Sharing Lessons Learned: Intersectional Collaboration, Collective Accountability, and Radical Care in Antiracist Programming

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INTRODUCTION

Our session at the 2021 Watson Conference functioned as a workshop to support antiracist conference committees in assessing their antiracist objectives. We showcased lessons we have learned about antiracist programming and guided participants in developing strategies for transferring those lessons into their own contexts, drawing from our experiences of piloting a Certificate in Antiracist Writing Pedagogy and launching the Inaugural Learning/Teaching for Justice Conference at our home institution. Taken together, these two initiatives have taught us that antiracist work in higher education necessitates three guiding values:

- **Intersectional collaboration:** Conference committees prioritize participation from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and community members in planning and hosting conferences.
- **Collective accountability**. To sustain intersectional collaboration, conference committees share responsibility for reflecting on how the committee is living up to its vision of antiracism, especially when that may mean calling out (or calling in) instances or patterns of racism within the committee.
- **Radical care.** Just as intersectional collaboration cannot function without collective accountability, collective accountability cannot function without radical care. Radical care is the daily work of humanizing ourselves and each other in antiracist spaces. Humanizing ourselves and each other means we regard one another and ourselves as complex people working within hierarchical institutions who are navigating interrelated systems of domination, as we may also experience grief and loss, parent small children while working from home, struggle to put food on the table, and balance our everyday lives. Radical care means that we are not only aware of these realities but also that our antiracist work is informed by them.

These values have emerged from teaching, learning, and laboring in the specific institutional context of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). At UCSD, the undergraduate student experience is defined by the seven-college system. Undergraduate students elect to join a college on campus that administers their living and learning experience. Inspired by the Oxford–Cambridge system, each college provides the structure to a student's general education curriculum and offers an academic and social environment defined by a specific intellectual theme. The college we work in emerged from student demands for what would later become UCSD's Thurgood Marshall College. In 1969, an alliance between the Black Student Council (BSC) and the Mexican American Youth Association (MAYA) resulted in the call for the university to establish Lumumba Zapata College. The BSC–MAYA alliance invoked the names of Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mexican revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata to stress the college's ethos of

Abstract

This article draws on our workshop presented at the 2021 Watson Conference that showcased the lessons we have learned about antiracist programming from piloting a Certificate in Antiracist Writing Pedagogy and launching the Inaugural Learning/Teaching for Justice Conference at our home institution, the University of California, San Diego. Taken together, these two initiatives have taught us that antiracist work in higher education necessitates three guiding values: intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care. In this article, we ground these values in scholarship and analyze the contradictory institutional context from which these values have emerged, namely from within a first-year writing program that expects students to become proficient in academic writing through the counterhegemonic study of social hierarchies and mass movements for justice. We explore the specific work we have done to navigate this contradiction so as to imagine and conspire with our audience towards substantive transformation within higher education. The article takes the form of a gathering of reflections from different stakeholders holding different positionalities within our program but who each have used intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care to guide their antiracist work. Specifically, the reflections represent those of the two presenters at the Watson Conference and those of a former student of theirs who was hired to coordinate the inaugural Learning/Teaching for Justice Conference. Regardless of our differing positionalities in the institution, we all three share an ethic of antiracist resistance and hope our experiences are useful as you engage in your own projects in the name of justice.

Keywords

antiracism, antiracist pedagogy, antiracist conferences, first-year writing, intersectionality, intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, radical care

social resistance. In the BSC-MAYA vision, this new college would center students of color by providing a culturally relevant general education (B.S.C.–M.A.Y.A., 1969).

The plan for this new college was approved in 1970. However, it took almost 20 years for the college to receive its official name in honor of Thurgood Marshall, the first African American Supreme Court justice and legal mastermind of *Brown v. Board of Education* that ended juridical segregation in the United States. Today, the mission, vision, and values of the college are defined by its motto "scholar and citizen," exemplified by the life and achievements of the college's namesake. All incoming Thurgood Marshall College students enroll in the Dimensions of Culture Writing Program (DOC), the required three-quarter core sequence that provides a unified academic experience for them. These DOC courses are grounded in the original BSC–MAYA student activists' commitment

to social justice and calls for counterhegemonic engagement with U.S. history, culture, and society, while meeting UCSD's requirement that students demonstrate proficiency in English writing and communication.

DOC's very existence is thus a potential contradiction, as we describe in the sections that follow. In DOC, we study issues of social justice and self-determination while under the university's mandate that we train students to master academic writing, a kind of writing defined by White language supremacy (Condon & Young, 2016; Inoue, 2015; Inoue & Poe, 2012). While the history of our college and program is unique, the contradictory nature of pursuing antiracist work in the racist, classist, and heteropatriarchal institution of higher education is not. Our presentation at the Watson Conference and this article explore the specific work we have been doing to navigate contradiction in the spirit of suggesting ways for our readers to imagine and conspire towards substantive transformation within higher education. Specifically, we offer the three aforementioned guiding values. These values have grounded our decision-making and actions for immediate and long-term change in the face of seemingly insurmountable institutional barriers.

