Debra M. Szybinski, Executive Director of the Faculty Resource Network at New York University posed questions to a consortium of over 50 colleges and universities regarding social justice in the classroom. Her thought-provoking words called for an examination of ourselves at a key moment in history. Specifically, she questioned how today’s colleges and universities serve as a focal point for social justice issues in the 21st century. Broadly speaking, she narrowed the focus of social justice issues on college campuses to encompasses the principles of equity, opportunity, and non-discrimination, all of which are pertinent to higher education. (Complete Excerpt Available Here.)

Inspired by the words of Debra Szybinski, in this issue, we will examine how faculty promote an environment of mutual respect in classrooms that are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and national origin. Likewise, we will examine the experiential educational pedagogies most effective for fostering inclusive engagement in the student and employee communities at Sam Houston State University.
SOCIAL JUSTICE INTEGRATION IN CURRICULUM

There is always a need to evaluate curricula to keep up with the changing campus tapestry while simultaneously meeting instructional demands of developing future leaders who are both skilled practitioners and inclusive citizens. For educators, this is not an easy task. The breadth of topics, complexity of outcomes, and diversity of pedagogical approaches make it difficult to develop a single framework for describing and analyzing social justice curricula, therefore scholars use different frameworks depending on the context of the study (Gutstein, 2003; Mete, 2010; Bosanquet et al., 2012).

Based on this philosophy, it is absolutely necessary and beneficial for educators to continuously integrate creative and relevant experiences for students to be fully prepared to thrive in the world that will be waiting for them after matriculation through a degree program. Yes. We know that humans have a tendency to fall into patterns of behavior. However, if not careful, teaching and attempting to integrate social justice in a traditional format can result in a rigid curriculum without the desired meaningful teachable moments. Outlined below are some small techniques and tips to assist with adding social justice components and subject matter to existing curriculum:

- Integrate Social Media & Educational Campaigns to Promote Civil Discussion
- Take Advantage of Project-Based Learning with Existing Groups on Campus
- Engage Students with Video - Find Documentaries & Research Origins
- Make Readings Relevant to Local and Global Climate
- Assign Memorial Projects
- Invite Guest Speakers or Subject Matter Experts to the Class
- Encourage Classroom Collaboration
- Lead by Example.

"Educational Experiences must contribute to creating a more just world." 
In his classic study of College: The Undergraduate Experience in America (1987), Ernest Boyer concluded that colleges in the U.S. had lost sight of the moral and civic purpose of education. Through the years, others have acknowledged (and some have bemoaned) the trends cited by Boyer: confusion about mission, obsession with vocationalism, faculty who focus exclusively on disciplinary expertise and technical skills, a rift between academic and student affairs divisions, the widening gap between colleges and universities and the larger world. Recently, however, new opportunities for civic education have presented themselves as a result of the 2020 global pandemic, global warming/pollution concerns and outrage of injustice for communities of color. The increasing cost of education coupled with the global financial meltdown have captured the attention of college students nationwide. Moreover, some faculty and staff have begun to devise ways of tapping this new student awareness (and their impulse toward volunteerism/activism) so as to engage students in the community and the world. Concurrently, we must understand “internationalization” as a necessary tool for preparing students for the “globalized” world they are presumed to be entering.

As more faculty and student program practitioners foreground service-learning, they must also anticipate more international presence (immigrants, refugees) in the experience provided. That creates dynamics along cultural/racial lines, has the potential to play out in a community-engaged learning experience for all rather than one of fear or frustration. Therefore we must seek to fulfill pedagogical goals of both internationalization and civic engagement. For more on this concept, read the Emory University U.S.- Mexican born case study by Vialla Hartfield-Méndez, found here.
OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ANNOUNCES RACIAL DYNAMICS WORKSHOP SERIES

The Office of Institutional Diversity & Inclusion (formerly Equity & Inclusion | Title IX) is pleased to announce a new workshop series available for faculty, staff and students at Sam Houston State University. Each workshop within the series is designed to:

- help participants create the spaces to be self-reflective about our cultural shaping as individuals and institutions
- understand power dynamics in society that impact us
- develop the skills to interrupt old patterns and inequitable practices that limit access and exclude people
- build trust and clear communication across differences
- help participants begin to understand how to make decisions based on multiple perspectives where all people can be heard and represented.

