White people in the U.S. and Canada live in a society that is deeply separate and unequal by race, and white people are the beneficiaries of that separation and inequality. As a result, we are insulated from racial stress, at the same time that we come to feel entitled to and deserving of our advantage. Given how seldom we experience racial discomfort, we haven’t had to build our racial stamina. We consider a challenge to our racial worldviews as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people. Thus, we perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of racism as an unsettling and unfair moral offense. The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable—the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation. These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy. I conceptualize this process as white fragility. This talk will provide an overview of the socialization that inculcates white fragility and the perspectives and skills needed for white people to build their racial stamina and engage more constructively across race.

This event is free; however, we strongly encourage attendees to RSVP

Speaker Bio

Dr. Robin DiAngelo is affiliate Associate Professor in the College of Education at the University of Washington, Seattle. She is a two-time winner of the Student’s Choice Award for Educator of the Year from the University of Washington. Her scholarship is in White racial identity, and racelrelations. In addition to her academic work, Dr. DiAngelo has extensive experience as a workplace consultant in issues of race relations and racial justice. Dr. DiAngelo has numerous publications and books, including Is Everyone Really Equal: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education (co-written with Özlem Sensoy), and What Does it Mean To Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy. Her latest book, White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard To Talk To White People About Racism came out in June and debuted on the New York Times Bestseller List.

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