notice, this takes race out of it.



[00:17:21.850] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Portraying oneself as a savior or hero who can rescue or save others from their problems or challenges. This mindset. Here's the rub. It 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. Now, check this out. The last sentence. Saviorism can sometimes lead to paternalistic attitudes, disempowerment of others, and a lack of consideration for diverse perspectives and autonomy. And all of us can enter into a mentoring space. All of us can enter into relationships with young people having these paternalistic, the disempowering attitudes. And so that's so important for this particular class today--is that? It's not a class. Help me out, KB.

[00:18:10.820] - Kianna Bermudez

You're doing great.

[00:18:12.010] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Thank you.

[00:18:12.700] - Kianna Bermudez

Yeah. So, thank you, Dayon. Yes. So while white saviorism is predominantly perpetuated by white people, the same harmful behavior can be upheld by Pac as well. And so if white saviorism is what we want to move away from, positive racial identity is what we want to lean into and what we want to support young people of color in developing. A positive racial identity supports a positive self perception and a sense of belonging to one's own racial group. So, feeling proud of being your identity. So, for myself, being proud of being a Latina, which, if you were able to see this water bottle, it is like all over here, there's also cultural mistrust, which is a response to historical and personal oppression in which people of color do not trust white people. Cultural mistrust acknowledges the history of harm to people of color perpetrated by white people. We know that specifically in mentoring, we have a responsibility to understand and acknowledge that there's a history of harm between institutions like youth serving programs that have hurt families of color. And as we know, the history of white saviorism is hundreds of years old. The narrative of white saviorism has been historically used by white people to colonize and enslave people who've not been historically allowed access to white privilege and continues to be used today by the modern nonprofit sector. So it is completely normal that mistrust happens. So, just wanted to share a resource real quick. [Older and wiser by Jean Rhodes](#) is a wonderful book about mentoring. It outlines the origins of formal mentoring programs, including acknowledging some of those reasons why cultural mistrust happens specifically in the nonprofit sector. And lastly, as you know, we must acknowledge that many different racial and ethnic groups are targeted by white saviorism, and it looks different for all impacts. But this is a really good resource, and I'll drop the name for that in the chat, just in case any of y'all want to look for it.



[00:20:02.690] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Any of y'all familiar with that book? Have any of you guys read this? Jean Rhodes, she is the guru. Have spoken to her a couple of times. She comes to DC often, and she spoke at the national mentoring summit a couple of weeks ago. Check her out. She's powerful. Over 30 years of research.

[00:20:24.150] - Kianna Bermudez

Oh, you can't see it because my background. Oh, now I'm just missing.

[00:20:27.580] - Daon McLarin Johnson

There you go.

[00:20:31.110] - Kianna Bermudez

Awesome. So, our mandate. I want to read this real quick, make sure we're on the same page. So, as mentors, we all have a responsibility to know the individuals with whom we're building relationships. So know our mentees. And as mentoring programs, so those of us who are from that programmatic lens and all of you, all who mentioned staff member, who were staff members on that poll, we have a responsibility to know the communities we intend to support, including their specific history with white saviorism.

[00:20:59.810] - Daon McLarin Johnson

So right now, we've defined white saviorism. We've acknowledged that mentors of color can also contribute to this whole conversation, and especially when we're talking about race based narrative and white saviorism as it pertains to mentoring. And now we're going to start to explore some of these narratives and how it plays out. We're going to define who needs help, who deserves help, and what kind of help is needed. And so we're going to share this quick six minute video. It's a hilarious video. As you're watching it, go ahead and kind of monitor how you're feeling your thoughts and pick out those specific microaggressions. Go ahead and pick those out because we're going to talk about those as soon as this video is over. About six minutes. And it'll go quickly.

[00:21:46.940] - Kianna Bermudez

Yeah. And then just want to acknowledge that while we're using humor to explore it, we do know that this, unfortunately real harm happened.

[00:21:53.080] - Narrator

See the story of the black woman who became a world renowned scientist, an accomplice, cellist, and activist, and a man who was white while she did it.

[00:22:07.910] - Jack

Her mic was too high, but I fixed it. It's fixed because of me.

[00:22:13.610] - Jack

You're doing great.

[00:22:17.450] - Narrator

White savior. It's got all the things white people love in movies about racism. Like that scene where they're in a bar and the white person sticks up for the black person.

[00:22:26.880] - Bubba

This bar don't serve people like you.

[00:22:29.420] - Loretta

I have just as much a right to be here.

[00:22:31.390] - Jack

Hey, she's with me.

[00:22:34.770] - Bubba

Oh, sorry about that, Jack.

[00:22:36.890] - Jack

Not sorry about it. How are the kids?

