Calling In the Calling Out Culture
University at Buffalo 2-17-21

Loretta J. Ross
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• Rape survivor. Forced to raise a child born of incest at age 23.

• Activism began at 16. Tear-gassed at a demonstration as a first-year student at Howard University.

• Involved in anti-apartheid and anti-gentrification activism in Washington, DC as a teenager and founding member of the DC Study Group.
Loretta J. Ross

- Associate Professor at Smith College in the Program for the Study of Women and Gender, she teaches courses on white supremacy, human rights, and Calling In the Calling Out Culture
- Co-creator of Reproductive Justice theory and practice, and co-founder of SisterSong Reproductive Justice Collective in 1997
- Frequent guest on national news media
Why Calling In?

“Sow a thought and reap a deed. Sow a deed and reap a character. Sow a character and reap a destiny.”

Nannie Helen Burroughs
What is Calling In?

- Calling in is a Call-Out done with radical love and respect to achieve accountability
- Giving each other the benefit of the doubt
- Working to acknowledge that diverse people are on the same team and will have differences of opinion
- An emerging practice that recognizes what matters most: we must invest in each other for mutual growth and benefit
What is Calling In?

- An opportunity for self-reflection, apology, repair, and changed behavior
- Remembering the broader context
- Staying calm and asking for clarifications
- Using active, loving listening practices
- Expressing gratitude for shared learning opportunity to be better together
The Calling In Continuum

1. Calling Out
2. Calling On
3. Calling In
Calling In: A Transformative Practice To Make Our Values Real

- Educational institutions are often selected to provide a transformative education that helps students become leaders and advocates for social change.
- Implementing transformative teaching can risk backlash from parents and donors because people may be threatened with job loss and scared out of addressing “controversial” topics.
- Transformative learning must be accompanied by transformative practices like Calling In to address difficult conversations and learning.
Calling In
To Make Our Values Real

- School’s philosophical vision must shape content and action
- Not all faculty and staff know what a truly transformative and progressive education can be to create a win/win environment
- When educators do not speak on important political matters, they are teaching their students to be silent in the face of injustices
Calling In Continuum

Transformative Learning
- Long-term investment in knowledge and critical skills of inquiry
- Freire-based teaching for empowerment
- Builds historical literacy and creates lifelong commitment to justice
- Encourages development of deep moral character, not just political perspectives
- Provides radical knowledge for human rights realization
- Cannot be optional but mandated without sacrificing time in other subjects

Transformative Practices
- Educating on Calling In practices instead of Calling Out to understand our interdependence
- Development of empathy for others as part of integrity and love for self
- Better threat assessments to distinguish between debates, discomfort, micro-aggressions, offenses, and threats
- Normalizing a “Call-in” culture in all settings to reduce the need for punishment
I believe unconditionally in the ability of people to respond when they are told the truth. We need to be taught to study rather than believe, to inquire rather than to affirm.

— Septima Poinsette Clark —
When Students Arrive at the University at Buffalo

- May be socialized into thinking that differences are scary things to talk about
- May be from households in which people are uncomfortable when issues like race, disabilities, gender, sexuality, or immigration arise
- Childhood “innocence” is prioritized in which kids are naïve, fragile, and ill-prepared to encounter differences
- Taught that being “colorblind” is a good thing, yet reinforces racial illiteracy in particular
When Students Arrive at University at Buffalo

- Also taught that noticing differences like race is a problem of rude behavior but is actually a strength of our society when we appreciate diversity with appropriate language.
- Children can and do form biases from an early age even if they have not been directly engaged with conversations on differences, and will act on these biases at school.
- Patterns for handling mistakes are formed early in life to produce FIGHT/FLIGHT/FREEZE responses that affect how they respond to mistakes by others.
When Students Arrive at College

• Everyone’s identities matter to them, especially their racial, sexual, and gender identities

• Seeing, interacting with, and being friends with people who are different gives their personalities the possibility for becoming a fully complex human able to joyfully work with others
#BLACKAT________________CONTROVERSIES

