

Tackling Prejudice in the Workplace Using Techniques Developed for "Bystanders"

BOSTON – You're standing by the punch bowl at the office holiday party with a group of coworkers. As the new office manager walks in the room, "Allen," your supervisor who has had several cups of cheer, loudly announces with an exaggerated wink that the newest member of the team "just doesn't seem like one of the guys, if you know what I mean." Or following the end of the fiscal year report by the African-born CFO, another department head "offering praise" tells her, "Nobody can say you're an affirmative action hire."

You're shocked and embarrassed, and you know you should say or do something. You also know that this behavior, whether born of malice or ignorance, can derail any chance of building further cohesiveness as a team. The problem is you just aren't sure how to proceed.

A trio of Boston-based diversity researchers and consultants, offers a new approach, "Tools for Institutional Change," to help "bystanders" intercede during incidents of bias in the workplace – and in **non-work situations**. When s/he witnesses someone devaluing diversity through offensive jokes, comments and actions, a bystander can speak up, make room for silenced voices, halt a painful escalation, and sustain and increase respect for diversity:

- "Tools for Institutional Change" provides a number of examples, tools and techniques that empower bystanders to take on what is certainly a challenging but important role.
- The techniques teach someone in the bystander role how to take the focus off of the "offended" and "perpetrator" to open a new conversation in which each participant can contribute to an instructive conversation -- and stay away from the "blame game."

Speakers:

- **Stacey Blake-Beard, Ph.D.**, associate professor at Simmons School of Management and research faculty at Simmon's Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO)
- **Maureen Scully, Ph.D.**, faculty affiliate at CGO and assistant professor in management at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.
- **Tyra Sidberry**, director of the Diversity Initiative

The Diversity Initiative, a program of Third Sector New England, helps nonprofits increase staff and board diversity. The Center for Gender Organizations (CGO), a part of the Simmons College School of Management, conducts in-depth, cutting-edge research on the role of gender in the workplace.