

PEACE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE

# JOURNAL

FALL 2021/WINTER 2022

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 1



ALL PEOPLE. ALL VOICES. ALL MATTER.

# Growing our Community



Each time I think of the Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) at Valencia College, I am amazed at our significant growth and recognition over the past two years. This growth in support of the Central Florida community and Valencia College has had a significant impact as the country has wrestled with the killing of George Floyd and other people of color as well as the global pandemic.

While many of our community residents were home and trying to stay safe, PJI found new ways to connect people in dialogue on major conflict

points; while building a resilient community; and training students, teachers, and faculty to create inclusive, caring learning environments. These efforts have resulted in recognition of PJI by the City of Orlando, Orange County, and the Orlando Magic, to name a few.

We are continuing to build and diversify our Advisory Council with additional members from areas such as Osceola County. There is still much to be done, and with your help and financial support, the Peace and Justice Institute will positively impact the lives of Central Floridians and beyond.

Sumner Hutcheson, III  
Peace and Justice Institute, Advisory Council Chair

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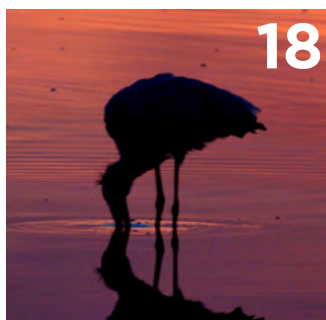
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PJI celebrates the life of our dear friend and colleague Penny Villegas, affectionately known as the Mother of Peace Studies, who died August 14th in her home surrounded by friends and family. She is pictured on the cover of our JOURNAL.

Penny was a dedicated advocate for peace and justice wherever she found it lacking. She developed the Peace Studies curriculum at Valencia College, was a founding member of PJI, and served on the Advisory Council for the Institute. She was a member of Amnesty International for 20 years and studied Conflict Transformation at the Eastern Mennonite University. Penny co-chaired numerous community outreach projects to educate and engage on the principles of peace and nonviolence. We will sorely miss her.

Valencia's East Campus has a tree dedicated to her legacy, which lives on through the many lives she touched and the work of the Peace and Justice Institute.

Penny's life modeled the value of community. She brought people together to lift them up in joy. If relationship is the healing balm of humanity, then in all our efforts we are called to center relationship and community in the work. Penny did this.

Now, more than ever, we need community to address the shared suffering we experience with COVID-19. Few among us have not been touched by the ravages of the pandemic with the disparity in health outcomes, economic devastation, loss of loved ones, or the consequences of the isolation so many experience. Ongoing healing is required. Healing can happen in a circle of trust or collectively in a community dialogue, as told within these pages when one city chooses to face race.

This issue of the JOURNAL provides examples of healing through theater and body awareness, community resilience, expanding our understanding of neurodiversity, racial awakening, and more, demonstrating that truth telling and story awaken us to our shared humanity. This unprecedented time offers us an opportunity to reimagine a world we all want to live in, where the truth of our own story is welcome, the "stranger" becomes friend, we recognize our interdependence in the family of creation on Earth, and lovingkindness prevails. For, as Dr. Asim A. Jani writes, love is the pathway to health and peace.

With this, I see Penny smiling on us all – encouraging us to move toward peace and love and supporting us along the way.

Join us!

Rachel C. Allen  
Peace and Justice Institute, Director

# TRUST CULTURE EQUITY INCLUSION & CHANGE



We know that systemic injustice prevails in our nation; and that means it also exists in organizations. PJI Business Solutions continues to serve as a trusted source to facilitate the critical conversations necessary for a healthy, accountable, and inclusive workplace.

**REACH OUT TO US TODAY TO SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP  
OR TRAINING SERIES FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION:**

[bit.ly/PJIWorkshops](https://bit.ly/PJIWorkshops)

[peaceandjustice@valenciacollege.edu](mailto:peaceandjustice@valenciacollege.edu)

(407) 582-2291

## **WORKSHOPS IN HIGHEST DEMAND**

Waking Up To Our Shared Humanity | Conversations On Race | Understanding Bias  
Understanding Privilege | Conversations in Inclusiveness | The Principles For How We Treat Each Other  
Leadership & Resilience: Tapping Into Our Source | Why PACEs Matter

**PEACE AND  
JUSTICE INSTITUTE**

All People. All Voices. All Matter.

**VALENCIA COLLEGE**

STUDENT VOICE

# REFLECTING ON MY TIME IN THE PJI DISTINCTION PROGRAM

by Gracielly Abreu

*The PJI Distinction offers an opportunity for a co-curricular focus in peace and justice in order for students to advance their personal and professional development. Through the Distinction program, the student will gain awareness, garner interest, and seek additional learning opportunities in Peace and Justice.*



I first started the Peace and Justice Institute Distinction Program in the 2020 Fall term. I have always been interested in social justice and implementing positive change in my community. When I found out about this program, I was excited for an opportunity to learn more about topics I was already interested in and meet people who are already working on implementing change that I want to see.

**Sometimes it can be discouraging when there's so much to be done, but small acts of kindness and compassion make way for big changes.**

Because of COVID-19, I completed the program virtually. This meant that all the workshops I attended were over Zoom. The workshops still exceeded my expectations and I was able to learn through the connections made and the content presented. I still can vividly recall one workshop where the group I was in bravely confided in each other about the struggles we faced, and it

made me realize the importance of creating spaces for mutual support and vulnerability in every aspect of life, especially in politics.

I also attended the Becoming an Ally workshop and it opened up a conversation about the importance of using privilege to enact change. Even though I have marginalized identities, I realized I still have privileges. One example of a privilege I have is living in a “developed” country where poverty isn't

as prevalent and basic necessities are generally met compared to “developing” countries. Albeit, the progress of developed countries comes

from the mass exploitation of vulnerable populations around the world. It made me realize I could use the privileges I have to support movements and amplify other people's voices.

My favorite part of the PJI Distinction Program was the capstone project. For my capstone project, I made a collage of social movements and activists that inspire me. Some

movements that are important to me are Black Lives Matter, mental health awareness, environmental justice, disability rights, and LGBTQ+ rights. I also find inspiration from civic leaders like Angela Davis, Fred Hampton and Eduardo Galeano because they stood up for what was right even if that meant going against the status quo and facing repercussions. I believe everyone should learn about social justice movements even if you don't believe you're directly affected because most, if not all, movements are interconnected in ways that might not seem apparent at first. To quote Martin Luther King Jr., “An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

I encourage everyone completing the PJI Distinction Program to stand with a cause and make a difference. Sometimes it can be discouraging when there's so much to be done, but small acts of kindness and compassion make way for big changes.

