



# **CULTURE, COMMUNICATION, AND CONFLICT:**

**A Certificate Program  
for Educational Leaders  
Navigating Today's  
School Environment**



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# Group Agreements

Show Respect

Listen with Compassion

Share the airtime when in breakout discussions

Honor Confidentiality





# ROAD MAP

Positive Culture with Greater Productivity



The Artful  
Conversation

The Art  
of Inclusive  
Communication

The  
Bystander  
Challenge

The  
Exchange

FOR  
LEADERS  
LIKE  
YOU



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# THE BYSTANDER CHALLENGE

Moving from Bystander to Upstander

## LEARNING OUTCOMES


In this workshop, we will consider the topics of **othering** and **belonging**.

- Reinforce the important role educational leaders have in **addressing microaggressions** and **encouraging upstanding**.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the concept of **bridging** and the **leader's role in creating belonging** in schools..



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An aerial photograph of a modern cable-stayed bridge spanning a wide body of blue water. The bridge features a prominent white pylon with multiple stay cables supporting the deck. The water is a deep, vibrant blue, and a few small boats are visible in the distance. The bridge's design is sleek and contemporary, with a multi-lane roadway and pedestrian walkways.

“**Bridging** means acknowledging our **shared humanity**, rejecting that there is a ‘them,’ and moving toward a future where there is instead a new ‘us.’”

- john a. powell

*Othering and Belonging Institute,  
UC Berkeley*



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# KEY CONCEPTS IN OTHERING

- “Us vs. Them” mentality –“The others” are less trustworthy and less capable than “us.”
- Seeing people only through their group identities (e.g., racial, ethnic, linguistic, political) without giving any thought to them as individuals.
- Negating another person’s humanity and seeing them as less worthy of dignity and respect. This is prevalent in how people with strong beliefs about polarizing topics view those with different opinions.
- Thinking that people outside your social, political, or identity group are not as intelligent, skilled, or special as you and your group.





# OTHERING

Othering often happens in schools (and other places) through microaggressions.

# MICROAGGRESSIONS

“The everyday slights, insults, and negative verbal and nonverbal messages—whether intentional or not—that impede your ability to do your work well.”

- Melinda Epler



# COMMON MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Making assumptions about an individual's background or about their beliefs because of their identity.
- Questioning the legitimacy of someone's position or qualifications.
- Disregarding someone's input, suggestions, or point of view because of their identity.
- Backhanded compliments.
- Questioning the intelligence, competence, or morality of someone based on their political beliefs.
- Assessing behavior and responding differently based on a student's identity.



NOTE: Microaggressions can happen to anyone, but the reality is that microaggressions are done more frequently to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals, and women.



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## BREAKOUT

**Practice Responding Respectfully. Each person will share an experience of when they were “othered.”**

**The other person responds respectfully:**

- **Demonstrate understanding**
- **Acknowledge impact**
- **Identify needs and values**



# BRIDGING AND BELONGING



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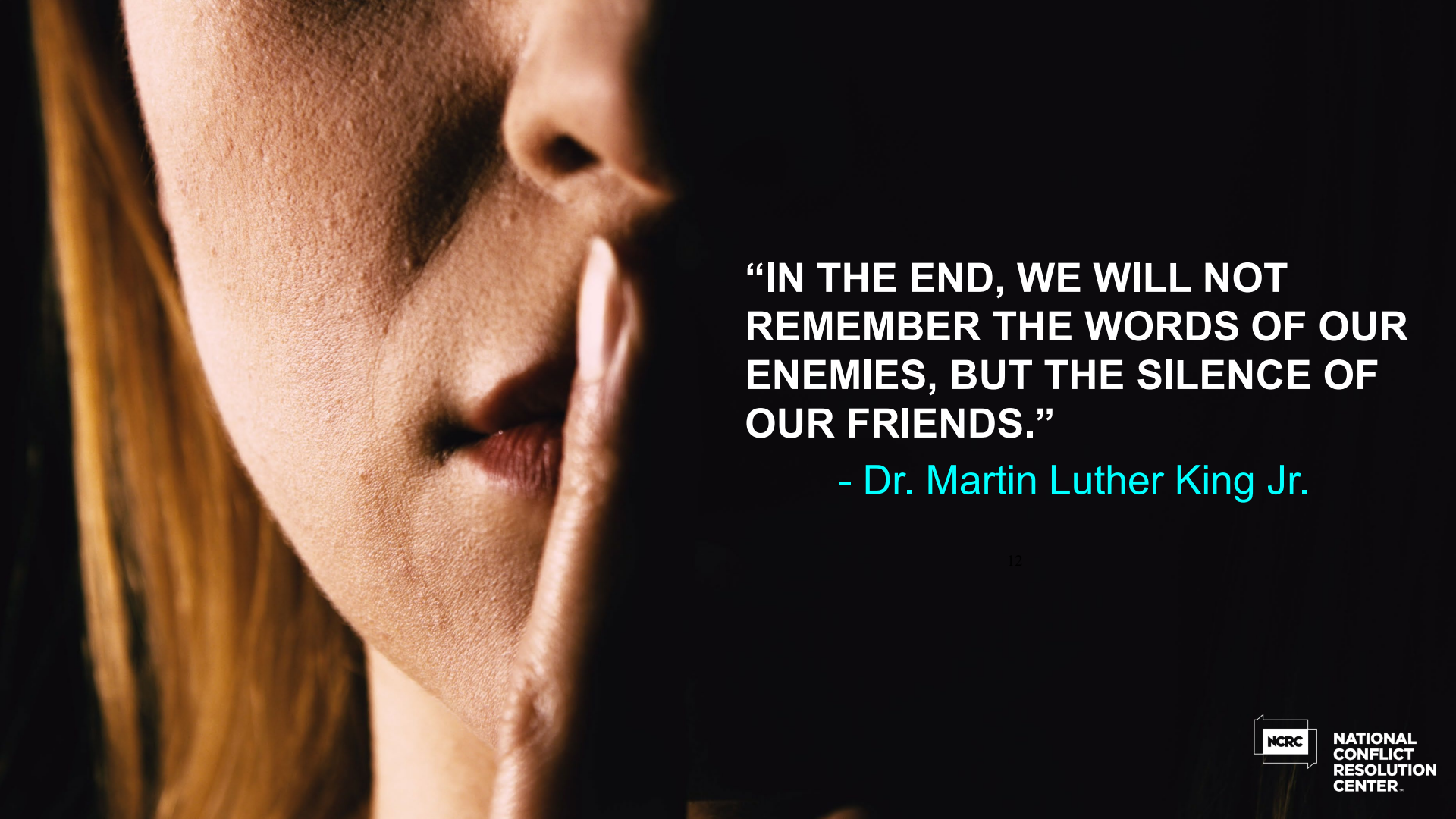




