

RACE, ETHNICITY, AND  
INCLUSION TASK FORCE  
REPORT 2016-17

 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
Office of University Life

*August 2017*

## Introduction

Dear Fellow Members of the Columbia Community:

We are pleased to share with you the first report from the Race, Ethnicity, and Inclusion Task Force (REI). The Office of University Life began the Task Force in 2015 as a means to engage in critical conversations about inclusion, campus climate, and community citizenship.



Over the past one-and-a-half years, students, faculty, and staff have gathered for Task Force meetings and events to consider how to create a campus free of bias and discrimination. Contextual points that informed the work of the Task Force included: 1) students' concerns across the nation regarding the experiences of those from historically marginalized communities; 2) increasing desire from students, faculty and staff to facilitate and engage in productive conversations and enact meaningful inclusive and diversity programs; and 3) President Bollinger's observation that successful citizenship in a pluralistic world requires a commitment to advancing diversity. These elements, and more, make the work of the Task Force layered and complex. While this work remains in process, what follows here is a review of projects designed this past academic year by members of the Task Force working groups to bring the Columbia community closer to the vision described above.

As we share these updates from the Task Force, we would like to thank all of the students, faculty, and staff who joined us this year. Their commitment, knowledge, drive to make significant contributions, and willingness to think afresh about these issues propelled the groups forward and provided the focus to cull, from a myriad of ideas, concrete actions and plans.

We are eager to continue the work of the Task Force in the coming year, and as always, appreciate your partnership and participation. Please share your thoughts and comments with us at [universitylife@columbia.edu](mailto:universitylife@columbia.edu). We look forward to hearing from you and moving this work even further ahead.

Sincerely,

Ixchel Rosal  
Associate Vice President for University Life  
Office of University Life

Roosevelt Montas  
Associate Dean  
Director of the Center for the Core Curriculum  
Columbia College

Co-chairs for the Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force

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*Building a diverse university community is not the work of a moment. It requires sustained commitment, concerted effort, and the attention of us all. I reaffirm Columbia University's commitment to this mission and to the realization of our core values of inclusion and excellence.*

- Lee C. Bollinger, President, Columbia University

## Background

The Office of University Life created the Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force in 2015 as a means to engage students, faculty, and staff from all schools at Columbia in projects, conversations, and initiatives that further cultivate a campus culture of inclusion.

In November of 2015, University Life held a teach-in and speak-out event: *Race, Ethnicity, and University Life*. Participants at the event called for the greater inclusion of students from historically marginalized communities at Columbia. Students also identified the need for such efforts to be centrally coordinated; “It seems that there are pockets of action happening in separate places across campus. Things get done in those spaces, but they aren’t extrapolated across schools at Columbia,” said Devon Wade, a sociology Ph.D. student. The momentum for University-wide efforts that promote a culture of inclusion was generated through this and other conversations, leading to the creation of the Race, Ethnicity, and Inclusion Task Force.

In speaking to the potential of the Task Force, Executive Vice President Suzanne Goldberg said, “The energy of these conversations reinforces our potential to make this not only a pivotal moment but also a shift toward sustained change in our community.” As the Task Force emerged, the question was asked, “What would it be like to study, live, and work at Columbia and in a world free from racism and free from other

### Operational Questions:

How does the work of the Task Force help to illuminate:

- how power and privilege influence interpersonal interactions;
- how our individual perspectives on identity, inclusion and diversity may or may not be shared by others, including our peers;
- how making assumptions about someone’s identity can be risky from the standpoint of creating inclusive community;
- how inclusive community citizenship is fundamental to developing leadership skills; how it takes work from each one of us; and how it can be powerfully educational and exhilarating, even when it can also be deeply difficult at many points along the way.

forms of discrimination and bias?” Students, faculty, and staff were then invited to join the Task Force with this question in mind as a guide.

In its initial year, the Task Force hosted meetings and events to identify how students experience their racial, ethnic, and other intersecting aspects of identity on campus. After review of the qualitative data from the first year, staff in the Office of University Life identified two key areas of focus for the Task Force:

- Interpersonal communications and interactions – This includes student/student, faculty/student, or staff/student interactions.
- Institutional identity – This includes the values, beliefs, assumptions and norms that shape the campus culture at Columbia.

