

ANNUAL REPORT
AD HOC COMMITTEE TO PROMOTE ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVES THIS YEAR
(PARITY)
ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

Background

After the police murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the acceleration of Black Lives Matter demonstrations around the world, the Old Westbury Faculty Senate passed a resolution in 2020 committing to a position of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement; students, alumni, staff, and faculty of color; and continued efforts toward the erasure of racial inequity and oppression. The resolution further committed to dedicating the 2020-2021 Academic Year to the curricular and co-curricular exploration of topics related to racial (in)equity, (in)justice, and movements for social change.

Early in the 2020-2021 academic year, many faculty and staff were eager to engage in anti-racist work on campus and advance the commitment named in the June 2020 resolution. Rachel Kalish, who had been organizing a Community of Practice on race and racism, sent out a poll to assess faculty/staff interest, and invited interested faculty/staff to a meeting in Fall 2020. At that meeting, plans for the upcoming academic year were discussed, and it was suggested that formalizing this service to the college in an *ad hoc* committee would be an important means to both strengthen faculty governance and to try to ensure that this essential work (often done by faculty of color) be both visible and valuable to the institution.

Thus, a Faculty Senate resolution forming the *ad hoc* committee to Promote Anti-Racism Initiatives This Year (PARITY) was drafted and approved by the Faculty Senate in October 2020. The resolution contained the following charge for the PARITY committee:

- Gather and disseminate information on faculty- and administration-led anti-racism initiatives at SUNY Old Westbury and within the SUNY system;
- Identify and implement initiatives to advance the June 2020's dedication of this academic year to a curricular and co-curricular exploration of topics related to racial (in)equity, (in)justice, and movements for social change;
- Advocate for support for relevant initiatives from the administration;
- Collaborate with key stakeholders on campus and within the SUNY system, such as the Student Government Association, the administration, the SUNY Black Faculty and Staff Collective, University Faculty Senate, UUP, CSEA, and others to identify and implement anti-racism initiatives

The resolution further specified that membership of the *Ad Hoc* PARITY committee shall consist of a minimum of five members, drawn from faculty and staff, appointed by the Senate Chair with

consent of the Senate. Committee can add additional members as necessary to complete its work.

Finally, the resolution specified that PARITY report to the Faculty Senate on the composition and activities of the committee, and recommend to the Faculty Senate such policies and procedures as it deems suitable for the success and continued development of initiatives pertinent to the June 2020 resolution. The resolution also noted that Senate shall assess the continued role for this *Ad Hoc* committee in early fall 2021, including determining whether a continued need for this type of work might justify a bylaws revision to reconstitute this *Ad Hoc* committee as a standing committee in the future.

With this report, the PARITY committee hereby communicates to the Faculty Senate its composition and activities for the 2020-2021 academic year, and its recommendations for the future. We hope this report will give the Faculty Senate sufficient information to determine whether or not a continuation of the *ad hoc* committee is advisable, or if perhaps a standing committee should be formed.

Membership

Llana Barber (co-chair)
Rahwa Haile (co-chair)
Svetlana Jović
Rachel Kalish
Sylvie Kandé (steering member until Feb 2021)
Danielle Lee (steering member until March 2021)
Rachel Littenberg
Kevin Ozgercin (joined March 2021)

The PARITY committee held its first, formative meeting on 11/4/2020. All faculty/staff who had responded to Rachel Kalish's summer 2020 poll indicating an interest in working to advance anti-racism on campus were invited to attend. At the meeting, faculty and staff were invited to volunteer to either become formal members of the committee, or to continue to support the committee's work informally.

The faculty and staff listed above volunteered to be formal members of the committee, although many other faculty continued to attend meetings and participate in the work of the committee informally. Initially, the committee decided to have a four-person steering group, instead of a chair or co-chairs. Rahwa Haile, Llana Barber, Sylvie Kandé, and Danielle Lee served in that role until Sylvie Kandé and Danielle Lee stepped down from the steering group in February and March, respectively. Rahwa Haile and Llana Barber, the remaining members of the steering committee, became co-chairs.