The three guiding values emerged from our experiences in DOC at UCSD, but they are rooted in Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) groundbreaking work on intersectionality. Crenshaw reminds us that any antiracist agenda must include an analysis of multiple systems of domination simultaneously: if we are to truly engage in antiracism, she explains, our work "must include an analysis of sexism and patriarchy" (p. 166). Subsequent scholars (Carastathis, 2016; Collins, 2000; Collins & Bilge, 2016) have taken up intersectionality to include social systems centered on sexuality, age, ability, immigration status, and other dimensions of difference. Crenshaw and the body of scholarship her work has sparked affirm the naming of our first guiding value, intersectional collaboration, as the value informing the other two: collective accountability and radical care. Intersectional collaboration reminds us to prioritize participation from communities of Color and, importantly, from marginalized identities within those communities.

Moreover, our three guiding values are affirmed by scholarship in Writing Studies on committing to racial justice. As Natasha N. Jones, Laura Gonzales, and Angela M. Haas (2021) and Rasha Diab, Thomas Ferrel, and Beth Godbee (2017) make clear, declaring antiracist values is not enough: we must *do* antiracism. Diab et. al (2017) describe how personal reflection can be a powerful tool for articulating commitments to racial justice, but to translate those commitments into material change, these narratives must act upon us: to help us study ourselves and come to "'see [our] invisible beliefs' (Wheatley, 2002, p. 36)" (p. 26), to prioritize time for "self-work *alongside* [emphasis added] work-with-others" (p. 20), and to take action *within* [emphasis added] our institutions "because racism [itself] is institutional" (p. 35). In articulating the

need to shift between the personal and the collective, Diab et. al affirm our value of collective accountability. As an outgrowth of intersectional collaboration, collective accountability helps us prioritize the individual positionalities of and collaborations among participants involved in an antiracist project but also *how* those individuals push each other toward (or away from) the work.

But, we cannot effectively attend to the *how* without prioritizing care. As Jones et. al (2021) explicate, the *doing* of antiracism centers on for whom and how we care. Their discussion of care affirms the naming of our third value, radical care, as the culmination of the previous two values, intersectional collaboration and collective accountability. As we work to humanize ourselves and each other in antiracist spaces, we reject a culture of disposability, "ensuring that no one in our community feels disposable" (p. 30)—especially in the face of the calling out and calling in that can occur within a context of collective accountability. Like Jones et. al, we too have found that care is everyone's responsibility: indeed, in antiracist work, care means everyone is engaged in educating ourselves about racism in our programs, what we need to do to eradicate it, and how to leverage what power we have in material ways. And, we extend this framing of care to center participants' complex and diverse material realities—as family members, parents, caregivers, survivors.

What follows is a gathering of reflections from different stakeholders holding different positionalities in the DOC Program, but who each have used intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care to guide their antiracist work. Specifically, the reflections represent those of the two presenters at the Watson Conference and those of a former student of theirs who was hired to coordinate the inaugural Learning/Teaching for Justice Conference (LTJC). First, Emily R. Johnston, DOC's associate director, reflects on the Certificate in Antiracist Pedagogy she launched in DOC. Then, Amanda Solomon Amorao, DOC's director, discusses how this curriculum in antiracist pedagogy is deeply connected to the vision for an even broader antiracist initiative at UCSD, the LTJC. Finally, Jonathan Kim, UCSD class of 2020, reflects on his work of translating the antiracist vision of the conference into material reality through his role as the LTJC Coordinator.

We have chosen to present our writing in three sections to distinguish our positionalities, as the different levels of privilege and power that come with our varied statuses in the university, as the roles of lecturer and academic coordinator, tenure-track faculty, and alumni turned academic employee, respectively, shape our work in different ways. However, we each engage with the three guiding values to highlight the simultaneity of this work. Our curriculum development and conference planning have been recursive, dialectical, and intertwined processes. Moreover, a major theme in both our antiracist pedagogy curriculum and in the LTJC is

challenging the racialized, capitalist, and gendered hierarchies within higher education.[1] By choosing to format our article in three distinct sections engaging with a shared set of values, we seek to highlight how our positional differences shape our different relationships with antiracist work, while also conveying the collaborative nature of our work. Regardless of our differing positionalities in the institution, we all three share an ethic of antiracist resistance and hope our experiences are useful to you as you engage in your own projects in the name of justice.