This initial exploration of the Task Force’s work and scope done in 2015-2016 provided the foundation for the REI projects developed in 2016-2017.

## 2016-2017 Overview

In the fall of 2016, University Life invited all Columbia students to apply for membership on the Task Force. Over 100 students submitted applications (see Appendix A for a complete listing of Task Force members), and, on October 21, 2016, over 60 students, staff, and faculty gathered in Case Lounge of Columbia Law School to begin the work of the Task Force for the new academic year.

At this initial meeting, attendees joined one of four working groups, each with a different focus:

- A. Awareness Project – to develop a campus-focused inclusion and belonging campaign.
- B. Campus Conversations – to create opportunities for the campus community to have conversations about diversity and inclusion.
- C. Discussion Group – to identify issues students are facing that impact their sense of inclusion and belonging at Columbia.
- D. Inclusive Classrooms – to examine the elements that play into creating an inclusive classroom.

In addition to the initial meeting and working group sessions, the full Task Force membership met twice in spring 2017 (February 3 and May 2, 2017). In these full Task Force meetings, working group members shared progress made on their projects and sought feedback from other Task Force members, which informed the next stages of development for each group's projects. Please see Appendix B for agendas and meeting materials shared at full Task Force meetings.

Additionally, Task Force members developed a value statement to define the terms *meaningful inclusion* and *belonging*, concepts central to Task Force projects. Currently, the statement is in draft form and will be finalized in the coming year.

**Meaningful inclusion and belonging at Columbia are values** that inform our interactions with one another and shape the projects we undertake as a community. They allow us to engage in dialogue across differences, past difficulties and challenges, and toward understanding. They guide us to see each person at the University as a valued member of the community. Not assumed, meaningful inclusion and belonging are principles to which we recommit ourselves continuously. [Current draft]

Meetings included presentations by students, faculty, and staff working on diversity and inclusion initiatives outside of the Task Force. These presentations included a review of an oral history project conducted within the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and a student group strategic-planning project housed in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. These presentations at Task Force meetings helped to create synergies between projects and shared resources, attempting to break silos and improve progress and participation in diversity and inclusion goals.

### **Awareness Project**

Members of this working group considered initiatives and campaigns in place at Columbia and elsewhere; conducted research on best practices regarding social engagement initiatives both within and outside higher education; and reviewed a variety of media for the initiatives (i.e. social media, poster campaigns, artistic expressions, public service announcements, etc.).

Members of the group deliberated for some time on the medium and message of the

campaign, knowing they wanted to create something lasting, incentivize participation within schools, and be mindful of people who are not “at the table.”

Awareness Project working group members selected video as the campaign’s medium. Through further discussion, the group identified elements of the video, including a series of testimonials by students, faculty, and staff responding to the prompt: “Are you in...?” This prompt was intended partly to play on the prefix “in”: INspiring, INtrospective, INsightful, INternational, INterracial, INTentional, etc. The group suggested that even if the question inspired someone to say that they were “not in,” highlighting someone feeling “out” could also be powerful and instructive.

The group developed an additional prompt: “What is the difference between inclusion and belonging? How do you feel included / How do you feel as though you belong?” The group discussed that one could be “included,” but not feel as though they belong, which is a compelling difference. Participants could say what they think of the two words, and then whether and how they belong. In the end, the group wanted to reinforce that all people who are here, regardless of their identities, income, political party, etc., belong in our Columbia community.

**Awareness Project Goals:**

- Greater “connectedness” on campus via a “cool,” accessible and meaningful campaign.
- Activate partners across schools and campuses for broader awareness and engagement with our campaign.
- If needed, create supplemental educational materials for project.

To date, the group has recorded video clips from four students. Clips from these will be shown at incoming fall 2017 orientations to elicit and invite additional participants. For the 2017-2018 academic year, the working group plans to expand the subject of the video to the work of student organizations. The video will be shared broadly to the campus community via social media platforms.

### Campus Conversations

With the understanding that interpersonal interactions are often where microaggressions and other tensions arise, the need for conversations becomes more apparent. Members of this working group investigated models for hosting conversations (including conversation guides, facilitation strategies, and formats) that could seek to address the following question: How do we as a community have difficult conversations, particularly those that

lead to greater understanding among participants?

