

SAMPLE

PREFACE

“I want to live the rest of my life, however long or short, with as much sweetness as I can decently manage, loving all the people I love, and doing as much as I can of the work I still have to do. I am going to write fire until it comes out my ears, my eyes, my noseholes — everywhere. Until it’s every breath I breathe. I’m going to go out like a fucking meteor!”

—Audre Lorde

Why This Workbook

Although the focus of this workbook is on the systemic change needed to create equitable and inclusive institutions, the change itself starts and continues with *people*. Working toward change brings up emotions and takes energy, and it is not something that can be sustained without finding ways to nourish oneself. Throughout writing this workbook, we needed a place to document and explore our thoughts and reactions and vulnerabilities, a place we then revisited after we completed writing this book. In fact, as we read this prior to publication, we were intimately aware again of how vulnerable we feel in sharing these following thoughts. We hope readers will be gentle with us while reading our conversation and will assume good intentions. Most importantly, we hope that sharing our conversation with you provides a glimpse into our process and into the importance of finding others who share your courage for lifelong engagement.

We would like to thank the Racial Equity Institute for their wisdom. Their trainings started our joint journey—and this conversation—over a decade ago.

Conversation between the authors

SCT: After three decades in higher education, I find myself increasingly impatient about the lack of true change in higher education related to equity and inclusion. Maybe there is too much focus on superficial or one-time events, when meaningful change requires ongoing reflection and actions. When I was in the University of Wisconsin system, they often noted that to provide excellent education, you had to be inclusive. I believe this: the only way we can truly provide quality education for students, is that it must be inclusive and equitable. As you and I have worked together over the past decade, our partnership deepened as we explored these ideas together. I want to share our collective thoughts and experiences through this workbook, so that those who are committed can create their own Landscape Design and learn from our experiences: both from those that created movement and also from our mistakes.

MT: What strikes me about what you said is the need for courage. The need for courage personally to take a good look at yourself and where you fit in the landscape, not only in higher education but also in society—and once you have that insight, the courage to actually do something as a leader. I find that that is missing.

SCT: In others, or for yourself at times?

MT: Both. The difficulty of having the conversations—and, a lot of times, the painfulness of having these conversations. The repetitive and cyclical nature of what happens in higher education, semester to semester to semester, makes it so easy to be lulled into doing the same things over and over again without making any significant changes, without taking the time to allow for reflection and insight.

SCT: You remind me about one-off workshops or one-off events, and there is such a sense of self-congratulation about having attended or put them on, when really it just doesn't make any difference. The next day, the same kind of identity-related aggressions, the same kind of status quo—embedded values and ways of doing things—just keep happening. It's almost like those kinds of events work *against* making real change because people get to feel good, like: "I went to Juneteenth, I attended this speaker, I did the common read." It can help to deepen understanding in that moment, depending on what it is, but without that ongoing deepening—actually facing it, like you said. That's why we call it courageous gardening.

MT: Right. The one-off events do nothing to disrupt that almost robotic cycle of going through the academic semester (year) or to disrupt the things that underlie what causes identity-related aggressions and inequities. Those one-off events do not disrupt us. We put them on ... What is it that we do every January—the King Day celebration? Then we may do something—I don't know—then we congratulate ourselves because we held a lavender graduation, and we congratulate ourselves because we celebrated Juneteenth. It just goes on and on, and it does nothing to disrupt the underlying causes of the problem. These one-off events can be good starting points, but we can't allow them to be the *end* points. It really is about being radical—literally pulling it up by the roots, using our metaphor.

SCT: Writing this is so unlike other collaborations. It's so complex. Trying to see and then make visible all the ways that the current system is operating, and then to do the self-reflection as to what I engaged in, and my own biases and assumptions that come from privilege. And then, to keep the focus on systemic change when it's easier to just focus on the individual. (It is also the self-reflection for me as part of marginalized groups.) And lastly, to keep thinking about all the ways we treat others poorly, and how we ourselves have been treated poorly, is overwhelmingly tiring.

MT: This makes me think about the ways I may have privilege within the university setting because I have a Ph.D.—the type of institution you got your doctorate from—the hierarchy for where you are in the university, VP, or provost, or president. You can get comfortable and have privilege in those positions.

