

CULTURE SHIFTS

Catalyst Project works to consciously create a culture that helps white people take strategic and effective anti-racist action as a part of multiracial movements. We think that white anti-racist organizing requires that we move away from competitive, individualist thinking, and instead support as many people as we can to be change agents, working in accountable relationships with people of color-led organizations. These shifts in organizing culture help create more sustainable and vibrant movements to win transformative change.

SHIFT FROM:

Call-out culture

Shaming people for making mistakes, focus on regulating each other's language, ostracizing members of a group for not automatically knowing the norms of that group, etc.

Critiquing from the sidelines

Critiquing people, organizations, or movements that we aren't a part of working to change. Inability to work with contradictions and complications.

Deficit-based thinking

Constant focus on identifying weaknesses and pointing out what is lacking.

SHIFT TOWARD:

→ Build-up culture

Appreciating and lifting up principled action and leadership where we see it, while offering constructive feedback to strengthen anti-racist practice.

→ Leading from the center

Recognizing that we've all internalized oppressive ideas, and engaging people and organizations to make necessary changes whenever possible.

→ Asset-based thinking

Seeing and building on strengths, nurturing what is working, acting on opportunities.

Individual focus

"How can I be the single best white, anti-racist activist with the sharpest critique /most specialized language/busiest schedule?"

→ Collective action

"How can we find ways to bring more and more people into social justice work, from lots of entry points, to grow vibrant mass movements?"

Obsession With Productivity

"I am worth as many hours as I put in, meetings I go to, events I plan." Focus on 'deliverables' rather than quality of work and relationships built.

→ Whole Movements

Valuing whole people and varied participation in building liberatory movements. Building relationships with integrity.

We draw these concepts from our own experiences and mistakes, as well as feedback from people of color and white people we've organized with.

The tendencies in the "Shift From" column produce individuals whose primary concern is being the quickest to critique everything—a practice often encouraged within higher education that fosters distancing or dismissal of people or practices. This practice tends to feed ego, not justice.

The "Shift Towards" qualities create bold, grounded leaders who look for opportunities, seek growth for themselves and their communities, and are committed to building the leadership of more people.