

In Their Own Words: Students' Experiences with Diversity and Inclusion at K

Report on Focus Groups and Survey

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Over the past few years, the student body at K has become much more diverse, particularly in terms of race, ethnicity, and country of origin. To gain a clearer understanding of how students of various races, ethnicities, and nationalities experience their time at K and to help the College identify ways to improve the K experience for all students, we held a series of focus groups during winter and spring 2013. We also conducted a survey to reach additional students.

METHODS

Focus groups

Fifteen focus groups were conducted during March and April 2013. In total, 80 students (29 white students and 51 students of color) participated in the focus groups. We also conducted nine pilot interviews to refine the questions. While data from the pilot interviews are not included in this report they are consistent with what we heard in the focus groups. Students were recruited to focus groups mainly by word-of-mouth. Focus groups generally lasted one hour and were facilitated by a group of three students (one student moderating the discussion and two students taking notes). To make students feel as comfortable as possible, we had focus groups with students of color only facilitated by students of color, and focus groups with white students only facilitated by white students. Many of the focus groups with students of color ran over because the students had so much to say. The sessions were also recorded so that we could check the notes and transcribe important quotes word for word. A copy of the focus group questions is included at the end of this report (see Appendix A).

Survey

To gather quantitative data and feedback from more students than we could accommodate in focus groups, we sent a SurveyMonkey survey to the student body over spring break. The response rate was 36 percent. We are still analyzing the data and will send a report soon. The survey data will also be included in the presentation to the campus community during 9th week.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to identifying main themes, we looked at the focus group responses to roughly identify where students were along the stages of racial identity development (Cross and Helms, as summarized by Beverly Daniel Tatum; see Appendix B) and where students perceived the College to be on the continuum toward becoming an anti-racist multicultural institution (Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training; see Appendix C). While we did not try to categorize individuals by stage of racial identity development, we did look for comments that were emblematic of the various stages.

Most statements made by both white students and students of color during the focus groups reflected the early stages of racial identity development. For white students this means seeing oneself as “normal” rather than “white” and displaying a naïve curiosity about people of color (“contact,” stage 1), as well as a growing awareness of racism and white privilege with associated feelings of guilt, anger, denial, and

withdrawal (“disintegration,” stage 2). Many white students described feelings of paralysis in terms of talking about race and ethnicity or interacting with students of color because they now understand that they have the capacity to offend without knowing it, and many were careful about trying not to speak for students of color. Many white students misunderstood the term “white privilege” or still had not accepted their privilege. Most students who had accepted their privilege were not sure what to do with it. We also saw some evidence of “blaming the victim” and many instances of withdrawal from thinking about and dealing with racism (“reintegration,” stage 3). This tendency of many white students to withdraw from, or to simply not engage in, issues of race was very frustrating to students of color who feel like there is no escape for them from thinking about race at K. A few white students made remarks that reflected the later stages of defining a non-racist white identity, but these were rare.

For students of color, most of the statements made during the focus groups were emblematic of “encounter” and “immersion/emersion” (stages 2 and 3). Many students described personally experiencing racism for the first time, or in a more intense way, since coming to K (encounter). Students described feeling marginalized and rejected and the associated emotions of anger, confusion, hurt, and alienation. Many students expressed a strong desire to learn more about their histories and cultures through the curriculum and to see themselves reflected in the faculty and staff (immersion/emersion). A few students of color made statements emblematic of pre-encounter (stage 1) or internalization (stage 4), but these were the exception.

In terms of where Kalamazoo College currently falls on the continuum from an exclusive to a fully inclusive institution, students of color may have been expecting K to be at stage 4 or stage 5 based on their perceptions before coming here, but their experiences are more in line with an institution at stage 2 or 3.

We provide this analysis of positionality as a framework within which to understand how students are currently experiencing the campus in terms of racial, ethnic, and international diversity. We hope that these findings will help students, faculty, and staff enact policies and programs as well as make changes on a more personal level that will move us further down the road toward making Kalamazoo College a fully inclusive institution.

MAIN FINDINGS

Students' Expectations of Diversity Before Coming to K

Students of color: For many students of color, having someone who shared their background was not an important factor in their decision. Size of classes, access to professors, and financial aid tended to be the determining factors. Most students of color also said that having students who did not share their background was important.

White students: For many white students, having students who shared their background was not considered; it was assumed that the majority of students on campus would be white. A lot of white students felt that diversity was important, not only racial/ethnic diversity but socio-economic diversity as well.

What Was Surprising When Students Arrived

Students of color: When they arrived at K, students of color were surprised by the whiteness of the student body and the faculty/staff, the prevalence of micro-aggressions, racism, stereotypes, and how often one's racial, national, cultural, or ethnic identity was fore-grounded. There was a theme of not

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feeling safe and not belonging, in either social or academic settings. Many students of color were also surprised by the wealth of many students and the Euro-centric nature of the curriculum. Some students said they were surprised by feelings of being underprepared academically compared to many white students, especially in the natural sciences.

[I was] surprised by level of disrespect I went through initially. Things that I heard, the way people talked to me: 'You are black, you like rap music, right?' The 'black people deserve to be in shackles' comment was being screamed though my hall. Who the hell are these white people who didn't think there were gonna be black people where they lived? I didn't know if I could trust people here. It just hit me like, wo. These white people be trippin'. I'm cool with a lot of white people back home. I've never been disrespected to this level.

"[I was surprised by] how many people thought I was Mexican. I thought people would be more educated and less ignorant than in my home town but maybe people are just stupid. [I thought] that I wouldn't have to worry about my color. People have false expectations and are so blunt about it, so soon in our relationship."

"Always having to be aware that I'm Latina. Having to be aware of the subject of race. Here I'm the only Latina in a class of 30 white people...I see a lot of racism in classrooms, and professors just let it slide and they don't care. Always having to be aware of my race and always constantly having to think about it surprised me."

"The white people here are so different from the white people at home from LA. White people who live there have encountered and been exposed to different cultures and races and class. And here I didn't know what felt different, but I sensed it."

"The whiteness. I mean I expected it to be white, but when I got here it was real white. And I was like, 'Are there ANY black people on this campus?' I was just looking for somebody, anybody."

"I was surprised by how far behind academically I was compared to white students. Other students took AP Bio, and here I am struggling. Their conception of failing is a B, mine is, I actually got an F. The learning gap was so big. I would find out that other Latino students struggled... by 8th week, you know who dropped the class, and there was definitely a difference. Professors are like, 'Come to our office hours.' There was SI and white students dominated SI sessions and obscure questions you might have."

"I feel like you'll be criticized for being behind. They don't understand that we went to high schools that don't have the same resources. I tried chemistry and bio. I came as a pre-med, but after taking classes I knew I wasn't going to succeed in them, so I dropped them."

