

# **Doing the Work:**

## **Building Explicit Anti-Racism into the Practices of Your Disability Services Office**

Presented by Portland State University

AHEAD Equity and Excellence 2022, Cleveland, Ohio

# Land Acknowledgement

In recognizing the land upon which we reside, we express our gratitude and appreciation to those who lived and worked here before us; those whose stewardship and resilient spirit makes our residence possible on this traditional homeland of the Lenape (Delaware), Shawnee, Wyandot Miami, Ottawa, Potawatomi, and other Great Lakes tribes (Chippewa, Kickapoo, Wea, Pinakahsw, and Kaskaskia). We also acknowledge the thousands of Native Americans who now call Northeast Ohio home. Case Western Reserve University and the greater Cleveland area occupy land officially ceded by 1100 chiefs and warriors signing the Treaty of Greenville in 1795.

Land Acknowledgement taken from Case Western Reserve University  
<https://case.edu/socialjustice/sites/case.edu.socialjustice/files/2019-07/Land%20Acknowledgement.pdf>

# Land Acknowledgement

In honoring the lives that have been lost and the intergenerational impacts of this violence, we must also give thanks to the descendants of these Indigenous/Native tribes who continue to carry on their communities legacy of resistance, survivance, creativity and brilliance. Land acknowledgements are empty without action behind it. Therefore, we should shift to a frame of Land Back. This includes, but is not restricted to, revitalization of Indigenous knowledges, giving to Native organizations, donating to the Indigenous communities whose land you reside on, building relationships with the people and their hxstory, and more. Be generous, not only monetarily, but with talents and time as well. Make space and redistribute power.

# Stacie Taniguchi (she/her)



- Assistant Director, DRC at PSU
- Originally from Los Angeles, CA
- Japanese-American
- Disabled (chronic illness, visual impairment)
- Family history of disability
- Spent 7 years working full time at cultural resource centers before working in disability services

# Jen Dugger Spalding (she/her)

- Director, DRC at Portland State University
- Originally from Ferguson, MO
- White Queer Ciswoman
- Nondisabled for now
- New mom / Postpartum 6 months
- Has worked in disability services for more than 15 years



# Presentation Agenda

- Setting the Stage for our Conversation
- White Supremacy in Higher Ed
- Disability Justice & the Connection with Anti-Racism
- Flashback to 2020
- Commitments To and Actions Towards Anti-Racism
- Advantages & Challenges
- Resources

# Taking Care of Ourselves - First and Foremost

- Content warning
- Do what you need to do throughout the session
- Get water
- Take breaks
- Move around
- Participate or don't



# Agreements

- All of us are on a learning journey. We all have a responsibility to examine what it is we think we know and challenge ourselves to expand.
- We thrive by creating a safe and supportive place to share concepts, ask questions, engage in discussion, and grapple with all of it.

# Agreements

- Racism and white supremacy are real. We are not here to debate this.
- Communicate your truth but make space for everyone
- Confidentiality
- Invitation not expectation to contribute
- Respect each other's views and path
- Engage to understand - not necessarily to respond
- Embrace non-closure
- Mutual care

These agreements are borrowed and informed by Michelle C Johnson  
(Race and Resilience and DRWorks)

# Defining key terms

**BIPOC** – Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

**Anti-racism** - Opposition to racism. The process of actively identifying and opposing racist systems to remove barriers, redistribute power, and create access for BIPOC people.

**White supremacy** - the social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable white people to maintain power over people of other races

**White fragility** - White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

**White privilege** - the set of social and economic advantages that white people have by virtue of their race in a culture characterized by racial inequality

**PWI** – Predominantly White Institution

**HBCU** – Historically Black College and University

**MSI** – Minority Serving Institution

# White Supremacy is at the Core of Higher Education

- Higher education was originally designed to serve the white majority, and prepare white men for leadership roles in society
- Development of HBCUs and other MSIs
- Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890
- GI Bill
- Affirmative action
- Racism experienced by faculty of color
- Racism experienced by students of color

# Group Participation

Group participation: Where do you notice white supremacy and racism in your institution? Your office? Your own practices?

