

A background image showing a group of people in a meeting or workshop. Several hands are raised, suggesting an interactive session or a vote. The image is dimmed and serves as a backdrop for the text.

# **POWER DYNAMICS, DECISION MAKING & COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS**

Dr. Adrian Thompson



WHEN GOOD INTENTIONS MEET  
COMMUNITY REALITIES

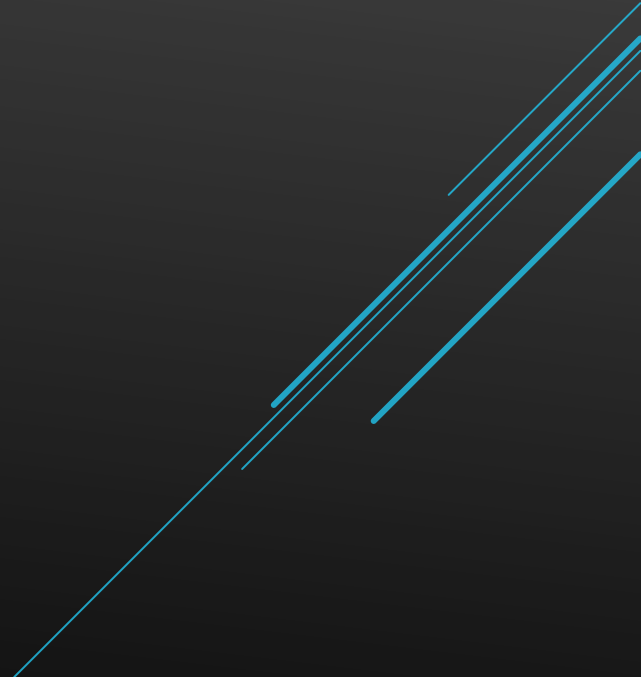
# TWO WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT DECISIONS

**Today's Framework:** How Fast vs. Slow Thinking Shapes Power Dynamics

Daniel Kahneman's research reveals two systems that influence our decisions:

- **System 1:** Fast, automatic, intuitive, emotional *In our opening story: Assuming established treatments would work; quick-fix solutions to attendance*
- **System 2:** Slow, deliberate, analytical, effortful *What was missing: Questioning assumptions; systematic investigation of community perspectives*

**Our Journey Today:** Examining how these thinking patterns affect whose knowledge we value, whose voices we hear, and how power is distributed in decision-making.

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# THE INTERSECTION OF COGNITIVE BIASES AND RACIAL POWER

## **How System 1 Thinking Perpetuates Racial Hierarchies:**

- Automatically centers whiteness as the invisible norm
- Creates what Dr. Glenn Singleton calls "the silence about race"
- Generates seemingly "race-neutral" policies with disparate impacts
- Attributes disparities to individual behaviors rather than structures

## **Tricia Rose's Concept of Metaracism:**

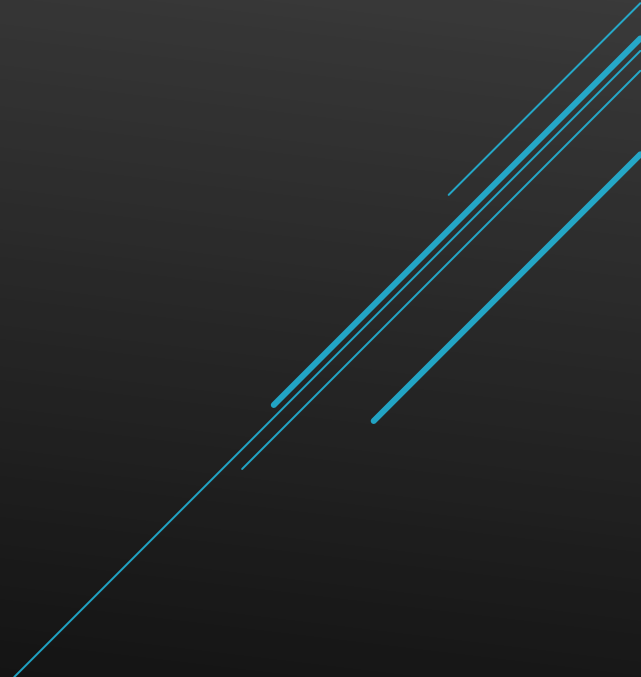
- Operates through "colorblind" narratives that mask persistent inequities
- Sustains racial inequality through three key myths:
  - Equal opportunity exists for all
  - Individual success stories prove the system works
  - Cultural deficiencies explain racial disparities