The fall semester meetings for the group were used to brainstorm and discuss ideas related to conversation and dialogue-based programming for the Task Force. The group provided feedback in three key areas:

- Key issues, events, and cultural phenomenon that could inform programming objectives.
- Qualitative and quantitative components of successful conversations.
- Potential frameworks for the conversation.

In the spring, this working group developed *Having the Talk: Conversations Across Difference*. The group designed the initiative as a series of conversation packets, each centered on a different theme, with three distinct exercises to explore the given theme along with facilitation guides. The group selected *fear*, *privilege*, and *identity* as the first three themes to use in the initiative's development. The subcommittees presented initial drafts of the packets at the Task Force's final meeting of the year, sought feedback from the larger group, and plans to refine the packets in early fall 2017.

The *Having the Talk* (draft title) conversation packets, once complete and finalized, will be made available to the campus community via the Office of University Life website.

Members of the Columbia community can download the packets, which will include facilitation instructions, conversation guidelines, and exercises to explore a given theme.

Each theme's exploration will have three parts:

1. An introductory exercise for participants to consider the theme within their own lived experiences.
2. A discussion focused on a text or art that asks participants to consider how the author/artist explored the given theme.
3. A closing exercise that places the theme within a contemporary context, which has implications for the campus community.

The purpose of the initiative is to provide structure for conversations that are necessary in further cultivating a culture of inclusion at Columbia. To review a sample conversation packet, please see Appendix C for the draft identity-themed packet.

## Discussion Group

Members of this working group convened three times throughout the year and continued

the conversations from the previous year, which sought to identify key campus climate issues impacting the quality of student life. This group's sharing of their lived experience on campus informed the selection and trajectory of the Task Force's projects.

After the group's initial meeting, inconsistent attendance and participation in regular meetings made it challenging to sustain cumulative work throughout the year. However, having different voices representative of various parts of the University provided an unexpected opportunity to approach each meeting as a focus group for thinking through current experiences particular to students' program, school, and campus. The following themes emerged from these meetings:

- Microaggressions are experienced in and out of the classroom, and it is difficult to address them effectively.
- The responsibility to raise awareness of and address issues of racism often falls on students of color and other underrepresented groups.
- There can be a lack of community responsibility when incidents of bias occur among students.
- In the context of a campus that values free speech, many students of color are negatively impacted when extreme, racist, and/or hateful speech is not challenged.
- Tension sometimes occur among students when incidents beyond campus impact communities on campus differently.

These five themes were shared with both the Task Force and the Student of Color Advisory Board (SOCAB), which is part of Multicultural Affairs, Undergraduate Student Life (CC&SEAS). SOCAB then utilized these themes to inform their own SOC awareness campaign, which will be used to inform, develop, enhance, or change programs and services to better support students.

#### Discussion Group Objectives

- Identify and compile student experiences.
- Identify themes and share with campus partners and the full REI Task Force.
- Explore ways for continual climate assessment beyond the Task Force.

## Inclusive Classrooms

This group explored the dynamics that shape the classroom environment. The group's conversations generated a series of stories that reflected both the presence of and absence of the principles of inclusion in a variety of learning environments (classrooms, conferences, etc.). Through their conversations and storytelling, working group members found that the stories proved to be useful pedagogical tools. And thus, the group's project came into focus: a collection of stories from students across the University that would provide opportunity for reflection on the principles of inclusivity and their further incorporation into the campus culture and classrooms.

Given the power of narrative and its ability to engage people in meaningful ways, the Inclusive Classrooms Working Group's collection of stories from students was imagined as a teaching tool. Through this project, perspectives on what it means to experience, learn from, or be denied the opportunity to thrive within learning environments will be shared with the campus community to stimulate dialogue and reflection on inclusive learning environments. For the 2017-2018 academic year, this working group plans to refine the scope of this project and identify campus partners for its implementation.

### **Excerpt from Draft Call for Stories:**

We all have stories to tell. The Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force wants to hear your story of belonging, or not, in the classroom. Given the power of narrative and its ability to engage us in meaningful and transformative ways, the Task Force is collecting stories from Columbians (students, faculty and staff) that shed light on the question: What is an inclusive learning environment?