[00:22:38.340] - Bubba

Good. Really good.

[00:22:41.010] - Loretta

Great.

[00:22:43.010] - Narrator

That thing where a white person works closely with a black person and is surprised to learn they're smart.

[00:22:48.540] - Jack

Oh, my God. You did it.

[00:22:51.400] - Loretta

Well, I've always been pretty good at math.

[00:22:54.080] - Jack

Well, you should go to school for it.

[00:22:56.680] - Loretta

I did.

[00:22:58.070] - Jack

You should get a job in it.

[00:22:59.870] - Loretta

I have one.

[00:23:00.990] - Jack

You do? Where?

[00:23:02.990] - Kianna Bermudez

Here. I'm your boss.

[00:23:05.200] - Jack

You.

[00:23:07.850] - Jack

Wow.

[00:23:09.370] - Loretta

Now clean this up and get me a coffee.

[00:23:12.330] - Jack

No.

[00:23:14.330] - Narrator

There's also the part where the black person very calmly eviscerates a white person in a way that makes white audiences think that was the day racism was solved and makes black audiences think I had to do that. Same last week. Don't forget the part where the black person bravely defies racist laws, and then the white guy steps in like he's some sort of goddamn hero.

[00:23:37.190] - Jack

You should be ashamed of yourselves, ladies. You know, it's people like you who.

[00:23:40.860] - Loretta

I can't go with you standing out there.

[00:23:43.190] - Narrator

And one racist who's so cartoonishly racist that other racists watch this movie and say, well, at least I'm not that racist.

[00:23:52.050] - Earl

Well, look at what we have here. If it ain't another gabba de goo goo gaga goo doodle a gaga gaga goggle.

[00:24:14.050] - Narrator

From the makers of green book hidden figures, the help, the blindside, dangerous minds, glory, cool runnings, radio hardball, ghosts of Mississippi, the principle, a time to kill freedom riders, Sunset park, the air up there and wildcats.

[00:24:29.750] - Loretta

Hey, thanks for everything.

[00:24:31.860] - Jack

You're welcome. Now, don't you go falling in love with me.

[00:24:36.710] - Loretta

I won't, because that doesn't test well with audiences.

[00:24:43.130] - Narrator

People magazine says this movie is a triumph, and the black person it's based on says this is not at all how it happened. And if you're a black person hoping for the catharsis of watching a black character punch a racist, you'll get the next best thing. The white guy punching a racist.

[00:24:59.550] - Loretta

If I'd have done that, they'd have locked me up until I died.

[00:25:03.970] - Narrator

Plus, a scene where the white guy is helpful in a way that doesn't advance the cause of all black people. Just the one he's friends with also has stuff like this.

[00:25:21.750] - Jack

I know what it's like for you. There's nothing worse than feeling like an outsider. One time when I was in junior high, I got some toilet paper stuck to the bottom of my shoe. And the other kids, well, you know how kids can be. They called me Mr. Poop shoe. Felt like it went on for weeks, but it was actually probably only about five minutes before someone told me and I took it off. But, yeah, I understand racism.

[00:25:59.890] - Narrator

Featuring a scene where the white character introduces the black character to something they definitely already knew about.

[00:26:05.620] - Jack

I'm going to teach you about a little something called jazz.

[00:26:10.470] - Narrator

And no white savior movie is complete without a white woman adopting a black person.

[00:26:15.290] - White Woman Character

I'm here to adopt you.

[00:26:17.430] - Loretta

Adopt me? I'm older than you.

[00:26:20.160] - White Woman Character

You will no longer want for anything in this world.

[00:26:25.130] - Loretta

Word. Bye, children. Hey, mommy. What's for dinner?

[00:26:31.470] - White Woman Character

Well, I guess I'd have to ask the chef.

[00:26:33.330] - Loretta

Chef.

[00:26:34.990] - Narrator

Some movies examine the complexities of race relations in America. This movie does not do that. But according to the root, it does push a black helplessness narrative that paints black people as passive in their own history. Plus, it's corny. And, you know, this movie was written by a white person because the black person becomes friends with the racist.

[00:26:53.850] - Kianna Bermudez

You know what, Loretta?

[00:26:55.590] - Earl

You're all right.

[00:26:56.940] - Loretta

Thanks, Earl. For some reason, earning your respect is something I'm interested in.

[00:27:05.190] - Narrator



White savior. In theaters this spring and coming soon. The Rosa park story told from the perspective of a white guy who was also on the bus. Rosa and Kevin.

[00:27:23.930] - Kevin

Hey, this seat's free.

[00:27:32.130] - Daon McLarin Johnson

All right. What are some of those narratives? We want to just kind of dive into them very quickly. There's multiple ones in there, and they mentioned it. So let's go ahead and open up the dialog for just a couple of minutes to get your thoughts and your comments. Feel free to come off mute.