# "RACISM WITHOUT RACISTS" IN DECISION PROCESSES

## **System 1 Thinking in Institutional Contexts:**


- Produces racially disparate outcomes despite good intentions
- Operates efficiently and invisibly in standard procedures
- Generates explanations that locate problems within marginalized communities
- Avoids "keeping the spotlight on race"

## **Knowledge Hierarchies in Fast Thinking:**

- Professional expertise granted immediate credibility
  - Lived experience requiring extraordinary validation
  - Academic language privileged over other communication styles
  - "Objective" data valued over "subjective" community perspectives
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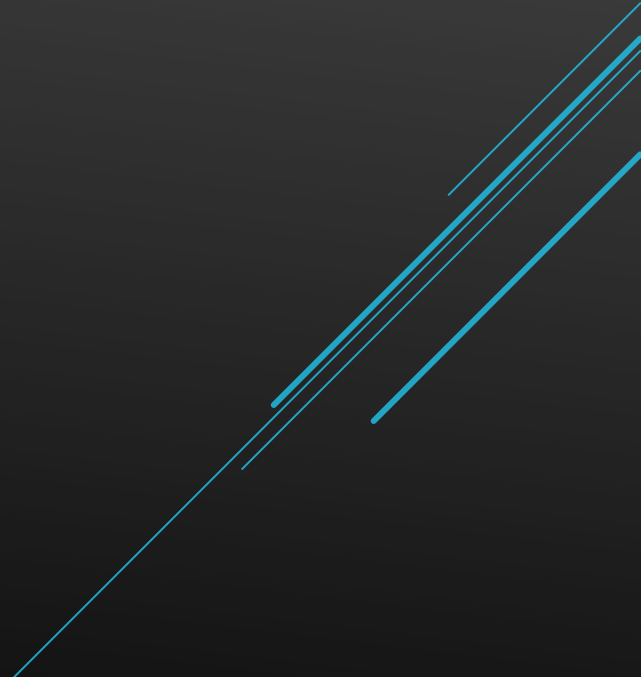
# CREATING EQUITABLE SPACES: ACTIVATING SYSTEM 2 THINKING

## Deliberate Approaches to Counter System 1 Biases:

1. **Structured Deliberation:** Protocols that slow down automatic reactions *Example: Required analysis of racial impact before program decisions*
  2. **Perspective-Taking Practices:** Systematically considering multiple racial viewpoints *Example: Structured consultation with affected communities*
  3. **Pre-commitment Strategies:** Establishing equity criteria before seeing options *Example: Racial equity impact assessments*
  4. **Interrogating "Neutral" Standards:** Examining cultural assumptions in criteria *Example: Reviewing evaluation metrics for embedded biases*
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# INTRODUCTION TO COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS FRAMEWORK