*Gracielly Abreu is a Dominican dual enrollment student from Valencia College's Poinciana Campus. She plans to graduate with her Associates in Arts in General Studies in 2022.*

FACULTY VOICE

# AN OPPURTUNITY TO GROW

by Tina Tan

*The Peace and Justice Practitioner Certificate is designed to support faculty members as they develop and/or refine their practice of peace and justice pedagogy for deeper learning in an inclusive environment.*



“We, the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united people, regardless of race, language or religion, to build a democratic society based on justice and equality so as to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress for our nation.”

I love this pledge. From the time I was in kindergarten in Singapore, the entire school would gather, sing the national anthem and recite this pledge every morning in the courtyard. It was ingrained in us from an early age that we had to be mindful of, embrace and celebrate our differences. I would spend many of our various religious holidays at friends' homes eating with them and honoring their customs. Exploring and appreciating the diversity of practices of cultures that are not my own has been with me for a very long time.

Later, during my days as an international student at the University of Central Florida, I experienced diversity in a new country. It was quite different from what I was used to and yet, I felt a sense of familiarity as well. In more recent years, with my learnings through Valencia College's

professional development courses and the PJI Practitioner Certification, I've broadened the initial focus on racial diversity and come to better understand and explore how we can (and must) use the broader definition of diversity to our advantage. As instructors, our students intuitively feel the climate we establish in our courses. It's important to share our standing, to say so, and not just assume our students know we value inclusivity.

The PJI Practitioner Certification process helps faculty learn to create a more inclusive classroom environment. The program has multiple dimensions including a Community of Scholars, selected workshops, and a Capstone. The Community of Scholars project let us lean into topics like nonviolence, restorative practice, conflict transformation, sustainability, and joy. I'm grateful to facilitators, Aida Diaz

and Michele Lima, who struck the perfect tone in leading us each week as we shared our reflections on the readings. They navigated so expertly the unplanned conversations the readings led us to. The biggest takeaway for me was the opportunity each week to learn from peers and hear their stories while hopefully contributing to their learning as well. We shared ways the topics applied to our lives and brainstormed ideas on how to enrich our work with students. The experience left me with more than just food for thought. It taught me to be comfortable with the uncomfortable.

To my fellow cohort members, Jennifer Papoula, Lauren Gibson, Laurinda Lott, Marci Dial, Marilyn Greaves, and Mayra Holzer, I also have you to thank for my growth.

*Tina Tan is a Professor of Speech Communication at Valencia College's West Campus, teaching Fundamentals of Speech and Interpersonal Communication. She is a LifeMap faculty fellow and an Online Learning Excellence faculty fellow.*

# SALUTOGENESIS

CO-CREATING HEALTH FROM A PLACE OF LOVE AND PEACE WITHIN US

by Asim A. Jani MD MPH



Few people may recall the unprecedented scientific achievement involving global vaccination that occurred on May 8, 1980. Civilization celebrated the eradication of smallpox, a pathogen that had plagued humanity since 3000 BCE, claiming almost 300 million lives in the 20th century alone. As one of the leaders of the smallpox campaign, Bill Foege, a medical epidemiologist and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, called upon leaders last year to be truthful, transparent, and strategic to end the COVID-19 pandemic (Foege, 2020).

Sadly, like many other countries, the United States has been afflicted by a "disinfodemic," an epidemic of false information with a negative impact. UNESCO (2020) published two policy briefs to address this additional engineered crisis that has made controlling the pandemic so much harder. Indeed this is a time to stay as close to facts, truth, and critical thinking as possible.

In that spirit, we as a nation need to take evidence-based approaches to a myriad of challenges – e.g., COVID-19, inequality, poverty, racism, and other

forms of oppression. We are also compelled to reimagine the approaches we take to solving problems. Whether it is global COVID-19 vaccine inequity (Burki, 2021) or, as in the US, the sobering reality of Hispanic, non-Hispanic Black, and Native American people suffering a disproportionate burden of COVID-19 deaths (CDC, 2021), we can reaffirm health as a fundamental human right and not a commodity (WHO, 1948). Emerging infections like COVID-19 and conditions such as obesity, substance abuse, violent crime, HIV, other



sexually transmitted infections, and many chronic diseases, necessitate that we look "upstream" to root causes, as complex as those may be (James, 2020).

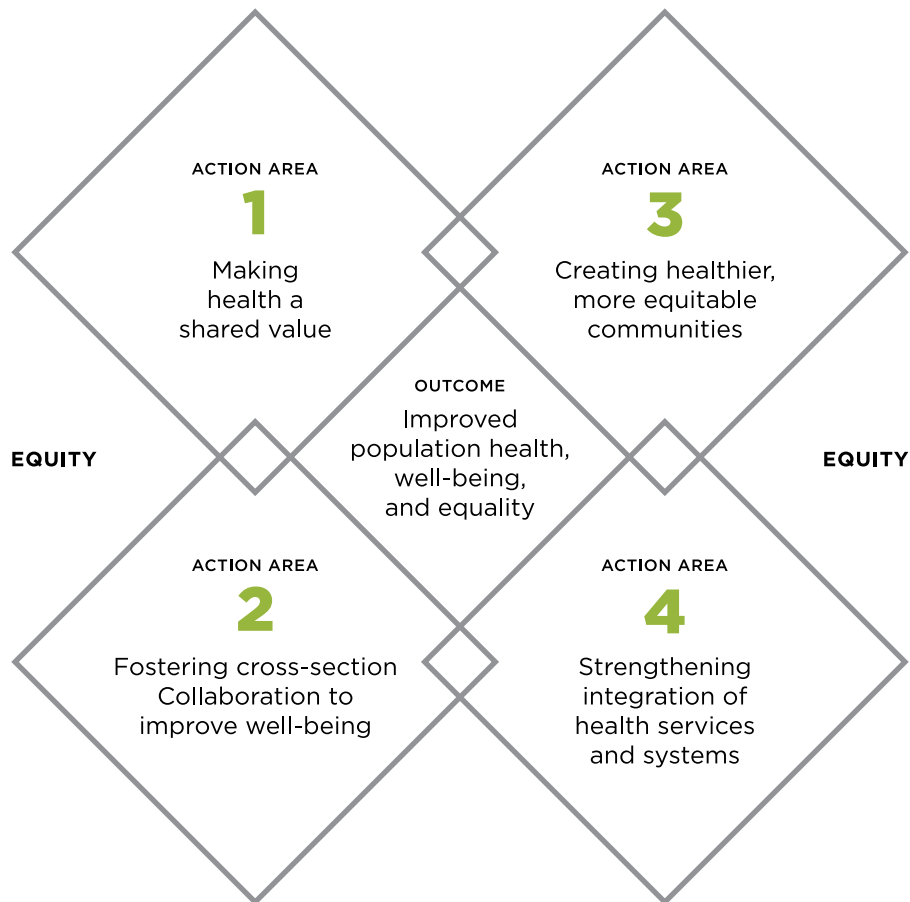
The long-standing nature of complex, expensive health crises in the US inspired prominent philanthropic organizations focused on health like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to promote a societal shift towards a "culture of health" (RWJF, 2016). The overarching goals for RWJF include improved population health, well-being, and equity. Personal health choices (e.g., tobacco use, exercise, diet) only partially contribute to why some people are healthy or unhealthy. While such behavioral factors do play an important role in personal health, there are many others – including socioeconomic (e.g., access to food, transportation, employment), environmental (e.g., safe housing, neighborhood crime, access to walking trails), and clinical (e.g., access and quality of medical care, medications, services).