You are invited to submit a story about a time you felt included or excluded in a learning space. What made you feel that way? If you felt excluded, what would have changed things for you so that you felt included? What did you learn from that experience?

## Summary and Next Steps

Over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year, the Race, Ethnicity, and Inclusion Task Force working groups met to select and design projects for the University community that would cultivate a greater sense of inclusion on campus. While still in development, each project was designed, with input from students, faculty, and staff from throughout the University community, to inform interpersonal communications and interactions and/or Columbia's institutional identity.

For the 2017-2018 academic year, the Task Force will again invite the campus community to join this effort. New members will be briefed on the development and current stage of each project, as well as plans for implementation. They will then join a working group of their choice. Each working group will further develop and complete their project and will introduce it to the campus community by spring of 2018.

The working groups will remain the same in scope and charge, with one exception: the Discussion Group. Next year, this group will have a specific focus for their conversation: bias incidents on campus. In the coming year, this group will function as a think tank and explore ways for the student community to recover from a bias incident. Through research on best practices at other universities and group conversations, the group will consider what could happen at Columbia when incidents of bias occur and the community requires opportunities for process, reflection, and moving forward.



## Appendices

### Appendix A – Race, Ethnicity, and Inclusion Task Force Full Roster

#### Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force

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##### Administrator

<b>Adrienne Blount</b>	Student Conduct and Community Standards
<b>Aisha Abdelmula</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Alex Serna-Wallender</b>	Earl Hall
<b>Alexia Ferracuti</b>	Center for Teaching & Learning
<b>Alexis Akagawa</b>	International Studies & Scholars Office (ISSO)
<b>Alison Ewing</b>	Office of University Life
<b>Barbara Chen</b>	Office of University Life
<b>Brian Sarfo</b>	Columbia College
<b>Carl "CJ" Jones</b>	Columbia College
<b>Chanel Roche</b>	Journalism
<b>Christine Bean</b>	Center for Teaching & Learning
<b>Cynthia Marino</b>	School of Nursing
<b>Desmond Beirne</b>	School of International and Public Affairs
<b>Diane Nguyen</b>	SIPA
<b>Ixchel Rosal</b>	University Life
<b>Jennifer Brown</b>	The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
<b>Jim Crocamo</b>	Libraries
<b>Judy Wolfe</b>	School of Nursing
<b>Kati Cadenhead</b>	Student Conduct and Community Standards
<b>Kuheli Dutt</b>	Lamont
<b>Laila Maher</b>	School of the Arts
<b>Lamar Lovelace</b>	Office of University Life
<b>Marqus Hunter</b>	Intercollegiate Athletics
<b>Melinda Aquino</b>	Columbia College
<b>Michael Karbowiak</b>	School of Professional Studies
<b>Mouhamadou Diagne</b>	Office of the Chaplain
<b>Radhika Patel</b>	University Life
<b>Raygine DiAquoi</b>	Mailman School of Public Health
<b>Roosevelt Montas</b>	Columbia College
<b>Samantha McLaughlin</b>	College of Physicians and Surgeons
<b>Samira Abdul-Karim</b>	School of International and Public Affairs
<b>Sarah Isabel Geathers</b>	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
<b>Shana Lassiter, Ed.D.</b>	Office of the Provost
<b>Stephanie Autenrieth</b>	College of Physicians and Surgeons

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<b>Vivian Taylor</b>	School of Nursing
<b>Yvonne Pitts</b>	Columbia College
<b>Zaibis Marie Munoz</b>	Undergraduate Student Life

Faculty

<b>Abdul Kayum Ahmed</b>	Columbia Law School
<b>Susan Bernofsky</b>	School of the Arts
<b>Trey Ellis</b>	School of the Arts

