CHARACTERISTICS OF
WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

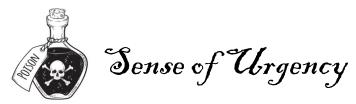## Sense of Urgency

Symptoms:

- Continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, think long-term, consider consequences, or learn from mistakes.
- Involves unrealistic expectations about how much can get done in any period of time.
- Reinforced by funding proposals that promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little.
- Frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results. For example, sacrificing the interests of communities of color to win victories more quickly for white people, who are seen as the default or norm community.
- Reinforces existing power hierarchies that use the sense of urgency to control decision-making in the name of expediency.
- Privileges those who process information quickly (or think they do).
- Sacrifices and erases the value of other modes of knowing and wisdom that require more time (embodied, intuitive, spiritual).
- Encourages shame, guilt, and self-righteousness to manipulate decision-making.
- Reproduces either/or thinking because of the stated need to reach decisions quickly.

- Reinforces the idea that we are ruled by time, deadlines, and needing to do things in a "timely" way, often based on arbitrary schedules that have little to do with the actual realities of how long things take, particularly when those "things" are or involve relationships with others.
- Makes it harder for us to distinguish what is truly urgent from what feels urgent. After a while, everything takes on the same sense of urgency, leading to mental, physical, intellectual, and spiritual burnout and exhaustion.

Antidotes:

- Collaboratively develop realistic workplans based on the lived experience of the people and organization involved.
- Leadership who understands that everything takes longer than anyone expects.
- Discussion and planning for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time.
- Learn from past experience how long things take.
- Collaborative development of realistic funding proposals with realistic time frames.
- Be clear about how you will make good decisions in an atmosphere of urgency. Be clear about what constitutes a "good" decision.
- Realize that rushing decisions takes more time in the long run because inevitably people who didn't get a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings will at best resent and at worst undermine the decision because they were left unheard.
- A commitment to equity, including a commitment to discuss and plan for what it means to embed equity practices into the workplan.
- Develop a personal and collective practice of noticing when urgency arises and taking a pause to deliberate with thoughtfulness and intention about the nature of the urgency and the range of options available to you.