Also in the first PARITY meeting, Usama Shaikh and Claudia Marin Andrade volunteered to be formal members of the committee. They served on the committee until February 2021, when the steering members – concerned that the resolution had specified the committee comprise faculty and staff, not members of the administration, and concerned about the power dynamic created by the presence of admin for untenured and/or contingent faculty – requested that the VP of Student Affairs and the Dean of Students meet with PARITY members separately, rather than formally serving on the committee. The request was made after consultation with the Senate Parliamentarian about the meaning of "faculty and staff" for governance purposes, and the Senate Chair was informed of the request.

Activities

Given that the committee was formed late in the Fall semester, the bulk of its activities occurred in Spring 2021.

Events

PARITY organized or co-sponsored fifteen events between December 2020 and May 2021. Co-sponsorship involved helping to organize or promote the event. All events focused on some aspect of racial justice. Some were aimed broadly at the entire campus community, including students, while others were directed at faculty. Events were well attended, with those aimed at the entire campus community often drawing more than fifty attendees, and those aimed at faculty generally drawing around twenty.

December 2, 2020

"The Racial Economics of Mass Incarceration," talk and discussion by Calvin John Smiley (Hunter College) and Peter Ikeler. Organized by Svetlana Jović. Participants: 51

December 3, 2020

Talk with Imani Henry, founder of Equality for Flatbush. Organized by Rahwa Haile. Participants: 53

December 8, 2020

Justice Seminar, Jasmine Mitchell's "Spectacles of Multiculturalism: Brazilian National Identity, FIFA, and Hegemonies of Whiteness at the 2014 World Cup Ceremonies," discussant Fernando Guerrero. Hosted by the Justice Seminar coordinators. Participants: 18

February 11, 2021

Justice Seminar, Orquidea Morales's "Transnational Genres: Latinx Horror but Made in Latin America?" discussant Ángel Lara. Hosted by the Justice Seminar coordinators. Participants: 23

February 18, 2021

BLM Book Club, Octavia Butler, Parable of the Sower, hosted by Orquidea Morales and Danielle Lee. Participants: 22

March 3, 2021

Justice Seminar, Kyle Anderson's "'I will not accept slavery!'— Race, Labor, and the 1919 Egyptian Revolution," discussant Sarah Smith. Hosted by the Justice Seminar coordinators. Participants: 21

March 22, 2021

Justice Seminar, Llana Barber's "Anti-Black Racism and the Formation of the Nativist State," discussant Jermaine Archer. Hosted by the Justice Seminar coordinators.

April 19, 2021

Justice Seminar, Chris Hartmann's "A Paradigm Shift for Public Health & Medicine? “Vivir Bien” (“Living Well”) in Bolivia, 2006-2019," discussant Keisha Goode. Hosted by the Justice Seminar coordinators. Participants: 12

April 21, 2021

Faculty and Staff Conversation on Implicit Bias, facilitated by Rachel Kalish. Participants: 18

April 29, 2021

"Encounters with Campus Police and their Effect on Black and Latinx College Students" a research presentation by: Tonya Bellings, Senior, SUNY OW Department of Public Health. Organized by Sarah Smith & Rahwa Haile. Participants: 51

May 3, 2021

"Deconstructing Negative Stereotypes about Black Women: Improving Well-Being on Campus," by Portia Allie-Turco from SUNY Plattsburgh (hosted by Counseling and Psychological Wellness Services). Participants: 25

May 4, 2021

"Implementing Antiracist Pedagogy into Courses," by Kyoko Kishimoto from St. Cloud University (co-sponsored by CETL) Participants: 31

May 5, 2021

Justice Seminar, Jermaine Archer's "A Push Towards Graphic Justice: Winslow Homer's 1877 Dressing for Carnival," discussant Amanda Frisken. Hosted by the Justice Seminar coordinators. Participants: 16

May 6, 2021

"Integrating Decolonialism and Anti-Racism: Humanizing the Higher Education Classroom," by Chanelle Wilson from Bryn Mawr (co-sponsored by CETL, TLRC, School of Arts and Sciences). Participants: 21

May 11, 2021

Faculty Workshop on "Applying Decolonialist and Anti-Racist Approaches in our Classrooms," lead by Kinning Poon and Jenny Strandberg (co-sponsored by TLRC). Participants: 15

