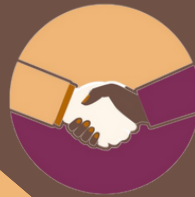# ADVANCING EQUITY: MENTORSHIP IN PEACE AND SECURITY

JANUARY 2023

WOMEN OF COLOR ADVANCING PEACE, SECURITY AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
ORGANIZATIONS IN SOLIDARITY

WCAPS | WOMEN OF COLOR ADVANCING PEACE, SECURITY, AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

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The Organizations

Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS) is a platform devoted to women of color that cultivates a strong voice and network for its members while encouraging dialogue and strategies for engaging in policy discussions on an international scale. Through our dedication to mentorship and partnerships and our passion for changing the global community landscape, we remain committed to achieving our vision of advancing the leadership and professional development of women of color in the fields of international peace, security, and conflict transformation.

OrgsinSolidarty (OiS) is a partnership formed among more than 300 organizations and individuals who are signatories to the WCAPS United States or United Kingdom Standing Together Against Racism and Discrimination Statements. Our mission is to combat racist beliefs, attitudes, and acts of discrimination, and integrate diversity within all levels of our organizations and as individuals in the peace and security, foreign policy and national security fields. We evaluate the current state of affairs, educate, elevate and support diverse voices and perspectives and the individuals who hold them, giving due recognition and credit to achievements of Black people and people of color, and creating a world where all people are treated fairly, equitably, and with respect.

Please connect with us!

The publication designer: Grace Y. Choi, Ph.D.

The Working Group

The core commitment of **OiS' Mentorship Working Group** is to develop and support mentorship opportunities for people of color in our organizations. Its primary goals are to: (1) expand access to mentorship opportunities for people of color in the peacebuilding and international security fields, and (2) communicate values that create a successful and meaningful mentorship environment, especially for people of color, in these spaces.

The Author

Kimberly Gillies helps social impact leaders actualize their visions. She lends executive office, management, and operations expertise to mission-driven teams so they can work more effectively—and enjoyably—together. Since studying peace, justice, and gender at Tufts University, she has served in cross-functional leadership roles and partnered with organizational leaders to create positive, holistic change within workplaces and society.

Gratitude

A special thank you to Maher Akremi, Lovely Umayam, Gabrielle Gueye, Tristan Guyette, Andrea Pimentel, Hadeil Ali, Camille Stewart Gloster, Nathaniel Ahrens, Rachel Jones, Grace Choi, and the OiS Mentorship Working Group for the support, insights, and commitment invested in this project. Thank you to Dr. Vic Marsh for your research, leadership, and mentorship on these issues over the last two years, and to Evelyn Thornton for being the best CEO, first boss, mentor, and friend. All of your time, perspectives, and commitment made this possible.

INTRODUCTION

Mentorship positively impacts individual and organizational performance, bolsters employee engagement and retention, and augments career advancement and satisfaction (Li & Li, 2021). In recent years, researchers have expanded upon these long-established findings by exploring correlations between mentorship programs, diversity and equity of organizations, and the professional experiences of people of color. These studies consistently and continually find positive correlations between all three.

In this report, we synthesize findings from original interviews and extensive research into what makes an effective DEI strategy, the impact of mentorship —particularly on people of color—and how to elevate equity-focused mentoring within the fields of peace, security, and foreign policy. We close with a recommendation to CRAVE mentoring opportunities by founding, joining, or supporting initiatives that:

- create opportunity for **cross-identity contact**;
- establish **responsibility** structures;
- cultivate social **accountability** for involvement;
- are **voluntary**; and
- **engage** participants in their evolution.

Increasing the accessibility and quality of mentorship within and across peace, security, and foreign policy disciplines can amplify the impact of these efforts and enable our community to better detect, address, and prevent cultures of exclusion, practitioner burnout, and organizational ineffectiveness.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) INITIATIVES

DEI INITIATIVES

There is rich theory and research regarding the causes of workplace inequality, but research-backed solutions for these dynamics prove harder to find.

An exception to that trend is *Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies.* In it, Alexandra Kalev, Frank Dobbin, and Erin Kelly share their analysis of Equal Employment Opportunity reports from 1971 to 2002 along with what does and does not work when it comes to popular diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives (Dobbin et al., 2006). Overall, they found that strategies designed to change individuals are less effective than conventional management solutions at diversifying the make-up of organizations**.