## BREAKOUTS

- **What stood out for you in the video from the Othering and Belonging Institute?**
- **What are your greatest concerns in helping the people in your school community “bridge” despite their differences? What impediments might exist?**





**“IN THE END, WE WILL NOT  
REMEMBER THE WORDS OF OUR  
ENEMIES, BUT THE SILENCE OF  
OUR FRIENDS.”**

**- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**



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# TYPICAL INEFFECTIVE RESPONSES



**Accommodate**



**Avoid**



**Attack**







**BYSTANDERS**  
**+ ACTION**

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**= UPSTANDERS**  
+ A Sense of Belonging



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# WHAT MOTIVATES UPSTANDER ACTION?

## Environmental Conditions

- **Psychologically safe environment**
- **Expectation of being supported**
- **Positive workplace culture**

## Personal Qualities of the Employee

- **Empathy for others**
- **Sense of empowerment to take action**
- **In touch with personal values; a sense of moral conviction**



A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, sitting at a desk in a classroom. She has her hand to her chin, looking thoughtfully towards the front of the room. Other students are visible in the background, also seated at desks.

# **FOUR EFFECTIVE RESPONSES**

**In the Moment**

**DISTRACT  
DIRECT**

**After the Incident**

**DELEGATE  
DIALOGUE**



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# EFFECTIVE RESPONSES IN THE MOMENT

## DISTRACTION

The upstander diverts attention to interrupt or defuse the situation.

## DIRECT

The upstander communicates something directly to the person responsible but does not attack that person.

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# CAUTIONS WHEN USING THE DIRECT APPROACH

- It is imperative that educational leaders make a direct statement in the moment. By not doing so, they are *demonstrating complicit agreement* with the statement, microaggression, or action taken.
- Formal and informal leaders need to be aware of their **tone** when making a direct statement. An overly aggressive tone creates a psychologically unsafe space for everyone in the group.



A photograph of a male teacher in a light-colored button-down shirt, smiling and holding a piece of paper. He is in a classroom with a green chalkboard and two world maps on the wall. In the foreground, the backs of two students' heads are visible, one on the left and one on the right. The overall scene is brightly lit and focused on the teacher.

## Direct Statement Sentence Starters

- Let's do a check-in about what just happened.
- It's important to me that all students in our classroom are treated with respect.
- Language like that goes against our school's values.
- You may not realize, but that term has a long, hurtful history.
- Others?





# EFFECTIVE RESPONSES AFTER THE INCIDENT

A man and a woman are seated at a table in a restaurant, facing each other and engaged in conversation. The woman is on the left, wearing a light-colored top, and the man is on the right, wearing a grey turtleneck. They are both smiling slightly. The table has plates of food, including a salad and a bread roll. The background is a bright, modern interior with large windows.

## DELEGATE

The upstander decides that the best person to intervene is someone else. They delay action until they can request that person to take action.

## DIALOGUE

The upstander has a private, respectful conversation with the person responsible. The upstander is nonconfrontational, shares their own values around how people are treated, and considers the other person's perspective.



## **DIALOGUE WITH THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE**

**Opening the Conversation**

**Clarifying Your Concern**

**Closing the Conversation**

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## BREAKOUTS

A student shares with you that one of their group members has been committing microaggressions against another group member because of their race, belittling their experience, questioning their contributions, etc.

*How would you have a dialogue with the student responsible to discuss the concern?*





# THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

## Bridging to Create Belonging in Schools and Communities

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# CREATING BELONGING ON CAMPUS

**Educational leaders today have an unparalleled opportunity to foster an environment of belonging, despite political and other divisions.**

*“People will typically be more enthusiastic where they feel a sense of belonging and see themselves as part of a community than they will in a workplace in which each person is left to his own devices.”*

- Alfie Kohn, American Education and Parenting Expert

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## BREAKOUTS

- **Share specific ways that you have created a sense of belonging in your district, school, classroom, and/or community.**
- **What are additional actions you can take?**





# CREATING BELONGING IN DIVIDED TIMES



- Encourage opportunities for colleagues to engage outside of work and students to connect outside of class.
- Host roundtable discussions, anonymous surveys, and other formats that encourage open communication and feedback.
- Build shared identities, such as through clubs and volunteering.
- Ensure that all team members feel respected and valued.
- Focus on common goals.
- Create safe, highly structured dialogue opportunities.



# THE BYSTANDER CHALLENGE

**Othering**

**Encouraging Upstanding**

**Bridging and Belonging**

**What is one takeaway for  
you from this session?**

## WHAT'S NEXT

➤ **The Exchange**



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