



The History of Equal UA

Equal UA is a non-profit, 501c3. It began as a grassroots organization in 2017 in response to an act of discrimination against a Black member of our community, spurring the creation of the Equal UA sign, and became a rallying point for our community to start having conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion in Upper Arlington. We became a non-profit in 2019.

Our mission is to embrace diversity, advocate for equity & nurture a community where everyone can belong.

Our vision is a vibrant, diverse and welcoming community where everyone belongs.

- **Bridge building** for Equal UA means building community among residents as well as building networks of support across other community organizations and institutions, including the schools and city, in UA.
- **Learning** means collecting and sharing resources that help us better understand the historic and current state of UA and the world through an equity and belonging lens and that also help us to consider different experiences.
- **Advocating** means doing the work to make those changes needed to achieve our vision of a vibrant, diverse and welcoming community where everyone belongs.

How it all began...

- [The Columbus Dispatch: Starting a movement, Dec. 12, 2017](#)
- [The Columbus Dispatch: Inclusion movement grows in Upper Arlington, Jan 18 2018](#)
- [CityScene: Suburban Spotlight: Tri-Village: Diversity in UA: Updates and opportunities, Jan 9, 2023](#)

Highlights...

- Instrumental in bringing forth the UA City Community Relations Committee. In mid-September of 2020, Upper Arlington City Council formalized its creation of the Community Relations Committee and appointed nine residents as its founding members. The Community Relations Committee's purpose is to promote understanding, mutual respect and a sense of belonging among all residents to affirm the value of each individual and foster a culture of shared community.
- Working to further incorporate the history of Pleasant Litchford in the Upper Arlington City and Schools and creating the Pleasant Litchford Fund, in partnership with UAEF and Pleasant Litchford descendants, to support the work of DEI in UA Schools.
- Supporting local non-profit organizations that are doing the work of DEI and justice in central Ohio through the proceeds (totalling over \$10,000) of the Equal UA ENOUGH signs, created to protest police brutality against Black people.
- Hosting panel discussions and educational opportunities, such as partnering with community organizations to bring experts from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, the Anti-Defamation League, and the award-winning author Jason Reynolds, author of Stamped.
- Co-founding and co-leading the Columbus Communities Coalition for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which is a collaborative of individuals and organizations from over 16 Columbus suburban communities as well as 3 private school communities. The purpose of this coalition is to share best practices, resources, and to collaborate where possible to move Columbus toward achieving racial and social justice.
- Creating the Human Connection Series in partnership with UA Library
- Facilitating community discussion to address white supremacy and disinformation in Upper Arlington and in the country at large
- Facilitating panel discussions, featuring experts and personal testimonials to bring understanding to the topics of: LGBTQ+ identity and experience; Implicit Bias; Affordable Housing; Speaking to children and adolescents about race and racism; Anti-Semitism and hate; The history of race and racism; Poverty and class; Transgender identity and experience; True Stories of the Japanese Internment
- Hosting bi-monthly book/other media talks on topics of DEI. Some titles include: *Waking Up White*, by Debbie Irving; *The Color of Law*, by Richard Rothstein; *So You Want to Talk About Race*, by Ijeoma Oluo; *Just Mercy* (film); *Heavy*, by Kiese Laymon; *Redefining Realness*, by Janet Mock; *The Case for Reparations*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates; *Caste, the Origins of our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson; *Seeing White* (podcast), by Scene on Radio, *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson
- Partnering with community organizations to bring award-winning author Jason Reynolds, author of Stamped, to speak to UA educators and parents.
- Partnering with community organizations to bring award-winning author Brendan Kiely, co-author of American Boys and Tradition to UA educators and parents.
- Designing and selling over 1200 "ENOUGH" signs in response to the police murder of George Floyd to state our commitment to ending police brutality against Black and brown people. Of the \$10,000 we raised, proceeds were split among three important

Columbus organizations: *Columbus Freedom Fund, My Project USA, and Asian American Community Services*

- Providing representation on the Pleasant Litchford working group to support the UA Board of Education in creating a comprehensive timeline and common language to share the Pleasant Litchford story among the UA City, UA Historical Society, Equal UA, and UA Schools. Continue to provide support to Litchford descendent community. Continue to work with school to modify school curriculum to include not only the Pleasant Litchford story in local history from grades k - 12 but to move toward an anti-racist curriculum that fully explores Upper Arlington's racial history in the context of the national history of race in the United State
- Facilitating UA IDEA Day workshops for three years with students
- Advising the UA's first Culture Fair and other student-led initiatives
- Providing representation as advisor for the School Counselors Advisory Board
- Advising and provided content for the Arlington Living Magazine to promote more diverse representation and inspire an inclusive UA culture
- Providing representation on the UA Schools strategic planning committee
- Providing representation on the UA Schools Equity Advisory Board, which was instrumental in hiring the Chief DEI Officer and with whom the Officer will work closely in executing DEI programming, policy and culture change, and ensuring the accountability of all stakeholders.
- Providing support and collaboration to launch Rainbow UA, dedicated to supporting and celebrating the LGBTQ+ community in Upper Arlington.
- Creating Becoming Welcoming Communities UA, a committee that seeks to support inclusive housing in Upper Arlington. This committee was integral to the advocacy that resulted in UA City Council passing Source of Income Nondiscrimination in 2024.
- Starting Equal Eats, a dinner club to build community and visit minority and immigrant-owned restaurants in Central Ohio.
- Collaborating with City of UA, UA Schools, and community organizations for events like Black History Month, Big Table conversations, hUmAn Connections Festival.



about us

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