Given the current popularity of ineffective and potentially damaging DEI approaches, we first highlight common pitfalls of well-intentioned initiatives in an effort to help individuals and organizations do no harm in their programming.

** Examples of "strategies to change individuals" include diversity trainings or performance evaluations. Examples of "conventional management solutions" include goal setting or accountability structures.

Mandatory Diversity Training

Five years after instituting required DEI training for managers, companies in Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly's study saw no improvement in the proportion of Black men or Hispanic men and women in managerial positions. More striking, is that the number of Black women and Asian American men and women shrunk by an average of nine and five percent, respectively.

This stagnant and backward progress is likely because the majority of "diversity trainings" make attendance mandatory, use negative messaging (i.e., threats), and limit participant engagement to prescriptive questionnaires (Dobbin et al., 2006). Forcing employees to participate in such training can activate bias, trigger anger or backlash, and make incoming participants feel like wrongdoers rather than learners, allies, or advocates (Nathoo, 2021).

Performance Reviews

Many organizations utilize performance reviews to inform—and provide legal coverage for—compensation and advancement decisions. One might think these reviews also provide an opportunity to ensure equitable compensation and recognition for employees. In reality, most lack sufficient techniques and structure to disrupt bias and result in the continuation of predominantly white male managerial teams and inequitable advancement opportunities (Nishiura Mackenzie et al., 2019). In *Best Practices*, Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly found the introduction of performance reviews had no effect on the number of people of color in management within a company after five years of being implemented (Dobbin et al., 2006).

Hiring Processes and Assessments

In 2021, economists at the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Chicago sent 83,000 fictitious job applications to openings posted by over 100 of the largest U.S. employers. They found that "distinctively Black names reduce the probability of employer contact by 2.1 percentage points relative to distinctively white names" (Kiline et al., 2022)**.

Similar racial prejudices are found in skill assessments utilized in recruitment and hiring procedures. Within five years of introducing written aptitude tests in hiring processes for managers, organizations see decreases of four to 10 percent in people of color in these roles (Dobbin et al., 2006). This may occur due to inconsistent usage and evaluation of assessments, such as testing one person and not another or scrutinizing one's mistakes while overlooking those of another (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

Testing can be a tool to widen and assess the talent pool for a job, but, as with other elements of recruiting and hiring procedures, organizations must utilize them consistently and with a proactive approach to counter bias (Friedman, 2020). Without those key elements, workplaces are more likely to undervalue and under-reward the skills and experiences of people of color and miss the opportunities for success these applicants could provide the organization.

 ** Of note, the study found that "discrimination against distinctively Black names is concentrated among a select set of large employers" (Kiline et al., 2022). In other words, hiring discrimination is not uniform across the corporate landscape, but the overall trend is that resumés of presumably Black applicants will be less likely than presumably white applicants to secure an interview.

Grievance Procedures

In 2015, there were nearly 90,000 discrimination complaints made to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; 45 percent of which included a charge of retaliation (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

Grievance procedures are typically put in place to prevent, identify, and rectify problems, but this and other findings suggest that reported grievances are made worse upon initial reporting, not better. Some studies indicate that this may be because when "protective" systems are implemented, people pay less attention to managing their own prejudices and rely more on company policies to guarantee fairness.