[00:27:57.360] - Kianna Bermudez

Someone has their hand up.

[00:27:59.330] - Etsube

Yeah, it's me. I know you asked the question, but I kind of have my own question, if that's okay. So I guess I'm just a little confused with. I understand what white saviorism or saviorism mean, but I feel like sometimes the lines are blurred. Meaning, like, if a person is considered successful and they go back to, I guess, where they came from, or they lend a hand to not lend a hand. Okay. I guess they help other people who don't have the same opportunity as them. Can that be considered as like a saviorism attitude? Like I don't understand where the line. Because growing up, I grew up in Ethiopia, right. So I would see people specifically, like, white people coming from like America, Australia, you know, in our schools. And I used to see them a lot, like, bringing us stuff, know, other things from ngos and stuff. So I'm just trying to understand if that's also, like, white saviorism. Where's the line? Sometimes it's blurred.

[00:29:19.070] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Thank you. And I don't want to mispronounce your name, because we've been in the same meetings for the last three times. Can you give it?

[00:29:28.350] - Etsube

Yeah. Etsube.

[00:29:29.670] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Etsube. Thank you. Thank you for coming to our professional development day a couple of days ago. Etsube. I think it goes back to sort of what we shared at the beginning and the next slide is going to talk about it. Also, it's not the fact that none of us desire to help. I think it's the motivation for why we want to



help when we're doing it. To have some type of internal feeling of superiority. I think that's grounded in that whole saviorism narrative. And so when we enter into those spaces where we're helping, we have to make sure and do an internal dialog with ourselves. Okay, why am I doing this? Am I doing it to keep some type of benefit or accolades on my part? And so I think that is the line. And we'll talk a little bit about those narratives in just a second. Anybody-- KB, would you like to add? Or anybody else would like to add to answer Etsube's question?

[00:30:29.170] - Kianna Bermudez

Yeah, Daon, I think you hit the nail on the head and that it comes back to motivation, right? And sometimes those aren't super clear either. Sometimes there's a lot of digging one has to do to make sure that they're not leaning into a savioristic lens. But it goes back to, if you think that something you have to provide is inherently better than what someone else already has and is something that you are like, I can fix it. I can fix them. If I just teach them how to do this, that's kind of what it gets back to. Yeah, Laura has some thoughts in the chat, too.

[00:31:09.070] - Daon McLarin Johnson

I think these narratives also go into the ones that are on the screen. Etsube. It kind of drills down into some of the motivations. So one, that individual people of color can overcome their circumstances, but only at the help of white people. So even as you're heading back to Ethiopia, it's like coming in with that mentality. Like the only way that my native Ethiopians are going to be able to overcome is if I show up and I do the work. Okay, so it's that whole internal motivation. Whenever we show up in a space, urban spaces, and people of color living in them are inherently threatening, dangerous, criminal. I can't go into those neighborhoods. White people are willing to deal with the individual deserving people of color. Like only the good black people are worthy of our help, right? Having that mentality, the fourth bullet. White people who are willing to save or help people of color at seemingly great personal costs. And now I'm noble. I'm a noble person. Then the last one, white people who are willing to deal with individual people of color are morally superior than other white people. Right. At least I'm not as bad as those other white people.

[00:32:25.930] - Daon McLarin Johnson

And entering into those spaces, especially in the mentoring field, it's just so critical that we check ourselves when we enter into any situation so--

[00:32:37.710] - Laura Green

Add another one Daon, because you called me out. It's Laura. But one that I think about also, which is a little more subtle than even this, not recognizing the gold that's in the communities who we serve. And sometimes that's a little more subtle. Right. Because going into lower income neighborhoods and zip codes and this idea of getting them out, the extraction effect of getting out a person from their



neighborhood as opposed to going in with the asset based mentality with the students who we serve. The problem isn't the student getting out of a zip code. Right? The problem in that situation is probably systemic inequity, which creates poor neighborhoods. But out of those neighborhoods: music, dance, talent, talent is distributed equally, even if money and opportunity is not so challenging around, not just saving someone out of their zip code or out of their environment, but rather leaning into that and understanding the gold that's there. There's a lot of gold in these kids, of gold in these streets, in every zip code. And that it's found everywhere, not just limited to certain affluent neighborhoods or zip codes or in the case of some of the programs that I've worked with in the past, lacrosse and rowing being the only answer out as opposed to some other sports programs. Yeah, I just wanted to add that other piece around just really being conscious about talent and gold and opportunity is everywhere, not just limited. And it's not about extracting a student or saving a student from their neighborhood, from their home, from their peer group.

