

The Dismantling Racism Project: Change Through Radical Programming

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Abstract

Working collaboratively, a three-person team of student researchers developed The Dismantling Racism Project: Change through Radical Programming to reimagine the University of South Florida's first-time-in-college student experience through a series of "What if?" scenarios. The project adheres to the tenets of critical race theory (CRT) to challenge dominant ideology with an eye toward social justice—an aim that is stifled by the underrepresentation of people of African, Native, and Latin American descent. While the project uses the University of South Florida as its real-world laboratory, others could institute it elsewhere following the model provided: (a) first-time-in-college student orientation programming that sets a stage for anti-racism education, (b) required general education courses that dismantle racism, and (c) collaborative ceremonies constructed through nontraditional power sources.

Keywords: university, curricula, critical race theory, racism

Situated in Tampa, Florida, the University of South Florida (USF) is enmeshed in the racist history of a state that includes Andrew Jackson's eradication of indigenous peoples, African American graveyards secretly built over, lynching of African Americans, the Rosewood massacre, Jim Crow laws, the Ku Klux Klan, the murder of Trayvon Martin, and more. To our knowledge, USF has had no significant, ongoing reckoning of this racist past. Black students were not enrolled immediately when the University opened, though the first Black student enrolled five years later (Hossain et al., n.d.). As with many modern universities, USF presents as inclusive; however, the mission and vision statements do not mention racial inclusion. The statements give generic references to its "global environment" and "global curriculum" (USF, n.d.).

Based on limited information available in a recent factbook (USF Office of Decision Support, n.d.) about the Board of Trustees and administration, University leadership is overwhelmingly White. Faculty members are also mostly White, mimicking national patterns that show 75 percent of all faculty are White (Davis & Fry, 2019). The student body is more diverse than faculty, but African American and Hispanic student percentages fall significantly short of those same categories for the state of Florida. The Florida Statutes section 1001.7065 (Preeminent State Research Universities Program, 2020) provides rules governing the establishment of preeminent research universities in the state based on a detailed list of student achievement, university rankings, faculty awards, and endowment size. Notably excluded are any goals for student or faculty racial diversity. USF's increased standing as a preeminent research institution is marketed quite well, including in the factbook, but USF makes few explicit claims about success in the areas of diversity and inclusion for the student body. In fall 2019, the USF Students for a

Democratic Society held several rallies protesting the declining Black student enrollment and calling for action to back up the university's claim of increasing diversity. The USF community needs to focus on issues of racism.

The Dismantling Racism Project team advocates for change at USF through new curricula and student programs guided by the tenets of critical race theory (CRT). Recognizing that we cannot change every aspect of every office and every person at the university, our more focused goal is to challenge and eliminate racist thinking in first-time-in-college students. We hope that other researchers will focus on employment practices, faculty and staff training, athletic issues, leadership issues, and budget issues at USF. We are feeding the resistance by influencing new college students with the development of (a) reconceived campus welcoming activities, (b) new required classes and experiential learning opportunities, and (c) collaborative ceremonies constructed through nontraditional power sources. While this proposed project uses USF as its real-world laboratory, other institutions could also follow the model. The Dismantling Racism Project seeks to unapologetically destabilize the “racist structures of U.S. social, political, and educational systems...through the critical examination of historical phenomena, policies, and practices” (Morris & Parker, 2019, p. 25).

We are partially modeling our program after USF's Global Citizens Project, an initiative that aims to broaden student understanding of the world. While we understand the importance of this, we believe that domestic race issues demand similar amounts of focus and energy for the University. We must make up for the years when students were not taught the true—more complete—history of the United States but were taught a history that bolsters and sustains White fragility and White ownership. The Dismantling Racism Project is laden with speculation about how different USF and society might be if CRT was imbued in the development of curricula and extracurricular programs.

