

## **Dialogue: Some of My Presuppositions**

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Here are some of the presuppositions for our class discussions:

1. **Social injustice exists.** People are not treated equitably. We live in an unjust society and an unfair world; the remarkable promises of democracy have yet to be fulfilled. Oppression (racism, classism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, etc.) exists on multiple seen and unseen levels.

2. **Our educations have been biased.** The Eurocentric educational systems, media outlets, and other institutions omit and distort information about our own groups and others. These hidden mechanisms sustain oppression, including an often invisible and normative “white” supremacy. This “white” supremacist thinking has affected all of us in various ways; we all have “blank spots,” desconocimientos (Anzaldúa), and so forth.

3. **Blame is not useful, but accountability is.** It is nonproductive to blame ourselves and/or others for the misinformation we have learned in the past or for ways we have benefitted and continue benefitting from these unjust social systems. However, once we have been exposed to more accurate information, we are accountable! We should work to do something with this information--perhaps by working towards a more just future.

4. **“We are related to all that lives.”** We are interconnected and interdependent in multiple ways, including economically, ecologically, linguistically, socially, spiritually.

5. **Categories and labels shape our perception.** Categories and labels, although often necessary and sometimes useful, can prevent us from recognizing our interconnectedness with others. Categories can (a) distort our perceptions; (b) create arbitrary divisions among us; (c) support an oppositional “us-against-them” mentality that prevents us from recognizing potential commonalities; and (d) reinforce the unjust status quo. Relatedly, identity categories based on inflexible labels establish and police boundaries--boundaries that shut us in with those we've deemed “like” “us” and boundaries that shut us out from those whom we assume to be different.

6. **People have a basic goodness.** People (both the groups we study and class members) generally endeavor to do the best they can. We will all make

mistakes, despite our best intentions. The point is to learn from our errors. In order to learn from our errors, we must be willing to listen and to speak (preferably, in this order!).