Student

<b>Abdul Kayum Ahmed</b>	Teachers College
<b>Alex Walker</b>	Columbia College
<b>Alexander Freemantle</b>	Columbia College
<b>Alexander Wold</b>	School of Professional Studies
<b>Alexander Freemantle</b>	Columbia College
<b>Alison Gondosch</b>	School of Professional Studies
<b>Amalya Johnson</b>	Columbia College
<b>Amalya Johnson</b>	Columbia College
<b>Amaris Hemmings</b>	Columbia College
<b>Amy Ding</b>	Columbia College
<b>Anna Williams</b>	Columbia College
<b>Anne Im</b>	Columbia College
<b>Armando Lozano</b>	Columbia Law School
<b>Ashley Mackel</b>	Columbia Graduate School of Business
<b>Bailey Peacock</b>	Columbia College
<b>Bailey Peacock</b>	Columbia College
<b>Bonnie Schipper</b>	Columbia College
<b>Brittney Wade</b>	Columbia College
<b>Caitlin Beach</b>	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
<b>Cameron Pope</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Carly Scramstad</b>	Mailman School of Public Health
<b>Carlyn Dougherty</b>	Columbia College
<b>Celina Malavé</b>	School of Professional Studies
<b>Chris Sinclair</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Craig Heck</b>	Mailman School of Public Health
<b>Danielle Noel</b>	Mailman School of Public Health
<b>Eleazar Charlie Flores IV</b>	Columbia College

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<b>Emilee Warner</b>	Columbia Mailman School of Public Health
<b>Empress James</b>	Mailman School of Public Health
<b>Erica Richardson</b>	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
<b>Eunice Kokor</b>	The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
<b>Fabian McNally</b>	Columbia Graduate School of Business
<b>Fatimah Martin</b>	School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA)
<b>Franklin Forbes</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Gabriella Puente</b>	College of Physicians and Surgeons
<b>Genesis Mullins</b>	School of International and Public Affairs
<b>Gianmarco Rea</b>	Columbia College
<b>Hadia Sheerazi</b>	School of Professional Studies
<b>Hailey Todoroff</b>	Columbia College
<b>Humaira Awal</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Ina Dogani</b>	Columbia Law School
<b>Jason Freeman</b>	School of Social Work
<b>Jessica Bennett</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Julia Sienski</b>	Columbia College
<b>Julia Flaspahler</b>	General Studies
<b>Jyotirmayee Sabat</b>	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
<b>Ka Tung Chan</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Kaila Dwyer</b>	School of Social Work
<b>Kanako Mori</b>	Columbia College
<b>Karla Nohemi Reyes Diaz</b>	Columbia College
<b>Katharine Berdy</b>	Columbia College
<b>Katie Leonard</b>	School of Nursing
<b>Kendall Pace</b>	Columbia College
<b>Kenneth Pham</b>	Columbia College
<b>Krystal Cruz</b>	Teachers College
<b>Laura Cabrera</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Lauren Fukumoto</b>	Columbia College
<b>LinDon Harris</b>	Columbia College
<b>Lisa Zhang</b>	Columbia College
<b>Livier Martinez</b>	School of International and Public Affairs
<b>Lolade Omokanwaye</b>	The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
<b>Lord Hyeamang</b>	Columbia College

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<b>Lord Hyeamang</b>	Columbia College
<b>Maddie Stuzin</b>	Columbia College
<b>Malaya Sadler</b>	Columbia College
<b>Malina Giulino</b>	Columbia College
<b>Maria Rohani</b>	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
<b>Mei Mei Li</b>	College of Physicians and Surgeons
<b>Michael Price</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Michael Hinton</b>	Columbia College
<b>Mistee Denson</b>	School of Social Work
<b>Natasha Korgaonkar</b>	Columbia Graduate School of Business
<b>Nikita Singareddy</b>	Columbia College
<b>Precious Amoako</b>	Mailman School of Public Health
<b>Ricardo de Luca e Tuma</b>	Columbia College
<b>Rocio Meza</b>	Columbia College
<b>Ronald Smith</b>	The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
<b>Rose Compton</b>	Columbia College
<b>Ruchita Brajabasi</b>	School of International and Public Affairs
<b>Sahar Ullah</b>	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
<b>Shreyas Lakshminarayan</b>	Columbia Graduate School of Business
<b>Sojourner Rivers</b>	Mailman School
<b>Stephanie Vargas</b>	College of Dental Medicine
<b>Taiwo Alonge</b>	College of Physicians and Surgeons
<b>Taylor Wood</b>	Columbia Law School
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<b>Timothy Dyster</b>	Physicians & Surgeons
<b>Tremane Gabriel</b>	Columbia College
<b>Turner DeMuth</b>	Columbia College
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<b>Tyler Holmes</b>	Columbia College
<b>Vanessa Suarez</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Xi Chu</b>	College of Physicians and Surgeons
<b>Yasi Alipour</b>	School of the Arts
<b>Yuxuan Zhang</b>	School of General Studies
<b>Zoe Marquedant</b>	School of the Arts

