

## **INDABA**

The following Indaba process was used for conversation circles among students, faculty, and staff in the wake of campus cleaning staff finding a hate symbol carved into a bathroom floor and wall.

People counted off to form small discussion circles. They were assigned one of the following topics, then following the Indaba process named below for small and large group processing:

- Given that bias happens in the world, why would it not at Cornell College?
- When a bias related incident happens at Cornell, how do we want to respond as a community?
- When a bias related incident happens at Cornell, what will I do when it is not directed toward me personally or toward my identity group/s?

## **WHAT IS INDABA?**

Indaba is a gathering or conferencing process used by the Zulu and Swazi peoples of South Africa (the Swazi refer to the process as indzaba). It is also used in Iowa, and in other regions of the global Anglican Communion/Episcopal Church, for addressing difficult issues impacting life in community.

*[In] traditional African culture, people get together to sort out the problems that affect them all, where everyone has a voice and where there is an attempt to find a common mind or a common story that everyone is able to tell when they go away from it. This is how we approached it. This is what we heard. This is where we arrived as we prayed and thought and talked together."*<sup>1</sup>

## **How Indaba works**

The Indaba process allows for the perspective of each person to be heard in small group.

There is a facilitator, scribe, and time keeper (i.e. using a cell phone stop watch) for each group. Participants count off up to the number of small groups being created to ensure a greater mix of perspectives in each group. Group size should be no larger than 6-10 people.

A question or questions about the matter at hand is read by the facilitator. **The question is then passed, like a 'talking stick', giving each person in the small group time to speak without interruption. People are to only use "I" statements. Individuals can pass, or speak for less than their allotted time but no more.**

If more than one question is addressed in small group, all members speak before proceeding to the next question. **A facilitator guides the process and—if needed, reminds folks to stick with "I" based comments. The time keeper gives a 30 second**

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<sup>1</sup> Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams regarding Indaba at the 2008 Lambeth Conference.

**warning before the 2 minutes (or other allotted time) is up. The scribe summarizes what each person says. That summary is then shared with the larger group.**

When structuring an Indaba-based event, remember to factor in time for event introduction, Indaba instructions, reporting back brief summaries to the larger group, and larger group sharing (still using “I” based comments).

Event options, depending upon intention/need of the gathering, as well as time:

- When there are multi-faceted issues needing to be addressed, appoint several groups (made up of diverse constituents) a different question.
- Consider having scribes turn in all written notes so that one larger compilation from all groups can be gathered.