RWJF has a four-part action framework to reach those goals and guide grantees they support. (Figure - RWJF, 2021):

- Making health a shared value.
- Fostering cross-sector collaboration.
- Creating healthier, more equitable communities.
- Strengthening integration of health services and systems.

According to RWJF (2021), there are 10 Principles for a Culture of Health underlying the Action Framework to connect health with social, economic, physical, and environmental factors. Comparably, fostering a change in culture and adhering to specific principles are two powerful characteristics shared

## CULTURE OF HEALTH ACTION FRAMEWORK



by RWJF and the Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) at Valencia College. In its core aim to "nurture an inclusive, caring, and respectful environment on campus and within the community," PJI envisions and promotes a "Culture of Peace" (PJI, 2021). In addition, [the Principles for How We Treat Each Other](#) anchor collaborators and partners in a holistic (the root of health), compassionate space within a framework of "Practice of Respect and Community Building" to honor diversity and foster unity (PJI, 2021).

Health and Peace are intertwined. A closer heart-mind reading of the RWJF principles suggests the power of "peace" can foster a Culture of Health – as a core element needed for health and an effect of health. Reviewing the Principles suggests that the power of

"health" can itself foster a Culture of Peace – as a key ingredient in having peace and offering peace to others.

PJI recognizes that neither health nor peace is a simple dichotomous state. Instead, there is a spectrum with aspirations and successes corresponding to ever-expanding levels of health and peace. RWJF's Action Framework supports the interconnections between the four Action areas while recognizing that health is a dynamic, positive state requiring individuals, providers, and organizations to co-create and sustain that state.

In 1979, the late social scientist Aaron Antonovsky introduced the term "salutogenesis," or creation of health. His primary research led him to focus on factors that promote health, not just those risk factors and triggers that lead

to disease (also called pathogenesis). He sought to understand if there were inner and outer resilience resources to mitigate the damaging effects on health by studying what keeps people intact and healthy despite adverse circumstances. In one notable group he studied, female Holocaust survivors, despite having endured horrific conditions, a third of them self-reported demonstrable high

of the same coin" – a situation where adversity and positive experiences work together throughout one's lifetime (Stevens, 2021). Researchers have articulated a total of at least 10 PACEs – grouped into relationship factors and resource factors (Hays-Grudo & Morris, 2020). The former includes the presence and experience of unconditional love; having a best friend; volunteering in

(Jonas et al., 2014). They recommend using healing-oriented practice and environments (HOPE) to create an optimal healing environment (OHE) based on the principles of salutogenesis, focusing on holistic approaches honoring mind, body and spirit and ensconced in social justice, ecological sustainability, and community health. (Ibid). Salutogenesis even alludes to the community sense of coherence (Mittelmark et al., 2017, chap 9 – pg 79), an ostensibly strong correlate of community resilience. ACEs and adverse community experiences, also known as the pair of ACEs, point to those adverse socioeconomic and environmental determinants of health that contribute to the overall level of stress and ill-health a person experiences (Stevens, 2019). Given the preeminent role of global warming and climate change on human health, there is a third ACEs realm added, adverse climate experiences. Salutogenesis remains a construct that honors the interconnectedness of systems – from personal to planetary health (Wahl, 2017). Since ACEs are considered the most potent attributable risk factors leading to a myriad of chronic diseases, addictions, and disabilities, preventing ACEs and engaging PACEs will have far-reaching positive impacts on population health and health care spending (ACE Interface, 2020). In response to all three ACEs realms, trauma-informed communities are building resilience. Best practices from multisectoral resources - e.g., mental health and social services, health care, school programs, home visiting programs, juvenile justice, and law enforcement agencies can leverage community coalitions focused on ACEs and resilience (Hays-Grudo & Morris, 2020 – pgs 140-146). There are six "essential ingredients" that have emerged from the case studies

**So, while traditional medical models focus on what went wrong and how to fix it, salutogenic models go further and inquire into what is already intact and health-promoting and how to strengthen it.**

levels of psychological health. This group had a strong sense of meaning in life, or as Antonovsky called it – a strong "sense of coherence" (SOC). The survivors went through the concentration camp experience tethered to a mindset their lives had a deeper purpose, and that life was worth living no matter what (Lindstrom & Eriksson, 2006). So, while traditional medical models focus on what went wrong and how to fix it, salutogenic models go further and inquire into what is already intact and health-promoting and how to strengthen it.

Salutogenesis has great relevance for trauma-informed communities. PJI appreciates the role of healthy communities in a myriad of contexts. One recent example is the annual Creating a Resilient Community: From Trauma to Healing Conference, which focused on exploring community wellness, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and trauma-informed practices (PJI, 2021). The new ACEs model also includes "PACEs" (positive and compensatory experiences) because there is growing awareness that in many ways, ACEs and PACEs are "two sides

the community; being part of a group (belonging); and having a mentor. The latter includes living in a clean, safe home/environment with ample food; getting an education; having a hobby; being physically active; and having rules/routines. These PACEs are synonymous with positive structural and social determinants of health. So the existence of PACEs represents not only a potential "antidote" to ACEs but opens the possibility that positive epigenetic changes can occur in adulthood to repair the damage from the ACEs earlier in life. Strengthening positive neurobiological stress responses through practices such as mindfulness, yoga, drama, music, art, and dance, along with improving adaptive behavior through expressive writing and cognitive behavior therapy can mitigate the impact of ACEs. Salutogenesis and the SOC concept have important implications for individuals and communities because they amplify the often overlooked but positive roles of the inner and outer sources of "health."

Experts in health care systems have proposed that salutogenesis can define an entirely new healthcare system

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outlined in the RWJF funded Health Federation of Philadelphia publication, "Community Resilience Cookbook": leadership and collaboration, community education, resources, communication, data/research, and mindset (Anda, 2021). PJI actively facilitates both the development of multisectoral partnerships and these six programmatic components.