DR. EMILY R. JOHNSTON, DOC ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

For the four years I have been serving as DOC's associate director, I have wrestled with balancing the teaching of content and the teaching of writing in our program. On the one hand, our very existence is the result of student demands for a college that centers the histories and experiences of BIPOC and working-class students (B.S.C.–M.A.Y.A., 1969), which necessitates teaching U.S. history, society, and culture from the perspectives of disenfranchised groups. On the other hand, the university mandates that we teach academic writing, which, as Asao B. Inoue (2015) reminds us, is steeped in Whiteness.[2] So, how do we teach our students to succeed as writers in the academy while also teaching them writing as a revolutionary act of speaking truth to power?

One answer I've explored lies in how I teach teachers, my core responsibility as associate director. With that, I have restructured our requisite pedagogy seminar for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in DOC as a curriculum in antiracist writing pedagogy. The curriculum guides GTAs in crafting a teaching philosophy and toolbox of practical methods for resisting White language supremacy[3] in teaching and assessing writing, while comprehensively supporting them in the larger work of pedagogical self-reflection and identity building. As indicated in the introduction, first-year composition (FYC) is entrenched in Whiteness. And, since FYC is among the strongest predictors of student success in higher education (Garret, Bridgewater, & Feinstein, 2017), FYC is an ideal site for teaching our first-year students to interrogate the standard language ideology that permeates higher education in the United States so that, as they move throughout their undergraduate careers, they have tools to identify Whiteness in other disciplines.

The year-long antiracist pedagogy curriculum begins with a deep dive into the growing body of literature on White language supremacy in Composition Studies, centering the work of scholars of color such as Asao B. Inoue (2015, 2019), Iris D. Ruiz (2016), and Vershawn Ashanti Young (2010). Following this intensive reading and discussion, I pair up new and returning GTAs to work together to develop specific antiracist teaching strategies for implementation in their classrooms. These partnerships segue into larger teaching circles, groups of GTAs that meet to discuss how their strategies are impacting student learning. GTAs report that the sharing of knowledge in these teaching circles inspires them to take greater risks in their teaching, integrate more play into their lesson plans, and name with students how standard language ideology shows up in academic writing. The year culminates with GTAs crafting statements of antiracist teaching philosophy and sharing them in a campus-wide ceremony.

While the implementation of this curriculum has been rewarding and beneficial for our GTAs and their students, the White-supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist conditions in which we all teach FYC remind me that implementing antiracist pedagogy within a single program is not enough. White supremacy infiltrates every facet of institutional life, so no single course, program, department, or instructor can vanquish its toxicity. We need to do this work in community to ensure we are actually serving BIPOC students and to sustain ourselves in the affective labor this work demands. I recognize that, at the very least, the DOC GTAs and I have a responsibility to share the work we are doing with our colleagues across campus.

In transitioning the antiracist pedagogy curriculum into concrete material resources for administrators, faculty, and GTAs in UCSD's seven other writing programs on campus and potentially in writing programs at other institutions, I have reflected on what can and cannot transfer from what we are doing as a teaching community to other contexts. Our program is unique in its approach to FYC because we are housed within an undergraduate college that emerged from student demands during the Civil Rights Movement and, in alignment with those demands, teaches composition through the theory and practice of social revolution. What's more, our GTAs come from myriad home departments and do not have backgrounds in composition theory and pedagogy. These conditions are not common at other institutions.

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1 Please note that we have purposely chosen to use the term "antiracist" versus "anti-racist" with a hyphen to emphasize that antiracist practices should not be conceived as reactions to racist systems and events. Antiracism must itself be a generative, proactive, and iterative process.

2 Like all racial categories, White is a social construction, or "a way of 'making up people'" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 105), and White*ness* refers to "the normalization of white racial identity" (National Museum of African American History, n.d.) to the extent that White folks often do not even see themselves in racial terms (DiAngelo, 2018). However, while race is human made and not biologically determined, race has had and continues to have a profound effect on United States history, society, and culture. Indeed, race has functioned as "*a master category*" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 106) of difference since the very formation of the United States as a nation.

3 White language supremacy is a tool of White supremacy that "uses language to control reality and resources by defining and evaluating people, places, things, reading, writing, rhetoric, pedagogies, and processes in multiple ways that damage our students and our democracy" (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2021).

So, what can I share with other antiracist educators that may actually work in their contexts? This question helped me name three guiding values, which are outlined in our introduction: intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care. These values have helped me root our antiracist pedagogy curriculum in the legacy of Thurgood Marshall College: revolution from the inside out, from the institution and into the streets. And yet these values are flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of program and department structures and cultures. What follows is a description of how these values are helping me build our antiracist pedagogy curriculum outward, which can perhaps spark ideas in others invested in antiracist pedagogy to launch and expand antiracist pedagogy initiatives in their own contexts.