White students: When white students were asked what was surprising, they talked about their high schools and home communities being either more or less diverse than K. Many white students said they were surprised by the overall whiteness of the student body and faculty/staff. However, students who came from predominantly white communities found K to be very diverse and some even expressed feelings of culture shock with regard to the level of diversity. Some white students also mentioned the wealth of many students on campus and the cliquish nature of the student body. White students were also surprised by the number of international students. They said that the diverse viewpoints offered by international students were unexpected but nevertheless appreciated.

"I was surprised immediately by the cafeteria. That scene in Mean Girls, where she draws the map to show cliques came to mind, very high schooly to me."

"Freshman year I had all white professors, and I was really taken aback by that."

"I felt like, 'Oh my god! So many white people, so many people with privilege.' I was like, 'Why am I here?' K prides itself on being diverse but it's not the reality."

"I noticed when I visited it was majority white, but on their website I noticed how many students of color they had."

"It struck me how white K was. I came from a high school that was mostly African American and Hispanic. [K College] is kind of white washed."

"The diversity was shocking coming here, well not shocking, but I am from up north where it is mostly white people. Lots of people in my seminar were of different races. It was interesting. I wasn't used to it. I hadn't ever been around a ton of non-white people. There were a lot of people I met from Posse. It was kind of cool, but definitely different."

"Where I come from it was all white. Super white. So I had culture shock. And I was like, 'Oh my god! , So diverse!' So when people say we don't have much diversity, I can't relate because compared to where I'm from it's so diverse."

"K is pretty diverse internationally. I originally lived in suite of all international students when I came to K. It was really awesome to have different perspectives."

Experiences of Diversity on Campus in Terms of Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality

Students of Color – Main Themes

Thinking about race/diversity much more at K than at home

"It crosses my mind here like more than ever in my entire life. Like it's just exhausting sometimes because it comes up here and it comes up there. But back home, it would never cross my mind, like at school or at home or anything. But here it's so common."

"Freshman and sophomore year, I had a fixation with race. I couldn't exist without thinking about it. On study abroad I was in a society where no one cared that I was black and I was de-contextualized in terms of race. I could exist without being black."

"I don't know if it's K's atmosphere or just being here at K but people are more aware or want to ignite those conversations. Because even at home, I guess I never really thought about my own race being afflicted by like... being oppressed or anything like that. And I never felt that way, but coming here I have been enlightened with different perspectives, which is good, but I've definitely thought about it more here than ever at home."

"When you constantly think about your race, the way people look at me and treat me. Even professors when they look down on me ... All of these experiences make me feel so bad inside. Every time something ignorant is said my blood boils. I think it's almost a love/hate relationship with the college. Although it's

been challenging and made me a better person, it was so detrimental to me psychologically. The way I cope is to engage on campus."

"[I think about race] just about every day. Being a person who is not of the dominant race, I have to be concerned about why people are saying things. Is it because I'm black, a woman, or a student at K?"

"When I visited I only saw one student of color and there weren't any other black students visiting, so I knew what I was getting into. So I wasn't surprised, but at the same time I've never felt so black until I came to K."

"My skin is brown everyday; I can't really change that."

Perceptions and assumptions about students of color based only on race, ethnicity, or nationality

"I'm dancing with someone who is white and they're like 'I'm so white, I can't dance' They assume just because I'm black I can dance. It comes out in social situations more than academic situations."

"If you're a student of color in Dow the white students don't think you are capable of helping at all. This happens with peer-to-peer work and TA-ing; it has happened over and over again."

"I think of the random things people ask me, which is related to my nationality most of the time. 'Do you smoke weed, do you live on the beach?' People assume my first language isn't English because of my accent. They ask when I started to learn English because it's 'so good.' They think they speak superior English compared to like developing countries."

"Maybe it's just a sense of being uncomfortable and feeling the spotlight is on you. I remember one time somebody asked me if I ever washed my hair, and it was like, what? ... I don't have to wash my hair as often as white people do so I wasn't thinking about it when they asked, but it was like yeah, I wash my hair. Why wouldn't I wash my hair?"

Being the only student of color in class

"In my major, where it is white male dominated, I'm not sure if what I'm experiencing is passive aggressive racism or someone having a bad day."

"Being the only Latino in the classroom... I hate it when people have to get into groups during class, and you see all the white kids get into a group and you're the last one to get chosen."

"Definitely in my science classes I noticed it... when we have lab, and you're just one of the few people of color, and you're wondering who you're going to be partners with and trying to figure that out. And then of course I definitely leaned more toward someone of color. I noticed I was different."

"I was sitting in my economics class of 35 people and I realized I was the only person of color. It just made me think. It reminded me of my high school in a way. The AP classes I would take were predominately white too. How did I get here? What separated me from the people at home?"

Unsafe/uncomfortable moments in the classroom

"I feel like in classes I've been invited to a safe space, but you say something and you feel the room change. Even though I've been in classes where it's supposed to be a safe space, I don't feel that there are that many spaces around here without having someone getting embarrassed, angry, or insulted. The people of color want to talk about something that is construed as offensive to the whites and the white students want to talk about something that might be offensive to the students of color."

"So [in] class, the topic [was] civil rights and like, vocabulary. And, of course, racial slurs come up. And, the time comes that I would have to say that the 'n' word. I don't say the 'n' word. And so I pause, and the teacher filled in the 'n' word for me. She said the 'n' word. She said THE 'n' word, the actual word. I'm like I'm shocked and she says, 'You should try to say it sometimes, it's freeing.' There's one or two people of color in the class, and I looked over to the other person of color. And it's like, what just happened? It was awkward for me, obviously not for her."

"[In one of my classes] a girl says there were going to be more minorities at Western because it's cheaper. You don't want to be seen as an angry Latina, [but I'm thinking] you're assuming all minorities don't have enough money to be at a private institution. What angered me more was that the professor didn't say anything either."

"In [a] class, someone called me Mexican because I'm brown like Mexican people. You know how MECHA has been talking about getting Ethnic Studies, what would have happened if it was white students who wanted to have Ethnic Studies? A [white] student said, honestly I think we would look ridiculous because we're not chicanos. And I said I'm not chicana and I'm part of MECHA. But then she said, 'Oh, you look chicana.' Then she said it again! 'You're brown like Mexican people.'"

"I've definitely gotten the cold shoulder from students in the science classes for sure. Like in some cases I would ask a question and it wouldn't get answered (from a student). Then I see the same question being answered in some kind of similar way, and [the person who asked] would of course be a person who's white and I would just be like, wow. This is one of the reasons why I study by myself. I don't have a study group or anything because I know I wouldn't get the type of help that I would think that my so-called friends or peers would give me. They have their own little study group and I'm always in my room by myself studying."

"There's a ton of times in ANSO classes where like, you realize, it's like explicit, you realize your race, you realize how different you are from the person sitting right next to you and how different your lives are. Because [white students] can't figure out what their privilege is... they can't figure out this simple task to do for an ANSO class. And those moments are like, are you kidding me? I have to help a white guy figure out his life to write on a piece of paper. It's like come on now... This is not hard. And he's like 'I don't believe it....Oh, because I'm white I have these privileges? I don't believe it.'"

