

Statement from the SPFC Diversity Committee

The SPFC Diversity Committee strongly denounces the horrific racism and hatred on full display in the recent abhorrent killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd. We deeply recognize that these deaths are only the latest among the countless acts of violence directed toward Black individuals going about their everyday lives; these acts, in turn, are a manifestation of historical and systemic oppression of Black Americans in the United States.

We also know that these horrific events impact people differently depending on the experiences that have shaped us. For those of us who are not Black, we will not be able to fully grasp the magnitude of the pain and anger stemming from centuries of experiencing structural and interpersonal racism directed toward Black Americans. Despite this, we stand in solidarity with our Black communities during this time. We stand with you, who are scared, grieving, angry, frustrated, or any other emotions. As social scientists, we in SPFC are fully committed to the work of justice that will help to eradicate racism, hatred, bigotry, and other oppressive systems. We know that the burden of this work should not fall on one community, but rather it requires all of us to be deeply engaged.

We also recognize that the wealth of the United States is a direct result of the labor of enslaved Black people. The U.S.'s current economic structure depends on the ongoing subjugation of Black people (Nkomo, 1992; Roithmayr, 2014). This system has led to disproportionate privileges and opportunities in American society based on race, with many in White communities benefiting most. We invite everyone in SPFC to engage in the lifelong process of identifying when we are upholding and benefitting from unfair systems. Next, we must join together to dismantle those systems even as we reimagine and build new ones. In accordance with SPU's mission, our primary motivation for this work is love, and in this spirit we also support the work of President Dan Martin and other senior leaders to engage in meaningful dialogue and change efforts with SPU students and other constituents.

As educators in psychology and related fields, we believe that the SPFC community is uniquely positioned to be attuned to structural racism impacting Black Americans, and to take appropriate action to advocate for those who are impacted. As such, in the attached document, we have begun the work of compiling various resources that might be helpful for teaching, advocacy, coping, and allyship.

SPFC faculty, please note that we are asking you to contribute to this document, so that we can draw from the collective wisdom and experience of the SPFC community. This effort of the SPFC Diversity Committee is consistent with the educational goals of and the voices from our accrediting bodies, such as the [American Psychological Association](#) and the [Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education](#). Likewise, our convictions expressed here are aligned with the [diversity commitment](#) of our larger university community. As more resources come out of these entities, we hope to share those with you as well.

You will notice that this document is **editable by SPFC faculty**. As you encounter different materials that may be useful for our community, we encourage you to insert the information in this document. When do you so, we ask that:

1. Identity yourself by name.
2. Provide any available link.
3. Provide a short annotation (1-2 sentences) describing why you think the material might be useful.
4. Use track changes (it is turned on by default) to add your text, so that the Diversity Committee is aware of the changes in the document.

Finally, we would like to close by repeating the sentiments that we expressed in a previous resource document. Too many times, for various reasons, the default mode is silence to the ongoing events in our local and global communities. Speaking as faculty, the topics we choose not to mention are as important (if not more important) to students as the topics we choose to discuss. By not engaging a topic, we (inadvertently) send the message that because a topic or event does not impact us personally, it is not worth discussing. Addressing these events with a stance of compassion and empathy is often appreciated by our students. It also role models to students how to be supportive advocates. Along those lines, please let us know how the diversity committee can better-serve SPFC as we support students impacted by a myriad of hardships in our current time, including mass deportations, LGBTQ discrimination, anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic sentiment, and more.

Thank you for sharing and contributing to this document.

Sincerely,

SPFC Diversity Committee

References:

Nkomo, S. M. (1992). The emperor has no clothes: Rewriting "race in organizations". *Academy of Management Review*, 17, 487-513.

Roithmayr, D. (2014). *Reproducing racism: How everyday choices lock in white advantage*. NYU Press.

