

Astor Child Guidance Center,  
Bronx, NY USA  
June Helme and Jamila Codrington

## The Process: Cultural Sensitivity Series

- **Mandate:** *Hold a department-wide event devoted to cultural awareness*  
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- **Catalyst:** *Particular interests of staff supported by a "Committed Listener"*  
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- **Openings:** *Developed of experientially-based discussions*  
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- **Community Enhancement:** *Authentic commitment to change*  
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- **Enrollment of Administration:** *Presented in Professional Services & Quality Assurance mtg.*

## Cultural Sensitivity Series

- Background and Development
- Examples of Topics
- Staff Reactions
- Shift in Organizational Culture

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### Cultural Sensitivity Series Topics:

- "Who has power in the room?"
- "How does the therapist's personal identity (race, ethnic background, cultural identity) impact on our work?"
- "Hair texture, length and style as a metaphor in the African American mother-daughter relationship."
- "The influence of culture on boundaries in the therapeutic relationship."
- "Racism and Invisibility: Race-Related Stress, Emotional Abuse and Psychological Trauma for people of Color," by Franklin, et al.

### Staff Reactions to the series:

- "I think that these questions are best explored together . . . where learning can be compounded and expanded based on responses from others."
- "[T]hese conversations are necessary . . . as *culturally embedded beliefs impact our work on a daily basis*. . . . Without . . . conversations, [on] gender, sexual orientation, economic status, beliefs surrounding power, medication becomes either the . . . elephant in the room, or we as . . . therapist end up imposing our values on the client."
- "What would we be doing as clinicians if we did not take the time to explore the essence of what makes us who we are, and what makes our clients who they are?"

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## Where are we now?

- Board of Directors: *presentation Spring, 2009*
- Quality Improvement Team: *developed agency wide 2009*
- Executive Cabinet: *discussion with QIT Spring, 2010*
- Undoing Racism Workshop: *Executive Cabinet and QIT members underwent training and reported back Spring, 2010*
- International Summer School of Narrative Therapy, Toronto: *presentation and take home messages*

## Model for Grassroots Change

- Authentic commitment of staff
- Embedded practices
- Experientially based discussions
- Presence of a "Committed Listener"
- Side-step organizational politics