However, if these policies are not consistently checked and adapted to counter bias, which they frequently are not, they inevitably fall short of their objectives. Consequently, people lose trust in systems, organizations, and their leadership (Dobbin & Kalev, 2020).
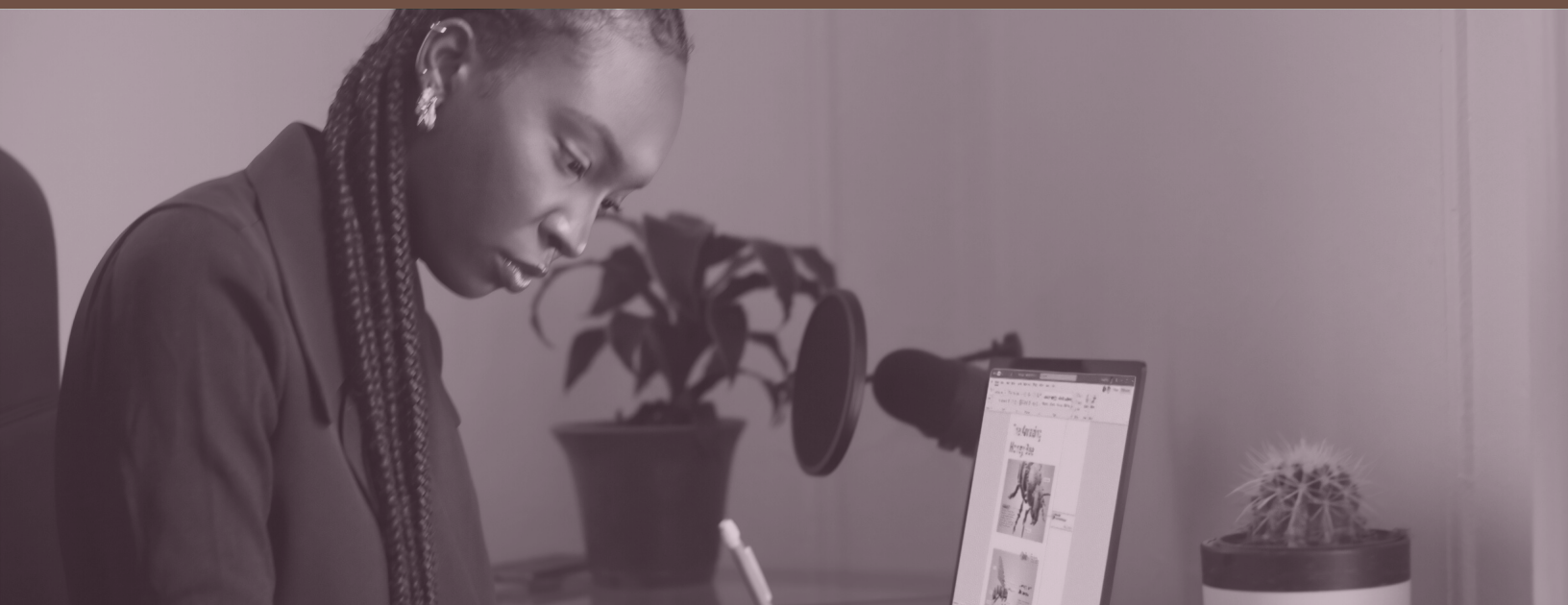
EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

With a better understanding of what not to do when creating and implementing DEI initiatives, we now turn to strategies shown to advance DEI that can readily be integrated into any initiative, including mentorship and networking programs.

Cross-Identity Contact

In the early 2000s, psychologist Dr. Thomas Pettigrew found "all that's needed for greater understanding between groups is contact, period, in all but the most hostile and threatening conditions" (DeAngelis, 2001). In other words, mere exposure to people from different identity groups can counteract individuals' biases. This power of interaction and shared experience holds true in the workplace, and it can be fostered through mentorship programs, cross-team projects, interdepartmental training, and the like.

Responsibility

Of the strategies Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly studied in *Best Practices*, they found organizational structures that embed DEI accountability, authority, and expertise to be most effective at increasing the proportions of Black women and men in managerial positions**. Moreover, responsibility structures catalyze the success of other diversity initiatives, rendering each effort more impactful when utilized together. Creating transparent processes, accountability metrics, and an organizational role focused on DEI can influence organizational progress toward a more inclusive, equitable, and successful workforce.

** Examples of such structures include: affirmative action plans, diversity committees and task forces, and diversity managers, officers, and departments. Affirmative action plans and diversity staff both centralize authority over and accountability for workforce composition. Diversity committees locate authority and accountability in an interdepartmental task force and may work by causing people from different parts of the organization to take responsibility for pursuing the goal of integration (Dobbin et al., 2006).

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Accountability

Social norms are the typical observed behavior within a group; they set expectations about what is and is not appropriate within a specific context (Chang et al., 2019, 145). Establishing norms within a workplace to participate in DEI initiatives, for example, creates a sense of social accountability to do so and increases the likelihood of individual engagement.

The power of norm setting becomes even more apparent when considering cognitive dissonance, or "the state of discomfort felt when two or more modes of thought contradict each other… [including] ideas, beliefs, or the knowledge that one has behaved in a certain way" (Theory of Cognitive Dissonance).