Collective wisdom from past and present luminaries inspire us to manifest a culture of health and peace. Themes of justice and love are prominent and ubiquitous. Cornel West has said, "Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public" (Safi, 2016). Visionaries, poets, faith leaders, and even scientists have also used the word "love" in different ways. And

yet a shared perspective is that love is a fundamental existential energy that transforms, unites and heals, i.e., make whole. To the extent that offering love to others and experiencing love from others is healing, it is an energy that is also fundamental to health. Bessel van der Kolk, the author of *The Body Keeps the Score* offers, "Social support is the most powerful protection against becoming overwhelmed by stress and trauma... The critical issue is reciprocity: being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else's mind and heart" (van der Kolk, 2015). The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that

stands against love" (King & Carson, 2001). And the Buddhist monk Geshe Kelsang Gyatso said, "Without inner peace, outer peace is impossible. We all wish for world peace, but world peace will never be achieved unless we first establish peace within our minds" (Gyatso, 2017). We can empower people, communities, and organizations by realizing that equity and justice emerge from the place of love, wholeness, and peace within us. In this way, we can foster a salutogenic orientation in life to heal wounds and unite hearts.

*Asim A. Jani MD MPH is a Consultant of Infectious Diseases, Preventive Medicine, Epidemiology. He serves as a member of the PJI Advisory Council.*

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# BIAS RACE PRIVILEGED FAMILY SHARES HUMANITY WAKING UP

## ONE CITY FACES RACE

by Rachel Allen  
& Erick Sanchez

One participant attended the workshop because he was horrified by the images of George Floyd's murder and scorned the racial injustice of our country, "I realized I needed to become more engaged in fighting racism and saw The Dream Series as a way to start that process."

For many, witnessing the killing of George Floyd galvanized them into action. In addition to the racialized violence and ensuing social unrest of the summer of 2020, the impact of COVID-19 laid bare the gross inequities that exist for communities of color in healthcare access, jobs, housing, food access, childcare, education, community safety and more, moving many cities to take measures to address the urgent need for change.

Advancing racial equity in local governments is an important priority across the country. Building knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racialized divisions and build equitable communities looms large as a mandate in the United States.

Like many cities across the country, the City of Orlando faces challenges to meet the goal of racial equity. In a recent

report comparing poverty by race and ethnicity, the city's black population was 20.6% below the poverty line compared to 9.7% of the White, Non-Hispanic population. Likewise, the Hispanic population of all races has 19.9% of the population below the poverty line (US Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, B17020). There exists a 14% gap in the share of the White and Black populations with a bachelors degree and higher, and the wage gap between Black and White employees is 31.1%, with Blacks earning an average of \$15.42 an hour and Whites earning an average of \$22.39 an hour (US Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, B17020).

Facing this gross disparity and building equity for all residents in a community is a complex process with no one silver bullet. What is known, is that by creating opportunities for dialogue, people can begin to uncover not only their personal biases related to race, but the historic sources of the disparities, recognizing that policy and law have woven inequity into the fabric of our country and

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# THE *Dream* SERIES

MAYOR'S MLK COMMISSION

*I still have much to learn about myself to deal with the many implicit biases that I have. Implicit bias makes you human. I can work with that instead of feeling bad or guilty.*

*I learned I have finally gotten to a point in my life as a Hispanic woman where I am comfortable enough to be outspoken in race conversations when I would have shied away previously.*

*Being silent in conversation about race will not help others around me. I can focus on what I can do to better my community.*

community, and that education and consciousness raising are needed in order to create a new way forward.

Clearly leadership matters. And city mayors can make a difference in these efforts. Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer supported a bold step for his city:

**As a city, we are committed to the effort to achieve Dr. King's dream of a community where everyone is treated fairly, and everyone is judged by the content of their character.**

**The Dream Series' workshops created a space for each of us to examine our own story of race, privilege, bias and understanding so we can move together toward a more equitable community, which is the beloved community that Dr. King envisioned.**

**I applaud our Orlando Mayor's MLK Commission and the Peace and Justice Institute for making The Dream Series possible.**

In response to the killing of George Floyd and the urgent need to address the current racial climate, the Orlando Mayor's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission made the bold decision to host a series of workshops, The Dream Series, on race as it intersects with gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and other aspects of an individual's identity. The intention of this series was to embrace the shared humanity of residents by addressing our racialized history in an effort to spark important conversations and bring about change, both internal, within each individual, and structural, through city and resident action, resulting from these dialogues.

*Orlando Mayor  
Buddy Dyer*



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The Dream Series laid a foundation for dialogue in a safe and open environment where people were invited to share their lived experiences related to the scholarship and theory of race, bias and privilege. Over the course of six workshops, participants gathered to learn about the racialized history in the United States; implicit bias; racist policies such as redlining and inequitable mortgage lending practices; white supremacy; aspects of privilege, specifically white privilege; and authentic allyship. Each session presented scholarship, while creating space for personal stories, and exploration of how we might move toward a more beloved, equitable community in Orlando.

The Dream Series illustrated the power of what can be accomplished when the private, public, and nonprofit sectors along with higher education institutions and elected officials engage with the community in an effort to expand equity.

Marcia Hope Goodwin, Chief Service Officer in the Office of Community Affairs for Mayor Dyer, believes “the more facts (historic, recent, etc.) people know about the root causes and impacts of racism, implicit bias, privilege, etc., the more likely they are to avoid actions that perpetrate these divisive behaviors and they're more likely to endeavor to be anti-racist.” MLK Commission Chair Brandy Hand shares her experience:

While the PJI Facilitators and the resources shared with the participants were outstanding, it was in the small groups where the real work happened. There was nervous laughter, anger, sadness, concern, disbelief, disappointment, and dismay expressed in the safe and confidential setting of a few “strangers” coming together to share very personal experiences [around race]. It is through the sharing – by being “invited” to listen deeply – that respect for others and their experiences is gained and a heightened awareness and deeper understanding for the feelings and experiences of others occurs. The result of each session is increased knowledge, new resources and insights, a change in personal behavior, and for some, a transformation of heart.

The work of expanding equity is intergenerational and requires the participation of people from all ages and backgrounds. When people show up together in community and share their stories, each person takes something unique away from the experience. Kyle Alexandre, government relations manager at Walt Disney World, one of the MLK Commission sponsors, appreciated her chance to “connect

*I knew about race as a social construct, about redlining, and about non v. anti-racism, but I got a deeper, more visceral understanding of how pervasive the racism in our country is and how it has hurt not just those directly victimized but all of us.*

*I learned about the blind spots that I have when it comes to privilege. I am going to use this knowledge to continue learning and finding ways in which I can be an ally.*

*It's so important to be able to have tough conversations to achieve a more equitable society. The centering of whiteness is intended to be invisible, and I need to call it out and center diverse perspectives.*

*Children do see color.*

with the students and hear perspectives from a different generation.” Throughout the series, students from the National Honor Society at Jones High School shared their distinctive outlooks, their hopes for expanding equity, and their place in this work.