May 13, 2021

"Deadly Ricochets: Mechanisms through which the Carceral State Fuels Racist Health Inequities in the United States," by Rahwa Haile (co-sponsored by OW's Health Disparities Institute, CSTEP, and FY). Participants: 20

Discussions

Conversations for PARITY had several meetings during the 2020-21 academic year, to help community members gain knowledge and comfort directly discussing issues related to anti-racism. In open, semi-structured discussions, participants collectively explored relevant topics, including the meaning of racism and antiracism, ways to practice antiracism as individuals, and ways to help Old Westbury to evolve into a more antiracist institution. Over the course of the academic year, a broad range of different faculty participated in these discussions, including those who were not formally a part of PARITY's work. Conversations were facilitated by Rachel Kalish, who had previously helped lead the Community of Practice on Race and Racism that had transformed into PARITY in Fall 2020.

Resources

In partnership with the TLRC, the PARITY committee solicited information from faculty to develop and publicize to students [a list of courses focused on racial justice](#) for the Spring 2021 semester.

On April 5, 2021, PARITY distributed to faculty a compiled list of resources to help our colleagues contextualize and stand against the racist attacks on Asian Americans.

On April 13, 2021, PARITY distributed to members of our campus community a statement on the murder of Black people by the police, as well as a list of resources to struggle against this racist violence.

Administration/Governance

PARITY co-chair Rahwa Haile drafted the bulk of the final resolution to formally create the PRODiG committee, and both co-chairs spent several weeks in discussions with members of faculty and administration in order to determine the ideal structure and goals for PRODiG, and to

garner sufficient support for the resolution to be approved by the Faculty Senate at its last meeting of the year.

In May 2021 PARITY members Rahwa Haile and Rachel Kalish worked with PARITY supporter Sarah Smith to closely read and analyzed the existing faculty climate survey. They met with Jacob Heller in June of 2021 in order to present their constructive feedback regarding the faculty climate survey.

Also in May 2021, the PARITY committee sent a formal request to the President's office to rename the Columbus Day holiday as Indigenous People's Day. In 2017, SUNY's [Student Assembly](#), [University Faculty Senate](#), and [Faculty Council of Community Colleges](#) voted to request that all SUNY's implement this change on their campuses.

A [number of SUNY's](#) [have already](#) done so, and the administration responded favorably to our request.

Collaboration

PARITY members were tireless in fostering collaborations. Steering members/co-chairs met (by video or phone) or collaborated with representatives from the following campus and SUNY entities: Student Affairs, Student Government Association, Student Conduct, University Police, DEI Council, PRODiG committee, Teaching & Learning Resources Committee, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Health Disparities Institute, Justice Seminar coordinators, Institutional Research, SUNY Black Faculty and Staff Collective, UUP's Member Action Coalition, as well as several grassroots organizations in Long Island, including LI Progressive Coalition and the Women's Diversity Network.

Recommendations

Our primary recommendation is that OW invest much more proactively and meaningfully in creating an anti-racist college. Some steps that would help bring this vision to fruition include:

1. Declare a public commitment to antiracism.
2. Hire a full-time administrator who is an expert in antiracist theories/practices and has successfully implemented them at an institutional level, in order to shift institutional culture.
3. Formally incorporate the consideration of antiracist work or the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion into all hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions.
4. Develop a clear, effective, and restorative/transformational grievance process for members of the campus community who experience bias incidents.
5. Conduct truly rigorous qualitative research/assessment on the experiences of minoritized groups (faculty, staff and students) on our campus and in their local communities. This research should be conducted by seasoned social science researchers who are also theoretically conversant in antiracist theories and practices. The college must then work

to systematically implement any key changes indicated by this research (i.e. "close the loop").

6. Develop an Anti Racism Institute led by faculty and organizers invested in and expert in antiracist practice and theory. With sufficient resources, this institute could be a beacon of social justice research and practice in Long Island.

Finally, we recommend that PARITY should continue to function as an *ad hoc* committee for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Report approved by PARITY committee members, September 15, 2021