- Social media is the power platform for students
- Creates opportunity for racial reckoning and provides an opportunity to make school’s mission statements active in real life of students
- Students telling stories in ways that can’t be ignored
- Exposes unaddressed long-term problems such as alumnae agreeing with present students
- High-achieving Black students receive impression that their race would prevent their success by white teachers/counselors
- Casual use of racial slurs by white staff/faculty with no consequences
- Students may perceive those who do not actively support them as part of the problem, not the solution, and misdirect their anger
- Repeated complaints about problem faculty or staff shoved under the rug
- Demands for moving from private responses and corrections to public ones with transparency
- Locking the bad news stories down for public relations fears does not address the problem and guarantees reoccurrence
- Speaking up against racism increases racist comments directed towards students if hidden white resentment by liberals remains unaddressed
- Can provide convincing proof to administration about the problems
- Proactive strategies may be developed to handle anticipated racism and prove forward looking thinking by schools
Developing Racial Courage

- Confusing white supremacy with white identity: ideology vs. identity
- Based on believing that white people need to be “less white” which causes shame and guilt for characteristics beyond their control and people are left scared of saying something wrong
- Spaces used for public therapy for emotions to address white fragility instead of taking action to build white courage
- No one is really “race-blind” and pretending to be so reinforces an unconscious superiority complex and ignores white privilege
Developing Racial Courage

- Without intentional work to end white supremacy, it continues to exist and get reinforced.
- We must be less judgmental and avoid becoming the “blame-and-shame” gang calling each other out.
- If given opportunities to learn and have forgiveness for our mistakes, everyone could practice meaningful conversations about diverse identities from the first day and throughout the learning process.
- Can transform such conversations from “difficult” and “uncomfortable” to manageable and joyful.
BLAME VS. RESPONSIBILITY

- No one alive is to be blamed for the creation of the system of White Supremacy but we all bear the responsibility for ending it.
- Blame is an unhealthy response.
- Responsibility is the healthy response.
“White people need to learn to love ourselves; white people should work with other whites against racism, and middle-class whites need to deal with our own class biases to do so.”

MAB SEGREST
Reinterpreting America: Liberty or Slavery?
America’s Unfinished War

White Supremacy Noose at U.S. Capitol

January 6, 2021
Divided Country?

• The COUNTRY is not divided. WHITE PEOPLE are divided over the choice of Chaos or Community, the question that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked.

• White supremacy and democracy are incompatible.

• White supremacist thinking is reinforced by many euphemisms the media uses to avoid saying “White People.”
61 Ways White People Avoid Saying “White People”
By Damon Young

1. Real Americans
2. Middle America
3. Working-Class Americans
4. Patriots
5. Europeans
6. Southerners
7. Midwesterners
8. Millennials
9. Christians
10. Evangelicals
11. Red-State Voters
12. Rust Belt Voters
13. Conservatives
14. Republicans
15. Suburbanites
16. Gentrifiers
17. Stay-at-Home Protestors
18. The Silent Majority
19. Law-Abiding Citizens
20. Small Business Owners

21. Blue-Collar Workers
22. White-Collar Workers
23. Essential Workers
24. Gun Owners
25. Bernie Bro(s)
26. Americans
27. Elected Officials
28. Normal People
29. Folks in the Neighborhood
30. Like “Us”
31. Our Values
32. Our “Kind”
33. Families
34. Veterans
35. Soccer Moms
36. Management
37. Law Enforcement
38. Hardworking Americans
39. The Middle Class
40. The Upper Middle Class

41. The Upper Class
42. Citizens
43. Taxpayers
44. Hipsters
45. Baby Boomers
46. Homeowners
47. The Military
48. The Troops
49. Yinzers (for Pittsburgh)
50. Steel/Coal Plant Workers
51. Legal/Documented Immigrants
52. Regular/Simple/Decent/Rural Americans
53. Voters
54. Victims
55. People
56. Legal Voters
57. Sports Fans
58. State Electors
59. Trump Supporters
60. Moms
61. Workers
Fannie Lou Hamer

“Because of these young people, I think for the first time we have the chance to make democracy a reality in the United States.”
The Last Two Elections

• 2016: 54% whites voted for Trump and 39% voted for Clinton
• 2020: 57% whites voted to reelect Trump while 42% voted for Biden
• 2016: 53% white women voted for Trump; 2020: 55% white women voted for Trump
• White people were the only racial group in which a majority voted for Trump
• White youth were the likeliest youth to support Trump, with 43% between ages 18 and 29 voting for Trump leaving 56% of young white voters to vote for Biden – only white age group that repudiated Trumpism
Importance of Young Voters

- Represent many “new” American communities like Latinx, Asian-Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and North African
- Children of immigrants from Africa, Asian, Latin America, and Caribbean (especially younger Cuban-American community)
- Politically active despite intentional deconstruction of civics education in schools that affects their engagement