[00:34:41.570] - Daon McLarin Johnson

That's so good. Laura, you got the spoiler. We're going to talk a little bit more about an asset based framework. That's really one of the things that combats this. Leshia, you have your hand raised.

[00:34:56.790] - Leshia

Yes, it's have poor. I'm getting a reading right now about my Internet connection, so I apologize. This resonates to me because as a professor, one of the things that I teach in sociology and I teach primarily on the foster care system, and I talk about lived experience, and I see this all the time because similar to mentoring, of course, we're helping youth who are coming from very challenging spaces at times. But a lot of times people look at these children and they look at these are victims, and I really need to give them everything and then some. And again, I'm very intentional with my words, because of the fact of lived experience. I'm an African American woman, and my husband's an african american man, and we actually adopted a white child. And so one of the things that we discuss, actually, we talk about, as society calls it, transracial adoption. We actually-- I refer to it in my class as intercultural adoption. And I say that because I am not in transracial adoption. It means that you are taking away that child's culture, that identity, and trying to uplift them into something that you feel like would be the necessary things to have in your life or the necessary things to be in order to be a better person , so, you know, the example immediately in the video just kind of know it really spins. I think I'll use it probably in my next time I teach my foster care class. I really love this piece of it, but I do see this on a lot of angles where I do have that discussion, and I work with our Department of Social Services here in Frederick, Maryland. Our dynamics and our demographics speak to that. Most of the children that come into care are going to be white children. Of course, there was a pickup in that with the opioid epidemic, more white children were coming into the system, although nationally, we know most of the children that are actually sitting in our system are African American. So we have to be very careful about the language that we're using whenever we're bringing these children, no matter what age, into our homes, because there is a lot of saviorism, there's a lot of virtue signaling in foster care right now that we really want to get rid of. Where, you know, see these images of a child back, and there's this family holding them, and it's like we want to bring them into



something new in their life and, no, the goal of foster care is actually reunification. So let's talk about that message as opposed to the saviorism that we're really projecting in a lot of the videos and media that's out there. Thank you.

[00:37:32.000] - Kianna Bermudez

Leshia, that's huge. And I used to work for DSS back in North Carolina, so definitely chat with you about that.

[00:37:40.750] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Definitely.

[00:37:41.870] - Kianna Bermudez

Yeah, that's, like, a very common thing. Like, reunification is somehow always forgotten, even though it's literally the goal. But, yeah. Thank you all for engaging with us and chatting through just some of the things you're noticing about white saviorism. So just to chat a bit through the impacts of white saviorism and mentoring as we've been talking about it reinforces that sense of inferiority within young people of color, which obviously creates a damage to young people of color's. Racial identity. Young people of color often left with even fewer tools to support their identity development. They also believe that white culture is right and it's superior. And so they try to assimilate to that, as we've talked about, that believe it's the only path to success and in some cases, survival. And so trying really hard to assimilate to white culture, and then that results in abandoning their racial identity out of fear that it'll keep them from succeeding and also losing connections with their community, whether that be family members, friends, mentors, that ultimately loses their sense of belonging.

[00:38:53.270] - Kianna Bermudez

So in the chat, would anyone be willing to share maybe an example of an impact that white saviorism has had on a young person of color that you've had experienced or maybe you've witnessed? In other words, what effect did white saviorism have on a young person of color or their identity? Feel free to put any stories you have in the chat. You can also come off mute if that's easier. Just want to do a quick little pulse check here. We know typing takes a moment, so I'll give you all a second. I can personally share. Being from South Carolina and being the daughter of immigrants, I'm a first generation American born. I was often the only person of color in most of my classes, went to very small schools, and the classic got made fun of for my food, got made fun of for the way I spoke, got made fun of for the way my family spoke. And so that caused me to aggressively. I, to this day, still don't eat a lot of meat and pork because I was shamed for it so aggressively when I was younger. I'm still bilingual, thank God. But I really only speak it with my family. So a lot of those narratives, really, especially at a young age, deep, deep.

[00:40:37.470] - Daon McLarin Johnson



Know. I think also, I used to work direct, don't. We don't work directly with kids anymore at Mentor, Maryland, DC. But my previous job, I worked with a mentoring organization, and we mentored primarily african american males. What struck me in that last narrative was how we always expected our young men to wear shirts and ties and to tuck their shirts in and to speak articulately. I'm really kind of still working through this whole, what are we trying to achieve? What is our mentoring organization? Are we trying to get them to assimilate in a culture that we deem better than another culture? And so this really kind of strikes home for me, even being an african american male working predominantly with african american males, young people. So this saviorism and white saviorism really is an interesting topic that we all need to be mindful of when we enter into from a programmatic practitioner standpoint.