Resources

1. Identity yourself by name.
2. Provide any available link.
3. Provide a short annotation (1-2 sentences) describing why you think the material might be useful.
4. Use track changes (it is turned on by default) to add your text, so that the Diversity Committee is aware of the changes in the document.

For White People: Learning to Engage in Allyship Behaviors

This link provides a pretty comprehensive list of resources for education on what it means to be white and how to engage in anti-racism work:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BRIF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VIBO-QgirlTwCTugSfKie5Fs/preview?pru=AAABcnZds8Y%2ABosNWbot9-ulTo9FajbiNA&fbclid=IwAR3ACVDmUXiE6JZLSBwK985h948LXn1ClgtLmUnH66k6T_aeDg1BvZz71cw

This book is helpful for unpacking whiteness and teaching about systemic inequities:

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/what-does-it-mean-to-be-white-robin-j-diangelo/1124386545?ean=9781433111150>

For all: Learning to Engage in Allyship Behaviors

This book is essential for understanding how our education system in the US does not tell us the truth about US history, leaving many of us ill-equipped to engage in anti-racism:

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/lies-my-teacher-told-me-james-w-loewen/1100185227?ean=9781620973929>

For Coping with Racism

Responding to Microaggressions

- This article goes over some strategies for responding to racial microaggressions: <https://nyti.ms/2wsh0bY>
- The above NYT article draws heavily from this scholarly piece. This American Psychologist article is especially effective in articulating different strategies for responding to microaggressions, depending on one's goals and roles (bystander, recipient, or perpetrator): Sue, D. W., Alsaidi, S., Awad, M. N., Glaeser, E., Calle, C. Z., & Mendez, N. (2019). Dismantling racial microaggressions: Microintervention strategies for targets, White allies, and bystanders. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 128-142.

Experienced or observed a bias-related incident while at SPU? We encourage you to report it to the office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

<https://wiki.spu.edu/pages/viewpage.action?spaceKey=HR&title=Anti-Bias+Policy>

Action Steps

This article aimed toward leaders/managers for how to support employees of color in the workplace. It contains many practical ideas that can translate easily to the academic context:

<https://qz.com/work/1175468/why-you-need-to-talk-politics-at-work/>

De-Centering Whiteness

By Dr. Dana Kendall

In diversity work, we must develop eyes to see what was previously unseen—what was formerly taken for granted. In U.S. culture (and SPU is no exception) [whiteness is the norm—the baseline to which everything and everyone else is compared](#). [Whiteness, as a cultural system of beliefs](#), consists of several underlying assumptions, including but not limited to: (a) the U.S. economic system is sustainable and moral, (b) people generally experience life outcomes that are commensurate with their efforts, and (c) comfort and civility are pursued as moral mandates, over and above truth and justice. Above all, whiteness is completely convinced of its own innocence and fundamental goodness. We are generally unaware that we are beholden these implicit beliefs and norms until someone violates them or exposes their fallacious underpinnings. We recognize that across most institutions, individuals of color are generally [expected to assimilate to the expectations of whiteness](#), and their presence is desired only to the extent to which they do so. As [Austin Channing Brown explains](#):

“Whiteness constantly polices the expressions of Blackness allowed within its walls, attempting to accrue no more than what’s necessary to affirm itself. It wants us to sing the celebratory “We Shall Overcome” during MLK Day but doesn’t want to hear the indicting lyrics of “Strange Fruit.” It wants to see a Black person seated at the table but doesn’t want to hear a dissenting viewpoint. It wants to pat itself on the back for helping poor Black folks through missions or urban projects but has no interest in learning from Black people’s wisdom, talent, and spiritual depth. Whiteness wants enough Blackness to affirm the goodness of whiteness, the progressiveness of whiteness, the openheartedness of whiteness. Whiteness likes a trickle of Blackness, but only that which can be controlled.”