We make these suggestions with only tacit concern for politicians' whims, community objections, donor demands, or even student doubt. We also understand that USF professors and college deans do not develop programming without considerable pressure and directives from the Florida Legislature, the State University System Board of Governors, University trustees, faculty groups, and outside donors. The ups and downs of budget allocations along with state metrics for success are always on the front burner of administration considerations. We understand that proposing this project without a plan for mitigating these pressures would lead to difficulties with implementation. What we propose is the first step in imagining a new reality, and we know that much strategic work would be needed to see this vision put in place. The barriers to open, honest, raw communication are strongly ingrained as Joyce outlines in “Derailment: A Field Guide” (n.d.). Joyce shows that people in power often claim they are victims when their power is challenged, and their wrongdoings are written off as jokes or less-serious threats despite how they are perceived by the oppressed. This derailment of critical conversations often misdirects focus and thwarts social change. We believe that audacity and fearlessness will get attention and bring change; acquiescence to the status quo will not.

We expect backlash against the courses and those who teach them based on the experiences of other Florida university professors who have challenged racial construction and White privilege. In 2018, a Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) professor received so much criticism from outside sources for his class titled *White Racism* that police were stationed outside the classroom door. The professor advocated that the class was “not an attack on White people” but rather “an

in-depth exploration of our racially stratified society that is based on White supremacy” (Reilly, 2018, para. 3). The class continued to the credit of FGCU.

The numerous obstacles to success stop many transformative projects. Parents object. Administrators get nervous. Donors stop giving. Students are confused. The Dismantling Racism Project still asks the difficult “What if?” questions that confront racism in America and on our campus without looking away. We have divided the project into three student-focused categories: The First Fifty Days, The First Two Years, and the Four-Year Experience. The strength of the project rests on the sharing of power. In that spirit, we are not wedded to the name of the program. We believe there is likely a better name out there, though we eschew the words “diversity” and “inclusion” because of overuse and diluted meaning. We conclude our proposal with ways to bring a broad range of diverse voices to the dismantling racism table.

The First Fifty Days: What if the College Experience Started Differently?

USF claims to be dedicated to empowering students to maximize their potential for lifelong success and to closing the achievement gap regardless of race, background, or socioeconomic status. To make sure that USF lives up to these goals, we would implement a two-pronged anti-racism model during the beginning days of the university experience: defining CRT principles and practicing those principles.

CRT is an analytical framework that stems from the field of critical legal studies and addresses the racial inequities in our society. Currently, USF is a leader among universities with a diverse population; 41% of the student body is Black, Asian American, Hispanic, Native American, or multiracial. However, the University has not always supported these populations fully. To do so, a CRT-mindset must be instilled during the first 50 days of college using the following five principles outlined by Ladson-Billings (2013).

Critical Race Theory Tenets and Definitions

Belief That Racism is Normal or Ordinary, Not Aberrant, in U.S. Society

In order to apply the “What if?” scenario, USF must consider that many students are experiencing ongoing racism perpetrated by other students who feel that they belong to the dominant race. This racism is unfortunately an everyday occurrence that is embedded in university life rather than only the periodic episodes that might gain wider attention. USF needs to establish an understanding with the majority White population that the way they may perceive racism will not be the way that the university does business and will not be tolerated.

Interest Convergence or Material Determinism

The interest convergence principle (Bell, 1980) addresses the way in which White people advance social justice only when they have something to gain. To guard against interest convergence, USF must ensure that White students, faculty, and staff do not seek racial justice only when they feel it benefits them, including materially; rather, they need to see and treat all people equally simply because it is right.

Race as a Social Construction

USF can combat race as a social construction by ensuring that we are not developing or supporting a hierarchy of students based on race, skin color, hair texture, eye color, lip size, etc. All students are different, and their differences should not be used as a mechanism for creating a hierarchy symbolizing the ideology of White supremacy (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Deconstructing ideas of race and showing how the concepts have been invented and abused will be important for incoming students.

Intersectionality and Anti-Essentialism

What if USF examined how intersectionality and anti-essentialism, involving race, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, are addressed? The intersectionality of oppressions and privileges are not based on essential qualities or essences of people who make up groups (i.e., queer Cherokee youth), but the sociopolitical, economic, and geographic interests that converge and diverge to suit those privileged in the social order already in place. Anti-essentialist intersectionality can aid the student to fully understand racism, as an expression of power, whereby biases are directed at skin color, culture, language, etc.

