



Inequity @ Work: What Would You Do?

Discussion questions for your assigned case study scenario:

- What identities are relevant to your assigned case?
- How is power relevant to this workplace situation?
- What type of inequities occur in your case?
- What factors would make it difficult to speak up or enact resistance?
- If you witnessed this event, what could you do to respond and advocate for equity?

CASE STUDIES

1. You are a new office assistant and a single parent. Your department is hosting a retirement party for one of the senior partners of the firm tonight. A senior leader in your firm calls you at 4:45pm to let you know she is stuck in a meeting, and asks if you can stop and pick up the cake on your way to her house for the party. You gladly oblige, happy to help out. Later, as you step up to the counter at the bakery, you are shocked to hear the price - \$75. You only have \$100 left until payday – which is four days away - and you need to pay your electric bill tomorrow. You pay for the cake and head to the party, embarrassed and stressed about what to do about your near empty bank account. What do you do?
2. While driving to an offsite work event listening to an NPR report on current transgender bathroom legislation being debated and implemented across the country, a colleague from another department says, “What will be enough for those people? Why do they have to be demanding all these special rights? Things should be left the way God intended them.” Your other colleagues sit frozen in silence, and one offers a nervous laugh. You feel a surge of emotion wash over you because, unbeknownst to your colleagues, you have a 16-year-old grandchild who is transgender. What do you do?
3. You are a departmental supervisor who has been with your company for 10 years. One of your employees is a Black man in his mid-50s who has severe joint problems and needs to use parking designated for people with physical disabilities. He mentions while chatting with you and a younger White teammate, Carolyn, in the hallway that having to park in the back of the building to access this parking makes him feel like “he’s sitting in the back of the bus.” Carolyn chimes in, “Even with the parking spot being right next to the door and the elevator? It could be a lot worse. I have to walk up the stairs in the parking garage every day!” What do you do?
4. You starting working as a client relations manager in 2020. You love this job and have been great at it over the past 2.5 years. This year, your company has decided to bring all employees back to work on site, five days a week. The good news is business at your agency is booming and each team should get a nice bonus at the end of the fiscal year. Your team has just been assigned three new client portfolios to manage, unfortunately your workload has increased substantially and you’re finding it difficult to cope with the interpersonal demands of social interaction. You have been diagnosed with Autism and have been able to manage it effectively on your own until now. Your doctor mentioned a couple of accommodations that may help you manage the extra workload. So

you go to Human Resources (HR) and make a formal request with diagnosis paperwork for a disability accommodation, which is supported by law. You'd requested to have your one hour lunch uninterrupted in an empty office with the door closed (there are a lot of open offices on every floor since few company's are there full-time after the Covid-19 pandemic). Having lunch in your open cubicle isn't allowing you the time to decompress from being overstimulated mid-day. Second, you requested the possibility of using your personal noise canceling headphones during peak hours in the mid-morning between 9:30am and 11:30am when the office is the noisiest with foot traffic and chatter. You promise to remain accessible during those hours on Slack messaging. The HR manager rolls her eyes at says "Yeah sure, I'll have to complete the paperwork and take it to the Director of HR, but I won't be able to get to it until next week." While you're waiting on the formal process to grant you accommodations, a co-workers come up to you and says, "Hey I hear you were on the spectrum. Is that for real? You seem like such a normal employee. I bet you're just trying to take a longer lunch, huh?" You were upset by the discriminatory and invalidating response and shocked to know your health information was being shared without your knowledge. What would you do?

5. You identify as racially White and you're out to lunch with a good friend and colleague who is also White – and who you've worked with for over 10 years. He looks over to a mixed-race couple a few tables over and says, "I'll never understand why White women betray their race like that." What do you do?
6. You are meeting with three departmental coworkers and your boss, Susan, to discuss terms of a contract for a new piece of software for your department. In reference to the vendor, Susan says (nonchalantly without missing a beat), "We need to Jew them down a few hundred dollars in order to get this contract within budget." What do you do?
7. You are a newer 24-year old human resources generalist working for a technology company – and serving on your first hiring process along with a mix of senior and mid-level consultants. The committee is discussing the final two candidates for a new social media marketing director who will lead a new social media marketing team who will support multiple brands. The final two candidates are Samantha, who is a White woman in her early-30s and has 6 years of work experience, 2 of which are in marketing and currently works at a small marketing firm serving the non-profit sector and is active in her alma mater's alumni organization – and Miguel, who is a Costa Rican American man in his mid-50s, has a master's degree in marketing communications and 15 years of experience doing marketing in the tech industry.

Near the end of the meeting, as the final decision is being deliberated, Larry, an outspoken employee with 30+ years of experience in research and development says, "Miguel is clearly past his prime. Plus, we can save a few dollars on the salary if we offer the job to Samantha. We could use a fresh perspective especially for a job in social media." Based on your assessment, you are confident Miguel is best qualified for this role (and a bit concerned about the criteria Larry is using to reach his conclusion). What do you do?