

The Center for Multicultural Engagement and Inclusion Departmental Anti-Racist Statement

May 2022

“ The crux of anti-racism is the common agreement that racist systems exist, are pervasive, and unfortunately permeate almost every aspect of society. The CMEI team will use our socialization, education, and positionality to eradicate the racist and oppressive systems deeply rooted in white supremacy that are the drivers of inequality. As socially conscious leaders, we are committed to using our positionality, power, and privilege to structure programs, training, and policies, to bring about liberation. ”

Background Context

The CMEI team engaged in reading, conversation, reflection, and writing to arrive at individual commitments to anti-racism. We began by reading and discussing Dr. D.L. Stewart’s 2017 Opinion Piece “*The Language of Appeasement*” as an exercise to provide us with a common language and framework aimed at achieving the MSU Denver institutional commitment of becoming an anti-racist institution. The CMEI professional, paraprofessional, and student staff will design, implement, and assess intentional and meaningful co-curricular learning opportunities where allyship is the standard and co-conspiratorship is an expectation.

Such an organizational transformation cannot take place without significant investment in developing a cadre of student leaders committed to anti-racism at MSU Denver and social justice and racial equity in the broader society. Achieving this desired state requires the CMEI, and the greater MSU Denver community to recognize the transformative power of our collective differences. In essence, each of us, as leaders, have been socialized in unique ways and with unique understandings of what anti-racism means, could be, and should be.

As the Center for Multicultural Engagement and Inclusion, situated in the Center for Equity and Student Achievement, within the Division of Student Engagement and Wellness at MSU Denver, it is essential that we continue developing our understanding of what anti-racism is, the potential impacts it will have on the students we serve, and how we will use it to deconstruct systems of whiteness, oppression, racism, inequity, and injustice.

Furthermore, the multifunctional student affairs organization that is the CMEI, is uniquely positioned to use student development and multicultural student support services as a means to accomplishing the shared institutional commitment to making MSU Denver the anti-racist institution we aspire to be.

CMEI Action Plan

- **Acknowledge Power:** We must recognize the power structures that exist both inside and outside the professional place and in academia. Power is hegemonic and people who are oppressed may, perhaps, facilitate and recycle the same power structure that marginalizes them. Amidst the work of dismantling whiteness, we also take notice of who is at the center of attention, who is at the center of power, and stand against injustices. We need to also learn and understand the power of humankind in order to understand our history of racism and whiteness and make the connections between all these forms of injustices.
- **Be Knowledgeable:** It is imperative that we do research and learn as much as we can about the state of higher education in this country and higher education policy. We will do this through a wide range of tactics such as diving deeper into the higher education principles that our institution upholds and practice, utilize the additional resources that appear throughout the Civil Rights Principles for Higher Education, and resources from our institutional partners internally and externally on our commitment to anti-racism work.
 - Engage and implement assessments around anti-racism into staff performance evaluations and goals, professional development, staff meetings, supervision model of student employees, and programs and services. The CMEI is committed to engaging in self-analyses to reflect on how our department can better undo the systemic racism within our culture, institution, and society. We look to the following assessment guides and tools to aid in our work:
 - *Anti-Racist Organizational Development*
 - *Moving A Racial Justice Agenda: Organizational Assessment: Are You Ready?*
 - *Organizational Assessment Tool*
 - *Racial Justice Assessment Tool*
 - *Self-Assessment Tool: Anti-Racism*
- **Know Where We Stand:** The love for our community and people motivate us to do this work, commit to this work, and guide us in action and process. We stand for the prospect of a greater humanity. As such, the focus always remains on improving humanity despite the discomfort we may feel at times. It is vital to always remember, despite the critiques, that the work of anti-racism and decolonizing white colonial minds is, and will forever be, a project of humanity.

- **Incorporate:** Another way to take action is to incorporate the information we have learned from our key constituents and stakeholders into our programming efforts and initiatives, utilize the data we gather from our research/racial equity virtual community townhalls and conversations, and listening of personal stories in order to communicate within our institutional departments and leadership on ways we all can work together to protect the civil rights of all students attending MSU Denver and overall higher education institutions.
- **Breaking the Silence:** For many marginalized and communities of color, learning to break the silence is a survival issue. To remain silent would be to disconnect from our own experiences, to swallow and internalize our own oppression. The cost of silence is too high for marginalized and communities of color. We choose to break the silence to survive. We survive so that we continue to speak truth to power forever committing to a more racially humanizing world. And that is something no one can break or take from our marginalized and communities of color.
- **Reach Out:** Connect, reach out, support, talk, discuss, and actively listen to tell each other why we support action to make meaningful change that serves the needs of people who are from historically excluded communities. To be able to have candid, honest, anti-racism, anti-Blackness conversations with each other in thinking about creating change and advocating for overall systemic and structural change, not just react in the moment; how to sustain these relationships and conversations consistently and long term.
- **Coalition:** Work in partnership with and support organizations, internally and externally, invested in higher education and anti-racism work, especially for our underrepresented and marginalized communities. Working with coalitions and organizations that support higher education equity help us stay informed and keep us up to date on the latest actions we are embarking on to continue protecting the civil rights of MSU Denver students.