To live up to a term like antiracist pedagogy, which implies an active and constant resistance to White supremacy, a curriculum requires intersectional collaboration. As we defined it in the introduction, intersectional collaboration means any antiracist initiative must prioritize participation from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and community stakeholders. Admittedly, this participation has been challenging to enact on our campus. Whiteness is overrepresented in writing instruction at UCSD, and while many White writing faculty members such as myself are invested in antiracist work, if we are only or primarily collaborating with each other, we will continue to fall short of our antiracist vision. Given that reality, it's been essential to expand our network of support by collaborating with campus communities across disciplines and units, such as teaching-resource centers, writing centers, student-resource centers, and upper-level administrators positioned to amplify the urgency of antiracist pedagogy campus-wide.

To that end, Amanda and I have secured an Antiracist Pedagogy Changemaker Grant from the UCSD Teaching + Learning Commons, a campus unit that supports teaching and teaching research across the university. Through the grant, we have been able to materially compensate DOC students for participating in focus groups to assess the labor-based grading contracts (Inoue, 2019) we have implemented in our lower-division sequence, the most recent material consequence of our antiracist writing pedagogy curriculum. We have also been able to bring Dr. Inoue to campus (virtually) to guide our GTAs in implementing labor-based grading. We recognize that while labor-based contract grading is itself a potentially powerful antiracist practice, its impact on our students and GTAs has been disparate. Some students have struggled to develop the metacognition necessary to reflect on their labor. Some GTAs have struggled to balance an emphasis on learning and risk-taking alongside constructive feedback to students on improving their academic writing. Some students *and* instructors have found the labor of labor-based contract grading exhausting. The focus groups and Dr. Inoue's workshop with GTAs centered those most directly impacted by labor-based grading in the necessary process of revising our grading contracts in DOC: the students whose writing is being assessed under this model and the GTAs charged with assessing that writing.

As part of the research grant, Amanda and I participated with faculty and graduate students in a biweekly Antiracist Pedagogy Learning Community to read and discuss literature on antiracism across disciplines. Participating in this learning community provided a space for sharing about the antiracist writing pedagogy curriculum in our program and helped us redesign that curriculum to meet the needs and labor constraints of GTAs across disciplines. This grant will culminate in revised labor contracts and teacher-training materials for implementing labor-based contract grading in DOC's large-lecture, small-discussion section model of FYC to maximize both teacher and student agency. Through further conference presentations and publications, we hope these material resources will be transferable to writing programs with comparable structures.

Sustaining intersectional collaboration requires collective accountability, a compassionate naming of instances or patterns of racism occurring within our community, and radical care, a daily humanization of ourselves and each other. That is, to ensure that such collaborations are mutually beneficial and that they center antiracism, Amanda and I establish regular space for dialogue and reflection with our GTAs. These conversations during weekly teaching meetings explore how we have been caring for ourselves, our colleagues, and our students; the challenges in extending care; and strategies for how to support one another through the vulnerability of antiracist work. For example, we've had many difficult conversations as a teaching community about our own internalized racism as it shows up in the assessment of student writing. We have had to name moments when we, in the name of helping our students become more successful academic writers, are simply reinforcing hegemonic conventions such as logical argument and peer-reviewed research without also helping our students interrogate the uses and limits of these norms. We are learning to lean on each other to develop new vocabulary for responding to student writing in ways that respect students' responsibility for their own learning and that keep us focused on creating the classroom conditions in which learning can happen if and when students are ready for it.

DR. AMANDA SOLOMON AMORAO, DOC DIRECTOR

As director of the DOC Program, I feel acutely every single day the contradiction of our program's location in the university. As Emily points out, first-year composition (FYC) programs are entrenched in Whiteness. Many times in the attempt to teach students how to write "well," even the most well-meaning instructor is ultimately trying to teach students—especially students of color—to adopt a normative White voice that devalues the specific practices of language and lived experiences of minoritized communities (Inoue 2015). The inherently colonialist nature of FYC becomes even more obvious in a program like DOC, where the intellectual content is focused on exploring the development of social hierarchies

in the United States and movements for social justice in U.S. history. In other words, the challenge facing Emily and me daily is how to align our teaching and assessment of student writing with our content's focus on naming and resisting oppressive power structures. As Emily describes above, we have responded in a significant way to this challenge by developing a curriculum in antiracist pedagogy for the graduate students who labor as teaching assistants in our program and by committing to a significant structural change in our program's ecology through the adoption of labor-based contract grading (Inoue, 2019).

We have also responded by launching the Learning/Teaching for Justice Conference (LTJC) as an opportunity to explore the contradictions of enacting antiracism within higher education and to recognize how those contradictions in fact provide the fertile ground upon which transformative knowledge production and community building can and does happen. The culmination of ten months of planning, collaboration, and community building, the LTJC took place May 14–15, 2021, via Zoom. I offer the lessons learned from the conference as a model for how to create transformative spaces of learning across differences and within complex institutional contexts. In what follows below, I discuss how our three guiding values of intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care dialectically emerged from and defined the LTJC as we worked to manifest our commitment to antiracism.