Clint Buczowski, who said he was taking personal action in response to the killing of George Floyd, reflects on his experience with The Dream Series, “The diversity of the participants was inspiring and kept me coming back for each session. The memory of the faces and voices will always be with me. The Dream Series helped me to see how much we have in common with each other and gave me hope for a more loving and inclusive society.”

People don't know how to sit in the discomfort of facing race. This workshop created that space to move from the head space to the heart space.

We must be intentional in making changes: Expand our circle of friends, recruit more diverse members to volunteer groups, be brave and have the conversations.

I learned how to open up and speak about race. I have never spoken about race openly before. It was a very eye-opening experience.

I was so very encouraged by the engagement and commitment of those in my group. It's very heartening to realize others are also committed to a much better community and country.

As Brandy Hand reflects, "Community dialogue like The Dream Series, while filled with difficult, candid, and uncomfortable conversations, provides a meaningful step toward transforming our community into the beloved community of Dr. Rev. King's fervent hope and dream."

*Rachel Allen is the Director of the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College.*

*Erick Sanchez is an Implementation Coordinator at the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College.*



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Office of Community Affairs







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# To Mean This River

by Linda M. Goddard

And when I have forgotten to love this river,  
this cold river, and when I have forgotten  
the ways its waters surge, its turbulent curves,

When I have forgotten all the ways  
I want it to draw me out beyond  
the fractures of my unlived lives,

When I have forgotten they weigh  
nothing here at this river's edge,

Say I brush away this silver breeze  
that shudders the skin on my neck,  
my hair blown back,

Say that I've forgotten how  
this river speaks, this river always speaks,

And say that I've forgotten the sounds  
of wild reeds that open my breath,  
parting oceans behind my eyes—

that listening is the voice under a wind—

And if this river forgets, if it forgets all the ways  
it stuns, folds over and into my wet skin,  
say that this river un-remembers that my body bears—

My body bears traces of its stones, its gathered stones,  
its oncoming roils,  
that my body means this river—

my body means this river—

Then, I will have to let go its white hands,  
its wind-shivered hands, their wild willingness  
to heave stars beyond stars  
into and against the unassailable world.



# PRINCIPIOS PARA CÓMO TRATAR UNOS A OTROS

## Nuestras Prácticas de Respeto y Crear Comunidad

1. **Forme una comunidad hospitalaria y responsable.** Todos llegamos sin conocer a nadie y necesitamos sentirnos bienvenidos. Entréguese completamente al trabajo de esta comunidad. Extiéndales la bienvenida a los demás en este lugar de trabajo, y presuma que usted también es bienvenido. La hospitalidad es esencial para la restauración de la comunidad.
2. **Escuche atentamente.** Escuche atentamente a lo que se dice; escuche los sentimientos que subyacen a las palabras. Haga un esfuerzo por lograr un equilibrio entre escuchar y reflexionar, hablar y actuar.
3. **Forme una zona libre de consejos.** Substituya el consejo por curiosidad a medida que trabajamos juntos por la paz y la justicia. Cada uno de nosotros está aquí para descubrir nuestras propias verdades. No estamos aquí para rectificar a otra persona, o para “arreglar” lo que percibimos como erróneo en otro miembro del grupo.
4. **Practique el hacer preguntas honestas y abiertas.** Una buena pregunta es ambigua, personal y provoca reflexión.
5. **Haga espacio para respuestas poco populares.** Responda a las preguntas con sinceridad, aunque la respuesta parezca poco popular. Esté presente para escuchar, no para debatir, corregir o interpretar.
6. **Respete el silencio.** El silencio es un don poco común en nuestro ocupado mundo. Después que alguien haya hablado, tómese el tiempo para reflexionar, sin sentir la necesidad de llenar inmediatamente el espacio con palabras. Esto se aplica igualmente al hablante - siéntase cómodo o cómoda al dejar sus palabras resonando en el silencio, sin perfeccionar o ampliar lo que ya haya dicho.
7. **Evite el juicio.** Ponga a un lado sus prejuicios. Mediante la creación de un espacio entre los juicios y reacciones, podemos escuchar al otro, y a nosotros mismos más plenamente.
8. **Identifique las suposiciones.** Nuestras suposiciones nos son invisibles. No nos damos cuenta de que son meras suposiciones y hasta permitimos que moldeen nuestra visión del mundo. Cuando identificamos nuestras suposiciones, entonces podemos dejarlas a un lado y abrir nuestro punto de vista a mayores posibilidades.
9. **Diga su verdad.** Usted está invitado a decir lo que está en su corazón, confiando en que su voz será escuchada y su contribución respetada. Sea dueño de su verdad, y recuerde hablar sólo por usted mismo. Cuando usted utilice la primera persona “yo” en vez de “usted” o “todos” comunica con claridad la naturaleza personal de su expresión.
10. **Cuando las cosas se pongan difíciles, hágase preguntas.** Si usted se encuentra en desacuerdo con otra persona, convirtiéndose en un crítico o cerrándose a la defensiva, pregúntese: “¿Cómo llegó él o ella a esta conclusión?” “¿Qué me enseña a mí la forma en que estoy reaccionando?” “¿Qué estará sintiendo él o ella en este momento?”
11. **Tome las cosas con calma.** Simplemente la velocidad de la vida moderna puede causar un fuerte daño al alma. Al tomar las cosas con calma de forma intencional fortalecemos nuestra habilidad de no transmitir molestia a los demás ni a nosotros mismos al responder.
12. **Todas las voces tienen valor.** Cuando una persona hable, mantenga esos momentos como algo precioso porque esos son los momentos en los que una persona está dispuesta a expresar y defender algo, a confiar en el grupo y a ofrecer algo que él o ella ve como valioso.
13. **Mantenga la confidencialidad.** Forme un espacio seguro al respetar la confidencialidad y el contenido de lo que se ha hablado en el grupo. Deje que lo que se ha dicho en el grupo permanezca allí.

*Preparado por The Peace and Justice Institute con considerable ayuda de los trabajos de Peter Block, Parker Palmer, The Dialogue Group y The Center for Renewal and Wholeness in Higher Education.*

**Find the Principles in English, Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Arabic, Farsi, and Russian on our website at [valenciacollege.edu/pji](http://valenciacollege.edu/pji).** Help us translate the Principles into additional world languages so that we can extend these practices to our diverse local and global communities. If you are interested in contributing to this work email us at [peaceandjustice@valenciacollege.edu](mailto:peaceandjustice@valenciacollege.edu).