- Many grew up in the Obama years from 2009-2015 and only knew a Black president
- Trump is therefore their first “white President” with anti-democratic values and behavior (Ta-Nehisi Coates’ analysis)
- Rejection of single-issue voting
- Prefer an intersectional approach
- Less susceptible to Q-Anon and “Deep State” conspiracy theories
Good Intentions are Not Enough

- Must unlearn unconscious habits in addressing differences that can do more harm than good, no matter how good our intentions are.
- Lack of transparency and active secrecy on “difficult” issues creates confusion and divisions between white students and students of color.
- Assumes that “race issues” are only for students of color to learn; “gender issues” are only for female students to learn; “disability issues” are only for students who are disabled to learn, “queer issues” for gender non-conforming students, etc.
Excluding people from conversations based on identity can backfire if not handled ahead of a crisis (problematic DEI training).

May leave white students to bring their questions to students of color.

Goal is to foster innate empathy that is a useful leadership skill, but also builds healthier relationships in life.
RE-THINKING CALLING OUT

- **Avoid “us” vs. “them” mentality**
- **Focus on self/motives**
- **Prioritize strategy**
- **Envision outcomes**
- **Build collaboration**
- **Avoid shame and ousting as punishment**
- **Value relationships**
UNDERSTANDING YOUR CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

(OR DON’T WASTE YOUR TIME!)
90% → 75%
How to Determine Your 75% or 50%

- Who works on issues that are adjacent to the things you care about?
- Who do you have relationships with who don’t share your precise political perspectives?
- Who do you see as necessary to the work you want to do?
- Have you developed a strategic plan for identifying potential allies?
- Who would you like to develop relationships with?
- Examine when calling in is your opportunity to do so?
- When does calling in become your responsibility to do because you’re in a position to offer grace, forgiveness, and respect?
- Who shares your values but work on them in a different way?
WORKING FROM 90% TO 50%
CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

- Don’t overstate harm
- Take their suffering seriously
- Challenge narratives viewed only through a trauma/victim lens
- Offer factual explanations for their suffering
- Normalize a Calling In Culture
- Create sense of joy and belonging to human rights movement
- Use examples that resonate with their lived experiences that reinforce their positive values
- No name-calling or call-out tactics by weaponizing your knowledge or language
FIGURING OUT YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

- Friends
- Co-workers
- Colleagues
- Classmates
- Family
- Political allies
- Cultural leaders
- Trend-setters
- Confidantes
When Call-Outs are Good or Bad

• Not based on membership in a particular race, class, disability, citizenship, or gender identity
• Everybody makes mistakes. How we handle them matter
• If people make mistakes and are offered chances to do better – AND DON’T – this may be a call-out time
• If people make mistakes and offered a chance to do better and want to do better, this is a CALLING IN time
• Defining harms vs. discomfort
• How to handle getting called out on social media

• Need accurate threat assessments
• Goal is to become a CALLING IN CHAMPION, not a CALLING OUT problem
• I’m inviting you to think about that differently
• Learning to live a joyful but imperfect life
• The importance of guarding your own integrity and determining how you want to walk in the world
• Not to swallow the hurt but to call someone in, which takes courage
• Dealing with haters and trolls
What is Calling Out?

- Criticizing others’ social justice perspectives while not self-critical of one’s own
- Publicly using knowledge as a weapon against others
- Banishing others because they are not “woke” enough
- Using social activism to boost one’s ego, or standing in community
- Using trauma to claim moral superiority
- Seeking political purity of opinions through shaming, ideological bullying
7 Stages of Calling Out/Cancel Culture

Magnification by Natalie Wynn

• Presumption of Guilt
• Abstraction
• Essentialism
• Pseudo-Moralism/Intellectualism
• Unforgettability
• Contamination/Infection of Others
• Dualism/False Binaries
How is Calling Out Toxic?

- Replicates the prison system of punishment
- Creates a discouraging atmosphere for learning
- Frightens others into not speaking up to tell their truths
- Drives people away from the teamwork
- Disguises privilege while weaponizing “woke” language
- Makes accountability difficult
- Increases harm rather than healing
- Devalues people’s lived experiences
- Isolates people rather than unifying them
- Creates a culture of cynicism and hopelessness
Why Do People Call Out?

- End harm or abuse
- Respond to harm
- Draw attention to invisible or unmarked situations by validating people’s pain
- Show off knowledge and gain respect
- Establish superiority over another
- Seek positive attention
- Define the “in” crowd
Why Do People Call Out?