Voice or Counter-Narrative

To counteract the traditional White narratives, the voices of all minority student groups must be honored and promoted. Counter-narratives go beyond the definitions, myth-busting, and legal arguments in building a case against racism; they make a passionate appeal that might be lost in technical discussions. Giving voice to these groups is often difficult when the very first welcome to USF is from the White male president of the University: Counter-narratives go against the grain and take effort to elevate.

Implementing the Five CRT Tenets

During the first 50 days, USF has already implemented programs that strive to ensure student connection: WOW (Week of Welcome) and The First Fifty Days. The First Fifty Days is focused around the first semester, which is the most critical time for students to establish their connection with USF and kick off a successful year. This is also the purpose of WOW. Going beyond the concept of connection, though, USF should build a foundation for CRT thinking. We propose four major activities for this. First, all students should be required to attend a series of short (2–3 hours) workshops based around these topics: identity, privilege, power, discrimination, cycle of socialization, intersectionality, allyship/accomplices, systemic oppression vs. personal experience, microaggressions, and nonviolent communication. These workshops should specifically be interactive, engaging workshops as opposed to one-sided lectures.

Complementing these individual workshops would be the concept of an anchoring group. While the workshops would ideally have a mix of students with a new group for each workshop, students would be assigned to an anchoring group that is small, meets for many weeks, and has static membership. In this smaller group, trained student leaders or counselors would build community among the small group and help them delve deeper into CRT issues. The anchoring groups could methodically explore and self-reflect on questions like these posed by school psychologists (National Association of School Psychologists, 2016, “Self-Reflection Questions” section):

1. When was the last time you had to think about your ethnicity, race, gender identity, ability level, religion, and/or sexual orientation? What provoked you to think about it or acknowledge it?

The Dismantling Racism Project

2. When watching TV or a movie, how likely are you to watch shows whose characters reflect your ethnicity, race, gender, ability level, religion, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation?
3. When using social media, how diverse is your feed? How diverse are your friends and followers? How diverse are those that you follow?
4. How do you respond when others make negative statements toward individuals of a different ethnicity, race, gender, ability level, religion, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity than yourself?

After workshops and anchoring groups, incoming students should participate in a third activity: critical analysis of the university policies. In particular, they should ask how the university is supporting hierarchy based on racial constructions. Students could practice fledgling research skills to analyze student codes of conduct, university housing policies, first-year syllabi, academic policies, etc. They would be fully vested in this process when they see that their voices enact change. Fourth, celebrating a wide variety of other voices in order to change the current White supremacy narrative is important. We propose an example in a department that is overdue for counter-narratives: athletics. Currently, universities are showcasing the diversity of their student populations as badges of honor. However, there still is a common perception among students that within the athletic department, the population is comprised of a majority of Black/African American students. The reality is that our athletes, especially Black/African American student athletes, are often considered to be intellectually inferior but athletically superior, and thus expected to perform at a higher level athletically and at a lower level academically (Smith et al., 2014). Using counter-narratives, USF could derail this narrative and highlight undergraduate Black/African American student-athletes who help comprise the University's graduation success rate of 80% or better in the past several years. This counter-narrative would not only highlight student athletes' abilities, but also celebrate athletes who succeed academically regardless of the color of their skin or from where they come.

The First Two Years: What if General Education Classes Reflected Critical Race Theory?

General education requirements were introduced to American universities in about 1915 as a response to the availability of excessive, disparate electives and to require students to “share like experiences in a limited number of courses” (Crooks, 1975, p. 109). These were courses on topics (e.g., English composition and literature, basic sciences, history, and humanities) that curriculum developers thought provided the general knowledge that would transform young students into well-rounded and good citizens. O'Banion (2016) claims that general education in the 1960s morphed into early versions of common core curriculum, an innovation that saw course numbers grow again after decades of restrictive offerings. However, O'Banion posits that the “cafeteria style, self-service” menu of too many class choices does not adhere to the mission of general education to provide all students with a common knowledge base. USF, like many universities, has organized general education into more rigid categories with greater choices within those categories, trying to strike a balance of core requirements with flexibility for student interest. In 2019, USF revamped and renamed general education courses as Foundations of Knowledge. The broad categories representing the revamped courses are generally the same as before with only a slight nod to the study of race and culture. Those current nine categories are as follows: English Composition, Fine Arts, Humanities, Human and Cultural Diversity in a Global Context, Mathematics, Quantitative Reasoning, Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences.