The initial idea for the LTJC materialized in honor of Marshall College's fiftieth anniversary of its founding. In 2019, as college leadership initiated planning to celebrate the occasion, we began reflecting on that founding moment, evaluating how our college was living up to that legacy and envisioning the next fifty years. Marshall College's origin is fundamentally defined by antiracist student activism, as exemplified by the B.S.C.–M.A.Y.A. demands that the new college be "devoted to relevant education for minority youth and to the study of the contemporary social problems of all people" (B.S.C.–M.A.Y.A., 1969, p. 2). After protracted struggle, protest, and compromise, Thurgood Marshall College emerged. Some have gone so far as to call the naming of the college after Justice Marshall a neoliberal and multicultural compromise (Thurgood Marshall College, n.d.). The adoption of the name was read as symbolizing a redirection of the original anticapitalist, anti-imperialist energy and critique by the B.S.C.–M.A.Y.A. coalition into a rights-based framework of social change that upholds the nation-state as the guarantor of justice, rather than as the primary site of oppressive power and social critique. My vision for the LTJC was born from this deep consideration into how the college generally and DOC specifically were and were not fulfilling the original demands for a revolutionary college dedicated to and determined by students. Ultimately, my vision for the LTJC emerged from the desire to move beyond my own personal "confessional narrative" (Diab et al., 2017, p. 20) regarding my position as a writing-program director and toward "actionable commitment" to antiracism (p. 20).

The contradictions between the liberatory content of the assigned texts and the disciplinary nature of the writing assignments in our program are oftentimes frustratingly obvious in our day-to-day work instructing students in academic writing while simultaneously analyzing hierarchical systems of oppression in U.S. society. In these moments of frustration, however, I return constantly to intersectionality. As Vivian May (2015) observes, "An intersectional justice orientation is thus wide in scope and inclusive: it repudiates additive notions of identity, assimilationist models of civil rights, and one-dimensional views of power" (p. 3). An intersectional view of our program reveals the persistence of White (language) supremacy, class inequality, ableism, and heteropatriarchy as defined by the program's position in the university, *and* it also reveals the currents of resistance, counterhegemonic coalitions, and humanizing practices of care that defined the college's founding and continue to coexist with and challenge institutional and interpersonal relationships of domination in the college even today. It is thus my responsibility and the responsibility of all in our DOC community to maximize the practices of intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care. From this starting point, it became clear to me the LTJC could be a space to continue and amplify the radical student tradition that defined the B.S.C.–M.A.Y.A. coalition. The LTJC could be an institutionalized and biannual space where the power of student social analyses and activism were centered, where institutional hierarchies were broken down, and where clear connections between classroom learning and community impact were showcased. The LTJC would be a biannual public event, and I envisioned it as a critical tool of accountability that would force us to regularly evaluate our day-to-day work in antiracism and chart our growth (or lack thereof) for ourselves and our stakeholders.

With the support of Marshall College Provost Dr. Leslie Carver, I was able to convene a committee of volunteers who shared my vision and represented staff, faculty, and students. Absolutely pivotal to the functioning and success of this committee was the employment of Jonathan Kim as the LTJC coordinator. A former DOC student himself, Jonathan's daily labor regarding communications and logistics was essential in enabling the committee to operate according to the values of intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care. The committee's point of departure was Paulo Freire's (2005) notion of the teacher-student/student-teacher in order to break down racist and elitist hierarchies among undergraduates, graduates, faculty, and staff in higher education (p. 80). We had many conversations about how to cultivate an active, interactive, and inclusive space for educators to be students, and for students to be educators. We wanted to recognize that teaching is not done just by academics for students in lecture halls but occurs in residential halls/apartments, academic-advising sessions, student organizations, campus centers, and other formal and informal learning communities across the university.

More importantly, educators do, and must, learn from their students. To this end, we built into the conference-proposal process specific questions asking presenters how they would

center engagement and dialogue, highlight student voices, and encourage material action in the name of antiracism and social justice. Presenters were asked to address these questions in their proposals:

- How will you design your session to be active, or even participatory, for attendees in a remote/virtual environment?
- One aim of the conference is to center student voices in the conversations about justice in teaching and learning. How do you plan to involve students' perspectives in your presentation?
- Would you like the conference organizers to arrange for a student respondent (or respondents) to offer thoughts and comments on your session?
- What actions to advance justice in teaching and learning do you intend for participants to take as a result of attending your session?

To ensure potential presenters received as much support as possible in considering these questions and in submitting their proposals, we held a virtual workshop before the proposal deadline during which potential participants could get feedback from committee members and their peers. This preproposal workshop particularly focused on supporting those who had never before written a conference proposal or attended an academic conference. The workshop facilitators asked participants to identify what stage of drafting the proposal they were currently at and created breakout rooms where participants could brainstorm with each other and a conference-committee member. In this way, we sought to make the conference-proposal process not an individualistic competition but a communal one centered in radical care for each other.

