

November 19, 2015

Recently a Facebook page was created by individuals called the “Illini White Student Union.” This page offers to be a place “for students of University of Illinois Urbana Champaign who are interested in organizing alongside other white students and discussing our issues.” Furthermore, the page administrators hope that the group can help “organize against the terrorism we have been facing from Black Lives Matter activists on campus.” Almost instantly, a number of students, staff, and community members voiced their concern.

From Mizzou to Yale and now the University of Illinois, Black students have been raising attention to their experiences of racial discrimination and injustice. Pro Blackness is not anti whiteness, and these protests demonstrate an urgent need to address a systemic climate of racial oppression at Illinois and across the nation. For anyone committed to creating a campus open to everyone, it is crucial at this moment to listen to and support Black voices, as well as work as allies to confront these systemic issues. Change requires a community effort.

There are many places to come together to help understand racism and whiteness. It is important to have opportunities to thoughtfully examine what it means to be White in the US, and what it might mean to be an ally with communities of color. In addition to courses in ethnic and gender and women’s studies, the following is a working list of some of the resources on campus. We will be continuing to add to this list:

* EPSY 203 Social Issues Dialogue: Being White in a Multicultural Society is a second 8-week course that examines the different aspects of the white experience by exploring the histories, social contexts, ethnic and class backgrounds, and ideas that have shaped white people in the United States. For more information on this and other intergroup dialogue classes, visit <http://go.illinois.edu/EPSY203>

* Allies for Racial Justice (ARJ) is a student organization that has been designed not only to support students of color, but also to educate and increase the awareness of allies. You can contact them at arj.uiuc@gmail.com

* Multicultural Advocates Program through University Housing provides trained Multicultural Advocates (MA’s) in each of the University Residence Halls to create dialogue on numerous issues, including race and inclusion. MA’s provide “resources, opportunities and experiences that assist in the creation of inclusive, stimulating, engaging and supportive communities.”

We are in the process of organizing times and spaces for students to come together to reflect, discuss strategies, and proactively respond to these incidents. As more information is available, we will add to this page. In the meantime, please contact any of us with concerns or needs.

In Solidarity,

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