[00:41:44.780] - Kianna Bermudez

Yeah, that's really good, Daon. And someone in the chat was actually right on with you in that they've witnessed a lot of white supremacy based ideas of professionalism, which is kind of what you were just touching on. Like, why? Why is that the norm? Thank you all for engaging and for sharing your stories and continue to, as you all are going through, continue to put those in, but just wanted to share. So this lovely human is Dr. Jen Lindwell. In her 2017 article that's titled: "Will I be Able to Understand my Mentee?" shared that quote that's right there: "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." So in this article specifically, she shares an example of a white mentor who's matched with an African American eleven year old girl. And right away, the mentor, kind of similar to what we saw above, is super adamant about the taking the young girl to her country club and in her suburban community and emphasizes that this is a priority.

[00:42:56.830] - Kianna Bermudez

She has to go to this, and I'm going to teach her how to act and show her how to speak and teach her how to look people in the eye. And in that article, you see that this is an example of being well meaning and a caring adult. But they're putting this young girl's cultural identity development at risk by seeing her role as the one to show the mentee the right way to live. Right. And so sometimes this can be subtle, but it is extremely damaging. As we were all sharing some of our experiences and things we've noticed. It is a damaging mindset that mentors can bring into a relationship. It can have a very negative impact on their mentees perception of their own race and their own culture. That is something we want to avoid at all costs.

[00:43:44.390] - Kianna Bermudez

So we've defined white saviorism. We've explored how it shows up in the context of mentoring, and we've pointed out some of the harmful impacts of white saviorism on young people, especially young people of color. And so we are now looking how to combat it. So at this point, you might be asking yourself, is mentoring even worth risking harm to young people through white saviorism? And so to that question, our specific answer is that mentors are uniquely positioned being an additional caring adult in someone's life.



In someone's life, you are uniquely positioned to help young people develop positive racial identities and to cultivate a sense of belonging and connectedness to their communities, especially when we acknowledge the history of harm caused by white saviorism. So to this question. Question one, please drop a one in the chat if you have ever recognized a white savior mentality in a mentor. Maybe you didn't know how to address it. Maybe you addressed it head on. You were successful at reducing that harm. Regardless, drop a one if you've noticed it. All right, we got lots of ones. That feels right. All right, next question. Drop a-- we'll do a two this time, make it a little different. Drop a two in the chat if you've ever been to or have even planned maybe a fundraising event or some other event and recognized that the white savior narrative was being used to tell a program story. Lots of twos real quick. Yep. All right, so what we're going to do next is we're going to dig a little deeper into that. We're going to talk about what it looks like within mentor and mentoring program. So Dan's going to lead us through our first activity. I'm going to kick it over to Daon.

[00:45:46.700] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Good. Very good. So what we've got, we've got a couple narratives. Obviously, you don't have to read all of this very quick right now that's on the screen, but we're going to split you up into. I know everybody's thinking breakout rooms. We're going to put you in breakout rooms and we want you to work through this scenario. We're going to drop it in the chat for you and just identify the impact of this white saviorism on the mentor, the mentee, the families that are involved. Just talk about that amongst the people in your group and identify how the mentoring program can really support the youth and also bring sort of like a healing to the situation. So we're going to break you off into groups. Let's see. We need to make sure that you had this. Did everyone.

[00:46:39.580] - Kianna Bermudez

It is in the workbook. If you did not receive the workbook, I'm going to drop that in the chat again right now. And you'll find these prompts. But work on Julie. We're working on Julie right now. I'm dropping it right now in the chat. As long as one of you can access it, we are good.

[00:46:58.710] - Daon McLarin Johnson

If you got the PDF, give us a thumbs up if you got it.

[00:47:03.840] - Kianna Bermudez

Awesome. I see some thumbs up. Cool. All right, we're going into breakout rooms. You ready? Three, two, one, click, click.

[00:47:15.940] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Ok. Yep.

[00:47:17.050] - Kianna Bermudez

Folks are trickling in.

[00:47:22.620] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Alejandro mi amigo.

[00:47:27.580] - Kianna Bermudez

Alejandro. We met at the right.

[00:47:31.050] - Daon McLarin Johnson

We met in Baltimore.

[00:47:32.440] - Alejandro

Yes.

[00:47:34.620] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Alejandro Comos. All right. We know that was quick. We know it was quick. Somebody come off mute? Tell us, what are you going to tell Julie? You're the program manager. What are you going to tell Julie? Come on, talk to us.

[00:47:56.500] - Leshia

I tell Julie to pursue what her endeavors are and work with her in the best way possible to make sure she has housing, if she have to babysit her little sisters and brothers, to make sure they have care and transportation, because a lot of women, they will get a job or go to school if they have children or helping with the family. They leave their children with people they shouldn't leave them with. So just taking her away from what her goals and desires are is catastrophic.

