• Avoid accusing anyone of prejudice or unfairness. Instead, express your discomfort and ask each person to consider what happened and how they might feel in the other’s place. By raising everyone’s sensitivity to inappropriate comments or behavior, you are helping.

What if you see an activity that the leaders in your workplace endorse as acceptable but it excludes someone? An example of this would be when someone with authority in the workplace assumes that everyone has the same religious or cultural customs. If you don’t feel comfortable with any of the approaches discussed above, contact a member of Extension’s Diversity Catalyst Team for assistance. See the team’s Web site for a list of team members: http://harvest.cals.ncsu.edu/index.cfm?showpage=798.

Extension’s Diversity Catalyst Team
The team consists of employees who have volunteered to help their co-workers understand equal opportunity and to promote understanding of different social groups within the workplace. Visit the team’s Web page to see who is on the team and how to contact someone: http://harvest.cals.ncsu.edu/index.cfm?showpage=798

Team members can provide training and information about working in and creating an inclusive environment.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Diversity Catalyst Team to promote inclusiveness, contact Chiquita McAllister (mcallist@nca&t.edu) at N.C. A&T State University or Harvey Lineberry (harvey_lineberry@ncsu.edu) at N.C. State University.

Opening Doors
A Personal and Professional Retreat
North Carolina Cooperative Extension encourages all employees to attend a three-day retreat that gives participants opportunities to reflect on their membership and behavior in different social groups. The retreat is held twice a year and is free for Extension employees. For more information, visit the Opening Doors Web site: http://harvest.cals.ncsu.edu/index.cfm?showpage=716

Resources
Extension’s Diversity Catalyst Team
Final URL will be added

N.C. A&T State University Department of Human Resources
http://facultypages.ncat.edu/hr/
Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines

N.C. State University Office of Equal Opportunity
http://www.ncsu.edu/equal_op/index.html
Upcoming workshops:
http://www.ncsu.edu/equal_op/education.html
Equal opportunity training modules:
www.ncsu.edu/project/oeo-training/

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
http://www.eeoc.gov/

Change Agents States for Diversity
http://www.casd.cornell.edu/

To obtain copies of this brochure, contact Chiquita McAllister (mcallist@nca&t.edu).

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NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

What does this mean in the workplace? “Equal opportunity” in the workplace means more than fair hiring practices. It affects how we treat each other in the workplace. It describes one of Extension’s goals: to provide an environment where everyone can participate fully in workplace activities, regardless of physical traits or personal attributes.

Physical traits include age, gender, race, and physical ability. Personal attributes include one’s learning style, ethnic and cultural background, economic status, personal history, and religion.

Why is equal opportunity important? Our differences are the basis for our values, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, which form the basis for our performance at work and the positive impact we can make on the public we serve. Treating each other with respect regardless of differences means that everyone has a chance to contribute their best work in a supportive environment.

What is inclusion? An inclusive environment gives everyone the same opportunities regardless of their physical traits and personal attributes. An inclusive environment is guided by these values:

- To value human differences as a competitive advantage.
- To promote a culture that reflects the interests, contributions, and values of the diverse people we serve.
- To encourage full and influential participation by all members of the organization in decisions and policies.
- To eliminate any form of discrimination throughout the organization.
- To convey information in a manner that is easily understood by our diverse audiences.
- To be a resource for inclusiveness as part of community leadership.

Exclusion is the opposite. It involves subtle and obvious behaviors that deny someone respect and exclude them from workplace activities:

- Ostracizing someone who asks to be excused from an office event because of religious beliefs.
- Gossiping about a co-worker’s physical traits or personal attributes.
- Exchanging jokes that rely on stereotypes for humor.
- Assuming someone can’t do a job because of their gender, race, or ability level.
- Assuming everyone wants to participate in the same religious rituals.

How can I recognize exclusion? Sometimes it’s hard to recognize because everyone within a workplace has become accustomed to it. If you witness behavior that you think might be unfair to an individual or group in your workplace, imagine yourself in the same position. How would you feel if someone made a joke in your presence about a person of your race or ethnicity? What if you knew you were being gossiped about because of your dress, communication style, or other attributes? Would you mind being asked to pray in the custom of a religion other than your own?

What can I do about it? You can be a change agent. Remove yourself from activities that involve exclusion as soon as you can. This can be as simple as not acknowledging e-mails with jokes that rely on stereotypes, excusing yourself from a conversation that includes gossip about a co-worker, and asking others not to repeat ethnic jokes or gossip to you.

If you feel that you or someone else is being excluded or treated unfairly in the workplace, here are some guidelines to follow:

- Do nothing and wait to see if you witness similar behaviors in other circumstances before acting. Think about the circumstances, and imagine yourself in everyone else’s place. Perhaps the behavior was not intended to exclude anyone, but it might have that effect.
- Talk with someone you trust about the behavior that made you uncomfortable. Find out what they think about the situation.
- Talk with those involved. Express your discomfort with what is happening if you feel confident about doing so. Often it’s better to do this in one-on-one conversations with the others involved than with the entire group.