Recently, Senator Jeff Flake’s [R-AZ] fifteen year old son, Tanner, tweeted that a “faggot” stole his bike. He also used the moniker of ‘niggerkiller’ in an online game and tweeted that Mexicans were the “scum of the earth.” Senator Flake issued an apology that he was disappointed at his son’s insensitivity. The Senator also went on to say, “I’ve spoken to him about this, he has apologized, and I apologize as well. This language is unacceptable, anywhere.”

At first glance, everything seems quite sincere and upfront. We might even be urged by our friends and colleagues to move on since they both apologized and took responsibility. But, there are real issues here that remain unanswered and questions that still need to be asked. For example, from whom and where did Tanner ‘learn’ about these groups? Is this simply Tanner’s personal opinion or is it symptomatic of his community, school and/or family? What is the extent of his exposure to Mexicans, African Americans and gays? Is it simply Tanner’s ‘insensitivity’ or rather that he is racist towards African Americans and Mexicans and heterosexist towards gays? What is Tanner actually apologizing for? That he got ‘caught’ and embarrassed his father (who happens to be a senator) or that he truly understands how painful and derogatory his remarks are to each of these groups? And while we’re at it, to whom is he apologizing? Why was it just to his father? Additionally, if these types of remarks are ‘unacceptable anywhere,’ then why did Tanner feel safe enough to send them to his friends and classmates? And how long has this been going on without anyone even noticing or feeling that something was morally and socially wrong?

What is needed from Tanner is a ‘meaningful apology’ that has long-term significance, takes responsibility and demonstrates learning and application for him, his family and his community. I would like to propose that Tanner is merely reflecting a nation that lacks the training and the modeling of what makes an ‘apology’ truly sincere and heartfelt. So, here are some useful pointers for Senator Flake and Tanner, as well as for Paula Deen:

**9 MEANINGFUL WAYS TO APOLOGIZE**

1. Communicate what you are apologizing for and what you’ve learned.
2. Reflect on your stereotypes/biases prior to the incident.
3. Take responsibility for the ‘impact’ of your actions, words and perceptions Avoid defending your good intentions or past history.
4. Be curious about the ‘impact’ of your actions and remain open to hearing reactions from others.
5. Feel and express sincere remorse, empathy and compassion.
6. Follow through by changing your behavior/attitudes at home, in your community and at work.
7. Share what you’ve learned with your family, colleagues, and community.
8. If possible, apologize to that particular group you’ve offended and enter into on-going conversations with them.
9. Be willing to hear from those groups that were targeted by validating their concerns, experiences, hurt and anguish.

“If you acknowledge and accept your mistakes, what I see are not your faults, but your goodness. If you make excuses for your mistakes by claiming your goodness and good intentions, then all I see are your faults.” (Author Unknown)
**Cross-Cultural Facilitation Techniques**
5-day Intensive for Diversity Trainers
Facilitated by Lee Mun Wah
August 10-14, 2013
Saturday: 2 pm-9 pm;
Sunday - Tues: 9 am-5 pm; Weds 9 am-2 pm
Quan Yin Training Center • 2311 8th Street, Berkeley, CA

Facilitating a group with many cross-cultural perspectives and experiences requires a keen understanding and knowledge of how cultural differences can impact group dynamics, relationships and their sense of safety.

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Unlearning Racism Retreat
Facilitated by Lee Mun Wah
September 20-22, 2013
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Quan Yin Training Center, Berkeley CA

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For questions, contact us at: products@stirfryseminars.com or call 510-204-8840 x100. www.diversitytrainingfilms.com

**End of “Summer” Sale!**

Get 25% off for a limited time off of all regularly-priced diversity training materials (including Lee Mun Wah’s newest book Let’s Get Real: What People of Color Can’t Say & Whites Won’t Ask About Racism as well as his book The Art of Mindful Facilitation) Enter coupon code NEWS25 upon online checkout at www.stirfryseminars.com/store.

*Some restrictions apply. Expires August 15, 2013*

**StirFry Calendar of Events**

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<td>Cross-Cultural Facilitation Skills for Diversity Trainers, Educators &amp; Therapists: Five Day Intensive</td>
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For StirFry’s complete Calendar of Upcoming Events, please visit www.stirfryseminars.com/events

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