## **Singleton's Approach as System 2 Activation:**

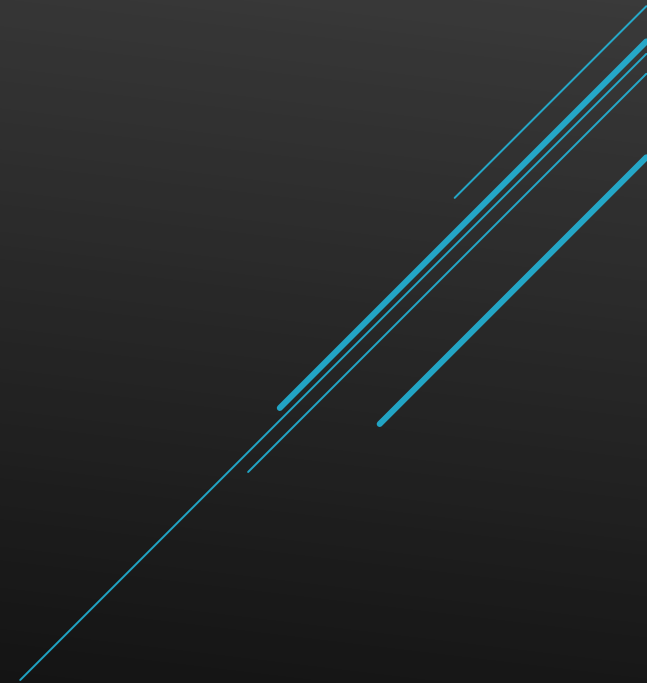
- Creates structures to disrupt automatic racial patterns
  - Provides tools to engage in deliberate racial analysis
  - Establishes protocols for sustainable dialogue across difference
  - Counteracts the "silence about race" that maintains inequities
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# THE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION COMPASS AS A DE-BIASING TOOL

## Balancing Multiple Ways of Knowing:

- **Emotional** (Heart): Counters the dismissal of feelings as "irrational"
- **Intellectual** (Mind): Values analysis while recognizing its limits
- **Moral** (Soul): Acknowledges beliefs that guide judgments
- **Relational** (Hands/Feet): Honors connection and practical action

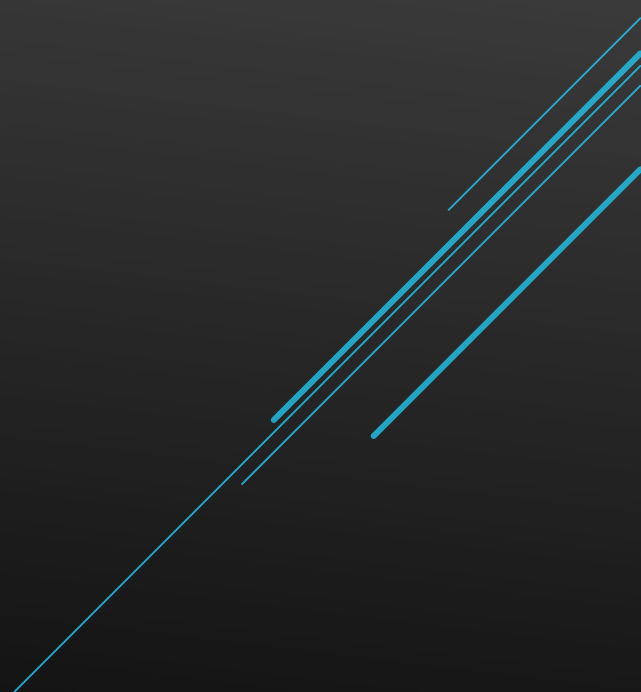
**System 2 Application:** The Compass helps us deliberately engage multiple domains rather than defaulting to dominant intellectual approaches.





