



Racism, Discrimination and Abuse of Power (RDAP)— Shifting Awareness to Action

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ECI



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ECI provides ethics and compliance professionals with the resources they need to become great leaders, build exceptional Ethics and Compliance (E&C) teams, and create thriving ethical workplaces that set the highest standard. ECI is a leader in the business integrity space, helping professionals build and sustain programs that power strong ethical cultures and drive business success.

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Racism, Discrimination and Abuse of Power
Shifting Awareness to Action

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Foreword

The tragic murders of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, among too many others, once again brought to the forefront issues that have plagued our societies for centuries. Racism, discrimination, and the abuse of power (RDAP) were center stage in the public forum; social inequities were being discussed as enormous threats to the health of our world. In response, ECI issued a public statement to add our voice to the growing call for an end to the deeply rooted injustices that have persisted far too long. We also felt compelled to do more than just decry the issue; we wanted to take action in our own community.

That was the beginning of the Working Group that for quite some time has dedicated itself to further understanding the issue of RDAP; in workplaces, in society and in the E&C profession. This report is the end result of their passion and persistence. We are deeply indebted to them for their hard work and thought leadership.

The pages that follow offer deep insights based on research, experience and best practice. The survey conducted by this Working Group and the resources they cite offer a deeper look at how RDAP is experienced and addressed in modern workplaces, with an emphasis on the role of E&C practitioners as champions for ethical workplace cultures that truly celebrate diversity. Some of the major points from the report's content are outlined below.

- E&C professionals play a crucial role in ensuring a healthy workplace that offers employees safety in sharing their ideas and celebrating their individuality.

- Anti-racism and anti-discrimination policies and trainings are happening in many organizations—but most often, the driver of such initiatives has been the potential harm to the company's reputation rather than a desire to holistically implement the organization's ethical values.
- As evidenced by the case studies in this report, from recruiting practices to accountability metrics, employers are already taking steps to counter RDAP and the ways that it manifests.
- Despite progress being made, there is room for improvement. There are concrete steps that any organization can take to build an inclusive culture within their workplace.
- Because RDAP-related incidents can be so destructive to the strength of any organization's workplace culture, ECI's framework for High-Quality E&C Programs can be a helpful starting point for E&C teams endeavoring to build a culture that does not tolerate RDAP.

To sum it all up, there is no place for RDAP in the workplace; neither is there room for the harm it inflicts on the world. On behalf of ECI, I want to thank the Working Group once again for their tireless efforts. I also thank readers of this report for your attention and dedication to improving the E&C community and the societies in which we live.

Patricia Harned

Patricia J. Harned, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer, ECI

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Acknowledgements

ECI would like to thank Con Edison of New York for sharing details of their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Challenges and General Mills for sharing details of the history and success of their Employee Resource Networks (employee resource groups.) These case studies provide excellent examples other organizations can follow for strengthening their own internal programs, including education and allyship as important elements in building cultures of trust and belonging for all.

More than 200 individuals responded to a survey from ECI to its mailing list, answering a variety of questions about racism, discrimination, and the abuse of power (RDAP), including their personal experiences and observations about their workplaces and the E&C profession. Their input is truly appreciated, and the survey results form a key element of this report. Lastly, we thank all the contributors and group members that helped to complete this white paper who are not listed below.

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Executive Summary

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, closely following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, was one of a series of tragedies and high-profile cases that prompted global racial justice protests and led to intense public dialogue about racism, discrimination and the abuse of power (RDAP) in all aspects of society, including within workplaces. Recognizing that Ethics and Compliance (E&C) functions and practitioners may have unique opportunities to address RDAP within their organizations, the Ethics and Compliance Initiative (ECI) convened a working group to explore relevant research, best practices and opportunities. ECI's leadership asked the working group to consider what can be done by the Ethics and Compliance profession, by individual E&C practitioners and by organizations both within their workplaces and in the broader context of their communities.

Data from ECI, the Workplace Bullying Institute and Society for Human Resource Management provide evidence of RDAP in workplaces. To obtain additional insight into RDAP in the workplace, ECI conducted a survey of E&C professionals on behalf of the RDAP Working Group. Survey results identified some race-based experiential differences among E&C practitioners and suggested opportunities for action and for future research.

Recommended actions include the application of ECI's Principles of a High-Quality Program (HQP), particularly in risk identification and mitigation related to RDAP. In addition, examples are provided of actions being taken by organizations in areas including recruiting, interviewing, investing in communities, fostering allyship, using metrics and taking collective action. Case studies from Con Edison of New York and General Mills provide deeper dives into education via peer-led discussions and into the effective use of Employee Resource Groups, respectively.

Some international examples are provided, but this report admittedly has a United States focus. The working group concluded that meaningful reviews of RDAP issues and solutions specific to individual countries or regions other than the United States, would be best addressed in a future report dedicated to that purpose.

The report concludes with a Call to Action including recommendations for companies and their E&C functions, ECI and the broader E&C profession and individual E&C practitioners. These range from learning to recognize and avoid the use of offensive language, to pursuing community collective action and to developing a profession-wide inclusion initiative for E&C practitioners.