The Dismantling Racism Project advocates for courses on race, social justice, and inequities to be required as part of the common knowledge base and proposes a tenth category to emphasize the study of racism and CRT: Contemporary Issues in Race. Listed now in the Humanities and Human and Cultural Diversity in a Global Context categories are courses that could be moved to this new category. These offerings need updating to appeal to students and to disrupt the status quo. USF requires only one three-credit class from the Human and Cultural Diversity category. One class is not enough to right years of public school neglect on this topic or actually enact significant change for the university community. We propose that all students take at least two classes from this category.

We aim to make classes relevant to students by using contemporary art forms (e.g., newly published novels from authors of color rather than American “classics”) and to insist that course content changes regularly to reflect current events. The Dismantling Racism Project is a living, breathing program. The project proposal includes an undergraduate certificate (*Understanding Race Scholar*) that can be obtained by taking 15 credits from a combination of courses outlined below and from the proposed USF Study at Home program, an experiential program inspired by study abroad but situated in the United States.

New Foundations of Knowledge Courses

The Dismantling Racism Project team appreciates the role of academic freedom in course development and understands that these proposed courses may dampen creative independence. Changes to the curricula should be overseen by a committee that is devoted to the mission of eliminating racist thinking in students and to disrupt the Eurocentric education system. The proposed courses address content alone leaving pedagogy and assessment parameters to individual professors.

The initial course offerings are:

Slavery, Circa 2020

This course will cast a critical eye on the statement “slavery was abolished in the United States in 1865” in order to expose students to the long-lasting effects of nearly 250 years of mass kidnapping of Africans forced onto transport ships and held in captivity in the New World. Slavery, Circa 2020 will consider the ways in which race has been constructed, how that construction has roots in slavery, and the ways its legacy manifests today in schools, neighborhoods, and government. This topic is likely to be new to many students and the course will begin with a workshop on how to talk about race, using Joyce’s “Derailment: A Field Guide” (n.d.) and the book *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi.

The (Im)morality of Science

Scientists have long used people of color for scientific experiments without their permission or regard for their wellbeing. Money made from the results of that science has not been shared with subjects (or their families). Students in this class will study the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which began in the 1930s and continued for 40 years. Students will also read *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot (2017), the story of an African American woman with ovarian cancer whose cells were used without her permission and which eventually led to major medical breakthroughs. This course is guided by the writings of Harris (1993), such as “Whiteness as Property” in the *Harvard Law Review*, and Reardon and TallBear’s (2012), “Your DNA is Our History.” Both articles show how White people have long operated as if everything belongs to them, even other people’s bodies.

Sports & Protest

This course will trace protest and racism in top-tier athletics with an emphasis on how White fragility has derailed the discussion and understanding. Students will study the impetus for and reaction to the Black Power salutes by Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the medal stand at the 1968 Mexico Olympics to the “take-a-knee” protests of NFL players behind the leadership of Colin Kaepernick. Students will study media coverage of tennis player Serena Williams and gymnast Gabby Douglas, both of whom have been victims of attacks about their bodies, clothes, and hair.

Disrupting Children’s Books

The content of this course will change each year to feature new multicultural children’s books written by authors of color. In the first iteration of the class, award-winning authors Jacqueline Woodson and Kwame Alexander will be the featured authors. Both write children’s and young adult books, weaving in their experiences of growing up Black in America. The interest convergence principle (Bell, 1980) informs the course, focusing on how the work of Woodson and Alexander has become profitable for mainstream publishers. Without this support, the authors would not be so widely known.