# FOUR AGREEMENTS AS SYSTEM 2 ACTIVATORS

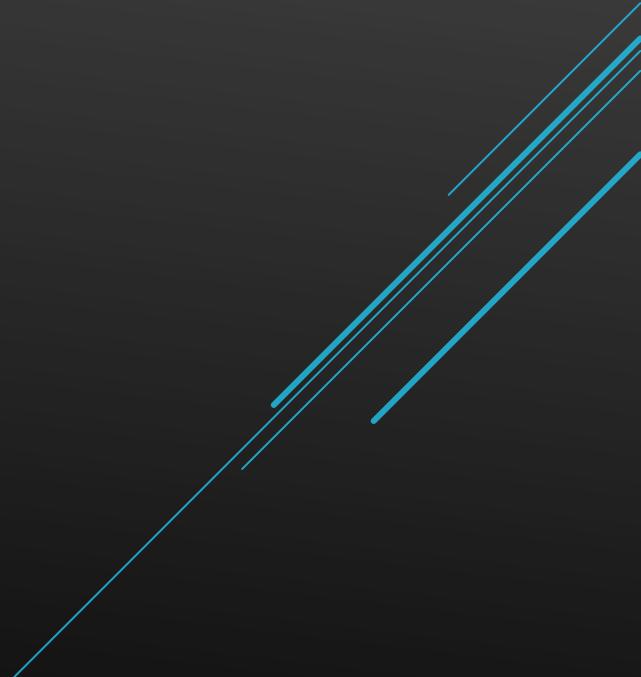
## Creating Conditions for Deliberate Thinking About Race:

1. **Stay Engaged:** Counters automatic disengagement from racial discomfort  
*Resists the System 1 tendency to avoid racial topics*
  2. **Speak Your Truth:** Addresses automatic deference to authority *Challenges hierarchies that determine whose perspectives count*
  3. **Experience Discomfort:** Counters comfort-seeking bias *Recognizes that System 2 thinking often feels uncomfortable*
  4. **Accept Non-Closure:** Addresses premature resolution bias *Resists the System 1 desire for quick, clean answers to complex problems*
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# IMPLEMENTATION: FROM AWARENESS TO STRUCTURAL CHANGE

## Redesigning Decision Processes to Counter System 1 Biases:

### Immediate Actions (Annotation Activity - Mark the 3 you commit to):

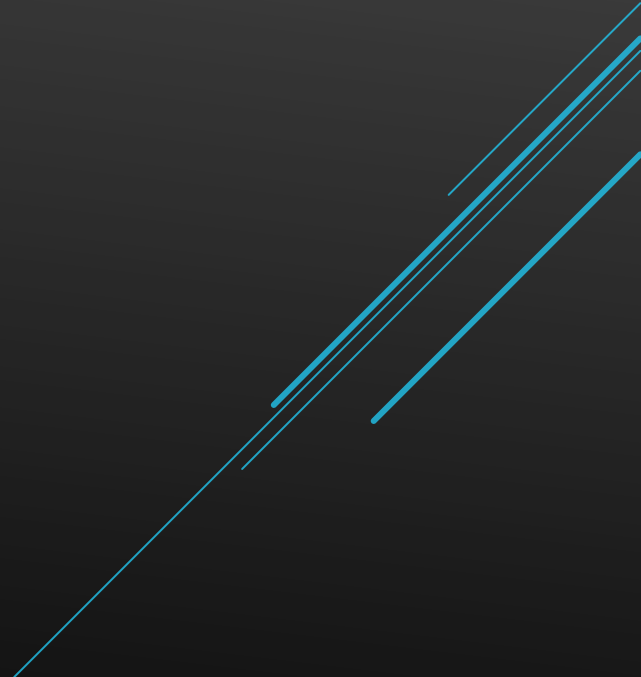
- Create structured protocols for racial impact analysis
  - Systematically gather input from those typically excluded from decisions
  - Explicitly examine cultural assumptions in evaluation criteria
  - Use the Four Agreements in discussions about disparities
  - Create brave spaces for explicit conversations about race
  - Track whose knowledge influences final decisions
  - Establish accountability measures for racial equity outcomes
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# YOUR COURAGEOUS NEXT STEPS

## Developing System 2 Practices for Racial Equity:

"By redesigning our decision processes to slow down automatic thinking and create space for diverse perspectives, you can transform your approach to decision making. The goal is to move beyond examining individual biases to questioning the structures that elevated certain voices and perspectives. This fundamentally changes whose knowledge we valued and how we defined success."

## Individual Commitments (Add to Chat):

- One System 1 pattern you'll be more conscious of in your work
  - One way you'll activate System 2 thinking in board dialogues
  - One structural element of power you'll examine in your context
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THANK YOU

