The Conspiracy of Silence
3 PROTOCOLS OF WHITE / WESTERN CULTURE THAT IMPEDE AUTHENTIC DIALOGUE ON RACE
by Dr. Derald Wing Sue

The POLITENESS Protocol:
We must be nice and polite. We must take care not to offend others. We must keep conversations light, friendly, and noncontroversial. We must avoid conflict.
**We must embody different selves to maintain social harmony:**

**Authentic Self**
Who I really am: My actual beliefs, attitudes, ideas, and fears related to race — the language I use to express them when I'm not conscious or not worried about being judged.

**Ideal Self**
Who I want to be: The beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and emotions I want to have about race.
Sometimes I deceive myself, confusing my ideal self with my authentic self.

**Tactical Self**
Who I present to others: I use techniques to curate my image and ingratiate myself. I might express my authentic or my ideal beliefs and emotions about race, depending on audience.

The ACADEMIC Protocol:
We must separate the mind from the body. We must be objective. We must be rational. We must prioritize concrete, observable evidence. We must pursue a linear, logical path towards truth. We must create binaries and seek universality.
**We must obey these basic mandates of Western science:**

**Empiricism over Experience**
The personal and the intimate become intellectualized and sterilized. Storytelling is not considered evidence. Intuition is dismissed.

**Reason over Emotion**
Emotions are considered disruptive, dysfunctional, and disrespectful. It is assumed that learning occurs only when topics are discussed calmly.

**Reductionism over Complexity**
Phenomena must be broken down into distinct and separate units and categories. Contradictions, ambiguities, and irreversibility are undesirable.

The COLOR-BLIND Protocol:
We must pretend that racial difference does not exist, that we are not aware of racial difference, or that we are not affected by racial difference. We must maintain innocence, naïveté, and oblivion with regards to racial difference.
**We must continuously practice these forms of evasion:**

**Color Evasion**
"I don't see color!" "Color doesn't matter." "We're all the same." "There's only one race -- the human race." "I don't perceive difference!"
Implicit Idea: being a human = being White.

**Stereotype Evasion**
"I don't have any preconceived ideas about other races."
Consciously: reject stereotypes, deny prejudice.
Unconsciously: respond on basis of unacknowledged biases.

**Power Evasion**
"I don't have any special advantages or power because of my race." "Anyone can make it with hard work." "I earned everything I have!"
If I don't know about racial oppression, I don't have to do anything about it.

All of the above ideas are from Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race by Derald Wing Sue (2015). Infographic created by Dr. Sarah Ropp, 2021.