

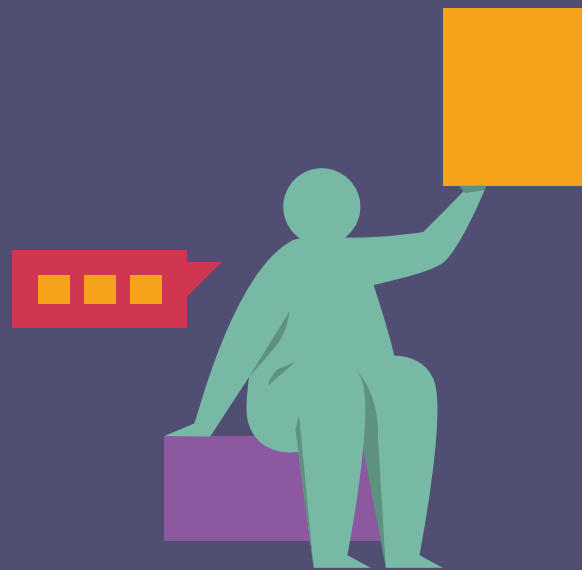


PLATFORM
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Toolkit for racism- and discrimination-sensitive events

Cora Bieß



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Introduction

In social practices, there are no spaces without power and discrimination; consequently, colonial continuities also have an effect in events. A first step towards a racism- and discrimination-sensitive practice can therefore be taken through racism- and discrimination-sensitive event formats. The aim of this toolkit is not to accuse, blame or shame. Rather, it is about promoting a privilege-conscious attitude by actively looking at the interplay of privilege and discrimination. A self-reflective approach with a racism- and discrimination-sensitive lens makes it possible to influence one's own environment, to initiate or promote social change, and thus to actively counter discrimination as a form of violence.

These reflection questions help identify which aspects should be considered from a racism- and discrimination-sensitive perspective 1) before, 2) during and 3) after the planning and implementation of events.

Subsequently, the 4) Safe(r) Space approach is described and an outline is given of how this concept could be implemented in event formats. In addition, documents for the trigger warning and the code of conduct can be found in the appendix as a printable template. The documents can be modified depending on the specific context.

The initial impulse for this toolkit came from the "Critical Reflection on Racism" working group of the Platform Peaceful Conflict Transformation in 2022. We would like to thank the working group members Dani*el*a Pastoors and Sara Fromm for their review and initial research of existing publications. These sources of inspiration can be found on page 16. Explicit thanks go to Tejan Lamboi and Dagmar Nolden for piloting the Safe(r) Space concept at the Platform's annual „Digital Peace“ conference in 2023 in Loccum, Germany.

We would be pleased if the toolkit helps to reflect, initiates exchange or promotes further thinking, and gives impulses for racism- and discrimination-sensitive perspectives in one or the other context.

Warm regards,

Cora Bieß

Project Officer of the project "Transforming Peace Work. Challenging racism and power structures in peaceful conflict transformation".
Platform Peaceful Conflict Transformation

Ginger Schmitz

Managing Director
Platform Peaceful Conflict Transformation

1. PREPARATION

Who is in the organizing team?

- a) Who decides what?
- b) Is reflection on one's own position and role undertaken within the organizing team?

Who chose the theme of the event?

- a) What are the goals of the event?
- b) Which target group is the event aimed at?
- c) Whose issues are to be addressed by the event?
- d) What is the benefit of the event for BIPoC?

The acronym 'BIPoC' stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. The term is used to make Black and Indigenous identities explicitly visible to counter racism and the invisibility of Indigenous communities.

Who is the event aimed at and how will participants be:

- a) asked to take part in the organizing team?
- b) asked to play an active role at the event?
- c) asked to be a keynote speaker?
- d) invited to attend?
- e) Are levels a)-d) transparent for all involved?
- f) Are these different levels communicated with all involved?
- g) Is it stated on the invitation or flyer whether there is an inclusion officer?
- h) If so, who can participants contact (e-mail address/telephone number) if they have needs that have not been taken into account?

Tip:

If the pronouns of the participants are also requested during registration, these can be used to prevent a binary assignment and allow non-binary identities to be taken into account.

Selection of speakers/speakers:

- a) What (and who) is considered to hold 'scientific' status?
- b) What is accepted as part of the general educational canon?
- c) What (and who) is devalued/excluded as 'unscientific' or as niche knowledge of less importance?
- d) What are the unquestioned normalities of the knowledge offered? What/who is seen/presented as normal? What/who is seen as different?
- e) What is the weighting of position vs. expertise?