The Food We Bring With Us

This course highlights how immigration has influenced the American culinary landscape. Students will study the contemporary issues that connect food to immigrants, including the topic of food appropriation and the toll paid by migrant farmworkers to provide cheap food. Through the guidance of CRT, this course will use food to help students identify what theorists using CRT have argued is necessary to dismantling racism—power structures and the resulting winners and losers (Morris & Parker, 2019).

Locked Up/Locked Out

African Americans and Hispanics are jailed in most states at least five times more than Whites (Ghandnoosh, 2019). This course will consider the systemic reasons for the unbalanced incarceration rate using Kelly Lytle Hernández’s (2017) *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* as textbook. Students will also study incarceration rates in Florida and the Tampa Bay area. The development of this course considers Omi and Winant’s (1994) historical notion of the rigid Black/White color line and the meanings attached to people’s existence that stem from that.

USF Study at Home Courses

USF’s study abroad opportunities are extensive, and students travel to all corners of the globe to study various subjects. While we agree that out-of-country travel promotes experiential learning, it is an exclusive experience. According to the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA), 70% of the 332,000 United States students who studied abroad in 2017 were White while only 56% of college students were White. In contrast, African Americans make up 13.6% of higher education students, yet only 6.1% traveled abroad (NAFSA, n.d.). While seeking more funding for full scholarships to increase participation among students of color, we also propose a domestic study program that would enhance students’ understanding of United States history and culture and how they inform contemporary attitudes about race. We seek to deepen student understanding of racial realities in the United States through experiential learning and to that end propose the following programs.

Melting Pot New Orleans

Using the history of New Orleans as a springboard, this program will delve into the more difficult aspects of the creation of the city and then use a variety of those events (including more modern events) and cultural items to more fully tell the story. This program will include examination of race and Hurricane Katrina. That 2005 natural disaster revealed the disparity in disaster relief efforts along color lines. Students will also visit the Whitney Plantation outside of New Orleans. Unlike many plantation museums, this one tells the story from the perspective of the enslaved people who lived there. The two-week program will also introduce students to the legendary cuisine of New Orleans typified by the convergence of French, Creole, Native American, and African American influences. They will also study the multicultural influences of the local music scene, which is imbued by jazz, a music form that has deep roots in the African American community.

Badlands and Native Lands

The Badlands of South Dakota are part of the National Park System and this program will introduce students to the history of this barren but beautiful region. For thousands of years, the Badlands were the hunting grounds of several groups of indigenous people anchored by the Sioux Nation. Students will study the history of the area through sessions with park rangers and also local indigenous leaders. The Battle of Wounded Knee occurred near the Badlands and its history will be studied with a visit to the battleground guided by *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* by David Treuer (2019).

Architecture in America's Capital City

Michelle Obama famously said when she was first lady that she lived in a house built by slaves. That statement launches a program that highlights the complicated racial history of Washington, D.C. The first lady was referring to Black labor, but Black architects' contributions have been largely unsung, too (Goldchain, 2017). Students will visit the two newest Smithsonian museums, the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. These vast collections of artifacts along with sessions with curators will anchor the program that seeks to expose students to the history of slavery in the nation's capital through the study of the district's buildings.

The Full Four-Year Experience: What if Learning About Race Was Emotionally and Socially Engaging?

Practical application of critical race theory is heavy work. Ladson-Billings (1998) sums it up as “deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (p. 9). Another researcher calls it “unmasking, exposing, and confronting continued colonization [...] thus transforming those contexts and structures” (Writer, 2008, p. 2). Work that involves deconstruction, reconstruction, construction, unmasking, exposing, and confronting is serious, weighty work. Transforming entire institutions does not happen simply or quickly. Changing the culture of USF as we seek to confront racism and build a new culture will not be a simple task that can be summed up with a catchy program title.

