

Dismantling “ISMs”: Increasing Our Strength and Power

Rita Kern

Mercedes Garcia-Mohr

Dieskau E. Reed III

OUTLINE

- Introduction (5 min.)
 - Overview of Training
 - Goals of Training
 - Ground Rules
 - Anti-discrimination Policies (UPTE & UC)

- “ISMS” Discussion (40 min.)
 - Types of “ISMS”. Brainstorm session.
 - Cultural awareness questionnaire. Personal experiences shared.
 - 3 Ways “isms” Affect Members
 - Demographics of UC employees/UPTE members
 - Why we care? Brainstorm session.

- “ISMS” Definitions (15-20 min.)
 - Definitions of prejudice, oppression, power, “ism”, diversity.

- Historic Background: Unions & Diversity (5-10min.)
 - History of Diversity & Labor Movement
 - Recent Changes/Progress? (CWA & AFL-CIO efforts)

- UPTE Next Steps (15-20 min.)
 - What do we want to do? Discussion.

Goals of Training

- To better understand our relationship with oppression “isms” both as individuals and as a union
- To have an open forum to discuss the forms of oppression that UC employees have experienced or observed in a confidential setting.
- To decide as a union on next steps; how we can actively work to dismantle “isms” and celebrate our diversity

Ground Rules

- Listen respectfully when others are speaking, even if you don't agree. One speaker at a time. Be gentle with each other when disagreeing.
- Speak for yourself and your own experience. Use "I" statements. When we generalize from our experience we risk shutting other people down.
- There is no such thing as a stupid question.
- Be patient with each other and keep others' comfort in mind. Remember that we are all at different levels of this work
- Confidentiality: what is said in this group does not go any further and will not be used against anyone in the group.

Cultural Self-Awareness Questionnaire

- With what ethnicity and/or cultures do you identify?
- What rituals, customs, or values helped to form your culture and your identity?
- Which aspects of your culture do you embrace or feel particularly proud of?
- With which aspects of your culture do you struggle?
- What kinds of negative messages or experiences did you have as a child about people who were different?
- What cultures are you inclined to perceive negatively because of your childhood teachings? What has contributed to these perceptions?
- In what ways have you fought against these negative messages? What worked? Why?
- I wear the style of clothes I do because...
- In my family, the head of the house is expected to...
- List books written by African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos/Latinas, Native Americans...
- Which television shows and movies depict People of Color and/or themes about their lives?
- List and describe achievements of people of color in your community.

Rita Kern & Darlene McGee-Reed, LCSW

UPTTE Member Policy

UPTTE prohibits discrimination in any union-related activities on the basis of **race, color, national origin or ancestry, religion, creed, sex, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or status as a covered veteran, and any other category protected by applicable federal, state or local laws.**

All such discrimination is unlawful and all persons involved in the operations of UPTTE are prohibited from engaging in this type of conduct. UPTTE is committed to providing equal employment opportunity and participatory environment where each member and employee is treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.

Ethics & Values for a Sound Organization

- **Respect:**
 - We treat all members and staff with respect and courtesy.
- **Honesty:**
 - We are truthful in how we represent our capabilities and ourselves.
- **Integrity:**
 - We make decisions and take action based only on the best interest of the members and the organization.
- **Compassion:**
 - We find solutions to workplace problems through the steward network that improve the lives of university workers.
- **Fairness:**
 - We provide a consistent standard of treatment of all members coordinated across the organization.
- **Innovation:**
 - We support innovation by our participation in educating all members, officers and staff.
- **Stewardship:**
 - We seek to use all our resources effectively and efficiently.
- **Volunteerism:**
 - We encourage our members to participate and strengthen our union by taking frequent small actions supporting our goals.
- **Community solidarity:**
 - We develop relationships with individuals and organizations that mutually support the goals of our members.

Definitions

- **“ISM”**: form of oppression
- **Race**: usually defined by skin color with a variety of other genetic, behavioral, and moral characteristics associated to each racial group; a political construct
- **Ethnicity**: refers to a geographical place of origin of individual's family and group identity, can give a historical framework to understand an individual's cultural context
- **People of Color**: term used to refer to all racial groups other than 'white' which is the dominant structural group in the USA, includes Asian-Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, African-Americans, Latinos & Latinas, Native Americans
- **Gender**: an individual's self-conception as being male or female
- **Sex**: biological classification of male or female based on reproductive organs and functions
- **Gay**: Males with a sexual orientation predominantly toward males
- **Lesbian**: Females with a sexual orientation predominantly toward females
- **Bisexual**: Sexual attraction to both males and females
- **Transgender**: People who feel that the gender assigned to them based on their biological sex is a false or incomplete definition of themselves.