In light of this state-of-affairs, we argue that if SPFC sets an objective to de-center whiteness across our school, we will be more likely to retain faculty of color and move toward a place of

[racial conciliation](#).¹ We do not intend to approach this work primarily as a business strategy, enhancing our school's image by increasing the number of faculty and students of color. Rather, the goal is to expose and confront power asymmetries on our campus and beyond. The accountability for progress toward this objective will reside primarily with those who have benefitted the most from the inequities. We acknowledge this work will be ongoing, never fully completed.

We are dedicated to [developing awareness of the invisibility and power of whiteness](#), acknowledging that none of us, regardless of ethnic background, are exempt from upholding and benefitting from it to varying degrees. A long-term, holistic effort across our school will be required to infuse fresh perspectives into the content of our courses, our advising and collegial relationships, our PDP's, and our selection/hiring practices. We will be diligent in ensuring that the bulk of the work involved in the transition will not fall on faculty of color; instead, we regard this endeavor as a community journey.

To this end, we plan to implement two strategies in the next 1-2 years. First, we will be rolling out an initiative for white faculty in SPFC that will give them practical tools for grappling with their white identity in healthy ways. A primary goal will be learning new strategies for confronting emotional fragility, discomfort, and defensiveness when receiving feedback on their inevitable and unintentional behaviors that convey racist/sexist ideologies and narratives. We believe that this is the first step toward developing an anti-racist posture that will serve as a role model for white students. Dana Kendall and her research team of Ph.D. students will be leading this endeavor and will be consulting with students and faculty of color at each stage of the process. Her team will draw on the philosophical and theoretical works of [Kate Manne](#), [Robin DiAngelo](#), and [Sara Ahmed](#) as well as the theological works of [Mark Charles](#) and [James Cone](#) in creating and delivering the content. Another objective of this initiative is to develop and test methods for breaking through white resistance and to adjust their internal standard for the experience of trauma. Often white individuals experience transparent conversations about how they have contributed to racism to be traumatic—almost [as if they had become the targets of violence](#). Although these feelings do not comport with reality (Whites come to race conversations from a relative place of privilege and safety), the perceptions of personal suffering are felt acutely. Only in facing these feelings directly with appropriate support, can White individuals develop the resilience necessary to hold themselves to account, to wholeheartedly repent, and learn to walk alongside their brothers and sisters of color in solidarity.

¹ We intentionally refrain from the term “reconciliation” because of its implication that we were once united across gender and race in the U.S. As [Mark Charles argues](#), given that the U.S. constitution still refers to indigenous people as “merciless Indian savages”, we cannot assume that we were ever united across racial lines since before our nations founding.

The second initiative centers on updating the content of the courses offered in SPFC. Our goal is to integrate themes of power and privilege seamlessly into all our curricula. Faculty will be encouraged to apply a wider lens to their field of study, recognizing that our institutional systems such as law, education, science, religion, medicine, economics, politics, and the criminal justice system all align with one another to solidify and widen racial, gender, and economic inequality. Even the established ways we [conduct and disseminate our research](#) perpetuate [gender, race, and socioeconomic inequality](#).

We believe that our students need to observe faculty grappling with these matters and modifying their paradigms in real time. This will give students permission to question the status-quo and equip them to be agents for meaningful change when they eventually leave our campus. To this end, we plan to reflect as a community on the following questions as we begin the process of updating our course content.

Are students being exposed to information on the [history of eugenics in the US](#) and the [role that the field of psychology played](#) in the past oppression of people of color? Are we grappling honestly with the [lingering effects of eugenics into our present time?](#)

Are we talking about the [intelligence testing that occurred on Ellis Island in the early 1900's to prevent "unintelligent" individuals from entering the U.S.?](#)

Are we integrating perspectives of scholars of color in our courses, especially if their ideas challenge the status quo and our personal comfort?

Are we continually exposing students to current events that are happening at the intersection of economic, racial, and climate injustice?

How may we invite students into a holy, loving resistance to ideas and systems that stand against bringing the kingdom of Jesus into our present world?