"If a prof does not address a comment that was racist, if the professor just lets it go, that makes things really awkward. It creates an awkward space."

"I had a professor who wanted us to list all the stereotypes of the black man on the blackboard and it was really awkward for me. She kept on writing 'thieves,' 'stupid,' 'dangerous,' 'sexually aggressive,' and I kept on saying that no one race can fit all of these stereotypes. Since I was the only black person, I felt like I had to defend my race... If you do write the stereotypes on the board, then at least have a discussion afterwards."

"I missed class to retake a comprehensive exam. I told the professor, and she said that she didn't take it personally but that she was concerned for me professionally when I go into the labor force. Comparison to the day before when she had a white girl miss class. Her response was 'just take care of yourself.' Seeing those differences in treatment, I wanted to tell her, but then I remembered that she was grading me."

"[I was talking with a professor] and I was saying something about how students of color often times feel like they don't belong in classrooms and her response was "Well, when I go into the classroom to teach, I am not thinking about how students feel. My responsibility is just to teach and that's all I do. I don't think about how everybody is coming to the classroom feeling." And I thought, are you kidding me? I come into the classroom and if I don't feel like I belong in the classroom it will influence how I do in your class, and you don't care about the fact that I don't feel like I'm a part of your class? This is a problem. I was so heated I couldn't respond. I just said I'm really sorry but I have to leave, I have a meeting to go to."

Students of color being ignored outside of the classroom

"I found out that like the academic and the social are very different for people here. It's two separate worlds almost. When it comes to the classroom, everybody gonna say what they gotta say, like they're just trying to get that grade, so they're gonna talk to who they need to talk to, they're gonna be friendly, they're gonna be cool, but when it comes to being friends, kickin' it, it ain't gonna happen."

"You might talk to somebody, like a white student in the classroom, and you talk to them and they talk to you, and when you get out of the classroom it's like this fake smile thing that they do all the time It's like you sit next to this person in the classroom and you talk to them all the time, but when you come out of the classroom, it's like they don't even know you!"

"We meet every week in class and once you step out of the classroom it's a different thing. Then they just don't know you! I don't get it! Like you want to say hi, but they walk with their heads down. Ok, whatever."

"We (MECHA) decided to go to K parties. The moment we got there white students started to stare at us. Guess they had never seen a lot of Latino students together, like 60. We just got there and people started saying that we killed it."

"Nobody gets near MECHA students during parties."

A Euro-centric curriculum

"The curriculum here is very white... I don't have a relationship with any professors in my department. It's awkward now that I want to go to graduate school I need recommendations and I don't have anyone to write them."

"In other classes, I read things written by white authors, I don't have a passion for people like Shakespeare... I want classes where we look at people of color before 9th week when [students] are no longer engaged in the class."

The prevalence of micro-aggressions, racism, and stereotypes

"When people are drunk they say racist things. When I walked in [to the party] they said, "Hey Posse is here!" and I'm not in Posse."

"Posse is another byword for out of state or minority, just 'cause it's thrown around so much."

"At a party three white people asked if I can twerk for them."

"People also think it's funny to call me Mexican, even though I am from [a different country]. It's not that I have a problem with it, but I'm not Mexican. No it's not funny. I just play it off, but if you say it one more time I'm gonna punch you."

"I want to separate myself from the lumping that does go on. Because we're not all Mexican. We're not all Salvadorean. We're not all from LA... It's different ... there are different cultures and people don't see that and people don't understand that."

"I went to like a house party. I was just there doing my thing with my friends. And then one of the white guys comes over, and we started talking and then he's like, 'Also are you one of the Mexicans?' And I was just like, 'What? Did you say that?' Like, I literally felt my heart skip a beat all of a sudden. I was like, wow. I guess it was out of context. I felt like so offended, I felt so hurt. And from there I'm realizing, I guess race is an issue on campus and the way people identify you and see you."

"I don't ask Michiganders, 'Are you from Michigan... Are you from Finland?' You don't ask white people to [explain] their heritage. Why do it to us?"

"The shackles comment was made by [white] people who know where I lived, but as a joke among white friends. There were a lot of times I was ready to go home... I don't know if I can trust these people here. I'm always on an edge. In the classroom I have to speak for my experience.... My reason for being here is more than me. I'm the first one in my family to go to college, so that's what keeps me here. I have people looking up to me. I'm not here to make friends or for white people to like me. I'm here to get a degree at the end of the day."

"During election night, a guy came and he was drunk, and he voted for Romney, and he was upset. That doesn't excuse his behavior. He basically knocked down my door telling me that I better turn down my TV because nobody wants to hear this shit and that I better do it right away. Then his roommate comes down says I think you need to do this because he's really upset and if you don't he might beat you up... I left my TV on... I called my mom and I was crying. At that moment I was just ready to go... Why is this happening to me? Why me? Everyone in this hall is a Democrat... I was enraged... frustrated because I felt outnumbered... Even when I went to all-white Christian high school and all the black kids wore Obama T-shirts... That would have never happened back home."

"The crime alerts are very frustrating. They always come out as 6 foot black male wearing all black walking around, be careful. And it's like, well, 6 foot is pretty average height. If I'm anywhere at night as a black male, it's like damn, am I a suspect right now? I become cautious when I'm walking now, and you see people walking and they're a little a timid and won't make eye contact. It's like how'd that go on? We take the same classes... That's been frustrating."

White students speaking for students/people of color

"I don't think people realize how stupid they sound or how hurtful they are sometimes. Especially in classrooms sometimes people don't realize it. What surprised me is how a lot of white students think they know the struggle. No you don't, please shut up. Somebody in class said that because Obama was president there is no racism in the U.S. What are you saying? No! It surprised me that people on campus try to take our stories and try to say that it's ok because we're here [at K]."

"Just 'cause you know a little something, now you're going to tell me about the life I live 'cause you had a glimpse of it in some class? People kill me with their education."

"[A white student] chose to share this example, 'women of color feel this way,' like 'I know about this struggle and I can share with you.' And the professor was like yeah, yeah, but it just came off to me like 'don't try to bring this up like you are the all-knowing person.'"

Feeling like a token

"It's hard to sort of feel like you're just a token on campus. You're just sort of there to make sure that rich white parents are sending their kids to this college and they can be sure that they're getting to be cultured by interacting with people who are black or poor or brown."

"I feel like a lot of times we are puppets for the administration. To be placed in a pretty picture and just put up ... and then after that we're just thrown to the side."

"It's reinforced that people of color are a certain type of student. Opportunities offered to me always had to do with race. I was being invited because I was black. I've been black for one year... I was pigeonholed by the school and type-cast."

Differences among students of color

"I don't remember having deep conversations about skin tone; even within our own ethnic groups. When I did bring it up it was brushed off. Someone lighter than me said, 'I understand.' But I'm like do you really?"