# Disability Justice and the Connection with Anti-Racist Action

- The Americans with Disabilities Act came to be in 1990 and changed the game in terms of disability rights and regulations
- There were disability activists at that time who saw the need for a justice framework around disability issues
- In 2005 Patty Berne and other predominantly queer & trans BIPOC folks coined the term Disability Justice
- There are 10 Principles of Disability Justice

# Disability Justice and the Connection with Anti-Racist Action

1. Intersectionality
2. Leadership of the most impacted
3. Anti-capitalist politic
4. Cross-movement solidarity
5. Recognizing wholeness
6. Sustainability
7. Cross-disability solidarity
8. Interdependence
9. Collective access
10. Collective liberation

# Setting the Foundation for Anti-Racism Work in PSU DRC

- History of PSU
  - Founded in 1946 to serve WWII veterans
  - Campus was originally located in Vanport, OR - home to 40,000 people (40% African-Americans)
  - Vanport was destroyed in a flood in 1948, requiring the campus to relocate
- Racial makeup of pro-staff
- Variety of additional factors that led to the work in Summer 2020

# Institutional Context: PSU Today

- **Total Enrollment: 23,177**
- **First Generation Students: 46.2%**
- **Students with Children: 25%**
- **Disabled Students: 7.8%**
- **BIPOC: 37%**
  - **Latino: 17.1%**
  - **Asian: 9.5%**
  - **Black or African American: 3.9%**
  - **Native American: 1.1%**
  - **Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 0.5%**
  - **Multi-Ethnic: 5.9%**
  - **% of disabled students of color: 36%**

\*Numbers and categories from Fall 2021, PSU Facts and Disability Resource Center data

# Immediate Actions Taken

- Gathered staff for conversation about options for action and what we were prepared to do
- Purchased and began reading *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla Saad; worked through questions about the reading each week
- A list of action items was developed and added to each week
- Alerted our students of our work underway
- Alerted student staff of opportunities to engage in the work as well

# Actions Toward Anti-Racism and Racial Justice

1. Applying an antiracist framework to office policies and internal processes
2. Deepening relationships across campus
3. Recruiting and retaining a racially diverse staff
4. Supporting the retention of BIPOC students
5. Elevating BIPOC voices and experiences
6. Aligning our spending with our values
7. Expanding learning opportunities and expectations of professional and student staff
8. Regularly communicating our ongoing work and progress toward these commitments

# 1. Applying an antiracist framework to office policies and internal processes

- Reconsider documentation required for registration with DRC
- Develop protocol for calling Public Safety and other resources
- Update bios to include lived experience/area of research interest
- Develop email templates and “snippets” to include racially and culturally inclusive resources/information
- Advocate for inclusive Image descriptions across campus
- Responsible use of Land Acknowledgements

# 1. Applying an antiracist framework to office policies and internal processes



**Portland State University  
Native American Student  
and Community Center  
Presents**

A conversation about the current state of land acknowledgments with:

- Shirod Younker
- Dr. Danica Brown
- Dr. David G. Lewis
- Trevino Brings Plenty

**Friday**  
**February 26th, 2021**  
**5:00pm - 6:30pm**

Zoom: 895 4544 5939



**Recorded video link:** <https://www.facebook.com/PSU.NASCC/videos/land-acknowledgment-conversation/760742947884316>  
(not captioned)

**Event highlights:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f\\_7wURiLOzTo-ofWoD6yi14tpVy4YAnFw9NHxlugXhc/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f_7wURiLOzTo-ofWoD6yi14tpVy4YAnFw9NHxlugXhc/edit)

## 2. Deepening relationships across campus

- Intentionally building strong relationships with colleagues who work primarily with students of color
- Consultation and people power for BIPOC specific resources
- Asking colleagues of color to review our progress
- Increasing our participation in events that are for BIPOC students
  - If white DRC staff want to attend, ensure white folks are invited

### 3. Recruiting and retaining a racially diverse staff

- Intentional recruitment of BIPOC candidates via [Listservs, Orgs, and Job Recruitment Sites](#)
- Addition of minimum qualification to position description:
  - Willingness to engage in anti-ableism and anti-racism work
- Consider that the terminology we use is culturally appropriate for our institution/office but may not be shared by candidates
- Add lived experiences/identity into a hiring committee's calculation
- \*\*Include information about DRC's racial makeup to job description and all recruitment materials

