Allyship the VC Way!

Here’s the DFLers guide to starting to disrupt inequity on Video Calls:

1) Dominant Voices

Undeniably it is harder to disrupt the flow of conversation on a VC. This means the threat of certain voices dominating the ‘space’ is far greater in virtual meetings/events. And we know domination by voice is a way in which people at sites of privilege are able to reinforce and reproduce their power. What about trying a system where rather than everybody getting their ‘turn’, some people are entirely in ‘listening mode’ for whole sections of meetings creating the space for others to speak? This is more equity than equality! You can also cannily use the chat functionality on VCs to source ideas and insights in a meeting in a way that is more democratic. This is equality rather than equity but if you focus on over indexing on the ideas and voices of those in your meeting who are most likely to be more easily dismissed- you can use this to achieve equity.

A Fearless Idea:

What about sitting in on one of your team’s meetings as an ‘observer’ every month or so and using the tools of the DFI to analyse what’s going on? (The systemic oppression analysis framework could be super useful here!) Then you can candidly yet compassionately feed back to the team the dynamics you observe? Then we’re using our meetings as live inclusion data and stepping back to engage with what might be otherwise invisible day to day.

WWW.FEARLESSFUTURES.ORG
2) Pronouns

Request in calendar invites that everyone put their pronouns into their names on VC - again, let’s shift the norm! If that hasn’t happened when you’re in the meeting, gently request it again. Sometimes we need reminders to change behaviour but consistency is key here. This means every time someone speaks or engages in the chat their pronouns are clearly visible.

3) Captioning

Zoom and Google Hangouts offer live captioning features - make sure to caption your meetings regardless of who has or hasn’t alerted you to accessibility needs. By having captioning as a default you’re communicating to your teams/colleagues that inclusion isn’t about who works for/with you but what should always be the case. It’s about shifting the norm. While you’re at captioning your events or meetings - think also putting key questions, thoughts and conclusions you all come to into the chat for those that will benefit from more processing time and written rather than purely verbal information.

4) Backgrounds

Theories of classism attest to the advantages some people have access to through their self presentation. This includes how we present ourselves, what we know and what we own. That begs the question as to whether Zoom backgrounds could be disadvantaging some people? It might sound trivial but it makes sense if we think of our VC background as similar to our clothing when in-person. Try out ‘no camera’ days and/or institute the use of neutral Zoom backgrounds. It will also help people focus on what you’re saying and not the pictures on the fridge behind you!