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# Body, Theater, Empathy, & Social Change

by Nadia Garzon



Our body is a wise, beautiful, and delicate vessel for all our experiences. It holds love and joy as much as it holds pain and trauma. When we connect to our body, we are able to connect to our true selves. While we can filter our thoughts and words, we cannot do the same with the body; we cannot deny or hide what the body is telling us or what it knows. We cannot fight it: the body knows best, and if we listen closely, we can discover and learn many things. It is in listening to ourselves that we can understand our pain and heal. It is also in being present and connected to our bodies that we can truly listen to others and practice empathy.

Theater was where I learned about the language and the power of the body. As a child involved in school plays, a teen involved in semi-professional and professional theater, and later as a professional actress and director, I witnessed profound connection

*I have come to understand theater and arts as crucial in the fight for justice, as effective tools to educate others on social issues and to make political and social statements.*

and transformation through theater. For theater practitioners, theater is inextricably connected to who we are, to our identity. My fellow actors and I don't just practice theater; we live and are theater. In our practice, we learn to connect to our bodies so that we can connect to characters, and we learn to connect to each other so that we can act together. What I have been doing in my theater practice is connecting to my body so that I can listen to what it has to tell me, and so that I can, in turn, connect to others.

For theater practitioners, our practice merges with our bodies and

our encounters with the world. My experience working at an immigration attorney's office upon immigrating to the United States inspired me to study sociology, in addition to theater, in an effort to understand social inequality (something that I had come to believe was only an issue in so-called "third world" countries). It also inspired me to become an immigrant rights activist, to work closely with communities and organizations, and led me to find a way to merge theater and social change. It was my lived experiences, my developing connection to the body, and my desire to change the world, that guided me to find

the path for my career and my identity as a theater practitioner.

I have come to understand theater and arts as crucial in the fight for justice, as effective tools to educate others on social issues and to make political and social statements. My practice has also confirmed that we can create awareness and generate social change through telling personal and collective stories because our stories are valuable and powerful; and that engaging in these activities can have a positive and profound impact on individuals, and therefore communities.

As I began to explore different methods to merge my interests, I focused on Theater of the Oppressed and on Community Arts, and started to facilitate workshops and procesos artístico-sociales (artistic/social processes) that used theater and other artistic languages (what Augusto Boal called Aesthetics of the Oppressed) to explore social issues and oppression. I work locally with communities and organizations and also work abroad sharing my tools with theater and non-theater practitioners, while learning from others working in similar fields. This work has taken me to Guatemala, Brazil, Nicaragua, Australia, Colombia, and Mexico, working with patients of a psychiatric hospital, journalists and decision makers, teenagers, migrants, and indigenous and aboriginal women, among other populations.

Early in my practice, I noticed that my workshops and processes were having powerful effects. They often turned into empathy and healing spaces, where individuals not only connected with their own emotions, feelings, stories, history and memory, but also connected with others. When we connect to others, we understand that we are not alone, that we share pain and that our vulnerabilities are collective;



and it is in this realization and this connection that we can begin to heal.

This understanding clarified the role of the body in trauma and healing in relation to my practice; it led me to consciously incorporate Nonviolent Communication into my work, which meant centering my practice around empathy. Empathy does not reside in what we can say or in our ability to “put ourselves in someone else’s shoes.” Empathy, as I have come to understand it, is simply our ability to be present with the other; to be there with them, fully, without judgment, advice, silver linings, or dismissal. Empathy cannot occur if we do not listen to ourselves first because empathy requires us to connect with the other, and we cannot do that

if we cannot connect to ourselves. We cannot connect with someone else’s feelings if we are unable to connect with our own. Empathy is our ability to feel with the other, being present and connected to our bodies, with all of our attention, love, and care focused on them. It is in this connection, in this personal transformation, where social change begins.

*Nadia Garzón is a professional actress, director, voice over talent, and theater practitioner who focuses on Theater for Social Change, Latin American Theater, and Decolonization through theater*

*See one of Nadia's workshops at PJI's Conversation on Justice during January 24-27, 2022.*

# NEURODIVERSITY *is not a* PUZZLE

NEURODIVERGENT UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT

by Jessica Hoeschen

Neurodiversity refers to the human mind's differing language, socialization, learning, and emotional perceptions. In 1998, Judy Singer coined the term to discuss "wiring" of the brain in individuals diagnosed autistic and ADHD. It has since grown to reference communities and cultural views based on neurotype, with the dominant social group labeled "neurotypical" and individuals with differing neurotypes termed "neurodivergent" (Coplan et al., 2021). Just as neurotypical covers a wide range of personalities and abilities, so neurodivergent is broad and includes various developmental delays or mental health conditions. Examples of neurodivergent groups include autistic individuals, those diagnosed with ADHD, people diagnosed bipolar, dyslexic individuals, and those with sensory and anxiety concerns. This article explores neurodivergence and seeks to increase understanding, promote acceptance, and discuss support.

## *Understanding Neurodiversity*

The term neurodiversity has its origin in the autism rights movement. However, this term has expanded to encompass multiple communities and neurodivergent viewpoints. Some experts still see this concept as too limiting, but others see it as a paradigm shift in medical understanding (McLoughlin, 2021). Nicolaidis, MD (2012), noted that neurodiversity was founded by neurodivergent individuals who felt excluded by a neurotypically-structured society, the medical language of disorder and deficit functioning labels, and a need for more consideration of their experience. Growing medical support

of neurodiversity is also evident in the removal of functioning terms like "moderate," "severe," and "high-functioning," from the United States Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V). Additionally, the United States eliminated Asperger's syndrome as a potential diagnosis, and all diagnoses are currently recorded as autism spectrum disorder (ASD). While these steps are significant, some activists continue to call for an increase in neurodivergent consideration by removing the term "disorder" and eliminating ABA therapy recommendations (Zeldovich, 2018).

## *Giving Support: Neurodivergent Acceptance*

When considering neurodiversity support and visibility, one may think of "Autism Awareness Month." However, it is generally agreed that the outdated concept of "awareness" is limiting. Additionally, common measures of support attached to this month are often superficial (i.e., wearing blue) and can even exclude autistics who see some of these practices as offensive and opposed to the #ActuallyAutistic movement (Crosman, 2019). Genuine acceptance is more supportive and entails establishing meaningful connections with neurodivergent individuals. Valencia's commitment to equity in education moves us to promote acceptance for neurodivergent individuals on our campus.