- Influence others to compete for power and respect
- Disguise own shortcomings with false assertion of dominance and getting their power back
- Seek validation from community of friends or strangers
- Ineffective way to offer criticism to make people follow invisible “rules” they may not know
- Accuse others of their own behaviors -- projection
Why Do Call Outs Occur? Emotional Reasons

- Everyone makes mistakes; owning up to them prevents repetition
- People don’t forgive themselves, so they have hard time forgiving others
- Seeking approval from others they don’t receive in other ways
- Hurt people hurt people – if you’ve been previously hurt you think hurting others is justified
- Lack of empathy and positive energy
- Lack of appreciation that we’re all learning
- Misunderstanding threats vs. discomfort
- Social justice work engaged in for selfish reasons instead of service to others
RE-THINKING CALLING OUT

- Avoid “us” vs. “them” mentality
- Focus on self/motives
- Prioritize strategy
- Envision outcomes
- Build collaboration
- Avoid shame and ousting as punishment
- Value relationships
Using Your Emotions for Calling In

There is difference between being *touched* by something and being *moved* to act. The first is your emotional response. The second are the actions you take after being affected. This two-step process of “*coming into consciousness*” is what Toni Morrison describes. Your emotions should lead to ACTIONS towards justice.
50 Benefits of Calling In

1. Sets standards for behaviors
2. Protects everyone’s integrity and reputation
3. Addresses power differentials
4. Constructively identifies what needs improvement
5. Increases chances improvement will occur
50 Benefits of Calling In

6. Defines accountability without furthering harm
7. Prevents further injustices
8. Provides a plan for rapid responses if other situations occur
9. Gets bystanders involved
10. Helps everyone learn and grow
50 Benefits of Calling In

11. Identifies unmarked or invisible structures and privileges
12. Helps those historically silenced
13. Finds others experiencing similar harms
14. Creates culture of accountability through love and respect
15. Promotes joy in joining human rights movement
50 Benefits of Calling In

16. Provides accessibility to all
17. Invites others to participate
18. Protects freedoms responsibly
19. Accounts for historical injustices
20. Avoids persecutions and witch hunts
21. Identifies words that wound and offers alternatives
50 Benefits of Calling In

22. Provides guidance for those with authority to learn how to handle conflicts
23. Promotes justice-seeking conversations
24. Develops leadership skills in understanding how systems work
25. Provides opportunity to make mission statements palpable in communities
26. Brings reality of marginalized people into center of discussion
50 Benefits of Calling In

27. Acknowledges lived experiences of everyone
28. Avoids gaslighting others
29. Creates a culture of inclusion
30. Makes struggle against oppression fun and consciousness-raising
31. Integrates processes and outcomes based on human rights standards
50 Benefits of Calling In

32. Encourages self-reflection and growth
33. Disrupts oppressive spaces and doesn’t replicate prison industrial complex
34. Avoids exaggeration of harm
35. Avoids presumption of guilt
36. Avoids presumption of unforgiveability
37. Avoids guilt by association or contamination
50 Benefits of Calling In

38. Teaches effective apologies by centering person receiving it, not person offering it
39. Tackles problems head-on
40. Uses conflict as a catalyst for growth
41. Builds strength and emotional intelligence and stamina
42. Avoids isolating people and driving others away
50 Benefits of Calling In

43. Identifies passive/aggressive behaviors like:

- Being late
- Procrastination
- Forgetfulness
- Sullenness
- Stubbornness
- Resistance to change
- Denialism
- Excluding people

- Gossip behind people’s backs
- Sarcasm
- Belittling
- Condescension
- Micro-aggressions
- What-aboutism
- False equivalences
- Avoiding accountability
50 Benefits of Calling In

44. Prioritizes kindness based on empathy instead of niceness based on conflict-avoidance

45. Avoids building culture of cynicism and hopelessness

46. Decreases harm over time

47. Teaches how to stay together during rough times
50 Benefits of Calling In

48. Allows you to work smarter, not harder

49. Can be used to address unhealed and broken relationships in your past

50. You can determine your own Circle of Influence
Steps for Calling In

- Analyze how you feel
- Define what is achievable
- Who are you trying to reach?
- Define what will create the change you desire
- Select which intervention can best influence people to behave differently
- Choose the right messenger
Understanding Calling In

