



Dr. Raquell Holmes

## Creating Inclusive Environments: Acts of power, leadership and conversation

Despite invitations to be part of a vibrant working community, women and minorities often experience statements, gestures and decisions that implicitly convey: “you don’t belong here”. Such subjective and oft nuanced experiences, known as micro-aggressions, are embedded in social interactions and re-inforce existing inequities.

Whether intentional slights or unconscious assumptions, these acts are felt by those they are directed to and others in the room (physical or virtual). How do we respond to these emotional, cultural and political moments? Each situation is different and includes a unique grouping of people. It is possible to get better at creatively responding to and transforming these instances into opportunities for growth.

In the *Creating Inclusive Environments* workshop, participants from different backgrounds and perspectives create new, powerful responses to challenging situations. They develop their ability to step out from roles as “bystander” or “victim” to ones of ally and leader for inclusive environments for all.

### Approach

The improvscience performance-based approach combines improvisational theater and social change methods with situations from science, engineering and academic settings. After a brief introduction and discussion, participants are led through improvisational exercises that build community, trust and candor. During in-depth workshops, participants have the opportunity to work on personal professional scenes and dialogs in which they find themselves. Participants speak with one another on difficult issues and the instructor directs improvised scenarios that help participants increase their capacity to create allies, be direct, leverage differences, and bring their whole selves to work.

**Format:** Collaborative, interactive, experiential groups online and in-person. Number of participants and length of training tailored to needs of the organization.

### Outcomes

Individuals learn and develop from the engagement as they:

- Practice building inclusive environments.
- Discover expressions of individual and collective power.
- Become comfortable with the discomfort of creating inclusive practices.
- Broaden their range of responses and solutions to challenging situations and disagreements.

### Raquell M Holmes, Ph.D.

Dr. Holmes is a computational cell biologist and a pioneer in using improvisational performance to build developmental science communities. After earning her Ph.D. at Tufts Sackler School of Biomedicine, she completed her postdoctoral training at Harvard Medical School. She then joined Boston University as a Research Assistant Professor and University of Connecticut Health Center as the Director of Outreach, Recruitment and Retention for the Center for Cell Analysis and Modeling. She is author of the book *Cell Biologist's Guide to Modeling and Bioinformatics*.

Dr. Holmes provides leadership development trainings that foster communication and expand professionals' relational capacities. She coaches scientists in their development as collaborative leaders, presenters, and builders of learning environments where everyone can contribute, be seen and valued.

Dr. Holmes has worked with over 3000 scientists, physicians and engineers across the country in university settings such as Harvard Medical, University of California Berkeley and San Francisco; at national labs and National Institutes of Health; and is sought as a public speaker, most recently addressing groups at the University of Tokyo, the American Meteorological Society and the Applied Improvisation Network.