[00:48:42.580] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Cool. Eric, what are your thoughts?

[00:48:47.220] - Eric

Yes. If the mentor thought that college was so important and she understood that this child couldn't go because of family issues, she could have convinced her or not convinced her. But given the option of starting out at community college for two years because it's the same classes, so the mentee would be



home for at least two years, and maybe by that time could transition to a four year institution. There's colleges everywhere you look, so you don't have to necessarily leave too far from home.

[00:49:33.860] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Okay, Michael, what are your thoughts? Last comment, what do you think? Michael, some of what we talked about.

[00:49:39.470] - Michael

Was, know the decision that Gabby needs to make is one that we need to give her space to make and allow her to have multiple perspectives around it. And to the brother's point, who just spoke, I think it was Eric that might. To provide those opportunities, but that might not be what she needs. And so I think part of it is understand. I think one of the questions y'all asked on the sheet was like, what can we do around their racial identity? And part of that is also giving them the space to navigate that, because here we know that as a Latinx youth, there is a connectedness, and there's research around that. The family is very much a part of these decisions and connectedness and all. And so it's important to see, to not remove that from it. And so this is also, aspects of colleges are challenged now because there's a lot of students coming in from multiple family dynamics, and it's not about independent decisions for the students. It really is about the collective and communal responsibility and connectedness. And so you need to understand that in order for and honor.

[00:50:56.060] - Daon McLarin Johnson

There was. There was one more that, Aubrey, I think you had put your hand up. I know I said, we're only going to do one more. But, Aubrey, you had put your hand.

[00:51:05.680] - Aubrey

Yeah. We talked a little bit about needing to make sure that we were centering what it was Gabby was wanting as opposed to thinking Julie, the mentor. It kind of seems like she really set the priority and the goal in convincing Gabby. And I think I would just also add on that this is, like, an opportunity for the mentor, Julie, to really help Gabby come into a conversation with her family to make that decision and support the mother, because she's going to be the support that's always going to be there, even after this mentorship relationship evolved or.

[00:51:51.600] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Beautiful. Beautiful. Thank you all so much. And that's what this is. This is a talking through a process. You are the program directors, the executive directors, and we have to navigate in these spaces. We want to do one more very quickly. So the next one is about John, and we'll quickly break y'all up into groups again. Probably they'll be the same. And let's talk about John, and when we get back, we'll discuss what we're going to do in this situation.

[00:52:20.990] - Kianna Bermudez

See y'all in a few minutes.

[00:52:24.910] - Daon McLarin Johnson

All right, y'all. We know that was quick. Y'all probably didn't even get finished reading the thing before we pulled y'all back, but as y'all know, and I see y'all smiling, so that's probably what happened. But, hey, can we get one person to come on? As you know, we're running. Give us one person, one comment. Somebody that would like to share about this scenario and what you guys came up with in your group. One person.

[00:52:55.370] - Pat

I'll go. So one thing we talked about in Richard, I want to give him a. Shout out, because this is something that. He said, and it was good, but he was like. He was very contrasting. He said one good. He said a positive thing, and then. He turned around and said something negative. So that was one thing that we pointed out. Well, Richard pointed out.

[00:53:15.010] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Richard, you want to come off mic? I know Kat. She's put you out there. Richard. Here we go. The mic is yours.

[00:53:24.310] - Richard

Thanks for the shout out. Yeah, it was like every single time he tried to hype him up, he would do it in contrast. It was like this superior, inferior thing. When he tries to compliment the mom, he then immediately contrasts with in their neighborhood. It's like there weren't any pure compliments. It was always tied to some negativity there. Yeah.

[00:53:57.760] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Right. I think what's so interesting about that, Richard, you pulled it out. Know, we say things that we think everybody should hear, but then our underlying motivation usually sneaks out in the secondary comment. And so it's interesting that you pulled that out. I think that goes back all the way to the very beginning where we have to really identify our own biases and where we sit in this space. KB, what you got?

[00:54:30.310] - Kianna Bermudez



I can figure out how to unmute. So y'all have seen how white saviorism might show up within a mentor and a mentoring program. Let's chat about how we combat what are strategies to actually combat white saviorism in those spaces.

[00:54:44.930] - Kianna Bermudez

So some quick examples. Program staff, let's stick to we're going to talk about the mentor side. Program staff can coach youth and words are really hard for me right now. Program staff coaches youth and still creates space for and encourages young people to use their own voice and choice and focuses on strength and assets of the young person and the young person's family and the young person's community. Richard, just kind of what you were saying when you were looking through that know that was very clear in cutting that down, but rather making sure we're being asset based and strength based in that way. Programs can also use videos to tell stories of program participants who are not able to be physically present at the time of what might be like a fundraising event or something like that.