But at the same time, the dissonance of being a woman, of being a Black person, of being a southerner. This is why no one likes facing these issues; they are too complicated.

In some ways, you can benefit from the system as is, and in other ways it's harmful to you, personally. But as a leader, as the master gardener—to use our metaphor—you must have mastery to make sure everyone flourishes. You must understand the landscape and be willing to disrupt an inequitable system.

SCT: And every time you talk about disrupting, I think of how powerful the current system is to try to maintain itself. Being disruptive is risky. In fact, you stand to lose whatever privilege you gain from the system, and that, I think, keeps a lot of people from wanting to challenge it. They want to hold onto whatever crumbs they get based on whatever identity is valued, and there is real punishment if they start to push back and disrupt. It's really hard to do that in a way that actually moves things along. As you think about your values, how do you balance living authentically in your values with taking those risks? Sometimes you can't. Everybody has to weigh it for themselves, and yet if you *don't* disrupt, you are part of the problem.

MT: Toeing the party line versus stepping outside of it. But think about it—if you are trying to challenge a rigid, embedded system, if you benefit from it, you are not going to challenge it, right? And you don't even see that you are perpetuating the problem. The underlying values that are so invisible to us. It's even rooted in disciplines—science disciplines are valued above others, and the professionals like engineering and medicine are so valued.

SCT: As I think about all that is in this workbook, I am reminded of yet another complexity: the visibility and invisibility of identities. Readers may look at our photos and think they know something about our identities. Their conclusions may be correct about our gender (cisgender women) and ethnicity (me: White; you: Black). Yet, there are also important privileged identities (raised middle class) and marginalized identities of mine that are invisible. As a Jew and a lesbian, I often try to generalize my experiences to help me to understand the effects of oppression for other people, those people who hold identities in which I have privilege.

MT: People draw all kinds of assumptions about how you are going to handle different aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) based on your identity. Some people have an assumption that when they hire a person from a marginalized group, that that person can single-handedly resolve DEI issues that make others uncomfortable. That is one of the worst things you can do to a person from a marginalized group. It sets them up to be trapped.

SCT: And it's tokenizing, too.

MT: It *is* tokenizing.

SCT: And all of this, it's like the focus on this ends up being so much about the marginalized identity, that the privileged ones get to float on by and not ever be challenged, not ever get addressed. It feels like in this work it's always about the marginalized identity, it's almost always focused on race and ethnicity, which I think is really important to focus on. But then it doesn't challenge people who have other identities that have privilege and how they move through the world unexamined.

At this point in the conversation, we began chatting about an unrelated topic because the conversation became too heavy to continue. We took a self-care break. When we realized how far we had strayed from our work, we broke into peals of laughter.

SCT: What a great example of how difficult it is to stay focused on this. You have to take breaks in order to do it long-term and stick with it.

MT: You really have to pop out of it at times because it's just so gut wrenching. An article by Miller, Howell, and Struve (2019) acknowledges the emotional labor that goes into teaching about DEI in college courses.¹ This includes decisions one must make related to how much to disclose, to the need to provide emotional support to others, and to setting boundaries for self-care. They conclude that this emotional labor needs to be recognized.

SCT: While we were writing this workbook, as well as conducting some preliminary workshops using this material, I was also teaching a DEI course. I found myself in a parallel process about these same observations. Teaching, facilitating, and engaging with these topics is draining for me, and yet I am aware that to *not* engage is not a solution. I also am aware that I need to help those who are reading this book or engaging in their own learning in any way, aware that they need others (such as us) to support them emotionally; they are also using emotional labor. I am grateful that I have you, Maria, as a partner with whom I can share the labor.

MT: Same here. I can't envision doing this alone—this workbook, the workshops, any of the consulting—you must have partners in this work. I think that is one of the most important things.

SCT: And yet, emotionally, think of all the layers of what we end up doing when we are trying to do our own work, bring others along, support them, that proximal development.

MT: Because it is taxing, we witness people getting to the edge of going deeper, and they back away because it's scary. That's why some people come to DEI work wanting tips and tricks. "Can't we just do tips and tricks?" Not and make a long-term difference.

