Creating Anti-Oppressive Spaces:  
Our Roles as Institutional Actors  
*EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable*  
Dr. Daniel D. Spikes, MAP Center Equity Fellow - Iowa

### THE THREE LEVELS OF OPPRESSION

- **Individual**
  - At the individual level, people are socialized to accept stereotypes and internalize messages of inferiority and superiority about their own and others’ social groups (Ortiz & Jani, 2010 as cited in Holley, Stromwall, & Bashor, 2012).
  - This socialization of the individual is fueled by and reflects the institutional and cultural dimensions of oppression (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997).

- **Institutional**
  - Institutions serve as primary socializing forces in society (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 80).
  - Institutions produce, circulate and maintain the dominant’s culture’s norms, values, definitions, language, policies, and ideologies (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 80).

- **Cultural/Societal**
  - Our ideas, views and opinions are not objective and independent, but rather the result of myriad social messages and conditioning forces (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

### OVERT OPPRESSION

- **Individual** (Blumenfeld et al, 2000; Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997).
  - Using racial/gay slurs
  - Painting a swastika on a Jewish temple
  - A lone employer who rejects all Black applicants
  - A landlord who refuses to rent an apartment to a single woman

- **Institutional** (Blumenfeld et al, 2000; Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997).
  - Policies that prohibit women and Blacks from voting
  - Jim Crow laws
  - Denial of benefits to same sex partners
  - Redlining
  - Restrictive covenants

- **Cultural/Societal** (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997).
  - Books/ "scientific" articles attempting to prove the biological inferiority of people of color is a form of cultural oppression
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COVERT OPPRESSION

- Individual
  - Individual-implicit bias
  - Microaggressions
  - Carrying out oppressive policies and practices due to a lack of awareness

- Institutional
  - Institutional-school tracking
  - IQ testing
  - Eurocentric curriculum
  - Disproportionality

- Cultural/Societal (see Sensoy & DiAngelo p. 82).
  - Cultural- sexism in corporate culture

Dr. Daniel D. Spikes received his Ph.D. in Educational Administration, specializing in Educational Policy and Planning, from The University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin). Prior to pursuing his doctoral degree, he worked for the Lufkin Independent School District in Lufkin, Texas, as a middle school English/Language Arts teacher and as a school administrator. He also served as an adjunct faculty member at Angelina Community College.

While at The University of Texas (UT-Austin), he served as a Graduate Research Assistant for the Neighborhood Longhorns Program (NLP) and as the Assistant Director for Pre-College Academic Readiness Programs (PCARP) in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE). Most recently, he served as the District Site Coordinator for the federally funded Principalship Program. Daniel was also a Teaching Assistant for a course in the Department of Educational Administration, titled Social/Cultural Contexts of Education. His research interests focus on racial disparities in education and the practices of school districts, schools, and school leaders that serve to perpetuate and/or ameliorate these disparities.
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REFERENCES


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