Tip:

Is the topic of racism, discrimination and intersectionality linked substantively to the conference theme in a panel?

Is the cooperation with persons and organizations from the target groups adequately (financially) rewarded?

- a) How are fees set?
- b) Are the fee levels set equally for all?
- c) Are travel expenses reimbursed (for activists and for participants)?

Tip:

**Can childcare be provided during the event?
If so, is this stated in the invitation?**

Is multilingualism accommodated, and easy and inclusive language used?

- a) In the invitation/flyer?
- b) In the translation and during the lectures/workshops?
- c) In the running of the event?
- d) Is there multilingual communication? Are interpreters provided?
- e) Is sign language offered?
- f) Are technical terms introduced and explained inclusively?

What symbols/visualizations and narratives are used?

- a) Which images are used as promotional material in the flyers / in the event announcement? Are they racism-sensitive, discrimination-sensitive and gender-sensitive?
- b) What words or 'puns' are used in slogans, are they racism- discrimination- and gender-sensitive?
- c) Which categories/terms are used to explain/classify the world, and how?

Tip:

**Do the images reflect social diversity?
Or do they reinforce prejudices and stereotypes?**

Gender-sensitive representation: Are binary juxtapositions of women in dresses vs. men in trousers used?

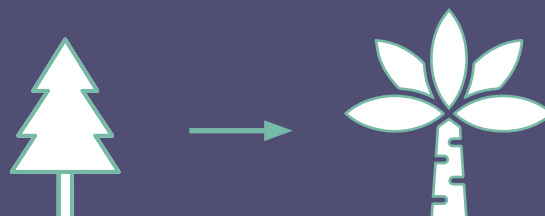


Instead, a representation without gender stereotypes could be used:



Tip:

Context-sensitive presentation: For example, are houses or trees from the northern hemisphere depicted, but regions of the southern hemisphere are talked about?



When using icons or symbols that are adopted from other contexts, reflect on whether this could fall under cultural appropriation.

Choice of location:

- a) Is the place barrier-sensitive?
- b) Are there religious signs or affiliations to a particular scene at the venue that could lead to inclusion or exclusion?
- c) Is childcare available?
- d) Is participation and catering free of charge, are different types of food available?

Tip:

Is pork or vegan food, for example, labelled in the buffet?

Tip:

Is the event in a religious institution where a ritualised morning prayer is part of the programme? Perhaps it could be discussed whether the morning prayer could be ecumenical. If so, an ecumenical morning prayer could be noted in the programme.

Tip:

Some locations only have binary toilets. Depending on the context, it could be discussed with the owners in advance whether a third toilet “for all” could be explicitly designated and marked with the symbol.



Date selection:

Does the event fall on a religious holiday that prevents people from attending?

Tip:

Interfaith or intercultural calendars contain multiple celebration and commemoration days and can often be ordered or downloaded free of charge.

Note: Is the event taking place during Ramadan?

If so, are variable mealtimes available that can be adapted to the breaking of the fast?

Tip:

In Christian conference centres, crosses and Bibles are often displayed in all rooms. Depending on the context, it could be discussed with the owners in advance whether such symbols can be removed for the duration of the event.

Preparation of a Safe(r) Space:

- a) Which forms of Safe(r) Spaces should be established in the event?
(see point 4: Safe(r) Spaces).
- b) Who is responsible for setting up, who for running the Safe(r) Spaces?
- c) What is a constructive way of dealing with conflicts that arise during the event?

2. IMPLEMENTATION

Tip:

Experience has shown that it is useful to give all participants 10 minutes to read the code of conduct and the trigger warning at the beginning of the event. Afterwards, the awareness team can introduce themselves, present their ideas and offer time for questions.

Depending on the format of the event, it may be helpful to discuss with the facilitators in advance to point out the relevance of content notes. Trauma-sensitive communication and discrimination-sensitive language could be the focus of the discussion. More information on this can be found below under “Mindfulness regarding wording and images”.

Code of conduct:

What guidelines are set for appreciative interaction and a sensitive approach to violence and conflicts?

Tip:

A template for formulating a code of conduct can be found in the appendix. The wording can be changed or adapted to suit the context.