This workshop series is ideal for any individual, department or organization on campus and will be organized into 3 sessions - Defining Racism, Bias & Racial Dynamics Part 1 & II and Tools for Transformational Change. The series begins July 8th & 9th from 10am-12PM.

For more information and registration details contact NuNicka Epps, Assistant Director for Inclusion Initiatives & Assessment at nepps@shsu.edu or 936.294.2680.

“The ultimate measure of a person is not where one stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where one stands in times of challenge and controversy.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
On Thursday, June 18, 2020 the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the Trump administration’s attempt to eliminate DACA. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program protects undocumented immigrants (known also as “Dreamers”) who were brought to the US as children. The program created in 2012 by the Obama administration was a result of ongoing youth protest for citizenship guidelines and legislation. According to the Associated Press, the result of the decision is that the 650,000 enrolled Dreamers keep protections. However, it remains unclear if others will be allowed to apply for protection under the program.

The 5-4 ruling was written by Chief Justice John Roberts and joined by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Elena Kagan, Stephen Breyer and Sonia Sotomayor. To review the complete DACA ruling from the US Supreme Court Click Here.

On Monday, June 15, 2020 history was made. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects gay, lesbian, and transgender employees from discrimination based on sex. Before the decision, there existed no legal protection for LGBTQ employees in 21 US states. Now, the Title VII federal law protects employees from adverse employment decisions in those states made on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity in a 6-3 Ruling.

The ruling was derived from two separate civil rights cases. The first concerned whether the law encompasses claims of sexual orientation brought by Gerald Bostock and the estate of Donald Zarda, and the other concerning a transgender woman, Aimee Stephens, whose challenge marked the first time the court heard arguments regarding the civil rights of a transgender individual according to the New York Times Story. Complete Supreme Court DACA ruling Here.
Dr. Venta joined the faculty of Sam Houston State University in the Fall of 2015 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology & Philosophy. She received her B.A. from Rice University and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Houston. Dr. Venta’s clinical training focused on children, adolescents, and families. Her primary research interests are the development of psychopathology in youth and the protective effect of parent-child attachment. She has received research funding from the National Institutes of Mental Health and the American Psychological Foundation. Dr. Venta is a first-generation American born to Cuban immigrants who fled Fidel Castro’s communist regime in the early 1960’s. As a Hispanic woman and native Spanish-Speaker, Dr. Venta is passionate about highlighting the unique contributions of Hispanic culture in the U.S. As a member of CHSS’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Dr. Venta has lead planning efforts for Hispanic Heritage Month the last two years. She also focuses on Hispanics in much of her research and clinical work, training graduate students to provide much-needed psychological services in Spanish and leading numerous research studies on the mental health of recently immigrated children and families. As a mentor in both the McNair and Bridge to Aspire programs at SHSU, Dr. Venta attempts to involve ethnic minority and first-generation students in both undergraduate and graduate research and training.
EDITOR'S CORNER

NUNICKA EPPS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, INCLUSION INITIATIVES & ASSESSMENT

Office of Institutional Diversity & Inclusion

As much as we might think Covid-19 was the most impactful thing of 2020, we also have to recognize the societal and systemic volcano that has erupted over the last few months. While it should be a summer of escapism, citizens globally, seem to be moved to social justice action. Although, it's scary. It is a good thing. Whether people are looking for information to puncture their own prejudices or insisting that “all lives matter,” conversations have been known to change hearts as well as minds. We are currently in a time of introspection and I am excited to be involved in revolutionary dialogue and engagement here at Sam Houston State University. If you have been curious about what all these protests are about, these resources provided in this issue can be a good place to start. We are all in this together and are more similar than we are different. Be well. Be open. Be hopeful.

DIVERSITY RESOURCES
for Higher Education Faculty & Staff

The Center for Racial Justice in Education
The Center for Racial Justice in Education’s mission is to train and empower educators to dismantle patterns of racism and injustice in our schools and communities. At the Center for Racial Justice in Education, we envision a world where all young people learn and thrive in racially equitable, liberating, and empowering educational spaces.

Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)
SURJ is a national network of groups and individuals working to undermine white supremacy and work toward racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability.

RECOMMENDED READING
by Robin DiAngelo

In this “vital, necessary, and beautiful book” (Michael Eric Dyson), antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and “allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to ‘bad people’ (Claudia Rankine). Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively.

Source: https://www.cafeconlibrosbk.com/product-page/white-fragility