Acceptance and belonging involve structuring a learning environment that actively considers neurodiversity. Post-secondary education issues for neurodivergent students are typically

related not to ability, but rather the classroom's "socially constructed" challenges (Shea et al., 2019, p. 1). Accommodations are not sufficient to support neurodivergent students as they can be inaccessible, and only address a small portion of classroom learning challenges. To construct curriculum that is supportive, flexibility is key. Cognitive load theory (CLT) is an approach that promotes flexibility, by positing that students consider materials through differing memory and cognitive capabilities, executive function, and language processing. CLT advocates separating assessments into intrinsic load (i.e., related directly to the learning outcome) and extraneous load (i.e., non-required learning components) (Shea et al., 2019, p. 47-48). Adjusting an extraneous load may result in reduced barriers and a more neurodiverse curriculum. For example, in a written assessment to demonstrate knowledge of Ancient Egyptian mummification, the writing may be extraneous load. Diverse submission options such as PPT and video presentations may better support neurodivergent students.

Curriculum representation is also significant for supporting a neurodiverse student body. According to the SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum, students must be able to "look through window frames to see the realities of others and into mirrors in order to see her/his own reality reflected" (Style, 1988, para. 7). Consider how many window views there are into neurotypical culture? How often do neurodivergent students see themselves in a mirror? Finding a balance in representation benefits the



neurodiverse classroom while offering valuable visibility and support to neurodivergent learners.

Support is also enhanced through material design and delivery, especially online. Neurodiverse design includes conscious decisions regarding highlighting and text. For highlighting, many autistic and dyslexic individuals have sensory responses to bright colors, like yellow, or to high “glare” colors (Grandgeorge & Masataka, 2016). Limiting highlighting to use of cool colors over darker text is a quick and effective way to increase neurodiverse accessibility. For text, materials can be made more neurodiverse, and especially accessible to dyslexic learners, by using sans-serif fonts, larger font sizes, double-spacing, and subheadings (Brown, 2018).

While these recommendations focused specifically on instructional support, we can offer support to all neurodivergent individuals through representation. Both neurodivergent students and employees need reflections of themselves and validation of their identities to feel safe, productive, and accepted. Therefore, noting full acceptance of neurodiversity and all neurodivergent identities can have a positive impact, especially for individuals that are sometimes overlooked – such as autistic women. It is commonly accepted that autism rates in biological males is higher, with some experts stating a four times higher occurrence (Loomes et al., 2017). This has been challenged as inaccurate since the diagnostic criteria is generated from traditional male traits. Additionally, autistic women mask (copy neurotypical interests and mannerisms), which can reduce correct diagnoses. Recent findings have also discovered diagnosis inaccuracy in biological women who have been mislabeled under other conditions. One medical study of women diagnosed with anorexia illustrated that 23% of those studied scored above the level needed on diagnostic tests for an ASD diagnosis (Dattaro, 2021). Considering such evidence, current reports are starting to accept even a 2:1 ratio of diagnosis.

This demonstrates why acknowledging self-diagnosis and late diagnosis is key to a fully supportive environment. While self-diagnosis, which involves diagnosing as autistic based on self-performed evaluations and research, is still rejected by individuals with both neurotypes, there is a higher rate of neurotypical rejection. Most internet forums deemed “safe spaces” by autistic individuals include policies about accepting self-diagnosis. Main reasons to consider self-diagnosis are cost and access (it can take multiple years and thousands of dollars to receive a professional diagnosis) and diagnosis bias (Uselton, 2020). According to autistic women, reasons for a denied diagnosis have included having careers, having friends, being married, and being able to work. For individuals who have experienced invalidation and accommodation struggles, being seen is valuable support.

### *My Neurodiversity Experience: Reflections*

This article reflects my personal journey as a neurodivergent advocate. Nineteen years ago, my nephew was medically diagnosed with ASD. In response, I started raising awareness through collegiate presentations. The next leg of my journey started when my daughter received her diagnosis. Her early childhood education and therapy challenges, medical experiences, and social interactions illustrated what little gains have been made in neurodivergent understanding and support, especially for autistic girls. This, and reflection on my own neurodivergence, made me realize how valuable it is to increase neurodiversity visibility and support in all areas of society.

*Jessica Hoeschen is a Humanities Professor at Valencia College's West Campus. When she is not teaching, she's loving life with her neurodiverse family, including herself and her oldest daughter (both neurodivergent) and her husband and youngest daughter (both neurotypical).*

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# FROM ASSUMPTION TO AWAKENING:

*Race, Privilege, & Power*

by Dr. Alyson Kaneshiro

I identify ethnically as Japanese-Okinawan and racially as Asian. Growing up and being educated in Hawai'i public schools during the 80's and 90's meant that I did not develop the academic language we use today to talk about my racial or ethnic identities because I never really had to and the adults around me were not prepared to teach me. My first language is Pidgin English and it is the language of my family, my closest friends, and my funniest memories. Pidgin English is the language I code switch to when I'm at home

**Because whiteness is the California norm, it was much "easier" for me to identify as Asian as I navigated frequent and sometimes fraught discussions about race in my new white dominant world.**

surrounded by friends, family, teachers, community leaders, and respected business owners who look and speak like me. In Hawai'i, my ethnic identity is reflected back to me as part of "normal, everyday culture" and for the 30+ years I lived and worked in Hawai'i, my ethnic heritage was normalized and part of the dominant culture.

Fast forward to today, I am currently working as a learning specialist and SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) facilitator in the Bay Area region. I serve as a touchpoint for middle school students with and without

disabilities who need support, as well as a trusted colleague for fellow educators grappling with addressing educational inequity in the context of creating deep meaningful change.

My identity journey from racially privileged to oppressed began in 2015 when I moved from Honolulu to San Francisco to pursue opportunities in higher education and independent schools. Upon arrival in California, I was immediately aware that I was not part of the dominant ethnic group anymore. Suddenly, my once "normal" ethnic heritage was subsumed into

a monolithic racial identity - Asian.

I was no longer "local, Japanese-Okinawan from Big Island." This no longer held meaning and became something I needed to explain in a way that a white person would

understand. Because whiteness is the California norm, it was much "easier" for me to identify as Asian as I navigated frequent and sometimes fraught discussions about race in my new white dominant world.

Along my journey of racial awakening, I have discovered the following truths:

- I experienced racial and ethnic privilege growing up because my ethnic identity was considered the norm; part of the majority/dominant ethnic group.