[00:55:38.670] - Kianna Bermudez

So another example, making sure we're leaning into that positive youth development, that strength based approach. We talked about capitalizing those preexisting assets and resources and then developmental relationship framework if you all have not attended our training on trauma informed care, we focus in heavily on developmental relationship framework. It ensures that you're centering young people in adult youth relationships, that you are listening, that you are putting the young person at the center, that you are not assuming that you know better or that you can fix them or you can help them, but rather sharing power.

[00:56:09.240] - Kianna Bermudez

Sharing power is one of the core tenets of developmental framework. Relationship frameworks. If you're not familiar with it, highly encourage you to look that up. And then within mentoring programs, that can look like ensuring that we're being equitable in what marketing looks like, what recruiting and selecting the board and staff and mentors look like, ensuring that you're screening mentors and doing it appropriately. Ensuring that you are. And that means also learning how to weed out and weed in. So bring good people in as well. Making sure folks are adequately trained. And that also includes being trained in things like this, combating white saviorism and trauma informed care and how to have cultural humility and all these really important tenets, ensuring that there's ongoing monitoring and support so you're getting that feedback loop, facilitating that relationship closure and collaborating with program and participant community partners. Eric, I see your hand. What's up?

[00:57:12.170] - Eric

I just wanted to comment. One of the greatest strategies of combating white saviorism is for men of color to stand up, you know, and get in the game. Because white saviorism is really like when you go to the



market and you buy fresh fruit and you bring it home and like a day later, you got the fruit flies. If you keep swatting at them, they're going to stay there. So white saviorism is sort of like that. If we keep focusing on it and we don't get in the game, why is a lot of the big mentoring organizations staffed by white men, but the white men's children aren't the ones that really need to mentor. So we really got to look at that issue of the absenteeism in our own communities that actually helps to keep this narrative going. So just wanted to make that comment.

[00:58:22.870] - Kianna Bermudez

No, Eric, that's a really good point. I think it kind of goes hand in hand with, I actually did a trauma informed care training yesterday, and something we talked a lot about in that group was very similar to what you're like. If you don't see yourself reflected in the people that are your mentors and the people that you're around and the people you look up to and your teachers and all these people that you as a young person are interacting like, what does that then make you say about yourself? Right. So ensuring that as people of color, that we are showing up in spaces and showing up for our young people.

[00:58:54.510] - Eric

Dr. Badell in Annapolis, Anne Arundel County Public Schools has an initiative called be know. When you go to the majority of those be present training and that be present simply just means show up at the school. When you go to the majority of those trainings, it's white women there. And nothing wrong with that because there are some white female children in the school, you know that could benefit from those women. But where are our folks? That's the question, you know? So.

[00:59:32.790] - Kianna Bermudez

So, yeah, that's a really good point, Eric. I really appreciate.

[00:59:39.250] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Yeah, that's good stuff.

[00:59:41.150] - Laura Green

Can I also make a comment?

[00:59:43.080] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Yeah, go ahead, LG.

[00:59:44.950] - Laura Green



It made me think. Also, I've been reading the book cast the origin of our discontent by spoiler. The movie origin is out in theaters now by Ava Duvernay. If you haven't seen it, run and go see it. That said, it really talks a lot about the laws. And when we talk about shifting the conversation to the assets of the young person, I think also I would add there's nothing wrong with also placing the blame on the systems that created the environment that the young person is in. So instead of talking about the touch point with the juvenile justice system, talk about the disproportionate targeting of black youth, profiling of black youth, laws that are on the books, that once you've had one touch point with the juvenile justice system, you're more likely to break other laws that are extremely stringent, placed on young people, and then they become repeat offenders in the school to prison pipeline. Talking about the systems of inequity that target youth, that despite everything against that young person, they actually triumph and they are where they are today. So I think also being educated and speaking about the systemic inequity that exists in our country and calling that out as the root cause or the thing might be okay, as opposed know, deficit based language around the young person who is actually surviving this system.

[01:01:28.510] - Kianna Bermudez

Yeah, that's really good. Thank you, Laura, for pointing that out and being able to also, while being asset based, being able to pivot, to not ignoring the systems that have created the environments that we live in. That's good. So we want to make sure we equip you all with some resources. And this is another book that we highly recommend. So, before we get into any of the strategies we've collected today on how to combat white saviorism and mentoring program planning and designing all y'all who are involved in planning and designing mentoring programs, we highly recommend this book. This is something we actually have everyone who's onboarding onto us read as well. It's [Critical Mentoring by Dr. Tori Weistan-Serdan](#). This book applies critical race theory to mentoring, which is huge. So, super good read. Must read for all of us who are doing this work. But drop the name in the chat in case any of you all want to look that up. But it's just something we want to make sure that we are keeping in mind and using as a resource, making sure we're doing the work in and outside of these spaces as well.