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## Appendix B – Task Force Agendas and Meeting Materials

### COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY LIFE  
PHILOSOPHY HALL, ROOM 208

#### **Task Force on Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion**

10/21/2016 | 10:15 am – 11:45 am | Case Lounge, Jerome Greene Hall

#### **Agenda**

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Overview of Task Force
- III. Starter Conversations
- IV. Looking
- V. Working Group Discussions
- VI. Announcements
  - a. Reading Columbia - 10/26, Pulitzer Hall (World Room), 6 pm
  - b. Awakening Our Democracy – 11/16, Pulitzer Hall (Room 300), Noon
  - c. CRLT Players (from the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at University of Michigan), hosted by Columbia University’s Center for Teaching Learning
    - i. 10/27, Milbank Chapel at Teachers College, Noon
    - ii. 10/27, Milbank Chapel at Teachers College, 4 pm
    - iii. 10/28, CUMC Alumni Auditorium, 4:30 pm

#### **Attachments**

- I. Task Force Overview
- II. Guidelines for Conversations and Guiding Principles
- III. Glossary of Terms
- IV. Article: “How to Get Americans to Talk About Race,” (*The Atlantic*, 9/7/16)
- V. Article: “Race, Ethnicity and University Life: Next Steps,” (*Columbia Spectator*, 11/24/15)
- VI. Article: “Students, Faculty Address Institutionalized Racism at University Life Event,” (*Columbia Spectator*, 11/18/15)
- VII. Article: “Goldberg: Race, Conversation and Columbia,” (*Columbia Spectator*, 11/13/15)

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY LIFE  
PHILOSOPHY HALL ROOM 208

**Task Force on Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion: Principles and Guidelines**

**Guiding Principles**

- An inclusive approach to community citizenship is fundamental to developing leadership skills.
- In identifying one's role in creating an inclusive community we recognize that this role can be powerfully educational and exhilarating, even when it can also be difficult for us at any point along the way.
- While focused on the student life experience, partnership with faculty and staff is critical to successful work on the Task Force's focal issues.
- Creating space for all, including those with differing points of view.

**General Discussion Guidelines<sup>1</sup>**

- Allow everyone the chance to speak.
- Do not interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
- What is shared in the discussion circle, stays in the discussion circle. Keep confidential any personal information that comes up in the conversation.
- Speak from your own experience.
- If you think something is missing from the conversation, do not wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself.
- If you find another's statement to be problematic, do speak up.
- Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say.
- Commit to learning, not debating.
- Challenge or criticize ideas, not individuals.
- Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language.
- Be careful about putting other participants on the spot. Do not demand that others speak for a group that you perceive them to represent.

**Call to Action**

- Identify an ally and bring them to the next general meeting of the Task Force.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: These guidelines were taken from the Center for Teaching and Learning's Inclusive Teaching Forum (February, 2016), which were adapted from: Guidelines for Planning and Facilitating Discussions on Controversial Topics, Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, University of Michigan, online at <http://bit.ly/21dIJW9>; Establishing Ground Rules, Center for Teaching Excellence, Cornell University, online at <http://bit.ly/1p1Rwt4>; and Talking Circles, First Nation Pedagogy, online at <http://bit.ly/1KB8ieA>.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
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PHILOSOPHY HALL, ROOM 208

**Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force (2016-2017): Overview**

The Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force (REI) focuses on students' experiences in and outside the classroom related to race, ethnicity and other intersecting aspects of identity. Convened by the Office of University Life, its charge is to identify issues, develop responsive strategies, and engage in projects to support a culture of inclusion and belonging where students from across the University community can thrive academically and otherwise.

The Task Force was first created in 2015 by the Office of University Life amidst a landscape of heightened local and national attention to issues of inclusion and diversity. During its first year, REI hosted conversations and meetings and also drew from a University-wide teach in and speak out to identify issues that impact students' experiences at Columbia. For 2016-2017, REI will build upon this work and develop initiatives that further shape the culture of the University as an inclusive, equitable and just learning environment.