For a conference to be antiracist, it must demystify the very conferencing process itself—an obscure process that can operate on uninterrogated disciplinary expectations and unconscious biases. In the name of collective accountability, the committee therefore adopted a practice of rigorous transparency that went hand in hand with a conscious rejection of a politics of disposability when it came to reading conference proposals. The committee engaged in a proposal-review process that centered on antiracist mentorship rather than on the evaluation of proposals against a hegemonic academic standard. The committee shared with potential participants all the written feedback from the committee on participants' proposals and followed that with an invitation to a preconference workshop intended to help presenters implement the feedback they had received. The preconference workshop offered concrete strategies on centering student voices during sessions, explored best practices in time management, and supported presenters in clarifying and articulating concrete actions to take to advance justice in higher education as it related to their specific topics. By shining light on expectations for proposals and deliberations

regarding selection, conference committees invited intended participants and attendees to hold the LTJC accountable to its stated objectives. Moreover, the preconference workshop ensured the LTJC materially supported presenters through the creation of a culture and practice of care. Presenters were not left to individually meet the goals of the conference; the workshop manifested our commitment to doing antiracist work in community.

In the lead-up to the conference, we also worked to recruit students from DOC courses who could act as respondents to sessions. In this way, students were empowered to bring their perspectives and experiences to every single session. Drawing on their exposure to intersectionality and racial formation theory in the DOC sequence, these students enriched presentation sessions with their questions and observations, all in the name of the LTJC's goal of antihierarchical and communal knowledge production. The conference afforded DOC students the opportunity to take what they were learning in the DOC sequence out into a larger community of scholarship. To support these students, Jonathan created a participation guide and facilitated an orientation session during which students discussed and communally agreed upon the attitudes and actions they would need to bring to the conference space to cultivate dialogue amongst audience members and presenters. Having Jonathan facilitate this workshop created a peer-to-peer system of mentorship in the name of conference goals.

To develop an authentically antiracist conference that served our constituents, we also attempted to center those experiencing the violence of White supremacy's most steadfast support systems: misogyny, capitalism, and heteronormativity. In selecting the conference keynote speaker, for example, the LTJC committee made a concerted effort to identify a dynamic producer of knowledge outside academia whose work emerges from their intersectional lived experience as a queer person of color. We were honored when author and poet Saeed Jones accepted our invitation to be the keynote. His address was grounded in readings of passages from his 2019 memoir *How We Fight for Our Lives*, which traces his growth as a young, Black, gay man from the South. We were also able to organize a workshop with Jones and student leaders interested in the power of writing to effect social change.

The inaugural LTJC was an inspiring two-day exploration of the power of learning and teaching—even within a contradictory institutional space like DOC at UCSD—to raise consciousness, build community, and effect structural change in higher education. The diverse range of presentation and panel topics testify to this and can be seen in the post-conference commemorative booklet created by Jonathan Kim.[4] Marshall College and DOC are committed to holding the LTJC on a biannual basis to regularly return to the antiracist and student-activist roots of the college so as to continue pushing for structural change in the name of justice on our campus. We hope the example of the LTJC is useful to you as you

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4 The booklet is accessible here: https://marshall.ucsd.edu/doc/ltjc-2021/index.html.

continue your own work in the name of antiracism. Our experience with the LTJC can provide a model for interrogating your own specific institutional context, naming the limitations and opportunities that context provides, excavating institutional visions for change that may have been forgotten or compromised, and holding the institution (and yourself) accountable to that vision in the name of a more equitable future for students from Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities.

JONATHAN KIM, CLASS OF 2020, LTJC COORDINATOR

As I logged off Zoom and closed my laptop, a wave of relief swept over me. Over the past 48 hours, I had overseen the inaugural Learning/Teaching for Justice Conference (LTJC). But instead of arranging rooms and running between buildings, my eyes had been fixated on my screen, carefully facilitating and monitoring over 30 zoom sessions. While I was familiar with the intricacies of hosting a series of Zoom meetings, acting as the LTJC's conference coordinator taught me the intentionality and labor required to host an online conference in an equitable and just manner.

Very few aim to intentionally facilitate a conference in an inequitable manner, but what does it mean to have a conference embrace justice? What makes that conference different? These were the main questions I wished to address as the LTJC's conference coordinator. Given the ongoing pandemic during the 2020–2021 academic school year, I was well aware of the ways the online format both fostered and hindered accessibility. More than featuring sessions centered on issues of justice, I felt it was imperative to embody those values in the format of the conference itself. Having been given a set of values from the conference committee, I wanted to dedicate my role to striving for how the logistics of this conference could be a reflection of equity, antiracist pedagogy, and justice amidst COVID-19.