"It's amazing how much skin color affects how you are treated. It does happen. People are given more privileges [based on] their skin color."

"That's something I was trying to understand... Since you are lighter you do have more privilege but we do belong to the same oppressed group."

"I don't think about [race] that often. It's not me ignoring, I don't go through as many experiences as other students, which is why it always hits me. I don't experience it that often. For some reason, Jamaicans get treated differently. Oh, you're off the hook because you're Jamaican. What if I were African American? How would I feel? This is awful."

"... everybody loves a Jamaican... Am I not exotic enough for you? Does my background remind you too much of where your ancestors messed up? ... Do I have to work ten times harder to be accepted in white culture because I'm not from a different country?"

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"I find people of color, particularly Latinos, to be split. There are people who are more aware that it's not perfect. Obviously we've just like [named] tons of things, but a lot of Latinos on campus are just like, it's perfect. They look at the scholarship and they're like this school's blessed me. There's nothing wrong with it. I think that's so frustrating, it's probably one of the most frustrating things. Because at least you know white people, they live in their own world sometimes, but people of your own kind, who you are supposed to team up, won't even team with you and consider you to be the angry people of color and whereas they are the sensible ones? I think that's just the hardest part."

"I feel like biracial experiences are not talked about. People who consider themselves to be biracial on campus, they don't really fit in any certain discussion...I think that's not as acknowledged."

"With the friends I have that are biracial, I try to make it a point to invite them and help them to fit in when I do something with the black group: "You're coming with us!" Could be difficult for them to know where they fit in."

"I wish people at K realized that being biracial is incredibly complicated. I don't fit in with white people. Sometimes I just watch [...] what people will say around me once they have gotten comfortable. But with friends I'm more likely to tell them what I think. I know why you think badly of white people but I think back to my dad [who is white]. There is good, bad, and ugly no matter the race in every place. It's complicated."

Disparity among white students and students of color when it comes to thinking and talking about race

"K wants people to be cultured and exposed but there are a lot of social inequalities, like academia being heavily populated with white people and not black people. We talk about race in a detached and critical way but not a personal way. White people never talk about it. People of color talk about it all the time..."

"People don't talk about racism here. When I was in class one time and the question was shouldn't we try and stop racism? A student answered, yeah, in a million years, but we should just avoid it. I didn't know people felt like that."

"I try hard to be open about my racial identity so that [white people] don't feel scared to talk to me. I want to talk about racial issues as openly as I can, but it doesn't mean I won't get offended every once in a while."

"That's why I hate going to the race talks because it's always the same people, preaching to the choir. It's like we're all here for the same thing, like I saw you at the last one, what's up? We ain't doing anything."

"I hear some Caucasian individuals talking about it too, either from their perspective or trying to understand it from the people of color perspective. And that was very different, and that really surprised me when I came here because I come from a really conservative network and I never heard people talk about stuff like that. And coming here, professors were talking about it. I was naïve. It was just interesting to hear from not people of color as well."

White Students– Main Themes

Encountering issues of race in the classroom

“I talk about it in classes a lot. Not everyone talks about it in everyday life. In my ANSO class we talked a lot about race. I heard people from my class making offensive jokes later. People participate in the discussion for a grade but they’ll perpetuate the same things we’re talking about later.”

“I think coming to K and prior to coming here I was aware, but I wasn’t as acutely aware. The fall of my freshman quarter having to take an ANSO class where the professor’s main goal was having us take responsibility for these social constructs--that really checked my privilege. These are issues I need to be accountable for.”

“It’s something I think about a lot in terms of ... I mean I’m an ANSO major so it comes up in classes a lot. In terms of interactions with friends, we try to talk and think about it.”

“I don’t talk about it much being in the sciences, though I’ve come to see here at K how important it is... I’ve been trying to become more sensitive....spending 9 out of 10 times in Dow I hardly get to discuss things. This [the focus group] is rare. I don’t know, it’s a new way of thinking for me and it’s not necessarily easy...”

“I talk about it in class a ton. I’m an ANSO major. Last quarter in [class], we talked about it every day. I occasionally bring it up out of class. I’m not disinterested, but my academic peers’ interest in it exceeds mine significantly. I don’t try to talk about it. The tone of the conversation is negative at me a lot for being a white male.”

“Just being a math and physics major, we don’t study a lot of issues of race, so I don’t think about it that much.”

“I’ve taken a bunch of African studies courses so the issue of race has definitely come up in that. It doesn’t so much cross my mind at K like the daily stuff, just learning about past things with race.”

“I would say I think about it every day just because of how active the campus is with race. Especially with the MECHA thing. I think about it a lot because of the classes I’ve taken.”

Encountering issues of race outside of the classroom

“I have a fair few friends who are involved with a lot of student of color organizations. I will talk to them because I come from a lower socioeconomic background than my friends so I’ll talk to them about that and they’ll talk about the issues they run into. Like one of my friends is from [a Latin American country], but people say she’s from Mexican descent, which pisses her off for obvious reasons. I might not think about it every day but I think about it a lot.”

“Coming here you definitely question a lot more. Coming from a place where confederate flags are on the back of trucks, definitely more.”

“I mostly talk to my friend group about things like that. I feel like a lot of people at K are fairly open to having conversations like that. Some people have thought about it more or less, and some people have thought about it more in an academic sense versus a real-world sense. I have a friend in Race and Racism right now so she brings home material basically on a daily basis.”

"I think for me...I live up north, [which] is sort of viewed as more conservative. My town is very conservative, very white. They're all Polish Catholic. Coming here, this is very diverse for my background, in comparison to where I grew up. My whiteness and white privilege, I really never thought about it before coming to K. It was definitely brought to my attention by the people who I'm living around, who I talk to, my classes."

"I've noticed that if I'm meeting a person of color for the first time, I automatically think that they have certain thoughts about me because I'm white. That's something I noticed, and I'm like why am I thinking that? That's something I've been working on not doing because that's stupid. I've really noticed that about myself."

Becoming aware of white privilege

"I think I've realized coming here and talking to people who've had really different experiences how much of a privilege it is to not have coming to college be a huge shift in cultural norms. Obviously coming to college is a huge transition for anybody, but there's an added layer of difficulty for people who come from different communities. So I've just realized little things like humor or how you talk to people, just different cultural norms..."

"There may be black power movements or immigration reforms where I can't be the center of attention because the change has to come from within the group. I can be there for support, but I can't be like here's what everyone should do because that contributes to the problem."

"I feel like people are self-aware here so you can have conversations about privilege."

"I've confronted my privilege and I'm starting to work with people in solidarity who don't necessarily have my privilege. That's where I'm headed. I haven't crafted that yet, but it's the next step."

Feeling attacked for having white privilege

"Friends of color talk about [privilege] in a flippant way as opposed to a real conversation."

"In certain conversations, people of privilege feel attacked. It's such an outspoken subject."