Humans, knowingly or not, try to eliminate this feeling of discomfort by aligning their beliefs and behaviors. It follows that by creating norms of inclusion or equity, leaders and organizations can influence not only DEI-aligned behaviors but also beliefs.

Engagement

Meaningful engagement of and with stakeholders is key to gaining buy-in and successfully implementing any kind of change. This holds true with DEI initiatives—when individuals have an opportunity to influence or impact the experience or outcome, they are more likely to become committed to and invested in its success. Creating pathways for people to help create or strengthen solutions enables individuals to see themselves as part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

Voluntary

Creating initiatives that people can opt into or out of allows those who choose to participate to feel greater autonomy in and commitment to their decisions than if their hand was forced. This was exemplified in a study by the University of Toronto, which asked white subjects to read a brochure critiquing prejudice against Black people. When the subjects felt significant pressure to agree with the brochure, the experience strengthened bias against Black people. When subjects felt the choice to agree or disagree was theirs to make, the reading reduced their bias (Kulik et al., 2007).

We see similar results in organizations—required training or participation can evoke frustration, whereas voluntary training typically elicits engagement, empowerment, and advocacy. When given the power of choice, individuals are more inclined to take pride in and champion their decisions.

BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP

FOR ORGS AND INDIVIDUALS

Qualitative and quantitative research has long supported and illustrated the life- and career-changing impact mentorship can have on individuals. More recently, research has explored how it can support organizations and people of color. Here, we outline the enduring influence of mentorship on individuals and newer findings that highlight the crucial help it can offer organizations.

Better Performance

A positive correlation between mentorship and improved individual achievement has long been established (Mittal & Upamannyu, 2017). In 1977, Heidrick and Struggles, Inc. conducted a study of 1,250 executives and found individuals who had at least one mentor earned more money at a younger age, pursued greater education opportunities, and were more likely to follow a career plan than their peers who did not (Roche, 1979). These benefits have been further researched and reinforced by countless studies since, and they are not limited to the professional realm. For instance, students who have mentors generally perform better in their current roles *and* subsequent opportunities than those who do not (Smith, 2014).

Sustainability and a Self-Supporting Cycle

Most interviewees in *The "Consensual Straitjacket:" Four Decades of Women in Nuclear Security* discussed, without prompting, their desire to mentor and support younger professionals entering the field (Hurlburt, 2019). This trend echoes the findings of both long-standing and recent studies on the impacts of mentorship, which indicate that individuals who benefit from an experience with a mentor will likely feel a stronger inclination to extend mentoring to others than those who do not (Roche, 1979). Unlike the short-lived nature of many popular DEI initiatives, mentorship serves as a scalable, self-sustaining model for change within and across organizations.

Higher Employee Engagement and Reduced Turnover

Organizations with engaged employees outperform those that do not, and mentorship can play a key role in boosting engagement**. In a study comparing the satisfaction of mentored and non-mentored groups of employees, those who were assigned a mentor reported higher levels of happiness with their career progress and greater pleasure from their work (Roche, 1979). Another survey of 170 sales and marketing professionals revealed that mentored employees felt more positively about their organization, its leadership, and its future course than their non-mentored counterparts (Bidwell, 2016). Such positive and forward-looking experiences have direct ties to engagement, retention, and organizational cost-savings (Smith, 2022).

Career Advancement

Respondents in *The "Consensual Straitjacket"* emphasized the "strong and omnipresent" role that mentorship played in their careers. They cited relationships as being "central to finding out about jobs, being considered qualified for jobs, understanding how to succeed in particular positions, and progressing on to higher-ranking ones," (Hurlburt, 2019). Their experiences align with findings that, compared to non-mentored personnel, mentees tend to receive a greater number of promotions, feel more satisfied with and committed to their career, and are more likely to believe that they will advance in their field (Bidwell, 2016). For people of color within organizations, these benefits are even more critical given the systemic barriers to entry, retention, and advancement they face.

** Gallup's 2017 State of the American Workforce study found business units in the top quartile of engagement greatly outperform those in the bottom quartile, realizing 17% higher productivity, 24% lower turnover, and 21% higher profitability (Gallup, 2017).

FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

Best Practices found mentoring and networking programs to be the second most effective DEI initiative of those studied. When considering that most of these programs feature some, if not all, of the effective DEI approaches previously outlined: they can expose participants to people from different identity groups, encourage social accountability for change, engage stakeholders in addressing the problem, and instill a sense of responsibility within partners toward the other's success (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

An ever-growing body of research continues to explore how mentorship can help people of color overcome, or at least feel supported while coping with, the unique and extensive discriminatory professional barriers they face, including within the fields of peace, security, and foreign policy**. Here, we outline some key findings to date.

** To learn more about the barriers and discrimination people of color face in the fields of peace, security, and foreign policy, visit Organizations in Solidarity's resource library.

Community and Networks

A 2016 Harvard Business Review study found a correlation between stronger networks and more job opportunities, broader and deeper knowledge, improved capacity to innovate, and greater career status and authority (Casciaro et al., 2016). Three years later, LinkedIn coined the phrase "Network Gap" to summarize the findings of similar research that linked access to professional opportunities with the strength of one's network (Wuench, 2020) (Garlinghouse, 2019).

Camille Stewart Gloster, a former WCAPS board member and a cyber and technology law, foreign policy, and national security expert, summarized this dynamic within peace and security well: "Unfortunately, people have to know who you are for you to get access to career opportunities, decision-makers, coaching, projects... Really everything." Since networks play a central role in career development and race is the most consistent and important differentiator of social networks, we must actively and intentionally work to bridge this Network Gap (Busette et al., 2021)**.

Existing professional networks like **WCAPS**, **NextGen NatSec**, **Black China Caucus,** **Highly Nriched**, and **Black Professionals in International Affairs** continue to play key and leading roles in doing just that. Similarly, DEI-focused mentoring programs within and across organizations create space to not only share advice and learning opportunities, but also professional networks and meaningful introductions.

** In Washington, D.C., 97 percent of people in white men's job networks are also white (Busette et al., 2021). This is just one example of the lack of network interconnection in the field.

Increased Representation, Retention, and Advancement

Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations found that "mentoring programs boosted minority representation at the management level by nine percent," and that mentoring programs "dramatically improved promotion and retention rates for minorities and women—15 percent to 38 percent as compared to non-mentored employees" (Beheshti, 2019). These findings highlight the key role mentorship can play in increasing equitable access to and realization of advancement opportunities (GAO, 2020) (Somers, 2022).

Comfort and Belonging

As **Coqual** notes in their report, *Being Black in Corporate America*, "workplace prejudice often shows up in subtle ways through microaggressions; brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color," (Coqual, 2019). Such experiences foster feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement, making it difficult, unappealing, or wholly intolerable for people with non-white racial identities to adapt to and thrive within an organization (Okun, 2020). By being mindful and embracing the context from which a mentee is coming, mentors can help create space and environments well-suited to a mentee and reduce feelings of isolation.

One interviewee for this report shared his experience relying on mentors in this capacity: "Like most people of color, I have had some tough professional experiences with racism and white supremacy. Thankfully, I have had mentors who created space for me to safely share my experience, confirmed it was not 'just me misinterpreting' the situation, and helped me think through what to do next." Through these experiences, mentors benefit, too, by becoming more competent in DEI practices and stronger allies.

Exposure to and Support for Professional Opportunities

Tristan Guyette, a partner for strategy and mobilization at Global Zero, emphasized the importance of awareness when it comes to pursuing professional opportunities: "You cannot know that you want to do a job until you know a job exists."**

The Science of Mentorship podcast reflects Tristan's experience and observation, recognizing that part of the reason people of color are underrepresented in many professional fields is because they may not recognize their ability to pursue certain career trajectories. This knowledge gap could be from a lack of exposure to the field itself, not having seen someone who looks like them in it, not seeing themselves as capable of joining it, or being encouraged down a "tried and true" career path instead (The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2021). By sharing ideas, development opportunities, connections, and encouragement, a mentor can bring a mentee's dream job to light and instill in them the confidence to pursue it.

Rachel Jones, former associate director at **Girl Security,** reflected on the importance of having a mentor who was "invested in me, but not invested in or affected by the outcomes of my decisions. Having a trusted person outside of my immediate sphere of influence has helped me make the best decisions for me." Mentors can create a safe and supportive space for mentees from which they can explore diverse experiences and pathways, including those related to peace, security, and foreign policy.

