



Coalition for Anti-Racist Action February 2023

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the Coalition for Anti-Racist Action (CARA) newsletter. This is the first of hopefully a quarterly update on CARA activities, anti-racist activities on campus and events around the Greater Cincinnati community.

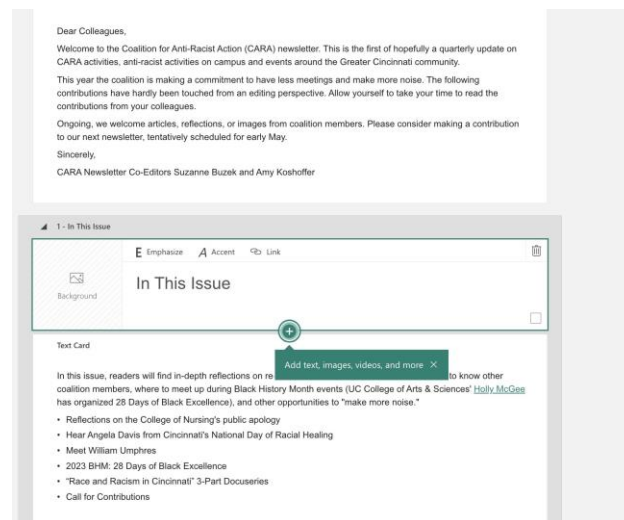
This year the coalition is making a commitment to have less meetings and make more noise. The following contributions have hardly been touched from an editing perspective. Allow yourself to take your time to read the contributions from your colleagues.

Ongoing, we welcome articles, reflections, or images from coalition members. Please consider making a contribution to our next newsletter, tentatively scheduled for early May.

Sincerely,

CARA Newsletter Co-Editors Suzanne Buzek and Amy Koshoffer

In This Issue



In this issue, readers will find in-depth reflections on recent events on campus, opportunities to get to know other coalition members, where to meet up during Black History Month events (UC College of Arts & Sciences' [Holly McGee](#) has organized 28 Days of Black Excellence), and other opportunities to "make more noise."

- Reflections on the College of Nursing's public apology
- Hear Angela Davis from Cincinnati's National Day of Racial Healing
- Meet William Umphres
- 2023 BHM: 28 Days of Black Excellence
- "Race and Racism in Cincinnati" 3-Part Docuseries
- Call for Contributions

Reflections on the Public Apology to College of Nursing Students

On January 13, College of Nursing Dean Gordon Gillespie addressed the College of Nursing in a public apology addressing the racism students experienced in the past. Below are reflections offered from CARA members who attended.

Kyle Key

The Interim Dean's apology to College of Nursing students is the *smallest* step in the right direction. Right now, that response viewed on its own is very performative—it is what the administration does next that truly matters. While I see the potential for positive change within the college, I have not yet seen how their plans will create that measurable change; nor have I seen the ways in which they will be held accountable.

As so often is the case, students were leading the way in this conversation. During the apology, several students of color courageously spoke up about their own experiences of racism and bias. After listening to the Interim Dean's response to these individuals, it is my opinion that he had not fully considered their experiences, or the ways that he can now follow up as an advocate. My hope is that he will seize this opportunity to learn about others' lived experiences, to recognize the privileges inherent to his position as well as in his own identities, and to wholeheartedly work toward meaningful change in the College of Nursing.

Amy Hobek

I attended the "Public Apology" at the College of Nursing that was put forward from the Interim Dean, Gordan Gillespie. First, I was struck by the implication of this being a public apology; however, I had not heard about this forum being held in any of my UC communications. My search efforts were also not successful. Thankfully, I had CARA communications to provide me with details so that I could attend. Although I believe this communication was specifically provided to address the students of the College of Nursing, having this be truly public and publicized would have better demonstrated the university's commitment to dismantling white supremacy and upholding the utmost cultural humility. I believe this would have further supported these nursing students, as well as students across all of our campuses.