- Goal is to decrease harm over time
- Not the job of victims/survivors to teach; must be voluntary
- Separate a person’s values from their behaviors
- Be comfortable with being uncomfortable as a bridge builder
- Accept that people are diverse with differing opinions, experiences
- There is a “woke” scale but it’s not a “woke” competition
- Understand the difference between problematic allies and opponents. Allies with issues are not enemies.
- Let go of what you cannot control – no Superpower to magically change other people
Calling In Begins with Self-Assessment

- Analyze how you feel and why you want to call-in
- Can you forgive yourself for your previous mistakes because this is the first step in forgiving others?
- Hurt victims have no responsibility to help those who hurt them, but the way to heal is to not give those who harmed you the power to control your emotions
Calling In Begins with Self-Assessment

- Are you in a healed-enough space for a difficult conversation?
- Define what will be different, because you don’t have the power to change others, but can only offer the grace of listening with love and respect
- Accept that you are offering your perspective without expecting to control another’s ability to receive it
Sample Roles in Calling In

- Survivor
- Advocate
- Intervener
- Healer
- Bridge Builder
- Bystander
- Witness/Reflector
- Abuser
- Common Ground Builder
- Question Asker
- Truth Seeker/Fact Finder
- Documentor
When You Are Called In or Out

- Time feels like forever when you’re shocked
- Sometimes when we say we’re hurting too we are not believed
- Recognize that some call-outs are justified, but not all
- How and when they occur matters
- Provides an opportunity for self-reflection and growth
- Can be used as a chance to call the other person in
When You Get Called In or Out

• Effective apologies require accepting responsibility, offering repair and rebuild, and changing behaviors
• Honesty is risky but often rewarding
• Understand the difference between intent and impact
• Remember how it feels before you call someone else out
# Interrupting a Call Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>Center yourself in your love practices so you can remain calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Up</td>
<td>Speak up through your discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind</td>
<td>Remind people of their human rights values and needs for each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check</td>
<td>Check emotional temperature of room to enlist others to build joy and love</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redirect</td>
<td>Redirect conversation back to the agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>Have individual conversations with people who are called out, or calling out others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>Help people identify problematic behaviors with specifics for change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make</td>
<td>Make a plan for future conversations</td>
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Avoiding Call Outs by Calling In

• Think through the decision to declare war on someone’s life or character

• Choices have consequences we should be able to look straight in the eye without shame

• We can control our opinion of ourselves when we choose honesty over deception or compassion over shaming

• The relationship that most matters is the one with our own integrity
Avoiding Call Outs by Calling In

• Examining our motives, understanding servant leadership, and that living up to principles is hard work
• As we work to change the world, we enlarge the possibilities of social justice by centering ethics and empathy
• Using radical love as an aspirational practice to bridge differences of identity and ideology
Start Up Sentences for Calling In

“When you said ______, I didn’t understand what you meant. Do you have time for us to talk about this more (now or at another time)?”

“I was wondering why the conversation became tense at this moment. Can we stop and investigate this?”

“I’ve noticed that most people aren’t speaking up? Can we slow down to go around the circle to get everyone’s opinions?”

“I want to revisit something that felt like disrespect to me, and I’m sure you didn’t mean that. May we talk some more?”

“When you used that word, I’m not sure what you meant. Can you tell me more?”

“Would anyone else like to share their views now?”

“What are we missing here? Is there something we should examine more closely?”
Practicing Calling In

- Seek mentorships; few things are that original that someone else has not experienced them
- Active listening skills needed
- Be a loving advocate against injustice by seeking accountability with compassion
- Dial the emotions back; more listening than talking
- Assess your own fear of speaking out
Practice Calling In

✓ Create “Calling In” ground rules at meetings or “don’t yuck my yum”
✓ Have fun by becoming a better, more politically empathetic and effective person
✓ Share with others
✓ Start with trusted friends
✓ Practice, Practice, Practice
What is now known is not all what you are capable of knowing... You are your own stories and therefore free to imagine and experience what it means to be human without wealth.

What it feels like to be human without domination over others, without reckless arrogance, without fear of others unlike you, without rotating, rehearsing and reinventing the hatreds you learned in the sandbox.

Toni Morrison
EVALUATION FORMS AVAILABLE ON MY WEBSITE AT

WWW.LORETTAjROSS.COM/FEEDBACKFORM
THANK YOU!

LORETTA J. ROSS

DRED FEMINIST
WE ALWAYS RESIST

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