"[The other day] I got yelled at for having white privilege... I was told I don't understand because I have white privilege... I was hurt. People can see privilege in the color of your skin. But you don't often know the disadvantages that people are going through because you can't see everything.... There have been not that many situations where I was just so confused and so not able to process how to deal with a situation."

Feeling paralyzed by white privilege

"You can't change what you are. And the initial reaction is I've got to help everybody but that's not what you're supposed to do with your privilege --- just go out and save the whole world. There's a difference between saving and being in solidarity. I stopped doing a lot of things because I felt like I had the save the world complex thing. Like what am I supposed to be doing, like now that I know about my privilege, now what?"

“People who are privileged, in a classroom discussion because they’re privileged, they feel like they might not be able to have an opinion on the topic.”

“Because of my white privilege, I don’t know what am I supposed to do about it. Should I acknowledge it? I understand it, but how do I go about doing something about it? That’s a big source of confusion and I’m sure a lot of other people feel that way.”

Misunderstanding or resisting the idea of white privilege

“It sometimes nice to feel that privilege. It makes you feel elevated.”

“Other races are privileged. Just because you’re white doesn’t mean you’re rich.”

“I’ve had several encounters where I’ve basically been yelled at in my face that I’m using some magical white privilege that I’ve never been aware of before. People are people. That’s how I was raised.”

“People are fed up: ‘Not another white privilege conversation.’ It’s not a happy or easy or relaxed environment. People talk about how liberal K is, but the dialogue isn’t open here, and I feel that isn’t a good thing.”

A divided student body

“Thinking back on how I made friends originally at K, my first friends were from LandSea, which is highly white because it’s expensive, it’s just privileged. I can’t remember racially what it looks like, but I’m pretty sure it’s mainly white. That’s how I made my first friends and that was my starting point. I felt comfortable with people that I knew first and that’s who they were.”

“As far as the international students, there’s not really an integration process. The international friends I have always talk about how they have to seek other people out to talk to. And I’m wondering if it’s because it’s not really an integral part to the first couple days of orientation, except for convocation, but that’s really formal.”

“There are a lot of international students, but they’re not integrated in the school.”

“I feel like this year and especially this quarter, I’ve noticed how important [diversity] is... I’ve realized this diversity around me and its importance. Yet I’m still friends with predominantly people of my color, or race. But yet I’m ‘acquaintances’ with people of different races but not necessarily that I hang out with them on the weekends, which is interesting. I started noticing that especially with the whole StuComm thing being brought up.”

“I think this campus is very divided – athletics, non-athletics, different ethnic groups, people from different countries, so many different groups that it’s hard to... you want to stay with people that you have stuff in common with and have discussions with those people. Those talks and those discussions between people often get distorted because you’re around the same people. And when different groups don’t communicate it’s really difficult.”

“Walking on egg shells:” Fear of engaging across difference

“I think what might be a factor in who I decide to be my friend is who I’m comfortable with. And I think the culture is so different between me and another ethnic group that I’m wary to become friends with them or speak to them because I don’t want to offend their culture. I would love to be friends with them, but I’m scared. I don’t want to engage in that and be wrong and be kind of like almost... I just don’t have that interaction because I don’t want to offend other cultures.”

“I feel like learning about all those micro-aggression things makes people more scared to talk with each other.”

I came from a diverse middle school and high school, and a lot of my friends at home are very diverse and a lot of my friends here are primarily Caucasian. And over the four years at K I’ve gotten more and more wary of approaching people who aren’t my same race just because K is such a volatile place when it comes to racism. It’s nice that we talk about it, but I feel like so many times I’m confronted with a lot of anger towards the fact that I’m white and a lot of judgment that I’m confused by. In a lot of ways K has created both a safe and unsafe place for diversity.”

“I was talking with one girl about study abroad and she had a really bad experience because the kids she went with were pretty racist. And she was talking about it and getting really emotional and then all of a sudden she just looked at me and said, ‘You people are so hateful and mean and I hate being around you!’ And I just felt like, ‘Me? Why didn’t you say anything?’ And she just got really pissed off at me and stormed off.”

“I’ve been to a few of the race talks, and they always talk about how you would call somebody out. And I want somebody to do it to me and I want to do it to other people. But if I do it, I want to be comfortable to talk to anyone and for anyone to be like, while I’m talking, like ‘Yo, that’s a micro-aggression,’ and me to be like, ‘Okay I need to check myself.’ So I don’t feel necessarily scared, but I feel like a lot of people are.”

“Even if a comment is not directed to a race or ethnicity, it can be perceived wrong based on like who you’re talking about and the color of that person or the ethnicity of that person.”

“The thing is that some people are exposed in their classes, you develop a vocabulary about [race]. Some people don’t have [that exposure] in classes or in friend groups. There is a weird divide on campus, even talking about race almost becomes segregated. People who talk versus people who don’t. Then add in the layer of race/ethnicity. It’s completely separated.”

“I feel like I only talk about [race] in the classroom or with my housemates after an event. I’d never just be on the campus talking about it... I don’t know, maybe I just don’t want to have battling opinions with someone: ‘You’re from [up north], you don’t know anything about race.’”

“I feel like a lot of my conversations are usually just about an individual and the conversation isn’t specifically about their race or ethnicity. There’s not much profiling or stereotyping. It’s not my favorite subject.”

“I think last quarter a lot of people knew it got pretty heated, but a lot of people learned from that. It’s slightly strained but not as much as I thought it would be.”

When I asked about [the Posse Plus retreat], my friend said, 'You're not going to want to go this year because it will target you. You're going to feel targeted and it'll put pressure on you given that you are very fortunate in where you've come.' I appreciated the comment, and I can honestly see where he was coming from, but that's kind of the point though... I wish I could have gone still and been challenged by it."

"You get head chewed off here if you say something wrong."

"I feel like [the topic of race] is avoided sometimes. I don't know if I should say stuff sometimes because people here are very defensive. Everyone tries to be cautious, so the conversation veers off that subject."

"[Race is] a touchy subject. Conversations get dampened a lot. Conversations are shallow because people are afraid of saying something wrong, or everyone is just rushing to show their liberal opinions in discussions of controversial subjects."

Campus Resources to Help Students Deal with/Learn about Issues of Race and Ethnicity

Students of color: Most students of color said that the College has nothing official in place. In describing resources they found helpful, it was clear that students had sought out support on their own, and the wide variation in their responses emphasizes this fact. Following are quotes illustrating the various ways in which students have found support.

"[In response to the question about resources...] Z E R O. It's the students who take the initiative to create groups – Sukuma started freshman year. It was started by an African American in science. A lot of people of color were struggling with science. It was a mentoring group for help in labs or to ask questions they were too scared to ask in class. It'd be more okay if it was K starting it. I'm tired of feeling alone."

"The institution is so detached from the student body. They just want to see two happy colored faces and two happy white faces – they don't want to deconstruct the complexity of the student body on this campus because that's not making the money. They don't care. They assume that by us being together we are going to be happy but it's up to students to deal with it – they don't put that in the brochure."