As I reflect on this meeting, what had the most impact for me was listening to the student voices. I appreciated the acknowledgement from the Dean that questions should be from the student attendees first and foremost. However, it was my understanding that these students, many from the student organization UC_Ambition, have attempted to speak up about their concerns in numerous past exchanges, but that these concerns were historically not acknowledged nor validated. This seemed to be the theme of this current apology discussion as well, students of color are speaking about their experiences and those in power had not listened. During this event, the students brought up concerns about a faculty member being dismissive on an Instagram post regarding their concerns of low enrollment of Black nursing students compared to White students. Initially, this concern was met with further dismissiveness by the Dean, hiding behind the university's position on social media communications, until the student insisted on reading the post aloud. Another student brought up a concern about a virtual conversation with the Dean in which she was communicating her concerns about racism in the School of Nursing, and he then asked her about her race in response. She asked for a personal apology for his racist inquiry. A student asked why a bust of Florence Nightingale was still in the building, as the students have communicated how harmful that image is to them due to her racist history. The student was told he didn't know where it should go as an artifact of the university.

Questions were posed and questions were responded to, but the power dynamic remained. A Dean at his podium speaking first and students in their seats needing to be called upon to speak, being reminded to be respectful, being reminded to keep their voices down, being moderated for how they should respond to racism. However, despite all of these activities past and present to suppress their voices, what these students in this space demonstrated was an uninhibited resolve to hold those in power accountable for upholding the ideals of white supremacy with their words and actions towards students of color in the College of Nursing. And they were undeniably successful in doing so. Because of their tenacity and unwillingness to be dismissed, these students clearly held their own power during this meeting, as their voices were electronically amplified, as their voices remained strong and courageous. We had no choice but to listen to their collective resonance. But, what I keep asking myself, as I remain

in awe of these students, is what did they have to do to finally be heard? How much exhaustion did they have to endure in their persistent fight? How long had they been feeling like their concerns didn't matter? What did it ultimately cost them in their fight for an equitable education? How much harm was already inflicted upon these students before someone whispered, 'We hear you.'?

Trent Pinto

There is an art and a process to apologizing. A phenomenon only truly studied in the past 30 years (Tavuchis, 1991) and written about from a psychological perspective in the past 18 years (Lazare, 2005). An apology is a process that takes recognition, courage, empathy, and a willingness to understand how actions or words harmed someone or a group of people. "People who offer a pseudo-apology", according to Lazare in *On Apology* (2005), "are unwilling to take the steps necessary for a genuine apology; that is, they do not acknowledge the offense adequately, or express genuine remorse, or offer appropriate reparations, including a commitment to make changes in the future" (p. 9).

For those of us who attended the dean's address to the College of Nursing on January 13, 2023 witnessed two phenomena meeting squarely at the intersection of offense and apology. What I witnessed was first and foremost a group of faculty, staff and students harmed by the systemic racism pervading the College of Nursing due to historical influences and a history of the profession harming non-white individuals, along with accusations of current-day examples of students feeling unwelcome, facing persistent microaggressions, and faculty of color fed up with the consistent naivete and ignorance to these issues impacting a career dedicated to helping others.

What I also witnessed was a white man, the boss, steeped in all of his white male privilege, standing in front of the mass of people, alone, apologizing. As a fellow white man with multiple dominant identities, I felt for him. And I recognized that he was trying. He was standing in front of his students, his faculty, and his staff apologizing for the actions of the College, and the historical ramifications of the profession, and vowing to do better. He was recognizing where he had shortfalls, where he "stepped in it" with Black students, and he earnestly shared that his privilege had previously clouded his ability to see the ways in which his actions and his very *being* colluded in the systemic racism in the College. (He did not say those words exactly, but again, he was *trying* to say them in so many words).