While the constraints of the ongoing pandemic limited us to a virtual conference, I knew the virtual space offered a multitude of opportunities and options. In choosing whether sessions were to be synchronous or asynchronous, or even whether sessions would be presented concurrently or sequentially, my mind was drawn to one of the themes of the conference: antihierarchical and intersectional collaborations. While "antihierarchical and intersectional collaborations" was originally meant to provide a theme for session submissions, I was drawn to format the conference in a way that challenged the hierarchical nature of higher education. What format reduces barriers for participation while also challenging the rigid student-teacher dynamic? While thinking about this challenge, the word "accessibility" continually made itself apparent to me. I was cognizant of the overwhelming evidence that remote learning due to COVID-19 had disproportionately impacted the learning experiences and mental health of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, so it was imperative that the conference format avoided

adding to the increasing disparity and strived to create an environment that directly addressed those challenges (United States, 2021, pg. 40).

In surveying and speaking with current UCSD students, two prominent concerns emerged: stable Internet and substantive engagement. With these obstacles in mind, I began to craft a hybrid synchronous and asynchronous format. While live sessions promote engagement, participation would require a stable Internet connection, as well as the flexibility to operate across multiple time zones, as many students and presenters were presenting from all over the world. Therefore, I wanted to incorporate a number of asynchronous sessions to allow participants to engage with the material at any time. By offering two options for presenters, I wanted to create a structure that allowed sessions to maximize the strengths of each format. With careful planning, we could group topics so they did not overlap, allowing participants to engage with the same or similar topics throughout the conference.

After I developed the outline and presented the format to the conference committee, the idea was approved with several minor revisions. While the work for this conference was just developing, I deeply appreciated how this conference presented an opportunity to view common engagement or logistics issues and properly address them within the context of justice. Facilitating an engaging and seamless conference is more than a logistics challenge; it is impacted and informed by the circumstances of the participants. Overlooking the context of these circumstances not only does a disservice to those wanting to engage with the conference, it allows for inaccessibility and injustice to be improperly labeled as mere administrative constraints. To strive for justice means to acknowledge how even seemingly unimportant or mundane limitations are informed by social, historical, and economic contexts.

With the format decided, next came the process of screening and selecting presentations. In wanting to deconstruct the hierarchical nature of higher education and academic conferences, we started with the idea of centering learning in a way that weakened instead of reinforced elitism. Through many conversations with faculty and experienced administrators, I began to realize how the system of "rejection" and "acceptance" of proposals by a faceless committee lends itself to supporting the mysticism and elitist nature of academia. Without knowing exactly what conference committees are looking for, it is difficult for potential presenters to craft a proposal that aligns with the values of a conference. Traditionally, having experience in the field or access to those with experience would alleviate this issue. But assuming most of our submissions would come from first-time conference presenters, we knew it would be inequitable to merely pass decisions along without an opportunity for feedback.

As mentioned in Dr. Solomon's section of this article, to promote collective accountability, members of the conference committee led by Dr. Johnston graciously hosted the aforementioned workshop

before the submission deadline. This dedicated space gave presenters the opportunity to receive feedback on their proposals. In addition to informing and educating presenters on how to strengthen their proposals, the workshop also held the committee and me accountable for clearly communicating themes and expectations.

But while we wanted to support those seeking guidance, we didn't have the capacity to provide individualized support at every step in the process. Instead of leaving this challenge as a shortcoming of our administrative process, we reevaluated the selection process as an opportunity to provide some insight and feedback on submitted proposals. Instead of creating a binary of acceptance and rejection, our selection process emphasized the strength of each session and prioritized offering quality feedback over an unexplained decision.

Watching the conference committee approach the screening and selection process informed by the value of collective accountability was deeply inspiring to me. In positions of power, it is easy to centralize the decision-making process to streamline and decrease the amount of necessary labor. While typing and formatting feedback took a considerable amount of labor, we felt just giving a decision was not only a disservice to the community of presenters but also an act that reinforced the barriers to participation in higher education. Creating a system that holds presenters and the committee accountable to the conference's values made clear to me how typical processes can be reimagined in more equitable and practical ways.

As the details of the conference slowly began to materialize, the committee felt it was imperative to also center the voices of students not just in responding to the presentations themselves but also in the administration of the conference. We used this opportunity to recruit undergraduate students who would help in facilitating the conference on the days with live sessions. In addition to training them to deal with technical issues, I explained the intentions and decision-making process behind the format and systems we implemented. In doing so, I saw an opportunity to demystify the event-planning process. We hoped students could take the skills and information learned from centering justice in this conference and apply them to future events and organizations.