What are some forms of oppression?

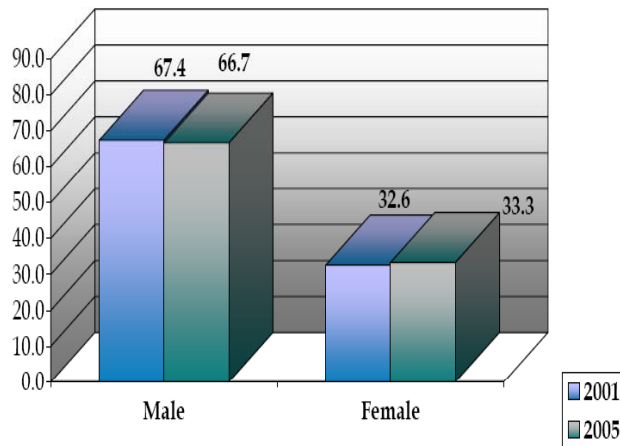
- **Racism**
- **Xenophobia**
- **Religious prejudice (ex. Anti-Semitism)**
- **Sexism**
- **Ableism (includes mental disability)**
- **Ageism**
- **Homophobia/Heterosexism**
- **Classism (Economically disadvantaged)**
- **Educationally disadvantaged**
- **Size-ism**
- **Discrimination based on marital status**

Ways UPTE Members Experience Oppression

- As Employees
- As UPTE Members
- As Leaders representing other union members

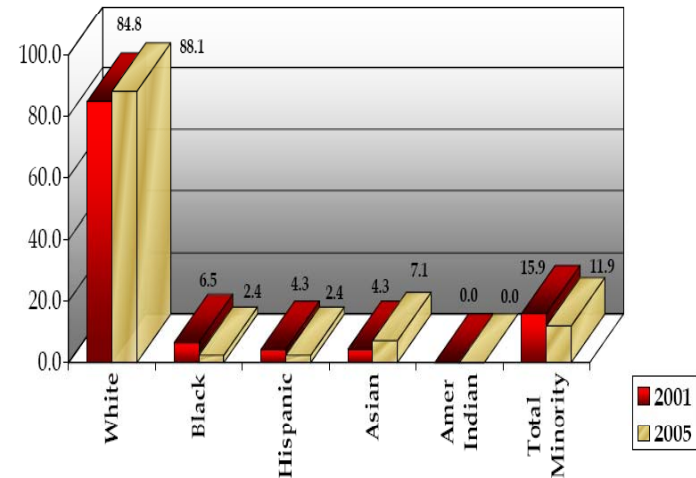
UC Senior Management Group Demographic Profile

Senior Management Group (SMG) Demographic Profile
by Gender (%)
10/31/01-10/31/05



Female representation in the Senior Management Group increased by 0.7% during the period 10/31/01-10/31/05.

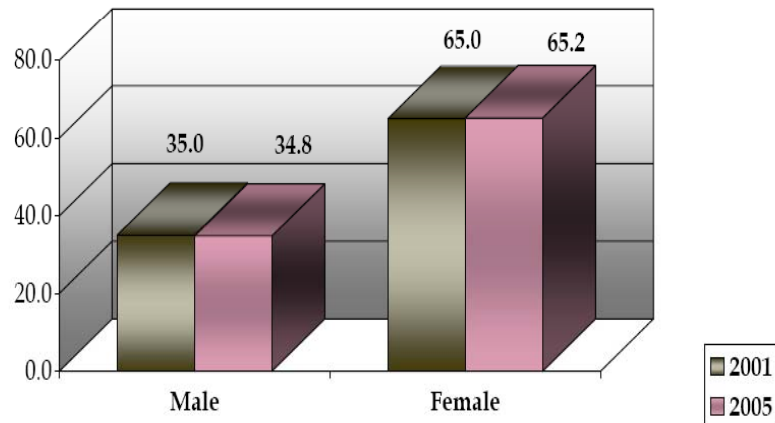
Senior Management Group (SMG) Demographic Profile
by Ethnicity (%)
10/31/01-10/31/05



There was an overall reduction of 4 incumbents in the Senior Management Group during the five year-period, from 46 positions in 2001 to 42 positions in 2005. Minority representation in the Senior Management Group decreased by 4.0%. Black and Hispanic representation decreased by 4.1% and 1.9%, respectively. Asian representation increased by 2.8%.