While there were a few missteps in his address to the College (first and foremost, as a white man trying to understand systemic racism, *never* use your own experiences growing up poor, or working class, or "underprivileged" as a way to "understand" what your Black colleagues have experienced), he was listening and reflecting back on the experiences being shared. When one Black student asked him to apologize for a previous conversation that they had had in which he questioned her race, he listened, did not get defensive, respected her question and experience, and he apologized. Lazare (2005) explains that "the parties who have been offended have one or more of the following needs they hope will be addressed: the restoration of respect and dignity, assurances that they and the offender have shared values, assurances that they were not at fault, assurances that they are safe from further harm by the offender, knowledge that the offender has suffered as a result of their offense, a promise of adequate reparations, and the opportunity to communicate their suffering and other feelings about the offense" (p. 34).

For his part, the white man at the front of the room was trying. Lazare (2005) continues by stating that "people are motivated to apologize for two general reasons. They first...is their response to shame, guilt,

and empathic regard for those they have offended. The second...is their attempt to restore the relationship..." (p. 34). It was clear to me that his balancing act was between personal acts of racism that he instigated and participated in, while also understanding, and answering for, systemic racism in the College and history of nursing that he certainly wasn't *responsible* for, but was an active participant in *perpetuating*.

I saw this white man trying. I could empathize with him and respected him for trying. We can all agree that what comes next, the action behind the words, the promises kept, are what matters most. We all understand that many people can save-face by facing the proverbial "fire" and offering up false promises and empty apologies that carry little weight or emotion. We can respect the fact that most white men, particularly white men in power, rely on their privileges to not have to face these realities and go about their entire lives and careers unaware, or uncaring, of the pained realities of those around them. But in this room and at this address, I saw a man trying and at least taking the first step towards healing. I wish more white men would at least *try*.

Hear Angela Davis from Cincinnati's National Day of Racial Healing

Cincinnati's National Day of Racial Healing 2023
Hosted by ITA

RACIAL HEALING IS THE PRESCRIPTION **NOT AS EASY AS TAKING A PILL**

ABOLITION IS A WHOLESISTIC APPROACH

HOW DO WE CREATE A SOCIETY THAT NO LONGER DEPENDS ON STATE VIOLENCE

TO HEAL WE MUST TRANSFORM

THE WORLD WILL CHANGE. IT TAKES TIME

HERE WE ARE, A SPEC IN THE UNIVERSE... THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS THAN ACCUMULATION

WE MUST IMAGINE a NEW WAY

100 YEARS

SELF CARE INTERTWINED WITH FREEDOM & CARE of the COLLECTIVE

DON'T HOLD TOO TIGHTLY TO THE PRESENT STATE

FREEDOM IS AN IDEA EXPANDED by the PROCESS of STRUGGLING FOR IT

ENCOURAGE CURIOSITY IT'S NOT WHAT YOU READ... IT'S HOW!

PEOPLE ARE LEARNING IN ALL KINDS OF CONDITIONS

IT HAS TO BE RELEVANT & FUN

WHY IS SOCIALISM SUCH A SCARY WORD?

BECAUSE CAPITALISM SAYS SO... & MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE IT

WHEREVER WE ARE... INCLUDING THE UNIVERSITY MORE THAN A PLACE of FACTS WE LEARN HOW to RELATE & CRITICALLY EXAMINE

KNOWLEDGE IS PRODUCED EVERYWHERE

COLLABORATIVE WORK IS MOST REWARDING

CAPACIOUS

CINCINNATI'S NATIONAL DAY OF RACIAL HEALING

On January 17, All-In Cincinnati, in collaboration with UC's Center for Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation, hosted the city's third annual National Day of Racial Healing. The closing keynote was no other than political activist, philosopher, academic, and author Angela Davis. In her conversation with Naimah Bilal, Davis shared her expertise in racial equity and encouraged us to create new paths to

address racial disparities. She offered a forecast of the current state of equality and discussed what we can collectively do to improve rights for all.