SCT: People who get through this workbook or use parts of it, what they will realize is that they are the constant. It's their understanding that they bring every day, that they deepen over and over. Because there is no way you can prepare for every possible inequity that's out there, and there's no way you can move the needle toward a more equitable, inclusive institution unless you are constantly asking questions. And that means you have to be there to ask the questions, to have the mindset to be able to shift and to make privilege and inequities visible. You are the only constant who can do that, and you can bring others in and there is a collective of people who maybe can help to do that. But it's the people and their growth and understanding. There may be a couple of key questions that people can remember to ask; those questions may be tips and tricks.

¹ See ERIC -EJ1245085 – "Constantly, Excessively, and All the Time: The Emotional Labor of Teaching Diversity Courses," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 2019.

MT: Right. The emotional component of this, as difficult as it is ... I think the beauty of approaching your work with an equity mindset, whatever your work is—whether it’s higher ed or something else—with all its difficulty, the beauty of it is: It helps you to bring your whole humanity to the work you do and to embrace not only your humanity but the humanity of others. It’s one of the loftier goals of higher education.

SCT: I think it goes beyond higher ed. I feel like it’s that nugget of what I think religion, or any spirituality teaches us: That we are all connected. And so, being equity-minded connects us to our full humanity, and it also connects us to each other.

How to Use This Workbook

We are so pleased you have decided to engage in the process of learning to lead with a mindset of equity and inclusion. By using this workbook, you are showing a commitment to create an inclusive and equitable climate and department/unit practices in your role in higher education.

This is not a “how-to” DEI manual—no tips and tricks are contained within the pages of this workbook. This book does, however, guide you through building and sharpening a tool to be used in every situation in which you may find yourself. That tool is your *mindset*. Becoming more adept at being equity-minded will lead you to viable, equitable, and inclusive solutions, of which there can be many. The readings, case studies, and microcontext and self-reflection questions offered in this workbook will help you to develop your ability to identify inequities and power dynamics related to privilege more quickly, and to then find equitable and inclusive solutions, no matter the current state of your institution/unit. This approach recognizes that different functions/components of your department/unit may be at different stages of DEI development. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all “how-to” approach would fall short in helping you to determine effective solutions.

We believe it is important to take the time to provide a foundational perspective of the landscape and create some shared language and understandings. While you don’t have to agree with us about each idea, we believe it’s important that we all share an understanding of our underlying assumptions and that we define the terms used in this workbook. Some may suggest that, given who is likely to read a workbook such as this one, this initial discussion of terms and assumptions may be “preaching to the choir,” and that others might need to be part of these conversations. However, while you and we might be the “choir,” we still need to make sure we’re singing in harmony and in the same key. Defining our terms and assumptions will aid us to harmonize.

We will unpack this throughout our workbook, and at the end, you will be asked to develop your own plan for how you will begin to dismantle inequities in your departmental/unit practices and policies, in order to create a more inclusive department/unit. As we move through each chapter, we will pose different questions for self-reflection and will ask you to gather some data about your own micro-context: the institution in which you work. Ultimately, these activities will provide you with a **Landscape Design** to help build this plan, which you will assemble in the final chapter.

The first four chapters will be useful as a foundation for all readers. You may want to revisit them often to help make and keep the hegemonic norm visible. The remaining chapters can be read in any order, depending on what part of your garden you wish to prepare and grow next. We include case studies from one fictional institution, Jackson Rockgrove University, to help apply concepts; a description of the institution and its cast of characters can be found in Appendix B.

In the following pages, we'll share what you can expect in each chapter.

Chapter One: Getting Your Hands Dirty

We start the workbook by inviting you to consider our *garden* metaphor in Chapter One. Imagine that our institutions are our gardens. (A garden can be the entire university or our particular department or unit.) Even if you don't have a green thumb, most everyone enjoys the beauty of flowers and the flavor of ripe produce. Join us in imagining that the people—employees and students—are the plants, each with our own potential for growth, and that these plants can be drastically affected by our environments.

While the metaphor is not perfect, we like how it affirms the cyclical nature of growth that all living things share. The garden metaphor also reminds us that we are always growing in our understanding of DEI and in how to apply our deepening understanding. If we don't succeed in some part of our garden this season, we'll always have more opportunities.