Tip:

A short handout for facilitators could be prepared, in which key points are noted (e.g.: paying attention to inclusive language, apportioning of speaking times, not leaving racist terms unchallenged).

Tip:

Sometimes it makes sense to give a content note for each thematic block/panel: “Today we are talking about issues XY, these forms of violence will be addressed: XY”

Trigger warning:

In what form and at what point are trigger warnings issued?

Tip:

A print template for a possible wording of the trigger warning can be found in the appendix. The formulations can be shortened, extended or reformulated for the respective context.

**Constructive and conscious handling of conflicts
at the event itself:**

- a) Which types of conflicts are being focused on?
Which are not?
- b) What instruments are available for dealing with
them during the event?
- c) What contact points for dealing constructively
with emerging conflicts are available at the event?
- d) Reflection on the apportioning of speaking times
in group discussions / in plenary sessions:
- e) Who takes up a lot of space, who is heard?
- f) Who is deprived of space, who is heard less?
- g) Does a particular communication behavior
prevail in the group?

Mindfulness regarding wording and images:

- a) How are the use of symbols/visualizations by
individuals, or narratives that are racist and
discriminatory dealt with during the event?
- b) How does the organizing team handle this?
- c) How do the facilitators deal with it?
- d) How does the plenary deal with it?

3. FOLLOW-UP

- **Critical evaluation of the event with regard to racism and discrimination, e.g. in the form of anonymized feedback forms from the participants.**
- **How can we constructively implement the basic attitude of ‚conflict as an opportunity‘ in the follow-up and make effective use of it in the preparation of the next events?**
- **Comparison of expectations from the beginning: What was implemented, what was not? Why?**
- **Documentation of lessons learned**
- **Documentation of good practices, permitting a joint learning process across organizations.**

Follow-up of conflict management/ retrospective reflection:

- a) Were there any visible conflicts?
- b) Which remained latent and invisible, but still had an effect?
- c) Critical reflection on own structures: What can be optimized in terms of the power relationships in the future?
- d) Where are the feasibility limits?
- e) Are these limits communicated transparently?

4. SAFE(R) SPACES

A Safe(r) Space is a place of retreat for people who are affected by discrimination, marginalization, social inequality or other forms of group-related and social exclusion and/or rejection.

This shelter is intended to enable people who have experienced exclusion to share their experiences, and to give them a space for doing so. In this context, a Safe(r) Space is understood as a place where such people are not judged or criticized for sharing their experiences or perspectives.

The goals of Safe(r) Spaces are, on the one hand, to protect people from different forms of violence and discrimination. On the other hand, the concept of Safe(r) Spaces at events is to provide a safer framework for articulating experiences of discrimination. Together with those affected, we reflect in a context and conflict-sensitive manner on which support options would help them. The individuals concerned usually know best what they need in order to feel comfortable and safe.

The presence of Safe(r) Space is intended to create an awareness of racism and discrimination in the overall group and to raise awareness of various forms of group-based and social exclusion.

Safe(r) Spaces at different levels:

Trusted Person/ Ombudspersons / Awareness Team

- a) Awareness team at the event: Clearly identifiable contact persons
 - b) A protected place where the awareness team can be found and discussions can be held in confidence, conflict-sensitively and context-sensitively, away from the group.
 - c) Safe(r) Spaces in the form of discussions with the awareness team should not take place exclusively at the same time as workshops and ideally should not clash with other offerings at the event.
 - d) Awareness teams online/offline beyond the period of the event: A few days after the event, the awareness team is still available as contact persons.
 - e) If necessary, embed external support systems beyond the event.
- b) Reflect on group dynamics using active listening, paraphrasing, mirroring methods.
 - c) Critical focus on group dynamics: At a certain point in time, the person highlights different perspectives that were mentioned in group discussions but were sometimes not addressed in an unbiased way due to imbalances within the speaking time, or were even lost. The person supports groups from a power- and discrimination-critical perspective, helping them to enter into a dialogue and to apportion speaking time in a balanced way.

Safe spaces for all attendees during the event through daily ritualized check-ins and check-outs

- a) In a check-in, everyone is invited to share what is on their mind/concerning them without others in the group reacting to it, starting to discuss it or interrupting the person. This requires training/briefing in advance for appropriate facilitation/guidance that is critical of racism and discrimination.

Designate individuals who are responsible for the framework conditions of a group process.