Watch this conversation by clicking the video component to the right. The image above was created live during the conversation by artist Brandon Black of Drawnversation.



1 - Angela's exploratory presentation took an in-depth look at America's problems with racism and injustice. She offered a forecast of the current state of equality and discussed what we can collectively do to improve rights for all. Angela Davis is the author of more than 10 books on class, gender, race, and the U.S. prison system. She is an icon of her generation - an outspoken powerhouse at the vanguard of the Black Power movement, feminist scholarship, and prison reform.

Meet William Umphres



William Umphres, PhD, leads [the team](#) at UC's Center for [Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation](#). Get to know him in the Q&A below:

What is your position with the University and the Center for Racial Truth and Healing?

I am an Assistant Professor, Educator in the School of Public and International Affairs and the current Director of the Center for Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation. I am the second director of the Center. Our founding director, Dr. Tia Sharee-Gaynor, left UC for the University of Minnesota in the

Summer of 2022 and I was asked by her and the leadership of SPIA to take over, as I was serving on the Center's leadership team. I was honored and daunted. It's been a whirlwind getting up to speed, but I'm very proud of what we've already accomplished and excited for the work ahead.

How did you become involved in anti-racist work?

This is a hard question for me. My honest - if somewhat embarrassing - answer is ...gradually. As a young person bearing multiple privileged identities and growing up in the South, I was aware of ongoing injustices, though I was isolated from their consequences. Thankfully, my parents were relatively upfront about the realities of racial inequality, which prevented me from simply pretending it wasn't there. As a young adult, I had to confront my personal complicity with those injustices - or simply turn away. I feel very grateful that I had patient and passionate teachers in college and grad school. As a theoretically minded individual, they allowed me to work through the theory and history of politics and society - especially in America - until I understood that there is simply no way to engage politics or society without explicitly addressing the ongoing issue of race and racism. I was lucky as well that this theoretical awakening was encouraged and deepened into action with an amazing cohort of graduate school friends, both at the University of Virginia and at Princeton Theological Seminary, where my partner got her M.Div. And, for better or for worse, this also coincided with the mainstream onset of the season of protest and unrest we live in now. That gave me a chance to put my money where my mouth was, so to speak. So, it's only been in the last 15 years or so that I would have self-identified as "anti-racist" in the sense that I would have understood that to be an active task I choose to undertake, rather than a simple passive attitude.

How do you see your role in CARA?

I am simply a facilitator or tool for CARA to use. CARA has amazing leadership, starting with Trent and MK and going on through the organization. My role is to provide them with support when and how I can. Maybe that is helping tap financial resources. Maybe that is putting the weight of the Center behind a problem they have identified. Maybe that is simply helping coordinate strategy. Often, it's simply showing up. The members of CARA are a powerful group. My goal is to get them in the right places with the right people to allow them to use their incredible energy and gifts to advance Anti-Racism at UC.

What does a university that is actively anti-racist look like to you?

This is a great question - and in some sense - THE question that we are all wrestling with. I want to focus on the word ACTIVELY, here. Because I think that's key: Anti-Racism is not something to be finished, accomplished, checked-off on a list of curricular or accreditation goals. Anti-Racism must be an ongoing process, an ethos, that we infuse into our day-to-day life at the University. It has to be part of the curriculum, yes. But it must also be part of our organizational culture, it must suffuse every level of our decision-making processes. It has to be something that we DO, every day. It is an ongoing commitment. It's a set of skills we exercise in all our contacts and interactions. This isn't going away. This isn't a problem a dean, or a committee, or a few hires, or an endowed chair, or a curricular tweak can "fix." Any

Campus Climate Survey we administer, any DEI or Inclusive Excellence Initiative we undertake, all of it - these are just steps, just part of the process. They can't be the end goal. It to centuries to do the damage; it may take centuries to undo. We have to be honest about that.