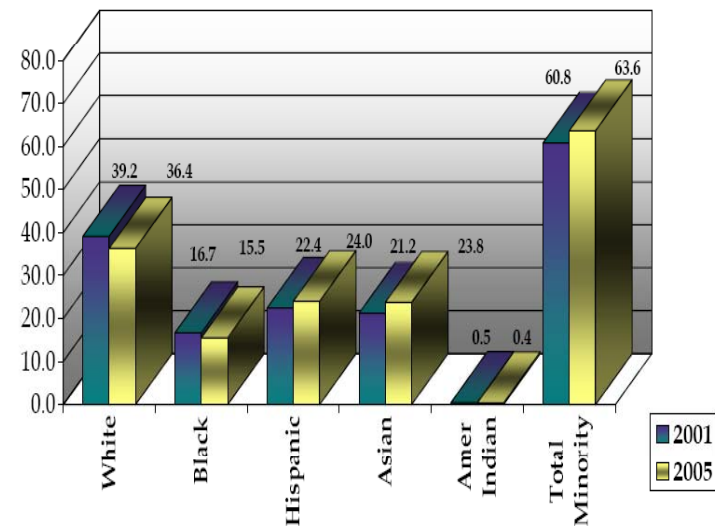
UC Professional & Support Staff Demographic Profile

Professional & Support Staff (PSS) Demographic Profile
by Gender (%)
10/31/01-10/31/05



Female representation increased slightly in PSS by 0.2% from 10/31/01 to 10/31/05.

Professional & Support Staff (PSS) Demographic Profile
by Ethnicity (%)
10/31/01-10/31/05