# 3. Recruiting and retaining a racially diverse staff

- Interview Questions that speak to our values:
  - What actions have you taken or what ideas do you have to demonstrate your support and solidarity with diverse identity groups or communities with whom you do not personally identify?
  - We value intersectionality and the centering of multiply marginalized voices, especially those most marginalized, such as Black, Brown, and Indigenous, queer, and trans disabled folks. We know that we cannot be free until we dismantle all forms of oppression. Do you hold these values as well? How would you fold these important identity intersections into the work you would do in the DRC?
  - DRC staff members are asked to actively address ableism and racism in their work. This may include being on committees, attending events/trainings, or doing internal work to address institutional barriers in DRC systems. Can you share what experience or interest you have in addressing ableism and racism?

## 4. Supporting the retention of BIPOC students

- BIPOC student-centered programming
- Dedicated time to support various initiatives across campus:
  - Advocacy for the creation of a Pacific Islander and Asian American Studies Program
- Review the work that has already been done around BIPOC student retention to help support/leverage resources
- \*\*\*Discussion of a disabled BIPOC support group

## 5. Elevating BIPOC voices and experiences

- Focus groups for disabled students of color
- BIPOC & Chronically Ill virtual event
- Social Media:
  - Follow more BIPOC Instagrammers, artists, activists, etc.
  - Post more consistently with focus on intersectionality
- Ensure DRC library uplifts racially diverse authors
- Evaluate the imagery used on our websites/social media/flyers, etc
- Reflect the language used by BIPOC students and on-campus cultural identity resource offices



THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER PRESENTS

# BIPOC & CHRONICALLY ILL

A CONVERSATION WITH INDIGENOUS  
CHAPLAIN MELISSA BENNETT

FRIDAY, MARCH 5TH  
1:30 PM - 3:00 PM



[BIPOC and Chronically Ill Virtual event recording](#)

## 6. Aligning our spending with our values

- Reconsider where we spend our money in the office and where we ask students to spend their money
  - Use info available to find minority business owners/vendors
  - Who are we hiring for trainings, event facilitation, etc?
  - What conferences/professional development opportunities are we paying for - how are these opportunities supporting BIPOC leaders?

## 7. Expanding learning opportunities and expectations of professional and student staff

- Required reading: *Me and White Supremacy*
- Addition of DEI-specific goal to everyone's performance eval
- Race/racism professional development opportunities for staff
- Ongoing monthly work done independently/in groups and monthly share-out in full team meeting

## 8. Regularly communicating our ongoing work and progress toward these commitments

- Posting information about our progress on our website
- Sharing updates with other directors in DMSS
- Communicating with stakeholders so work is not duplicated and we can leverage resources when appropriate

# Suggested Ingredients for Success:

- University culture and commitment to JEDI
- Deep understanding of Universal Design
- Office culture and readiness
- Leader willing to be vulnerable, open, honest, and make mistakes

# Group participation:

Group participation: How can you and/or your office practice solidarity in actionable ways? What are you excited to take on? What concerns do you have with moving this work forward?

# Recommendations

- Be sure that your actions reflect your promises
- Avoid tokenizing, asking BIPOC folks to take on unpaid, extra work, making assumptions about BIPOC experiences
- Be open to being wrong/corrected - processing work should not be the labor of BIPOC colleagues
- Creating a manageable, sustainable plan - what in your work plan needs to give so you can do this work?
- Collaboration has value - and may mean actions take longer. Build this time in your work plan.

# Resources

[A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#)

[Association for the Study of Higher Education \(ASHE\) Report, “Systemic Racism in Higher Education”](#)

PSU DRC Collection of Anti-Racist readings (included as handout)

PSU DRC Collection of Anti-Racist webinars and videos (included as handout)

[Land Acknowledgement Virtual Event Recording](#)

[BIPOC and Chronically Ill Virtual Event Recording](#)

# Thank you so much!

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