- When I saw my culture reflected to me everyday in Hawai'i, I operated under the incorrect assumption that talking about race and ethnicity didn't need to happen for me, simply because I didn't experience racial or ethnic inequality. This is how my racial/ethnic privilege showed up.
- I previously identified with the positive stereotype associated with Model Minority Myth (success = working hard, staying quiet, and following cisgender-heteronormative family values). This was "taught" through modeling and socialization from adults and elders in my community. I did not know this social construction, meant to benefit white supremacy, even existed until I came across [Ellen Wu's work in 2018](#).
- My experiences with racism in California were and continue to be valid. I won't go into much detail here, but they range from being told to speak English on the street in my neighborhood to being made to feel invisible by
- Disrupt internalized oppression in yourself and others by developing a healthy relationship with [calling in/calling out](#) as well as [apologizing](#) when you make mistakes.
- Always practice [cultural humility](#) as it cultivates deep trust and understanding.
- Encourage white people to [do their part of the racial equity work](#) by setting clear boundaries around where your encouragement and support ends and their responsibility begins.
- Center [healing](#) as part of the growth process by seeking social-emotional support from a [counselor](#) or therapist to heal from racial harm.
- Learn my history and treat every month like Asian Pacific Islander Month, where I normalize for myself the importance of celebrating and uplifting the contributions of fellow Asian Americans and disrupt the erasure and lack of representation in every other space I currently occupy.

It is my belief that we need to all hold ourselves accountable in our equity work and move beyond listening and learning towards intentional action and loving acts of solidarity. Our words and growth are powerful when we put them into action.

colleagues I've worked with for three years, who cannot tell me apart from other Asian colleagues.

- As a non-Black and non-Indigenous person of color, I must stay vigilant and do work to interrogate where I hold relative racial privilege, how anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity show up in my life (from birth to present), and how I can work in solidarity with these groups without centering myself.

I took these truths and made the following agreements with myself, my personal best practices, as I moved into the next phase of racial awakening:

- Decolonize social media accounts by following and centering the voices of people from historically silenced and marginalized groups.
- Learn from and stay accountable to people historically erased from curriculum and mainstream media.
- Do not expect free educational labor, instead pay people you learn from, uplift their work, and amplify their voices.
- Do no harm, rather understand where you hold power and privilege (positionality) and act accordingly.

My journey is far from over. I developed these practices as a result of consistent engagement in the work, regular reflection, and ongoing real-talk with other equity leaders like our esteemed Jennifer Tomlinson, Interim Dean of Valencia's West Campus and SEED Facilitator. It is my

belief that we need to all hold ourselves accountable in our equity work and move beyond listening and learning towards intentional action and loving acts of solidarity. Our words and growth are powerful when we put them into action. Thank you for allowing me to share a part of my identity experience with you.

By the way, I highly suggest reading [Dr. Akiemi Glenn's](#) poignant response to the NY Times article, unfortunately titled, "Want to Be Less Racist? Move to Hawai'i" if you are interested in learning more about how race has been uniquely adapted in a Hawai'i context.

*Dr. Alyson Kaneshiro is a learning specialist and Bay Area SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) Regional Facilitator in Oakland, California. She holds an EdD in Education from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa and her scholarship focuses on practitioner research and application in real-world educational contexts.*

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Through the gifts of individual donors as well as private and public organizations, the Peace and Justice Institute has shaped possibilities into reality. We want to thank each individual and organization who has funded our work from January 2020 - July 2021.

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## PEACE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE

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# PEACE NEWS



## **New Zealand Weightlifter Laurel Hubbard is first openly transgender athlete selected to compete at the Olympics**

When New Zealand weightlifter Laurel Hubbard began her transition in 2013, the International Olympic Committee didn't have any guidelines about transgender women competing in the games. Now, after eight years of toil and triumph in competitions — and amid significant conflict about the rules governing transgender athletes — Hubbard is the first openly transgender person selected to compete for a medal in the Olympics. "I am grateful and humbled by the kindness and support that has been given to me by so many New Zealanders," Hubbard said in a statement.

*Source: [Washington Post](#)*



## **Six hundred thirty three divers set world record cleaning ocean floor off Deerfield Beach**

Divers recovered 1,600 pounds of lead fishing weights alone, the result of years of anglers cutting bait. "All those times the line gets caught, you just never really think about it," Harper said. "Obviously, trash was collected, but the beauty of it is with 633 divers, we were able to do a very thorough cleaning."

*Source: [Sun Sentinel](#)*



## **Mary McLeod Bethune statue on its way to D.C.**

On the 146th anniversary of her birth, Mary McLeod Bethune's form debuted larger than life, practically immortal and destined to take a place in history.

An 11-foot, 4-ton likeness of the trailblazing educator and civil rights activist was unveiled Saturday in Pietrasanta, Italy, beginning the journey that will end in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C., where it will be the first statue of an African American to take a place there. Bethune will replace a statue of Gen. E. Kirby Smith, who surrendered the last armed Confederate force in the Civil War.

*Source: [Florida Politics](#)*

# CELEBRATING PEACE NEWS LOCALLY, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY.

## **New York Times newspaper commits to focusing on missing histories**

Since 1851, obituaries in The New York Times have been dominated by white men. Now, they're adding the stories of other remarkable people. Obituary writing is more about life than death: the last word, a testament to a human contribution. Yet who gets to be remembered - and how - inherently involves judgement. To look back at the obituary archives can, therefore, be a stark lesson in how society valued various achievements and achievers.

Source: [\*New York Times\*](#)



## **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance helps vaccinate almost half the world's children against deadly & debilitating infectious diseases**

By improving access to new and under-used vaccines for millions of the most vulnerable children, the Vaccine Alliance is transforming the lives of individuals, helping to boost the economies of lower-income countries and making the world safer for everyone. Gavi's impact draws on the strengths of its core partners, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and plays a critical role in strengthening primary health care (PHC), bringing us closer to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and ensuring that no one is left behind.

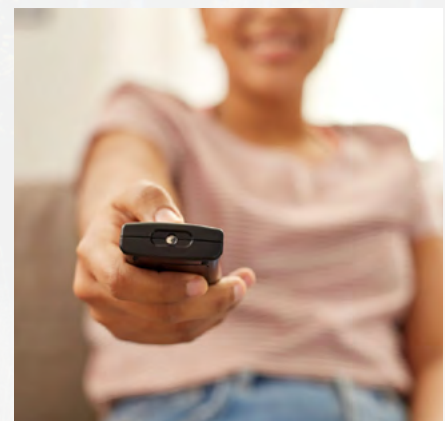
Source: [\*Gavi\*](#)



## **BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) characters are being represented on our TV screens**

BIPOC characters have received better representation in television recently. There is a steady upward trend for BIPOC TV characters in the past decade, and in the 2019/2020 season, they achieved parity (41.2% compared to 39.9% of the US population). In addition, there is a steady trend toward better BIPOC representation over time. In the past decade, the number of BIPOC writers increased from 4.2% to 10.7%.

Source: [\*The Rep Project\*](#)



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*Each year PJI celebrates the U.N. mandated International Day of Peace on September 21.  
This picture takes us back to years past on Valencia's East Campus.*