[01:02:35.330] - Daon McLarin Johnson

And you know, when we have discussions like these. And Eric, thank you for your comments. I mean, this can be a very heavy topic. Obviously, we talked about that entering into the space, but we don't want to leave you in this call feeling like, oh my goodness, there's no hope. There is hope. There are some things that we can do as a collective body, as a collective one is to acknowledge it's ongoing work on all of our behalfs. We were in a space in DC a couple of days ago, and many of us have attached to this work because of our hearts and our desire to see change. So just wanting to encourage each one of you that's on this call for taking time out of your schedule and don't lose hope. But we have to continue to reflect. We have to understand racism's effect and white supremacy, and it requires reflection on all of our parts. And that reflection happens when we read books, when we watch movies, when we take into effect some of the things that are happening in our culture. And this deep reflection is critical when we're working in this space.



[01:03:41.100] - Daon McLarin Johnson

One thing is also to make sure that in our programs, top to bottom, from the board all the way down to boots on the ground, that everybody on your mentoring organization is going through a continual reflective process to make sure that they're not re-injuring or making the situations that our kids encounter, worse. We're not exacerbating it. And so that requires us, our mentoring organizations, to review our policies and our procedures on a continual basis to make sure that we're not really helping to continue this systemic racism.

[01:04:21.090] - Daon McLarin Johnson

The only other two things that I would share with you guys tonight is just to really take responsibility when we enter into these spaces of what's my stuff, what am I responsible for and how can I continue to move the needle on my behalf? And then the last one is to, and this is something that I learned a couple of years ago, is to kind of embrace the discomfort, being comfortable with the uncomfotability. I just made that word up. I don't think uncomfotability is actually a word, but it's like when we enter in these spaces and these conversations, it's never going to be easy as long as we're in the United States and we have these racially charged systems and systemic oppression and all of that. But the conversations need to happen and to be familiar and to be comfortable with the uncomfotability, there is hope. Want to give you guys just encouragement.

[01:05:20.240] - Daon McLarin Johnson

And also, the last thing that's on this slide, have dialog with our young people and ask them, center the youth voice.

[01:05:28.770] - Daon McLarin Johnson

How can we encourage them in these conversations and in these situations? Just real quickly, in the mentoring organization that I used to work for, I would bring. I'm older obviously, than most of the kids that we worked with. And I grew up in a lens where Martin Luther King and coming out of the late sixty s and early seventies, I have a very distinct view about race relationships that our kids that are in high school right now do not have. And I noticed that I was projecting my angst onto this generation. Instead of asking them, how are you experiencing racism in your schools, how are you experiencing racism in your community? And allowing them to really inform my policies and procedures as a mentoring practitioner. So I want to encourage you to do the same. And that's always centering youth voice in your work. We've got a couple of trainings that are coming up. Want to invite you to our next training, which is going to be specifically talking about closure and closing the mentoring relationships as we enter into this season, where many programs are ending around April and May, taking off for the summer.

[01:06:46.310] - Daon McLarin Johnson



How do you close those mentoring relationships in a healthy manner? So that's going to be our next training. KB, do we have anything else that we need to share?

[01:06:54.550] - Kianna Bermudez

Well, I was just going to say I'm leading that one, so please come hang out with me and engage with me. So come through. On March 19, there's a few regional events, so please. That was a loud noise. Daon and I are going to drop our contact information below. Daon oversees all the happenings in DC, PG, Montgomery county, and the rest of the southern counties in Maryland. And then I oversee all the other 18/19 counties in Maryland. So saw some Frederick folks, I saw some Baltimore county folks. All of you all please connect with us. We have all sorts of events we'd love to connect you to. And we also just love the hanging out and chatting. We'd love to be a resource.

[01:07:37.990] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Beautiful.

[01:07:39.750] - Kianna Bermudez

Also, please take our survey.

[01:07:42.160] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Yeah, don't forget to do the survey. Rachel, thank you for crossing state lines. Appreciate you joining us from Virginia. All right, and y'all have a great evening. Thanks for joining us.

[01:07:54.810] - Kianna Bermudez

Thank y'all.

[01:07:55.650] - Daon McLarin Johnson

Yeah. If you want to stay on and talk, we're here.

[01:08:00.270] - Kianna Bermudez

Yep. We'll hang out for a little bit. But BJ, Alejandro, excited to see y'all at the training.

[01:08:09.050] - Daon McLarin Johnson

See ya. See ya.