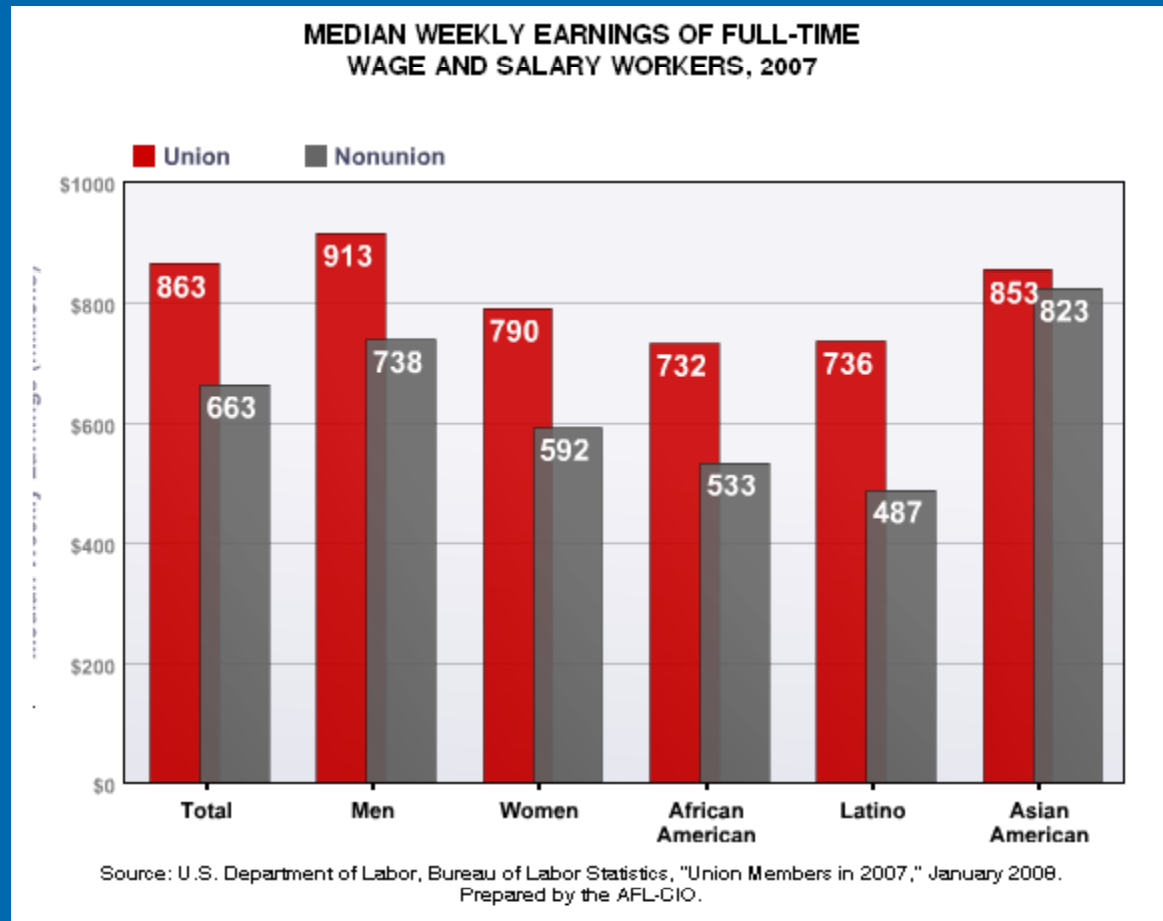


Minority representation increased overall in the Professional and Support Staff by 2.8% during the 10/31/01-10/31/05 period. Hispanic and Asian representation increased by 1.6% and 2.6%, respectively. Black representation decreased by 1.2%.

Why Should We As a Union Care?

- As a union our job is to advocate for our members.
- As a union we have greater strength when we are united, not when we are divided by oppression.
- Members affected by 'isms' are at greater risk and therefore may need union protection even more.
- We need all the people-power we can get. When members are excluded from working with us due to "isms" we lose out (on perspectives,

The union wage benefit is even greater for minorities and women



Assumptions

- **Growing up in the USA, we have absorbed considerable misinformation, specifically negative information about people who are different from 'us' and our families. We have been imprinted with negative beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes about groups of people we barely know. This began to happen when we were young, when we couldn't distinguish between truth and stereotype, before we could recognize misinformation or object. Now that we are older, we have a responsibility to think for ourselves**

Further Assumptions

- It is very important to distinguish between guilt & responsibility.
- Dismantling racism, sexism, homophobia, etc and unlearning the oppressive attitudes we have learned is a lifelong journey.
- Racism, sexism, heterosexism (homophobia), ageism, ableism, classism, xenophobia, religious prejudice and other forms of oppression have damaged us all.
- Individuals and organizations can and do grow and change. But significant change comes slowly and requires work.
- Racism, sexism, classism, all the isms are connected.
- If we want to dismantle racism, then we must be about building a movement for social and economic justice and change.
- Individuals working together as an organized whole, in groups, communities, and organizations make change happen.

Definitions

- **Prejudice:** An attitude which is based on limited information, often on stereotypes. Prejudice is usually, but not always, negative; positive and negative prejudices alike are damaging because they deny the individuality of the person. No one is free of prejudice.
- **Power:** Access to resources, the ability to influence others, and access to decision-makers to get what you want done.
- **Oppression:** The systematic subjugation of a social group by another social group with access to local power.

Oppression = Power + Prejudice

**“ISM” = a system of advantage based on
target identity (race, sex, etc)**

**“ISM” = a system of oppression based on
target identity (race, sex, etc)**

Social Oppression

Oppression is a systematic social phenomenon based on the differences between social groups.

It exists when the following conditions are found in a given society:

- The dominant group has the power to define and shape reality.
- There is psychological “colonization” of the target group.
- Discrimination, harassment, and other forms of different and unequal treatment are systematic and institutionalized.
- Individual members of both the oppressor and target group are socialized to play their roles and see those roles as normal and correct.

Target & Dominant Groups

- **Dominant Group:** The group in society that has control over all the major institutions that shape society
- **Targeted Group:** The group in society that has no control over institutions and their choices
- **Privilege:** Advantages, rewards or benefits given to those in the dominant group solely because of their membership in the dominant group
- **Internalized Oppression:** The way those in the target group internalize the images, stereotypes, prejudices, and myths promoted about them

Expressions of Oppression

- **Personal or Individual** – attitudes, behaviors, socialization, interpersonal interactions, self-interest
- **Cultural** -- values, norms, language, standards of beauty, holidays, society's expectations, music, aesthetics, religious values
- **Institutional** – housing, employment, education, media, health care, politics, government, court system, non-profits, medicine, business, religion, family

Brief Historic Context

- Early unions or guilds existed in the United States even at our nation's founding in 1776.
- Unions were originally divided by trade and craft. They were also divided by gender and ethnicity.
- Individual unions became federations.
- Federations eventually became inclusive to women and People of Color.

Women & Labor

- Women were originally seen as a cheap labor source
- Women were seen as a threat by working men
- Women formed their own unions.
- Women made their own labor federation.
- Eventually these women-only unions joined with larger union federations.
- There have been many important women leaders in the Labor Movement.