"I thought they would have things in place, but it's like, 'Here's a boat and a paddle, here you go.' And that's not fair because students of color don't know what they are getting into."

"I don't think the college has resources. I feel like we kind of bond... Students make their own resources. I started talking to [a professor] a lot. She's someone I feel comfortable talking to. I don't think there is a certain place."

"As far as what I've heard from people going through, there is no real resource that the college has for students of color. People find people they can relate to. I talk to [a professor] – I go to her. Apart from that, I don't think there has ever been anything for students of color or something to help. You can't find somebody you can relate to. When things come up, it's more on your own."

"Even when things are trying to get done it gets questioned. Things about creating a space for people of color and it gets questioned about it really helping, or we don't really want to leave people out. A lot of times I think these people don't want to do something about it."

*In Their Own Words: Students' Experiences with Diversity and Inclusion at K
Report on Findings from Focus Groups*

Office of Institutional Research ~ May 2013

"Dean Joshua, she is the office. When students of color are in trouble, she always has their back... She came here to be that support."

"I'm concerned and excited for the first years. I notice the increase in diversity on campus and there's a lot of increasing tension, too. These issues keep getting brushed under the rug and not getting addressed. There were instances when I wanted to drop out... I'm concerned about the pool of students coming to this school and there are inadequate resources. I think retention is going to be a problem."

"I think the counseling center helped me a lot."

"We aren't at the stature that we can do anything about it or combat it in a productive way. People in positions of power or more wisdom per se and knowledge and being able to talk to them and bounce ideas off of them is very helpful; not to resolve anything but to get it off your chest. I found that with some of my professors and my counselor and my mom."

"I found out there was an Office of Multicultural Affairs. There should be more support from other places. People are shoving [Dean Joshua] everything... It's only one person. With race it's harder to get what you want. She can't handle that by herself."

"[Administrator] takes a plan of action, there are steps. She randomly just asked my input about the event of ethnic studies about MECHA and Gomez Pena. I'm surprised this white woman is asking me how I feel about it. She was taking the steps to open up this conversation."

"[One of my professors]. I feel like I can tell her my whole life story and she will listen and will help me figure out what I'm feeling. She's super supportive."

"I don't know...nobody. No administration. No faculty. I feel like in the future I can go to [a professor]. I want to talk to somebody who has been through a struggle of some sort. It's great to have a plan of action but sometimes you just want to cry and complain."

"I can't talk to my mom about things because she can't get it. She didn't go to college. You hold onto friendships here more than you ever have because if you lose this person of color on this campus then you have no one."

"You look up to seniors on this campus and see what they did. As my friends were dropping out I thought about senior students of color. How did they do it? How did they make it through all four years? I wanted to go up and ask them, but I couldn't. How did they survive? How did they stay still and manage to almost graduate rather than simply dropping out simply quitting simply withdrawing?"

"I don't know a lot about the Arcus Center to be honest, but from what I've heard the people there are doing really good things. But they're in a little building on campus. I didn't even know that was the Arcus Center. It's just a little brick building. I know they are building a new one... Why can't you have an office in Hicks while the other building is being built or in Dewing where everybody else has offices."

"The CIP is one, and Service-Learning is another..."

"The college is like passing the buck off to the students. But like, nothing institutional."

White students: Responses from white students to the question about resources were all over the place, and most did not directly address a need for resources to help them sort through issues of race. A few students mentioned the Counseling Center and Jaime Grant and the Arcus Center as good resources, and a few students mentioned having more classes like Race and Racism.

"I really have no idea who I would go to if I were struggling with being white at K, or struggling with what that comes with. I don't know who I would go to. Everyone throws around seeing Jaime Grant. Maybe I'd look at the Arcus Center, but I don't know."

"K has lots of resources like the counseling center or talking to Jaime Grant. But I just talk to other people with the same background."

"I know there are professors who I feel like I potentially could talk to. I feel uncomfortable bringing up problems of being white."

"I think that if Jaime is talking about whatever topic...she needs to go out and talk to the different student groups and introduce herself."

"As of now Jaime is my person. She can teach me to be like her and she is awesome. When I have questions about any social justice issue."

"In terms of what I wish was there--I don't think it's as potent or as effective to have faculty or staff or any sort of authority be there as the person who fixes your problem because it makes it less real when it's not peer-to-peer. I wish there was a peer panel or student advisers that are well-versed in these problems. And it would be more helpful and more real."

Recommendations from Students of Color

Recruit a more diverse faculty and staff, not limited to just faculty and staff of color, but also individuals, whether white or of color, who have the capacity to effectively work with students of color and who students of color can relate to

"They're really good about bringing diversity here. They know by giving us money we're gonna come here, but they don't know what to do with us when we get here. Having more professors that look like us. We shouldn't have to pick from the two classes that are available—have options for classes to pick from."

"They need to have more professors of color who get what's going on. Because there are a slim amount that you can go to and talk to, who could kind of like, I don't know, feel sympathy or actually make a change."

"Have more people of color as workers, meaning academic staff, not people who serve me in the cafeteria. Most of the black people who work here are janitors or servers. More professors of color to be a part of the departments."

Revise the curriculum to include non-Eurocentric histories and perspectives

"Generally there should be more classes [about non-European countries and cultures]. Even learning about different people around you. The approach to learning in terms of including people can be better."

"I have heard a lot about ethnic studies. I think one of the ways is integrating ethnic studies into all departments' syllabi. You have to integrate it into all aspects; it has to be mandatory. You'll have a wider population of people getting this information and they are going to learn."

Offer pre-orientation experiences that are more inclusive

"They should come up with programs that benefit everybody because the LandSea program only benefits white people who have money, hence it actively excludes black people."

Integrate more programming on racial/ethnic diversity into first-year orientation and forums

"A lot of students of color are constantly having to educate white people. Tim Wise was the only person that tried to make a baseline, but I am forced to educate. I did not come here for that."

"During orientation they were talking about the drinking culture and sex. And I was just like, why is that important? [laughing in room] Emotionally during first week, I thought I was abnormal. I was like, is it just me? I thought I was weird, feeling withdrawal, feeling homesickness, feeling isolation. No one told me that was okay to feel, it's normal. [The administration] caters to white, middle class, suburban students. And the main problems for white middle class white suburban students are the drinking and sex culture. Not assimilation, not adjustment, not homesickness. You can't blame [the administration] because they can't cater to every student's needs, but when a large minority of students feel like that, something should be done."

Providing training to current faculty/staff so that they are better able to facilitate and address discussions/commentary/questions on race, ethnicity, or culture that may come up

"In the professors' defense, when issues of race come up in the classroom and they have no training in conversations that are drawn to tense moments, nobody wants to be thrown under the bus. They just move on and not talk about it. I had a class where [the professor] said she's not going to go over race, she's going to skip over it, because the last time she did it she got bad evaluations... So she said we would have the race discussion after she gave out the evaluations. So that's a problem, that people are skipping over sections because they're afraid of evaluations." (Professor not here anymore).

