

# OGL 481 Pro-Seminar I: PCA-Ethical Communities Worksheet

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## **1) Briefly restate your situation from Module 1 and your role.**

On Thursday, April 12, 2018, two black men were arrested at the City Center Starbucks in Philadelphia on suspicion of trespassing. The two gentlemen had made a request to use the restroom, which was refused since they had not purchased any Starbucks products, and they were asked to leave shortly thereafter by employees. The gentleman declined the request, and the manager of the location subsequently took matters into their own hands and contacted the authorities to have the would-be patrons removed. It was later verified that they were meeting with another patron, Andrew Yaffe.

My role in the organization will be as an HR representative working with a crisis team to develop a strategy to deal with the aftermath of two African American gentlemen being arrested on suspicion of trespassing during an incident at a Philadelphia Starbucks that took place on Thursday April 12, 2018. My team will have to consider this issue from multiple frames (HR, political, symbolic, ethical, and structural) to respond to both public backlash and political fallout for this blunder. Immediate and effective responses are critical when dealing with a publicly traded corporation.

## **2) Describe how the ethics of the organization influenced the situation.**

Starbucks has stood for diversity and inclusion since its founding in 1971. Starbucks believes in developing a diverse and inclusive workforce through programs that include mentorships, partner networks, a 15-course anti-bias curriculum, and 100% pay equity. The company also strives to create transparency by offering information on compensation tied to the building of inclusive and diverse teams for executives, as well as publicly available assessments evaluating the organizations commitment to civil rights (as conducted by Covington and Burling LLP, an external assessor).

The ethics of the organization would have supported this incident never taking place to begin with. There were no policies in place that supported the removal of the patrons in question on the day of April 12, 2108. The ethical measures taken by the organization to include a 15-course anti-bias curriculum was, unfortunately, only implemented because of this incident. While there were still several policies in place that encouraged diversity, inclusion, and anti-discrimination towards both patrons and Starbucks partners, this more specific measure was not in place during the time of the incident.

## **3) Recommend how you would apply one of the ethical communities for an alternative course of action regarding your case.**

One of the communities that could have been considered for alternative course of action regarding this case would be the view of the organization as a temple. “An organization, like a temple, can be seen as a hallowed place, an expression of human aspirations and beliefs, a monument to faith in human possibility” (Bolman, 2021, p. 420). Starbucks’ desired state is one that includes excellence, caring, and justice. Justice includes preserving the rights and integrity of our partners and our patrons when they are inside our stores.

Temples need spiritual leaders, and the management of our stores is representative of this spiritual leadership. Our leaders and managers are meant to embody the values and beliefs of the organization. In this sense, our leadership failed on the day of this incident. A manager made the choice to judge the situation and act in a way that did not support or represent the values of the organization. This may not have been entirely the fault of the organization – sometimes subtle bias and discrimination can be difficult to identify even by the most scrutinizing parties. However, taking corrective action in the form of anti-discrimination and anti-bias training was a crucial step in reiterating the values that Starbucks wishes to instill in all of our partners.

**4) Reflect on what you would do or not do differently given what you have learned about ethics.**

From an ethical perspective, I would have acted as the organization chose to act. The organization made a public apology, brought in respected experts to help form a curriculum geared towards anti-discrimination and inclusion, and took great losses by closing stores to implement the training. There are recommendations I made from the political frame that I feel could apply here as well – it would be an ethically sound decision to support anti-discrimination legislation and lobby for more inclusion in organizational settings. This would be a measure the company could take not simply because it is politically sound, but because it is the morally correct thing to do.

When you represent yourself as an ethical and inclusive organization, you must be willing to show that with your actions and put your money where your mouth is. Starbucks took steps to show they were willing to put their money where their mouth is by taking financial losses and investing heavily in a training program. However, we might have investigated further steps that may have been taken to ensure that the organization never makes such a misstep in the future. The Starbucks manager who called the police on store patrons that day left the company, but it is not entirely clear if that was by choice. A spokesperson for the company only stated that “she is no longer at that store” in response to questions by CNBC (Whitten, 2018, para 2). Generally, I do not support the concept of “making an example of someone”, but in this case I believe it was the organization's ethical responsibility to publicly remove this manager from their position. That is one thing I would have done differently. That sort of behavior cannot be tolerated.

## References

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