With all this confrontation and correction, when is there a possibility for celebration? We have considered how we might restructure orientations and create new general education courses and involve the entire USF community in this project. Now we turn more fully to the question of celebration (fun?) and engagement as we consider signature celebratory events for The Dismantling Racism Project. Critics of multicultural education suggest that what began as deep

and meaningful has become but a “shadow of its conceptual self. Rather than engage students in provocative thinking about the contradictions of U.S. ideals and lived realities, teachers often find themselves encouraging students to sing ‘ethnic songs,’ eat ethnic foods, and do ethnic dances” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 22). Rather than a simple one-day exercise that has students wear traditional clothing or eat traditional food, we recommend entire courses that spend considerable time exploring the history and nuances of areas such as food.

Celebratory events would be another way for storytelling to occur, which is a hallmark of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 2013). These stories might be told in media coverage of compelling events or in more artistic forms through public art on campus. Howard (2006) writes about intentional change theory, which shows how individuals most effectively undergo personal change, specifically that “[t]he hopes, dreams, possibilities, strengths, optimism and self-directed learning goals that make up our ideal self are the Positive Emotional Attractor (PEA) that pulls us toward intrinsic intentional change” (p. 662). Here we consider how positive celebrations might help change the university culture.

Signature Celebratory Events

Transformation of Existing Events

Many events already exist at USF that could be repurposed for the Project. Homecoming is always going to be Homecoming, but what if it was reimagined as an antiracist event? The same with graduation, Family and Friends Weekend, International Fest, etc. These events involve various student groups that rarely interact. For example, the traditional Homecoming parade could stand to be revamped. While it seems like an event with lots of diversity and camaraderie, it is actually a variety of groups creating their piece of the parade in isolation. What if floats had to be co-sponsored to be in the parade? This could lead to collaboration between two or three student groups.

We also propose to make events less about competition and more about collaboration. USF currently selects a “Family of the Year” for Family and Friends weekend (University of South Florida Parent and Family Programs, n.d.), and there is an elected Homecoming court also (University of South Florida Homecoming, n.d.). This inherently means that someone is selected while others are not selected.

Creation of New Events

What might a specific antiracist event look like? With so many events and clubs across campus, is it possible to create one event that celebrates antiracism? Similar to how Pride events celebrate the diversity of the LGBTQ community or how Black History Month celebrates a wide range of individuals and issues, there is room for one, large signature event to mark antiracism commitments. Much care would need to be taken to involve all voices and to avoid common mistakes like focusing “only on the three ‘Fs’—Festivals, Fashion, and Foods. By focusing just on these items, schools can risk trivializing the culture’s rich history and people’s experiences, and reinforcing stereotypes that tend to ‘exoticize’ or make excitingly foreign instead of showing the diversity within the culture itself” (Anti-Defamation League Anti-Bias Education, n.d.).

Leadership Visibility

When events are created or re-created, high-level university leaders should be integral and visible. Antiracist celebrations should get the same attention as major donations and athletic milestones. Top leadership should celebrate Title IX positive outcomes in a similar manner to “Top 100” lists or preeminence status. For example, when USF achieved preeminent status, the

university received abundant media coverage and even spearheaded a successful campaign for a newly designed state USF license plate (USF celebrates preeminence, 2018).

Support Clubs/Organizations

Researchers (Bowman et al., 2015) have shown that students who are involved in campus clubs and organizations are more involved civically, even several years after graduation. Bowman and Park (2014) write that student participation in ethnic clubs increases their interactions with diversity. For USF to make a true commitment to these clubs, they should follow the advice from the study and “[broaden] support for these groups via funding and resources, such as office space, advising, and faculty mentors” (Bowman et al., 2015, p. 142). This becomes more than simply nodding in agreement; these changes require budgetary changes and potentially even faculty contractual changes.

The Arts and Speakers

Art can tell a story that lasts far longer than other forms of storytelling. Murals, sculptures, or paintings would make significant statements about USF’s Dismantling Racism Project. In order to challenge power structures, The Dismantling Racism Project should consider a variety of other artistic endeavors such as *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1985) and participatory art projects, both of which can involve the community in ways that contradict the traditional systems of hierarchy in the art world. Research has uncovered the need for counter-storytelling (Brookfield, 2010) in the area of antiracism.

