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National Center on Advancing  
Person-Centered Practices and Systems

## **Culture & Person-Centered Practices – Bex Mui: Challenging Assumptions**

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### **SPEAKER**

Bex Mui

### **Bex Mui**

Hi, I'm Bex Mui. I use "she" and "her" pronouns.

And I'm here to talk today about assumptions.

So, to get started, you can pause this video or take some notes.

And I just want you to think about or write down, what are some assumptions that you have about me? Without knowing much and just kind of looking, if I'd walked into your office, you're working with me.

What are some assumptions that you have about my identity, about my name, about my sexual orientation, my relationships, my ability, my race? What comes to mind? What about now?

All of these are clothes and things I have, and things I wear and things I feel comfortable in and different ways that I look at different times. You never know if you're going to catch me on more of a working day, on more of a femme day, or more of a day like this.

So, any changed assumptions?

I'll tell you a little bit about myself and see what we can fill in.

So, I said my name is Bex Mui. I spell that B-e-x. It's not my legal name. It's not the name I was given, but it's the name that feels the most comfortable to me and the one I like to be addressed with.

Mui is my last name. It's M-u-i. It's Cantonese.

My family and my father's family comes from Guangzhou, China.

My grandfather was born there and all of our ancestors, and my grandfather was actually sold down to Malaysia when he was nine to work on rubber plantations. This is him; his name is Muichin.

My father was born in Malaysia. He's one of seven and he came over to America for grad school and he ended up meeting my mom.

My mom is Polish. She is third generation. Actually, second generation American and I'm third. This is my "Babci." So, I'm Polish and Chinese biracial, and growing up, I am from a really small town off of Cape Cod that was super white, that was really privileged.



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And even my own experience of race in my life has been really filtered by other people's assumptions and what other people thought about me.

I was always considered Chinese growing up. We were the most Chinese people in my small town. We were like the Chinese family, and I loved that. I really identify with Chinese culture, even though I also had this other side for me, Polish culture; and it's always been really a big part of my life because my Babci married a Polish man, lived in a Polish neighborhood.

And so, growing up, we went to the Polish Roman Catholic church. We had Polish festivals, we ate Polish food, we celebrated holidays. And so, both of these parts of my culture have always been a part of me, but at school and with other people, you know, we were the Chinese family. And I grew up in a town in a time when there was a lot of anti-Chinese and anti-East Asian racism and so that was a big part of my life as well.

You know, a lot of misunderstanding, especially because my father is from Malaysia, which was a place we really didn't know about. So that really shaped my experience until I went to college in New York and I was considered white passing for the first time in my life.

And it was a really big shock to me because I had always been told - not only that I was Chinese - but that I wasn't white.

The people around me were white and I was something else. And so, being framed as white, I went to a school that was predominantly Black and Latinx all-girls school in New York; and it was a real, real surprise.

So, as a bi-racial person, I've woven this path of being both in and outside of groups and of other people telling me where I fit and who I am. Another part about me is my gender. I shared that a little bit and I have a big space for how I express my gender.

Although, I identify as cisgender, just meaning that I was assigned female at birth, and I identify as a woman and that feels the same or aligned to me. But at the same time, my expression has a lot of space and I love having short hair. I have plugs, I have tattoos, and those parts of my expression and how I show myself is a part of my gender expression for me.

But I also do identify as a lesbian. I also identify as queer. I have, this is my girlfriend and our baby kitten, who's actually now like 13 pounds and not so much a kitten. Her name is Cheryna. She's Dominican and that's my family. And those kinds of things also, who's a part of my larger heart community, you can't really tell just by looking at me.

I also wanted to talk about ability.



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So, I don't know if you're making any assumptions about me or my ability. You really can only see me from here to here, but I do have an invisible disability. I'm visually impaired and it's something that I work with and have worked with for a long time.

I have very strong contacts. I actually, my eyes are too hard to use glasses because they have to be so thick, and I actually get headaches. So, I have glasses which might give a clue that my eyes are something that needs extra support, but they don't work for me.

So, I have to make considerations. I work from a computer. I work from home and so making accommodations, luckily, is a little easier in that way that I have large print on my screen, I have two screens and I have to give myself a lot of breaks.

I need accommodations when I work for organizations to make sure that I'm not on Zoom too long, that I have breaks for my eyes, that I may look out a window and do exercises. There's a lot of work I have to do and it also affects my driving and my ability to kind of move freely through the world.

And at the same time, I'm very privileged in the ways in which I can still move through the world without accommodations and the access to vision that I do still have at this time at least, but it's something that I carry with me.

And before we close, I wanted to also share some things about my religion and my spirituality. I'm not sure if you had any thoughts or if there were any assumptions about me.

This is Jade so it's a part of my Chinese culture that I do wear and share. And having Buddhist practices is also part of my world, and my life, and my work.

This is Pema Chödrön.

She's actually a queer, Tibetan Buddhist philosopher.

That's one of my favorite spiritual beings and somewhere that I get a lot of guidance when I need to. I was also raised in the Catholic church and so, this is my Bible.

I do spiritual organizing now in addition to LGBTQ consulting and equity work, and spiritual practice is a really big and important part about me and who I am. So, I have a lot of work on Catholic and Christian roots.

I do workshops on building your queer spiritual toolbox for the queer and trans community, and I offer spiritual guidance on Instagram at [@houseofourqueer](#).

So it's a way that I can bring in social justice activism and spiritual organizing ways to go out and fight against inequity in systems, and ways to come together as a community and as marginalized folks, to build ourselves up.



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And for me, spirituality and even religion is a really big part of that. I also do queer spiritual practices. This is my crystal - one of many that I charged, that I bring energy from.

This is my Tarot deck - one of them, which is another way that I find guidance, and that I give guidance.

And so, I want to just offer if you hadn't thought about queer folks, or me particularly having a spiritual path or a spiritual journey, or identifying with any type of spiritual practice, a religion; that might be an assumption you want to check.

Thank you so much and enjoy the rest of your day.