"When race comes up in the classroom, students get so quiet. The professors act like she or he didn't hear it. Faculty need to be trained. They are not trained and so they are afraid to even have these discussions because of what will happen in the classroom."

Focus Group Leader: *"Why do you think they have this fear?"*

"It's a predominately white campus and predominantly white faculty, and so I'm guessing they're afraid their whiteness will show up in the classroom because that's going to happen. Whatever race you have is going to show up in the classroom, so I think that we have to be trained in how to have these conversations."

Provide more resources and clear points of support to help students of color deal with the psychic, cultural, academic, and social challenges of being at an affluent, academically rigorous institution that is predominantly white

"How can you attract diversity without having the resources? When we invite students of color, we should feel we belong just as any other student. White students feel entitled to be here but students of color feel like it's a privilege."

"Each department can have a place, once a week or when needed for students of color and they could talk about the struggles they are having. The fact that there were no black people in [my] department made me stray away. For the long term, they are spending so much money on the Arcus Center; they should drop a few on a meeting/chill space where students of color can meet. Whenever I go into a building I am always in the minority."

"We need a department that deals with multicultural affairs. Then maybe they could work with the Arcus Center. I envision this department with more people who are Caribbean, Asian, etc. Maybe a board of people coming together to make the campus more welcoming for people of color."

"Have some kind of support system that is like out there. Explicitly. Know that there is a support system. I think just making it clear that there's people here to talk to. I think could go a long way."

"Don't bring in more students of color if the college can't handle them."

Institute resources that provide white students with the framework/analytical toolsets to enable fruitful conversations about race, privilege, and ethnicity

"I think the college needs to focus on having things focus more on white privilege because we can't move forward if the people we keep talking to don't understand white privilege. We can all talk about what we want. If the other side, white students, don't understand that and see where they're benefiting, we're not going to move anywhere as an institution."

Recommendations from White Students

Institute resources that provide white students with the framework/analytical toolsets that can enable fruitful conversations about race, privilege, and ethnicity

"I had a professor, she started off by talking about white privilege...She opened up discussion but the whole room was silent. We were talking about how black women are portrayed in media and it's hard to speak to that because I don't want to speak on behalf of another race. I don't have the authority."

"Our goal is to be diverse, so [the administration] should teach us how to have these conversations. Maybe a class like Race and Racism as a freshman seminar."

Hire more faculty of color

"Hire more American professors of color. All of the professors of color that I know are from other countries. Specifically urban, African-American men."

Revise the curriculum to include non-Eurocentric histories and perspectives

"I think my best classes here have been where it's labeled something and the visiting professor is like, 'Yo, I think this is what the campus needs, we're going to talk about this.' [example of English class that addressed race] We need something obviously that is not here. An Intro ANSO class turned into a class about capitalism. Those visiting professors came in and saw something that is not here, and that proves that there's something missing from the dialogue and culture of campus."

“We talked about race a lot in my seminar--and we have two people of color in my class and a white professor. There was no perspective. I feel like in a class setting we're just getting the white perspective, which is not been enough.”

Integrate more programming on racial/ethnic diversity into first-year orientation and forums

“During orientation, [...] Tim Wise being on campus... I feel like we have that a lot. We have these great speakers come in and they come and talk and then they leave. There's no follow up.”

CONCLUSION

The focus group findings indicate that both white students and students of color are in the early stages of their respective racial/ethnic identity development. Thus, it is not surprising that many of the students interviewed are struggling to make sense of their encounters with racial, ethnic, and cultural differences (hereafter referred to as 'difference(s)'). This issue is further exacerbated, to some extent, by the College's geographic location. Many of our white students come from predominantly white Midwestern communities, where they have had little or no experience with any type of diversity. Consequently, it appears, the “encounter” for both white students and students of color is much more fraught with ambivalence, confusion, and tension. Indeed, a number of students of color talked about how the white people at K are different from the white people at home.

Since so few white students are taking the initiative to engage students of color in a meaningful way, the primary place where they are confronting issues of difference seems to be in the classroom, most often in ANSO classes. In the focus groups with white students, it was mainly students who had taken ANSO classes who had something to contribute to the conversation. Many other white students simply had nothing substantive to say on the topic of difference and relatively few pertinent experiences from which to draw. White science majors were among the students who were the least exposed to issues of difference, and many seemed to have little or no awareness of how difference structured students' experiences within the institution. In contrast, students of color who were science majors acutely, and oftentimes painfully, felt the ramifications of embodying difference. Moreover, as result of their particular location with regard to difference, students of color experienced academic and social challenges with which their white peers did not have to contend.

Among students of color, there is a yearning to be accepted simply as K students by other students, faculty, and staff, instead of being typecast on the grounds of their difference. They also articulated a need for a clear support system, and a safe space on campus and in the classroom. Another salient theme among students of color was the strong desire to see themselves reflected in the faculty and staff, in addition to having a curriculum that reflects their particular histories, perspectives, and experiences.

The disparity between the white students' focus groups and the focus groups with students of color, in terms of interview length, was telling. Focus groups with white students were significantly shorter than those with students of color. It was evident that white students did not have much to say, and were unsure about how to broach conversations/questions about difference. Conversely, students of color had much to say, particularly about the embodied experience of being the 'other.' While students of color spoke cogently to the daily experiences of being in a racial, ethnic, or cultural minority group on campus, they too struggled to find language that was conducive to making sense of their experiences.

Certainly the campus is far ahead of where it was even a few years ago when there were many fewer students of color, and when race was rarely discussed. The focus groups underscore the reality that our

student body is currently experiencing a rapidly rising awareness of difference. This awareness, in turn, is prompting students to begin engaging actively with the aforementioned issues of difference. The focus groups, moreover, indicate that both students of color and white students desire conceptual frameworks, guidance, and institutional support to help them negotiate these experiences in a fruitful way. We hope that the findings from these focus groups will help us take the next steps in becoming a more inclusive institution, where all students can flourish, in spite of the manifold differences they may exhibit.

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Anne Dueweke
Director of Faculty Grant and Institutional Research
May 17, 2013

Diversity/Inclusion Focus Group Questions

Ice breaker: Name, year, major and favorite event they look forward to each year at K. (*Notetakers record gender, major, and class year of each participant*)

1. **When you were deciding where to go to college, how important was it to have other students who shared your background in terms of race, ethnicity, or country of origin?**
 - a. Did that change after you arrived?

2. **When you were deciding where to go to college, how important was it to have other students who didn't share your background?**

3. **What surprised you when you arrived at K? What was unexpected?**
 - a. In terms of support and resources available?
 - b. In terms of the curriculum?
 - c. In terms of the diversity or lack of diversity of the student body?

