

## Manifesting Anti-racism and Anti-oppressive Pedagogy in Faculty Life

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“Anti-racism” is the subject of popular books and echoes as a call to action across social media and the news. In order to take up this work, it becomes important to build an *attitude* that is ready to undertake anti-racist work in faculty life.

### ANTI-RACISM AS ANTI-OPPRESSION

Ibram X. Kendi, one of the most widely read authors on anti-racist practice insists that nobody is “not racist.” Instead, he argues, one must choose to be an anti-racist. According to Kendi and many others, we can learn to take up specific strategies that can contest racism as it manifests interpersonally, institutionally, and systematically.

Race, like other differences, operates as both fiction and fact: differences are social constructed, but we act on them in ways that are material. The cultural scholar Stuart Hall raised the stakes by asking “ what does it mean to take seriously, at our present conjuncture, the thought that cultural politics and questions of culture, of discourse, and of metaphor are absolutely deadly political questions?”

Anti-racism should be brought into a larger anti-oppression framework.

*Anti-oppression indicates “an explicit evaluative position that constructs social divisions (especially ‘race’, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and age) as matters of broad social structure, at the same time as being **personal** and **organizational** issues. It looks at the use and abuse of power not only in relation to individual or organizational behavior, which may be overtly, covertly or indirectly racist, classist, sexist and so on, but also in relation to broader social structures for example, the health, **educational**, political and economic, media and cultural systems and their routine provision of services and rewards for powerful groups at local as well as national and international levels. These factors impinge on people’s life stories in unique ways that have to be understood in their socio-historical complexity” (Clifford 1995: 65).*

How do anti-oppression and – necessarily – anti-racist practices show up primarily in faculty life?

- Collegial Intellectual life (relations among colleagues)
- Teaching

What are the practices to be taken up that allow for an anti-oppression? *Accompaniment; Solidarity ; Compassion, Justice ; Radical Hospitality.*

## HOW TO BUILD AN *ATTITUDE* TO CONFRONT RACISM AND OPPRESSION

Prepared for PLNU Center for Teaching and Learning

The following steps help to create an attitude and a culture that can undertake meaningful anti-racist and anti-oppression

1. **Accompany those experiencing marginalization.** The greatest authority in anti-racism and anti-oppression work are those who experience marginalization. These folks and their stories and experiences deserve accompaniment – presence and attentiveness with an absence of judgement. Without accompaniment, solidarity is impossible.
2. **Recognize centers and peripheries.** Academic work and intellectual life produce centers and peripheries when it comes to perspectives and voices, often without acknowledgement. Repopulate the center with what is on the periphery.
3. **Practice openness to critical voices.** Accompanying those who experience marginalization often means hearing and holding criticism about your work, your department, or discipline. Criticism is important – it may reveal issues that are otherwise hidden. Opponents or skeptics of equity can also level critiques. Hear those voices too, but proceed forward without distraction.
4. **Transparency and candor are assets.** Know that anti-oppression and equity are not problems to “solve,” but lay out a journey to travel. Be self-aware about strengths and weaknesses in the work and share both widely. Invite others to share their views on strengths and weaknesses as well. It may seem counterintuitive, but an openness to accepting responsibility for both successes and challenges builds trust in the community.
5. **Take ownership of the work.** Those who rightfully hold authority in intellectual life (instructors, chairs, administrators, academic committees, disciplinary leaders) must also take responsibility for anti-oppression and anti-racism in those areas.
6. **Commit to Anti-oppression.** Understand the difference between interest and commitment. Interest describes when one undertakes a task when *convenient*. Commitment represents a condition where one *changes the circumstances* of one’s situation so that the task is always necessary. Anti-oppression requires commitment and a change orientation.

Clifford, D.J. (1995). “Methods in oral history and social work.” *Journal of the Oral History Society* 23 (2).