Chapter Two: The Landscape

Chapter Two presents some assumptions that underlie the ideas presented in the workbook and begins to discuss each of our roles to help create an equitable and inclusive environment. Our focus is on institutional-level change, but we recognize that none of us have ever lived in a completely equitable and inclusive community. To participate in the creation of such a community requires a parallel process of our own growth as well as a continual examination of the institution. It takes courage to do both, and it takes self-care to enable us to engage for a lifetime.

Chapter Three: The Gardener

It's time to get a bit personal in Chapter Three. Although lasting change occurs at the institutional/system level, each of us is part of that system. This chapter will provide a context for you to do an honest and intentional self-assessment. This will enable you to internalize an intersectional understanding of yourself, so that you can more readily and consistently act with integrity and congruence as an equity-minded leader. We will also explore how sociocultural hierarchies are maintained, and will share definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion as important foundations to institutional change.

Chapter Four: Your Garden

Chapter Four introduces you to the underlying values and assumptions embedded in four types of institutional DEI functioning. By the end of the chapter, you will have the tools to be able to assess your institution's readiness for systemic change at the policy and practice level. This is an essential step toward transformation, as it enables you to think about how to tailor interventions to move your unit/institution toward equity and inclusion. Of course, you cannot do this alone, so this chapter will also revisit power dynamics related to your interactions with others.

Chapter Five: The Master Gardener—The Inclusive and Equitable Leader

How does one practice equity-minded leadership? Chapter Five explores this question by beginning to define the attitude and actions of an equity-minded leader. The inclusive and equitable leader does not consider DEI as an add-on activity, but seamlessly and intentionally embeds DEI into their approach to leadership. This intentional behavior, which we express in terms of an **Equity-Minded Leadership Practice Wheel**, yields results when applied consistently. This chapter also discusses how the equity-minded leader uses policy development and revision, budget development, and outcomes assessment as tools to support an equitable and inclusive student and employee experience.

Chapter Six: Cultivating Others

Chapter Six covers how to work collaboratively with colleagues in your unit to advance DEI. You are guided to use the inevitable departmental conflicts as opportunities for learning and growth toward an equitable and inclusive unit. This is achieved by speaking up to challenge the status quo and by using data to make inequities visible. This chapter closes with a discussion of power dynamics in titles and identities when interacting with others, and with a look at ethics and professionalism through a lens of equity and inclusion.

Chapter Seven: Perennials

Equitable and inclusive hiring practices are the focus of Chapter Seven. Talent acquisition strategies, such as cluster hiring and Grow Your Own programs, are discussed as ways to build a cadre of faculty and staff that is more diverse. This chapter also focuses on gathering data to determine what issues impact retention and promotion of faculty and staff who are members of marginalized groups, as well as to detect the obvious, invisible, and subtle biases built into the evaluation process.

Chapter Eight: Cross-Pollination

Chapter Eight encourages you to look beyond your unit to work toward the ultimate goal of creating an equitable and inclusive campus community. This chapter explores building a critical mass and involving others effectively,

meeting them where they are, and leading them to join you. Power dynamics related to titles, identities, and relative privilege and marginalization are taken into consideration when enlisting the help of others.

Chapter Nine: Seedlings

Chapter Nine emphasizes that true student success must include equity and inclusion. This chapter focuses on the multiple layers of power dynamics that students must navigate—some related to their role and others related to their identities—while negotiating the power dynamics with faculty and staff. The chapter closes with a discussion of three basic models related to student success and DEI: “Sink or Swim,” “Life Jacket,” and “Synchronized Swimming.”

Chapter Ten: Sustenance

This workbook was designed to help you develop a preliminary, unique plan for your unit to become a flourishing, equitable, and inclusive garden, with you as an equity-minded leader. Chapter Ten compiles the ideas embedded throughout the workbook and provides you with guidance on how to develop your plan. For those of you who benefit from a bigger picture, you may want to read this chapter early and refer back to it often as you engage with the other chapters. Your Landscape Design will, and should, change as you deepen your ability to think with equity and inclusion, and as those around you deepen their own abilities. As your unit grows toward equity and inclusion, you will want to nurture what is growing, while continuing to test the soil and make amendments to it. Remember, the best tool is your ability to keep equity and inclusion at the forefront, and your landscape plan should grow with you.

*Get Courageous Gardening:
Equity-Minded Leadership in Higher Education*

<https://www.academicimpressions.com/product/equity-minded-leadership-higher-education/>