Race, Ethnicity & Labor

- As early as 1835, African-American laborers were forming unions and going on strike.
- White labor organizations refused to represent African-Americans.
- African-American workers formed their own organizations and federations.
- These racial divisions hurt the Labor movement.
- In 1909 the Federal Board of Arbitration ruled that there had to be equal pay for equal work.
- In the 1920s white unions began to include People of Color and African-American unions fought for recognition.
- The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) formed in 1935 and organized workers regardless of race or ethnic background.
- Immigrant workers suffer due to the dual oppression of racism and undocumented citizen status.

AFL-CIO Diversity Principles

- Diversity in convention delegations
- Diversity on AFL-CIO governing body
- Diversity on state and local labor bodies
- Leadership development
- Accountability

Mary K. O'Melveny, "Achieving Diversity within Unions"

CWA Diversity Proposal

Add four at-large diversity board members to the CWA Executive Board. At least three should be persons of color and at least two should be women. The four at-large diversity board seats shall represent four geographic regions within CWA.

CWA Proposals to Promote and Achieve Diversity

- Proposals to Increase and Activate Workers of Color
 - Mentoring and leadership training programs
 - Networking opportunities
 - Overall union policies
 - “Affirmative action” efforts
- Proposals to Increase and Activate Women
 - Commitment to advancing women as leaders
 - Supporting internal structures to activate women
 - Develop and support policies that allow work-family balance

Mary K. O'Melveny, “Achieving Diversity within Unions”

Evaluating Your Organization

- What is the level of desire to be a social change organization? Who in the organization cares about it and what power do they have?
- Who makes the decision in the organization? On paper? In reality?
- Who develops the budget? Who understands the budget?
- Who gets paid (in other words, who staffs the organization)? How are these people chosen? How much are they paid? Who does the scut work for the organization? How does their race, gender, class, and pay differ from those in positions of power?
- Who is the organization accountable to? In paper? In reality?
- What is the culture of the organization? What are the values, stated or unstated? Does everyone in the organization see the organization's culture the same way? Do people in leadership positions support analysis of power and oppression issues?
- Where is the organization physically located? How accessible is it physically to communities of color, to women, to gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender people, to low-income people, to less-than college educated, to disabled people?
- Who are the members (volunteers, etc)? What power do they have, if any? On paper, in reality? In other words, what power do they use to influence the organization?
- What is the cost to people of color for being in your organization (staff/board/volunteers)? To women? To low-income people? To people with less than a college education? To disabled people?
- What is the level of awareness of white privilege and power among white people in your organization? Among men, heterosexuals, middle-class and wealthy people, college-educated people, able-bodied people?
- What's the reputation of the organization in the African-American community? The Latino community? The Asian community? The White community? In the gay community? In other communities? How do you know?
- Who are the organization's programs for? How involved are these people in the organization's planning and decision-making?
- What kind of training is offered for people trying to deal with oppression issues?
- Do white people and people of color answer these questions the same? Do men and women? Gay and straight people? Low-income and middle income/wealthy people? College-educated and less than college-educated people? Able-bodies and disabled? How do you know?

Organizational Change Process Essential Components

- Commitment from senior leadership
- Inclusion of all constituencies, all target groups
- Public dialogue involving all sectors of the community
- A comprehensive, focused and well-publicized long-term plan for change
- A leadership change group
- Institutionalization of the change process

NEXT STEPS

- Dismantling racism training and dismantling sexism training for the Board & Local Presidents
- Workshops/Trainings at yearly conferences
- Evaluate UPTE, create accountability process
- Re-evaluate yearly to monitor progress

Resources

- Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men and What to Do About It -- Evelyn Murphy
- White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son – Tim Wise
- The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Privilege – Robert Jensen
- White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training – Judith H. Katz
- Teaching/Learning Anti-Racism: A Developmental Approach – Louise Derman-Sparks & Carol Brunson Phillips
- “Achieving Diversity Within Unions” – Mary K. O'Melveny, General Counsel, CWA, AFL-CIO
- Grassroots – Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner
- Manifesta – Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner

THANKS

- Shiela Stittiams for her suggestions
- UPTe EBoard for making this opportunity possible
- Dr. Puette, Director of the Center for Labor Education and Research, University of Hawai'i, O'ahu
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights_of_Labor
- <http://www.albany.edu/history/history316/>
- <http://www.labor-studies.org/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence_textile_strike
- <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/american-labor-movement.html>
- <http://www.reuther.wayne.edu/man/1intro.htm>
- “Women in the Workplace: Labor Unions”, Juliet H. Mofford, *Women's History Magazine*, 1996