4. **How often do issues of race and ethnicity cross your mind?**
 - a. How often do you talk about race and ethnicity? With whom?
 - b. Are there topics with regard to race and ethnicity that people won't talk about?

5. **Take a minute and think back to a time here at K when a particular facet of your identity – whether it be race, ethnicity, or nationality – was acutely brought to your attention. Can you describe that experience?**
 - a. What about in the classroom?
 - b. ...in the residence halls?
 - c. ... during campus events?
 - d. ... through experiences online?
 - e. ... at parties?

6. **In light of [*name some of the experiences students have shared thus far*], what resources does the College have in place that have helped you with these situations?**
 - a. What resources could the College put in place that would be helpful?

7. **What kinds of things have you learned about yourself through interactions with people from different backgrounds?**

Stages of Racial/Ethnic Identity Development for People of Color

Beverly Cross, summarized by Beverly Daniel Tatum in
Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?

Pre-Encounter

Individual absorbs many of the beliefs and values of the dominant white culture, including the idea that it is "better" to be white. May value role models, life-styles, value systems of the dominant group more highly than those of one's own culture. Often seeks to assimilate and be accepted by whites. Tends to minimize the personal/social significance of race/ethnicity.

Encounter

Transition to this stage is typically precipitated by an event or series of events that enforces the individual to acknowledge the personal impact of racism. Anger, confusion, and alienation are common emotions. Aware of rejection by whites, the individual begins to grapple with what it means to be a member of a group targeted by racism. Initial attempts to define one's racial/ ethnic identity may be based on internalized stereotypes about own group. Process often begins in early adolescence.

Immersion/Emersion

Characterized by the desire to surround oneself with visible symbols of one's racial identity, and an active avoidance of symbols of whiteness. At the beginning of this stage, there is a tendency to categorically reject whites and glorify one's own group. Individual actively seeks out opportunities to learn about his/her own history and culture with the support of same-group peers. Anger may subside because focus is on group-and self-exploration. Results in a newly defined and affirmed sense of self.

Internalization

Characterized by a sense of security in one's own racial/ethnic identity. Able to view his/her own group more objectively, as well as other racial/ethnic groups. Willing to establish meaningful relationships with whites who acknowledge and are respectful of his/her self-definition, and is also ready to build coalitions with members of other oppressed groups.

Stages of Racial/Ethnic Identity Development
for Whites
Janet Helms, Summarized by Beverly Daniel Tatum

Abandonment of Racism

Contact

Unaware of own racial identity; does not think of oneself as "white" but as "normal." Tendency to view racism as "individual acts of meanness" rather than as an institutionalized system, and typically does not recognize or acknowledge "white privilege." Naïve curiosity or fear of people of color, usually based on stereotypes.

Disintegration

Awareness of racism and white privilege increase as result of personal experiences. Common emotional responses to this new information include guilt, denial, anger, depression, withdrawal. May attempt to persuade others to abandon racist thinking.

Reintegration

May feel pressured by others to "not notice" racism. Feelings of guilt and denial are transformed into fear and anger toward people of color; common response is to "blame the victim." Chooses to avoid the issue of racism, if possible, rather than struggling to define a non-racist identity.

Defining a Non-Racist White Identity

Pseudo-Independence

Individual is abandoning beliefs in white superiority. Has an intellectual understanding of the unfairness of white privilege and recognizes personal responsibility for dismantling racism. May choose to distance oneself from other whites, and actively seek out people of color to help him/her better understand racism.

Immersion/Emersion

Actively seeking to redefine whiteness. Asking self questions such as "Who am I racially?" "What does it really mean to be white in the U.S.?" Needs support from other anti-racist whites who have asked similar questions. Focus is on developing a positive white identity not based on assumed superiority. Takes pride in active anti-racist stance.

Autonomy

Has internalized a positive white racial identity. Actively anti-racist within own sphere of influence. Development of racial identity is not static, continues to be open to new information and ongoing self-examination. Able to work effectively in multiracial settings.

CONTINUUM ON BECOMING AN ANTI-RACIST MULTI-CULTURAL INSTITUTION

MONOCULTURAL → → → MULTICULTURAL → → → ANTI-RACIST → → → ANTI-RACIST MULTICULTURAL					
Racial & Cultural Differences Seen as Deficits		Tolerant of Racial and Cultural Differences		Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Assets	
<p style="text-align: center;">1. EXCLUSIVE A Segregated Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intentionally and publicly excludes or segregates African Americans, Arab Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans ▪ Intentionally and publicly enforces the racist status quo throughout institution ▪ Institutionalization of racism includes formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels ▪ Usually has similar intentional policies and practices toward other socially oppressed groups such as women, disabled, elderly and children, gays and lesbians, Third World citizens, etc. 	<p style="text-align: center;">2. PASSIVE A 'Club' Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tolerant of a limited number of People of Color with "proper" perspective and credentials ▪ May still secretly limit or exclude People of Color in contradiction to public policies ▪ Continues to intentionally maintain white power and privilege through its formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels of institutional life ▪ Often declares, "We don't have a problem." 	<p style="text-align: center;">3. SYMBOLIC CHANGE A Multicultural Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity ▪ Sees itself as "non-racist" institution with open doors to People of Color ▪ Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting "someone of color" on committees or office staff ▪ Expanding view of diversity includes other socially oppressed groups such as women, disabled, elderly and children, gays and lesbians, Third World citizens, etc. <p style="text-align: center; font-style: italic; font-weight: bold;">But...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Not those who make waves" ▪ Little or no contextual change in culture, policies, and decision-making ▪ Is still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism and control 	<p style="text-align: center;">4. IDENTITY CHANGE An Anti-Racist Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity ▪ Develops analysis of systemic racism ▪ Sponsors programs of anti-racism training ▪ <i>New consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege</i> ▪ Develops intentional identity as an "anti-racist institution" ▪ Begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities ▪ Increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage <p style="text-align: center; font-style: italic; font-weight: bold;">But...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutional structures and culture that maintain white power and privilege still intact and relatively untouched 	<p style="text-align: center;">5. STRUCTURAL CHANGE A Transforming Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commits to process of intentional institutional restructuring, based upon anti-racist analysis and identity ▪ Audits and restructures all aspects of institutional life to ensure full participation of People of Color, including their world-view, culture and lifestyles ▪ Implements structures, policies and practices with inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing on all levels of the institution's life and work ▪ Commits to struggle to dismantle racism & oppression in the wider community, and builds clear lines of accountability to all communities resisting oppression ▪ Anti-racist multicultural diversity becomes an institutionalized asset ▪ Redefines and rebuilds all relationships and activities in society, based on anti-racist commitments 	<p style="text-align: center;">6. FULLY INCLUSIVE A Transformed Institution in a Transformed Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Future vision of an institution and wider community that has overcome systemic racism ▪ Institution's life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural, and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices ▪ Full participation in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interests ▪ A sense of restored community and mutual caring ▪ Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression.

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