



RISK OF RACISM IN CONSTRUCTION

Racism Toolbox Talk Series – Part 2

Date: _____ Jobsite: _____ Discussion Leader: _____

WHAT WOULD RACISM IN A CONSTRUCTION WORKPLACE LOOK LIKE?

As we discussed in Part 1 of the Racism Toolbox Series, racism is embedded into our society. And, construction companies are not immune, which means that racism has the potential to affect workers in this industry on a daily basis. Let's take a look at some hypothetical scenarios and discuss the impact these events might have on racial or ethnic minorities working in the construction industry.

Scenario 1:

You are working on a construction site and overhear one of your supervisors telling a coworker that two of your coworkers are better at jobs that require less skill and expertise. Both of those coworkers happen to be Hispanic. Over the next couple of weeks, you notice how those two Hispanic coworkers are always assigned to the least desirable jobs by the supervisor. Both coworkers are at an equal skill and experience level to you.

Scenario 2:

It is your first week on the job and you have been working closely with your manager to get up to speed. During casual conversation one day, your manager attempts to compliment you by telling you that you aren't like other Black people they've worked with in the past.

Scenario 3:

You are working with a project manager who is Middle Eastern, and English is not his first language. At client meetings, this project manager is constantly ignored, interrupted, and disagreed with by the owner reps. You later find out that this project manager was demoted to assistant project manager, citing lack of ability to work with clients on a professional level as reason for the demotion. You have always found this project manager to be extremely competent. You have never spoken up to support this project manager's point of view in client meetings, or checked in to see how the project manager feels about these incidences. You also have not expressed your concern to superiors that these incidences stem from racism.

Scenario 4:

You open the door of the portable bathroom on your jobsite and there are racial slurs and jokes written on the walls inside of the bathroom. You are one of three Black workers on the job site.

Scenario 5:

A new employee, who happens to be Asian American, is hired. You introduce yourself and you ask the new employee where they are from. When they respond that they are from Virginia, you ask, "No seriously, what country are you from?" or "No seriously, where are you really from?", suggesting they were not born in the U.S.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

For each scenario discuss the following questions:

1. Put yourself in the shoes of the person of color in each of these scenarios. How would these experiences make you feel?
2. What affect do these types of experiences have on team dynamics?
3. How might these types of incidences affect safety on a job site?