Including All USF Voices in the Project

The limitation of this project is that three middle-aged graduate students (one is African American while the other two are White) are putting together a systematic project to challenge systemic racism for an enormous, diverse university. We realize that we need collaboration for development and implementation of the project to be successful in practice. Therefore, we complete the project proposal with considerations on how to involve the entire USF community in the decision-making process. First, CRT has taught us that little will change in an institution without changing the rules and policies; even state and federal laws likely affect racism at USF. This project purposefully ignores policy and laws, and it does not consider employee issues surrounding racism. Rather, the research team has imagined how we might design an education experience for first-time-in-college students that would challenge the racist ideology through which they operate. We recognize that including all voices in this project will necessarily bring up other matters that are more complicated, yet we remain centered on our goal of eliminating racist thinking with incoming first-time-in-college students. We certainly would champion other groups’ efforts to exam university policy, state laws, employee racism, etc.

We recognize that USF is doing some of what we have been examining. However, such programs and activities seem to be under the radar. We advocate for a visible, systemic program that fully addresses antiracism education for first-time-in-college students. As Jenkins (2006) writes regarding student success programs for community college students, “[s]mall-scale, ‘boutique’ programs or pilots may represent important sources of innovation for a college in the long term, but they are unlikely by themselves to have much of a direct impact on overall institutional effectiveness” (p. 4). Rather than pushing for more “boutique” programs that promote antiracism, we suggest an overhaul to the current education system and the implementation of an integrated new program.

While we have attempted to describe parts of that program, the entire USF community would need to give input on the actual problems and solutions. We propose using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) process for the actual USF Dismantling Racism Project. CBPR is

“*community-based*, and often *community-directed*, rather than merely *community placed*” (Wallerstein et al., 2017, p. 46) and looks to change power dynamics and has an end goal of social justice (Wallerstein et al., 2017). Based on Wallerstein’s definitions and conceptual model of CBPR, the following steps are proposed for creating and implementing the USF Dismantling Racism Project.

Finding and Investing in Community Partners

With the scope of The Dismantling Racism Project defined, it would be important to identify people and organizations who would be most invested in the success of the project. Care and attention must be given to developing relationships for the planning and implementation stages to work.

Community Listening Sessions. Once we have a network of organizations and individuals who are involved in the project, a massive community listening phase would be implemented. How, exactly, do you hear from the more than 60,000 students and employees at USF? A variety of small and large sessions both in-person and online would be needed. Rather than letting a few folks dictate the agenda for these sessions, a variety of intentional listening strategies should be employed. This will keep the project from having perceived leaders and fully involve the community.

Strategic Action Planning. Once this enormous data set has been gathered from the USF community, key selected leaders chosen from a variety of community partnerships should devise a strategic action plan. This plan becomes the basis for the years-long project.

Feedback-Reflection-Revision. Once there is a strategic action plan, more listening sessions should happen. This is a critical moment for the community to see that their ideas have become the foundation of the project, and it is also a critical moment for the planners to make sure they have heard everyone correctly. Planners should be careful to realize they are not ready to fully implement until this revision process is completed.

Implementation. Only with the full support of our USF community partners would the plan be fully implemented. We have provided a framework and examples with revamped orientations, new courses, enhanced celebrations, and community forum for empowerment.

Reflection/Evaluations. At various points of The Dismantling Racism Project cycle, partners and the general public should have formal opportunities for continued involvement. Importantly, when evaluations of the project or its components are concluded, those implementing The Dismantling Racism Project should be open to changing course in mid-stream.

Conclusion

We began The Dismantling Racism Project: Change Through Radical Programming with a touch of naiveté and a strong dash of boldness. Is it bold enough? Or does programming that tweaks an engrained pattern of racism only seem bold but merely scratches the surface? We end this paper with a reaffirmation of our original intention to unsettle the USF community and steer it in new directions as an academic community. We hope this project will set a new level of expectation so that future readers will view our work as “pretty good” (rather than radical as we perceive it) and then revise it to expand opportunities for subsequent generations to resist racism. We will declare curricular success when The Dismantling Racism Project is regenerative.

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The Dismantling Racism Project

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