** Global Zero is working to strengthen the taboo against nuclear weapons use internationally, reducing reliance on nuclear weapons in national security and setting the stage for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons everywhere.

MENTORSHIP AS A DEI STRATEGY IN THE PEACE AND SECURITY FIELD

MENTORSHIP AS A DEI STRATEGY

Mentorship programs in and of themselves are one of the most effective DEI strategies of which we know. Elevating those that intentionally incorporate DEI-focused best practices—like facilitating cross-identity contact, ensuring responsibility for progress, creating social norms for voluntary engagement, and engaging participants as allies in its success—is one of the most reliable ways we can meet the critical needs of both practitioners of color and peace, security, and foreign policy organizations.

Aspiring and current professionals of color working in the peace, security and foreign policy fields need, among other things:

- Opportunities to engage with the breadth and complexities of the disciplines and possible career pathways
- Access to wider professional networks that include senior leaders and decision-makers
- Antiracist workplaces and allies that make room for and uplift diversity of identities and perspectives
- Equitable recognition and advancement opportunities.

MENTORSHIP AS A DEI STRATEGY

Peace, security, and foreign policy organizations need to change existing norms that undermine their current and threaten their future success, including unhealthy stasis and competition; exclusivity and toxicity; insufficient and opaque structural support; and racist and white supremacist systems and cultures (N Square, 2019).

Successful mentorship of professionals of color disrupts barriers and provides them with more equitable access to career advancement; comfort and belonging; community and networks; exposure and encouragement to pursue professional opportunities; and focused support and guidance.

Having employees engaged in mentorship provides organizations: better performance; higher employee engagement; reduced turnover; a sustainable, self-supporting model for impact; and a research-backed pathway to racial diversification of its staff and decision-makers.

By pairing DEI best practices with mentoring, organizations and practitioners have an opportunity to affect positive change in the make-up, equity, and impact of peace, security, and foreign policy efforts**.

** GExplore is a database of mentorship programs, networks, and fellowships in the fields of peace, security, and foreign policy.

CRAVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

CRAVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

C ross-identity contact

R esponsibility structures

A ccountability

V oluntary

E ngage

Organizations in Solidarity created its **Mentorship Hub** to welcome, connect, and support its members and allies in making mentorship more accessible across peace, security, and foreign policy disciplines, especially for people of color. Through the resources, forums, events, and opportunities featured on the Hub, we encourage organizations, individuals, and program managers to CRAVE equity-focused mentoring opportunities.

CRAVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Cross-identity contact. Create and participate in mentoring opportunities where people with different identities interact. Intentionally creating cross-identity partnerships utilizes the benefits of Pettigrew's contact theory (i.e. "all that's needed for greater understanding between groups is contact, period") and directly addresses current access inequity**.

Responsibility structures. Establish accountability measures to ensure progress with equity-focused efforts, including mentoring initiatives. Set clear goals, roles, and metrics to oversee or measure individual or organizational participation in mentorship.

Accountability. Normalize engagement in and prioritization mentoring to create social accountability for doing so within organizations and the field more broadly. Organizational and industry leaders can play a powerful role in forming this norm with an eye to including and supporting people of color specifically.

Voluntary. Create and join mentoring opportunities with people of color that allow individuals to opt in or out. Doing so avoids backlash, overburdening people, and fostering communities with misaligned values. It simultaneously empowers people to see themselves as agents of change choosing to be part of a solution***.

Engage. Find avenues for stakeholder influence on a mentoring program's structure and evolution. Clear pathways for participant feedback and input can help ensure the needs of target beneficiaries are being met, increase participant investment in a program, and enable participants to see themselves as its champion.

** Coqual found only 31 percent of Black employees have access to a senior leader in the workplace (compared to white employees' 41 percent), and 67 percent of Black professionals have no access to sponsors or allies to help their career growth (Coqual, 2019).

*** Be mindful to differentiate between voluntary participation and free labor. Those leading or participating in activities to improve organizational and professional capacity and performance should be adequately compensated for their contributions.

CRAVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Following these CRAVE guidelines can elevate mentorship as an essential, accessible, sustainable, and successful means of remedying workplace inequity, normalizing inclusive and engaging cultures, and amplifying the impact of peace and security focused efforts.

Join the movement. Explore mentoring resources, events, and community on **the OiS Mentorship Hub**.

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