

SCENARIO # 1 – Rules of politeness

I was team interpreting a college course on gender, race, and class. When the assignment was finished I walked out with my team and she rolled her eyes and said, “Why do we constantly have to talk about this, they are making the problem worse.”

I was upset but didn’t know how to respond to my team. I had tried to politely call her out on this type of behavior before and she said I was being too sensitive and misunderstanding her intent.

I feel like the environment is setup so that I always have to follow white hearing cultural norms of politeness. There is never really a space for me to challenge some of the things I disagree with because I have to assume positive intent. Like because I have to assume you mean well, I can’t really tell you how I feel about what you are saying and doing. Like its ok to be nice, but there is no space for any other emotions.

SCENARIO #2 - Empathy

A situation came up with a Deaf consumer of color who was clearly being oppressed by the hearing consumer. When I approached my mentor to discuss the situation later, I mentioned my support for the Deaf consumer. I thought that was part of our work as allies. Like, I get that I can’t completely step out of my role, but I can stand with the Deaf consumer and say why something isn’t right.

I was upset by the situation but then I was told that I was having an emotional response and was stepping outside of my role. How am I supposed to just leave it at work? I identify with the experience. I can’t separate being Black, and being female, from being an interpreter!

Maybe the mentor’s emotions were less attached because they couldn’t identify with being oppressed in the same manner.

SCENARIO # 3 – Responding to underrepresentation

I have a few colleagues who do have a pretty good understanding of the Black community and what it means to be a Black interpreter. But, there is definitely a level of...every so often, because they don't live it, they didn't recognize what wasn't there. I remember as one example, I had expressed not having access to interpreters of color as role models and wishing there were more teachers of color in IPPs. I was told that I should go back to school and become a teacher. If I talk about the lack of representation in our local community or within the RID. I'm told the same thing; I should get involved. It's like exactly how involved do I have to be and why should I be stretched so thin. They have to do something too.

SCENARIO # 4 – What would you do?

You are hired by an agency to team interpret an assignment. The day of the assignment, your team is sick and the agency informs you as you are on your way that they are looking for a replacement. They send you an updated confirmation with your team's name. The team happens to be a Black interpreter. This would not be significant, except you know that this particular consumer is racist and the interpreter is likely already on their way. What would you do?

SCENARIO # 5 – What would you do?

You are hired to team interpret an appointment (a class) at your local social services office. You and your team are seated in the waiting area with the Deaf consumer, waiting to be called back for the class to start. The waiting area is full. Other parents/families are in the same area waiting to be called back too. A mother comes in with 5 children. They oldest couldn't be any older than 10 and the youngest is a newborn. Your team makes a comment about how "those people" should stop having kids if they need handouts. What's the problem and what would you do?