

StirFry Seminars & Consulting

FEBRUARY 2020

But, Are They Qualified?

Recently, a white man was listening in on a conversation that I was having with a colleague about the lack of underrepresented groups in administrative and upper management positions. He turned to us and asked, "But, are they qualified?" My black colleague was taken aback by his sudden interruption, but I was not. I had heard this countless times in every institution I've ever done work with. I have often wondered who started this iconic response, but of course, I have my suspicions.

So, many times, we have forgotten what prompted the need for affirmative action—white males predominately occupying almost all the top positions in almost every institution in this country. And so, I asked the white man, "I was wondering...when white males occupied almost all the top positions in this country, did you ever ask yourself, are they qualified? Weren't you ever suspicious about how it could be that so many white men were always the *most* qualified? Or did you simply assume that they were because they were white and male?"

Rather than answer my question, he did what most white males have been trained to do when cornered with facts to the contrary...he changed the topic by saying, "Well, I've been discriminated against, too." You see, in reality, that was the second disconnection between us and both times he never noticed my reaction. I believe that oftentimes, those in power either don't notice that a 'disconnection' took place or if they do...they just talk faster or pretend you didn't say anything or turn the conversation back to being about themselves. Sound familiar?

What is needed is rarely ever practiced, because we have seldom ever seen it modeled publicly or privately in any of our institutions or agencies. Underrepresented groups have become so accustomed to being responded to in a manner that is defensive, adversarial, in denial or with a deafening silence. What is sorely needed is curiosity, being open, self-reflection, and taking responsibility. Transformation happens when people feel heard, validated, understood and when there is a willingness to change.

What I needed from this white man was:

- a) What I heard you say was....
- b) Tell me more about...
- c) What angers you about....
- d) What hurts you about...
- e) What's familiar about...
- f) What do you need or want?

Each of the above inquiries would have helped me feel that he wanted to know more about not only why I said what I did, but because he was also curious to know more about me. In that way, I would have felt seen and valued, because he made the effort to try to understand my story and my journey as a Chinese American man struggling daily to be understood and believed in a mostly white world.

As the Buddhists have continued to remind us: *Curiosity is the gateway to empathy.*

Lee Mun Wah



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Streaming rentals now available for extended rental periods:
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StirFry Seminars & Consulting makes its acclaimed diversity documentary films available on-demand for individuals and students via digitally-streamed video at:

www.DiversityTrainingFilms.com

Stream Director Lee Mun Wah's latest film, *If These Halls Could Talk* as well as *The Color of Fear*, *Last Chance for Eden* and *Stolen Ground*.

Your rental fee allows you to access each film for your chosen time period (**24 hours, 72 hours, 1 week, 1 month, 6 months, 1 year**). Please note StirFry Seminars' Copyright and Use Agreement prior to purchase.

Purchase DVD copies of our diversity training films at:

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FEATURED WORKSHOP

Intermediate/Advanced Mindful Facilitation Training

by Lee Mun Wah

APRIL 3-5, 2020

Friday 2pm to 9pm; Saturday 8am to 6pm;
Sunday 8am to 2pm

Quan Yin Training Center • 2311 8th Street, Berkeley, CA

Too often we are afraid to begin a conversation about race and racism because we have had a bad experience or feel that we will say something wrong or hurtful. This workshop is particularly exciting and satisfying because it allows everyone the opportunity to practice talking to someone who is different from themselves in a compassionate and honest way. Participants will learn that they are not alone in their fears and that all of us lack a "model" of how to facilitate this type of conversation on diversity issues.

Participants will learn:

To notice the intent of our communications on other cultures and its impact • Ways to respond compassionately and openly about diversity issues • How to listen mindfully and with awareness • How personal stories can affect our perceptions and attitudes • Ways to create a sense of community through dialogue and stories • How to work with conflict and hurt feelings when diversity issues are involved

For More Information: 510.204.8840 ext. 103
or www.stirfryseminars.com/BTC



Announcing:

One Year Mindful Facilitation Certificate Program

New cohort for 2020-2021 starts Summer 2020.

Registration details coming soon.

This program provides an intensive level communication and facilitation (in-person and online) training to those wishing to develop their cultural intelligence, as well as individual and group process skills from a Mindful Facilitation and multicultural perspective.

This program will also provide participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to work more effectively with educational and social institutions, professional environments, and diverse communities on diversity issues and cross-cultural needs and concerns.

Questions? Schedule a time to speak with Lee Mun Wah, StirFry Seminars' Executive Director and Certificate Coordinator Today!

Contact 510-204-8840 x 103 for appointment availability.

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Films \$50 (or less) and other products \$25 (or less)

www.stirfryseminars.com/store Questions?
510-204-8840 x 100

STIRFRY CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 31-Feb 2, 2020 Berkeley, CA **	Responding to a Discriminatory Incident 3-Day Workshop Open to the Public
February 8, 2020 San Jose CA	Mindfully Resolving Cross-Cultural Conflicts in the Classroom; Creating Community & Connection in a Diverse School Environment * CTA Good Teaching North Conference • Open to the Public
February 19, 2020 San Jose, CA	Keynote: The Secret to Changing the World • Not Open to the Public
February 21, 2020 Louisville, KY	Cultural Competency for Educators, Administrators and Staff - One-Day Workshop • Not Open to the Public
February 28, 2020 Las Vegas, NV	Featured Speaker: Culturally Responsive Techniques for Allies NABE 2020 Conference

For StirFry's complete Calendar of Upcoming Events,
please visit www.stirfryseminars.com/events

** Held at the Quan Yin Training Center, 2311 8th Street, Berkeley, CA