Furthermore, we sought to recruit students to act as respondents for the individual live sessions. As Dr. Solomon previously mentioned, having an opportunity for student respondents allowed students to engage with the conference at every step in the process. While an engaging session requires participation, it can be daunting to be the first person to speak in a group. By including student respondents, we not only centered their perspectives and voices as undergraduate students but also fostered a space where others could feel comfortable in speaking and offering their thoughts. Including students on the administrative side and as assigned participants allowed us to mentor and incorporate student involvement at nearly every level of the conference.

While I was inspired to incorporate intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and the centering of student voices, I personally felt how *radical care* was essential to any work surrounding justice. As the conference coordinator, I found myself in a unique position. Having been mentored by many of the members of the committee in the past, I felt a huge amount of responsibility in organizing this event. Beyond a job, coordinating the conference meant much more to me. It was an opportunity to contribute to the UCSD community in a much larger capacity than I could have as an individual.

But in feeling the weight of responsibilities on my shoulders, I found myself constantly exhausted, wanting to implement even more strategies and systems into planning the conference. It wasn't until I felt overwhelmed with tasks that I learned how acknowledging my limitations and intentionally taking time for self-care were instrumental in my efforts to strive for equity and justice. Justice for myself meant being honest in acknowledging that while I knew the conference inside and out, I couldn't draft all the emails, oversee all the sessions, or answer all the technical questions by myself. By starting to recognize my limitations, I began to see how I could rely on the support of others. Acknowledging what I was capable of ultimately improved my mental health and prevented careless mistakes that could have impacted sessions and presenters. Radical care taught me how humanizing myself through this long journey was vital in the overarching goal of striving for justice.

While the two days of the conference were exhausting, they were even more gratifying. I felt extremely privileged watching the culmination of over 10 months unfold before me. For me, having the opportunity to give space to folks dedicated to forwarding justice in their communities felt extremely moving. But beyond being impressed by the work of others, I felt a deep sense of pride in facilitating an event that, from the ground up, sought to embody values of antiracist work. Intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care not only improved the processes of the conference but also made the act of organizing into a justice-centered project itself.

CONCLUSION

In closing, we acknowledge that while the work of antiracism is a daily struggle and never finished, our initiatives in DOC have contributed material change to Writing Studies. The Certificate in Antiracist Pedagogy and the Learning/Teaching for Justice Conference are but two examples of how we have shifted from *declaring* to *doing* antiracism. In launching an antiracist pedagogy initiative, particularly in our nontraditional FYC structure of large lectures taught by faculty with small discussion sections taught by teaching assistants, DOC has structurally embedded antiracism as a formative component of pedagogical professionalization for graduate students across myriad disciplines. Further, because we have embedded an antiracist pedagogy curriculum into the

requisite pedagogy seminar for graduate student teaching assistants (GTAs), GTAs have provided first-year student-writers with a unified academic experience that centers the comprehensive study of writers of Color, queer writers, and writers with disabilities; metacognition; and learning over mastery. And finally, in establishing the biannual Learning and Teaching for Justice Conference, DOC is creating an institutionalized space to center student knowledge production and activist projects, as well as antihierarchical practices of community, with the express purpose of leaning into the contradictions of higher education to facilitate change from within the institution.

In addition to naming our contributions, we also want to offer actionable takeaways for our readers to consider their own contributions to antiracism. In designing and implementing antiracist practices within the context of first-year writing programs and conferences regarding pedagogy in higher education, we have learned the three lessons below and offer them to you, with accompanying questions for reflection, as inspiration for your own work dismantling systemic injustice.

- **Intersectional collaboration** in the context of antiracist conferences means that in planning and hosting conferences, conference committees must prioritize participation from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and community members. One way we strive to collaborate intersectionally in DOC is by centering the needs and ideas of first-generation students, students of Color, students with disabilities, students of diverse sexual orientations and gender expressions, and students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in all our programming—in and beyond the classroom. How can your institution or context strengthen, amplify, and promote participation from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and community members?

- To sustain intersectional collaboration, conference committees must ground their work in **collective accountability**, a shared responsibility for reflecting on how the committee is living up to its vision of antiracism, especially when that may mean calling out (or in) instances or patterns of racism occurring within the committee. One way we foster collective accountability in DOC is through integrating structured reflection throughout the undergraduate curriculum, as well as in our beyond-the-classroom programming. What daily practices might strengthen, amplify, and promote reflection *and the respectful sharing of reflection* at your institution or in your context?

- **Radical care** is the daily work of humanizing ourselves and each other through the creation of antiracist spaces within hierarchical institutions. Radical care means that we are not only aware of the challenges of hierarchical structures but that we also push against them for ourselves

and for each other. One way we care for ourselves and each other in DOC is by beginning and ending our teaching meetings with check-ins and renegotiating the distribution of labor as needed in response to these check-ins. What small, yet consistent mechanisms might work to humanize participants in antiracist programming at your institution or in your context?

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