

## Consult & implement advice from Self-Advocates



Marginalized people are mis- and under-represented in all areas of life, even on well-known and professional media platforms. This is because they are mostly talked about from a privileged outside perspective, resulting in a distorted depiction of truth and a replication of oppression.

Self-advocates are people that belong to one or more marginalized communities and have volunteered to inform others about the hardships faced by their community - at a great cost of time, emotional labour, safety and/or money. Thus, heeding the advice of self-advocates and accepting their authority in this matter is vital for creating change.

### Examples of free resources:

- ★ Podcast episode *Decolonization and the writing center* on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO6QFXWLZck>
- ★ Website with resources on Personal Pronouns: <https://pronouns.org>
- ★ Youtube channel of Blair Imani, an intersectional self-advocate: <https://www.youtube.com/@blairimani>

## How (not) to handle mistakes



### Do:

- ✓ Take the needs of marginalized people seriously.
- ✓ Adopt responsibility and practice to get it right the next time.
- ✓ Be kind to yourself and accept that mistakes happen. Learn & grow.
- ✓ Understand that unintentional harm is both: unintended and harmful.
- ✓ Ask what the marginalized person needs or how you can help. Find solutions together where ever possible.

### Don't:

- Dwell on your guilt (e.g. profuse apologies). It doesn't help anyone - least of all the marginalized person, since it draws even more unwanted attention to them.
- Urge the marginalized person to accept an apology. This is often seen as a quick and easy solution, but causes them further harm.
- Rank the needs of one marginalized community higher than another.
- Expect yourself or others to internalize the entire scope of awareness or unlearn habits overnight. It takes time, a willingness to commit, and persistent effort.
- Invent excuses or give up when things get rough or ends aren't met.

# Awareness in the Writing Center

## Suggestions to Start & Keep Going



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## What is Awareness?



A mindset of self-reflection, solidarity, and the willingness to learn and change according to the needs of **marginalized** people.

These have fewer **privileges** than other members of society, meaning that they face more obstacles and systematic ostracism in several (or even all) aspects of their lives.

**Dimensions of marginalization** can include, but are not limited to (in no particular order):

- Age
- BIPoC
- Disability
- Low income/wealth/property
- Multilingualism/non-native speakers
- Neurodiversity
- Non-academic family background
- Queerness

Since these dimensions do not exist in isolation, efforts to enhance awareness must always be **intersectional**:

*"a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things."*

(Crenshaw 2017: Colombia Law School)

## Why?



The students visiting our writing centers - as well as the people who run them - have various backgrounds and bring **diverse** life experiences to the table. As such, our aim is to make learning and consulting about academic writing - be it online or on location, in an individual session or in a group - as **accessible and inclusive** as possible.

This leads to **ongoing questions** of...

Marginalized people:

*Am I really welcome here? Will I be able to focus on what I came here for, or will othering get in my way? What will happen then?*

Peer tutors, staff and managers:

*For whom is it difficult to access or deliver our services within the existing structures? How can we enable and enhance their safety and participation?*

Awareness means more than simply putting a rainbow flag on display during pride month. Instead, it means taking action to **prevent and intercept marginalization** when and where ever it appears, as best as possible: also within ourselves, and especially if you are not the target yourself.

By acknowledging the needs of marginalized people and aligning our efforts with theirs, we can make our services safer and more accessible for everyone. **Let's do what we can to create change within our circle of influence!**

## Anywhere you start is a good place to start.

👣 Whether you're beginning to familiarize yourself with the concept, or whether you have begun to plan and implement awareness measures - dedicating time & energy to this topic is important in engaging yourself for equal rights.

👣 The road will be long and difficult. At times you may feel confused, uncertain, frustrated or overwhelmed. You may be met with resistance and run into misunderstandings. But you are not alone, and there are many good resources to help you (see p. 5).

👣 Engaging in ongoing reflection allows us to better understand ourselves and others. What are your personal dimensions of privilege and marginalization (see p. 2)? This knowledge can help you in different ways. In dimensions where you are marginalized, you can use your inside experiences as a resource; in dimensions in which you are privileged, you have the power to deconstruct marginalization.

👣 Plan your goals & identify your next steps as a team - for example phrasing a statement against marginalization (including possible sanctions and a contact person). Include this in your terms of participation to enhance clarity for everyone.