



Ask Me Anything
A Courageous Conversation on White Fragility

Panelists: Ryan Trudeau and Rob Chambers
Co-hosts: Samantha Moonsammy and Faduno Ali

Wednesday, December 15, 2021 at 1:00PM EST

Ask Me Anything: A courageous conversation on white fragility and how to be an ally in the workplace

On December 15, 2021, the [Ask Me Anything: A Courageous Conversation on White Fragility](#) event explained and explored white privilege. Accepting white privilege as a fact is understanding that individuals who present as white have fewer barriers in Canada and other western countries. No matter how hard their individual life circumstances may be, as a group, they can generally trust in the government, institutions and society to give them the benefit of doubt. In the simplest terms, individuals who present as white are not at increased personal risk because of their race.

More than 1050 participants tuned in live from over 47 federal departments and agencies to learn more about white privilege and the harm of white fragility. Discussing white fragility is hard and uncomfortable. There are many complex definitions, but in its simplest terms it can be described as a white person requiring increased emotional support and assurances when a non-white person identifies an issue of racism- either individual or systemic. In many cases, the victim of racism ends up spending their emotional energy assuring the individual that they are a decent person and calming them down. In the end much more energy is spent on calming the perpetrator of the racist act then comforting the victim of racist actions. This often results in the reality that calling out racial injustice causes greater discomfort than the act of racism itself.

These concepts were discussed by the event's featured guest speakers Ryan Trudeau, Senior Innovation and Risk Analyst from Global Affairs Canada, and Rob Chambers, Assistant Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Environment (ADM(IE)) and was hosted by the Materiel Group and (ADM(IE)). Moderators Samantha Moonsammy and Faduno Ali

led an engaging, and sometimes difficult conversation with Rob and Ryan to further examine white fragility and race privilege.

For Rob Chambers, there is no more meaningful work than creating a workplace where people feel safe, welcome, and have the opportunity to flourish. Many federal public servants experience the negative impacts of systemic racism daily; these issues keep Rob up at night and motivate him come in every morning. His *raison d'être* is that “something must change, and we all have a role to play in that effort”.

Ryan Trudeau shared his personal journey to understanding, accepting, and using his white privilege to make a safe space for those without privilege and to inspire others to do the same. He acknowledged his privilege as a Canadian-born, white, able-bodied, heterosexual, cis-gendered male born into a middle-class family. He discussed the term white fragility and how it can generate a strong and often defensive reaction. However, the recognition of unearned privilege, like where you were born or the colour of your skin, does not negate any accomplishments or struggles that you went through.

Everyone needs to reach their own ‘tipping point’ to take action against systemic racism. Ryan explained that his own tipping point was an experience that his child had at school. After seeing how his child was impacted, he took time to become more knowledgeable, to discover how he could be part of the change he desired. He reinforces this by continuing to learn and act.

Hopefully Ryan’s words inspire you to be part of the change you want to see in the world! Ryan shared 10 points on being an ally that he learned from Patricia Harewood, Director, Representation and Legal Services Branch, Public Service Alliance of Canada:

1. Be an active listener.
2. Don’t rely on others for your learning.
3. Accept criticism - learn, unlearn, reflect.
4. Support marginalized public servants.
5. Use your privilege to dismantle systemic racism.
6. Support advancement opportunities for marginalized public servants.
7. Don’t expect rewards/recognition when facing the day-to-day problems.
8. Share your decision-making power (Leadership).
9. Build a professional network that includes marginalized public servants.
10. Give positive and fair referrals and/or evaluations to marginalized public servants.

Ryan is not an expert on white fragility, nor does he want to be praised for taking action. These issues matter, and Ryan hopes that by facilitating these discussions, more people are motivated to learn, act, and inspire others. We need to act and not wait for others to do the hard work for us. Change begins when one individual takes a courageous step, but it can become more impactful when we stand together.

The full event is available on [GCcollab](#) and [YouTube](#). Please use the monthly Ask Me Anything sessions as an opportunity to have brave conversations in your workplaces

and with your teams. Tune in live and watch the session together or watch a [replay](#), then book a team session and share [important discussions with the #AMACHallenge](#).

When we develop our cultural competence, we are able to work better together within our teams and respond to each other with relevant empathy and compassion. By celebrating and sharing our authentic selves, we gain a greater appreciation for each other and the diversity that surrounds us.

Please contact the [Diversity and Inclusion Team](#) if you have any questions about the Ask Me Anything events.