This means that we have to face up to an uncomfortable fact - a fact our organizations (at UC and elsewhere) do not often want to confront: We aren't going to finish this work anytime soon. We will continue to make mistakes. We will discover new injustices. We might have the best intentions in the world - but history and systems are so powerful - we are going to screw up, again and again. There are ways that we are oppressive now that we probably haven't even thought of yet. I recently heard Angela Davis remark that she was actually glad to that aspects of the movement have taken a bit longer than she hoped. Because this has meant that new kinds of oppression, the oppression revealed by intersectionality, for example, have come to light in ways they would not have if we had "solved" the problem of racism in the 1970's, or 80's, or 90's..... Being actively Anti-Racist means listening for these new forms of injustice, being attuned to unexpected outcomes, and being open to the next formulation or the next phase of our fight.

So, to me, an anti-racist university is one that first confronts this hard reality. This isn't going away. We have to shoulder the burden of acknowledging the depth of the harm. We have to do our absolute best in the moment. We also have to recognize that it's only a start. Or we admit that what used to work doesn't work anymore. Or that what was once good enough isn't anymore. Or that in solving one problem, we created new ones. We have to be willing to accept our ongoing shortcomings. But - and maybe this is the hardest part - we can't take those ongoing shortcomings as signs of futility or impossibility. It's not that the task can't be done or that the goalposts are moving unfairly. It's that Anti-racism is an ongoing process, an activity - not an endpoint. So we keep doing the work, knowing that there is always more work to do.

This is also true of the Center, by the way. I'm under no illusions that I've got anything like the right answers to all these problems. I welcome advice, dissent, and enlightenment. I've got lots to learn and I strive to stay open to that.

What resources would you recommend for people interested in getting started in this work?

Well, the first place I would start if I were at UC is getting in touch with CARA. Again, Trent and MK are amazing, have amazing resources, and can help you find a place to plug in right away. Relatedly, find a community - find a group that is doing work you admire or want to be a part of and join-in. This work is relational. This work depends on direct connections. Go find them. One way you might do that is to become trained as a Racial Healing Circle Facilitator through the TRHT - reach out to me for more information there! There are also myriad suggestions for great books and readings on this. I will simply add that the work of Dr. Gail Christopher is the foundation of the Kellogg Foundation and the AAC&U's Rx Racial Healing Framework and the Centers for Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation framework utilized here at UC and around the country. So I highly recommend her works!

Any last comments?

“Race and Racism in Cincinnati” 3-Part Docuseries

UC students, faculty and staff are invited to join the Center for Community Engagement, the Nathaniel R. Jones Center on Race, Gender and Social Justice, and the Center for Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation for on-campus screenings of the [Intercommunity Justice & Peace Center’s Race and Racism in Cincinnati](#) docuseries.

"Race & Racism in Cincinnati" is a three-part docuseries that tells Cincinnati’s history from the racial margins, a history that is not often told in school curriculums or in mainstream (white) culture. The three films explore how race and racism shaped Cincinnati from its inception to the present day and place the storytelling authority in the hands of common people, rather than the people who hold power.

Participants are encouraged to attend all three films, as each film builds on the last.

Brief reflections will take place and light refreshments served following the screenings. Attendance is free, but RSVPs are required. Please RSVP via CampusLink using the links below:

- [RSVP for Part 1](#): Tuesday, March 7, 6:30-8:30 p.m., TUC Cinema/ TUC 415
- [RSVP for Part 2](#): Monday, March 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m., TUC Cinema/ TUC 415
- [RSVP for Part 3](#): Tuesday, April 11, 6:30-8:30 p.m., TUC Cinema/ TUC 415



2 - Trailer for "Race and Racism in Cincinnati."

Call for Contributions

Please consider making a contribution to the newsletter. It can be a reflection from an event you attend, such as one of the Black History Month events, or an update on anti-racist work or initiatives you are part of. Our next issue is tentatively scheduled for release in early May.

Send your contributions to CincyCARA.information@gmail.com.