

Reciprocal and Transformative Relationships Conflict Scenarios

SCENARIO 1

Two friends, one Latino/a and one white, are walking down the street in a college town on a Friday night. It is rather late in the evening and both are laughing and joking around as they talk about their evening's experiences. Suddenly, a patrol officer approaches the pair who asks them where they are going. The Latino/a friend replies that they are legally not required to answer that question. The white friend is silent. The patrol officer tells the Latino/a friend to face a wall, does a pat down, and proceeds to offer a warning about being careful about how to respond to authority. The white friend is silent. The officer leaves. The Latino/a friend complains loudly about the racism of the officer and how often this happens to people of color in the US. The white friend says, "You know, I'm not sure how much it had to do with race. I mean, if we'd just told the cop that we were going home that might have never happened." The two then continue with the Latino/a friend describing how racism and racial profiling are usually ignored and the white friend talking about how our individual attitudes make a big difference in how we are treated.

SCENARIO 2

Two close work colleagues, one African-American and one white, spend time together after work one evening. They enter a bookstore to look around and wander off in different directions in the store. A few minutes later, as the African-American colleague is standing near a table of books, a white woman approaches from behind and starts to touch the colleague's dreadlocks, saying "Wow, how did you get your hair to do this? It looks so interesting." The colleague offers a hasty reply about it being a lot of work and moves away quickly. As the colleagues meet up with each other and leave the store, the African-American friend tells the white colleague what happened and turns to her with a shake of her head, releasing a sigh, saying, "I just don't understand the nerve of white people? What makes you do something like that? The lack of respect is completely ridiculous." The white colleague responds by talking about how not all white people are like that and that it's wrong to generalize that one experience to all white people.

SCENARIO 3

An interracial group of friends who belong to the same organization are in a meeting together where they are listening to a presentation by a guest speaker. The speaker is unusually brash and tells jokes that some might interpret as sexist and racially prejudicial. Several people in the audience laugh at the jokes, but some are also uncomfortable. After the event, the multiracial set of friends leave to grab a bite to eat. As they sit to talk about the evening, one person begins to talk about the racism of the speaker and how someone really should have done something to stop the barrage of insults being thrown out. One of the white friends suggests how helpful it can be to just see the speaker as being rather ignorant instead of emotionally reacting to that kind of nonsense. The discussion continues with several people of color arguing that white people really need to stop other whites from acting so ignorantly. The white friends in general suggest that doing something to interrupt the speaker would just make things worse and that refusing to engage it is smarter.