- a) Empathy givers: At an event, volunteers can take on the role of empathy givers. It would be conceivable to openly ask in a plenary session

at the beginning of the event who would like to take on this role for the day and then to visibly assign the function to this person, for example with the help of a T-shirt or an armband.

Tip:

Since all human beings have gaps in their perception, and perception is always filtered through one's own position, the following point could be mentioned at the beginning: "Even we who implement the Safe(r) Space concept have our own perception gaps and therefore are grateful for feedback and criticism afterwards".

Tip:

At larger conferences, the location for the Safe(r) Space is crucial for its perception. If possible, a space between the plenary and smaller break-out rooms for working groups is recommended.

Annex

The following pages serve as print templates for your own events.

Print templates:

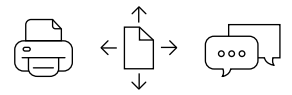
- Our Code of Conduct for this event
- Trigger warning
- What is a Safe(r) Space?

Our Code of Conduct for this event

Our goal here is to create a space in which everyone feels comfortable and safe through appreciative interaction, respectful discussion, and open-mindedness. We invite you to contribute to a Safe(r) Space by, for example, implementing the following guidelines together with us:

- We keep all shared and personal information confidential. Outside of a small group, we speak only of our own experiences and not of those shared by others.
- We position ourselves against any form of group-based misanthropy. Each person stands for themselves and not for a group.
- We strive for inclusive and discrimination-sensitive interaction with each other.
- We strive to use inclusive language and to treat each other with respect. We let others finish what they have to say. We are mindful of how much speaking time we take and allow everyone enough time and space to contribute.
- We respect that people have diverse backgrounds and different levels of knowledge. All participants are given the same space, regardless of their prior knowledge or ability to express themselves linguistically.
- We reflect on our own social roles. We acknowledge that there is more than one perspective. We acknowledge that one perspective is not more correct just because the majority has understanding and empathy for that perspective. We try to make marginalized voices audible and positions visible and to give them space, including within our own group.
- Everyone takes responsibility for their own statements and behavior.
- Feelings are important and have their place. When people talk about their own lived experiences (e.g. with discrimination), we accept them, do not judge them and do not deny them.

(Source: Bosselut et al. (2023): "Du Ich Wir und diese Strukturen" Hrsg.: eFeF. (evangelisches Forum entwicklungspolitischer Freiwilligendienst), Available online: <https://www.globaleslernen.de/sites/default/files/files/pages/2023%20-%20eFeF%20Leifaden-%20Macht%20und%20Kommunikation%20-%20akademische%20Sprache.pdf>)



Trigger warning

When we talk about wars, violence, and conflicts, we have to keep in mind that these topics can touch us in different ways. Therefore, it is important that we are aware of what this can do to us as individuals, but also as a group.

Some of you may have had your own experiences with these issues, others may have relatives who have been, or are currently being, affected by war or experiences of violence. For others, there may be intergenerational trauma, or you may be burdened by addressing these issues even without such prior experiences. You may also be able to handle the topic well for most of the time, but at some point it just becomes too much for you.

During the seminar, please always pay attention to yourself, to your own well-being, and to that of the people around you. For example, if you need a break in a discussion, be mindful of your own inner needs. Feel free to leave the room to get some distance. If you wish to be accompanied, talk to someone you know or trust, or contact the awareness team.

If you feel overwhelmed or burdened, you can always reach out to the Awareness Team in Safe(r) Space.

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Author: Cora Bieß

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Contact:

Platform Peaceful Conflict Transformation
Plattform Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung
cora.biess@pzkb.de
Großbeerenstr. 13a
10963 Berlin

Project Website:

<https://pzkb.de/friedensarbeit-veraendern/>
#Frieden braucht Gesellschaft!



The Platform Peaceful Conflict Transformation is the central network for the promotion of civil conflict transformation in German-speaking countries. Since its foundation in 1998, it has been networking and strengthening the civil society peace community and acting as its representative in the political sphere. The platform members cover a broad spectrum of active peace work. They come, among others, from civil conflict transformation in Germany and abroad, human rights and development cooperation, peace research, mediation and the peace movement.

Mail: kontakt@pzkb.de

Homepage: pzkb.de



Platform Peaceful Conflict Transformation

Großbeerenstr. 13a

10963 Berlin

T: +49 30 4000 65 118

kontakt@pzkb.de

www.pzkb.de