**What are the key areas of focus for the task force?**

Through conversations with task force members during the previous academic year, the Office of University Life has identified two areas within which to work:

- Interpersonal communications and interactions – This area may include student-to-student, faculty/student, or staff/student interactions.
- Institutional identity – Task members will consider the values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms that shape the campus culture at Columbia.

**What will it do?**

In 2016-2017 task force members will join committees and work with Office of University Life staff on the following projects:

- A. The Awareness Project - This initiative will center on the idea of *belonging and meaningful inclusion*. Among the questions to be considered in developing this initiative will be:
- What do belonging and meaningful inclusion mean to you?
  - What does a truly inclusive environment look like?
  - What are the barriers in creating such an environment?
  - What can I do to cultivate such a community?

Members of this committee will consider initiatives and campaigns in place at Columbia and elsewhere; research on best practices regarding social engagement initiatives both within and outside of higher education; and a variety of mediums for the initiatives (i.e. social media, poster campaigns, artistic expressions, public service announcements, etc.). Grounded in this research, working groups members will then craft a process for developing and refining a message for the initiative, along with supplemental materials (goals for the campaign, additional educational materials, website content, etc.) and possible complementary programming. Additional considerations for this project include identifying partners for the initiative, obstacles to its success, responsive strategies, and

methods for evaluation. The primary scope for this project will be student-to-student interactions; however, a well-crafted and widely distributed message could also carry over to interactions among all members of the CU community.

- B. Campus Conversations - The purpose of this project is to provide the campus community with opportunities to share stories, experiences and perspectives centered on the ideas of inclusion and belonging. Much of what task force members have learned thus far has centered on the impact of interpersonal interactions (i.e. the places where microaggressions and other tensions arise) and the need for conversations. These conversations, while sometimes successful, are often stymied by misunderstandings and the challenges we all sometimes face in understanding the viewpoints of others. How do we as a community have difficult conversations, particularly those that lead to greater understanding among participants? For 16-17, REI task force members will curate opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to gather and discuss topics related to diversity, inclusion and communication across difference. In preparation for this series of conversations, task force members will explore models for hosting conversations (including conversation guides, facilitation strategies and formats). Formats to be explored include both in-person and digital options.
- C. Inclusive Classrooms - This initiative will be an exploration of the role students can play in the creation of an inclusive classroom setting. This will be a project aimed at empowering both undergraduate and graduate students to take an active role in facilitating and contributing to inclusive learning environments at Columbia. It will be an opportunity to bring together students from different disciplines and different stages of their academic trajectories to personally reflect together in their capacity as learners and fellow students/members of the campus community, and to have what they write be directed to other/future Columbia students.
- D. Discussion Group - Last year, REI conducted interviews with students about their experiences at Columbia. Review of these interviews informed the project selection for REI this year. Staying current on key issues for students with regard to campus climate remains a priority for REI. To that end, task force members can join this committee, which will meet regularly to review and discuss the student life experience at Columbia. This group's sharing of their lived experience on campus will inform the selection and trajectory of the task force's projects going forward.

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**Task Force on Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion: Principles and Guidelines**

Guiding Principles

- An inclusive approach to community citizenship is fundamental to developing leadership skills.
- In identifying one's role in creating an inclusive community we recognize that this role can be powerfully educational and exhilarating, even when it can also be difficult for us at any point along the way.
- While focused on the student life experience, partnership with faculty and staff is critical to successful work on the Task Force's focal issues.
- Creating space for all, including those with differing points of view.

General Discussion Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

- Allow everyone the chance to speak.
- Do not interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
- What is shared in the discussion circle, stays in the discussion circle. Keep confidential any personal information that comes up in the conversation.
- Speak from your own experience.
- If you think something is missing from the conversation, do not wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself.
- If you find another's statement to be problematic, do speak up.
- Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say.
- Commit to learning, not debating.
- Challenge or criticize ideas, not individuals.
- Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language.
- Be careful about putting other participants on the spot. Do not demand that others speak for a group that you perceive them to represent.

Call to Action

- Identify an ally and bring them to the next general meeting of the Task Force.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: These guidelines were taken from the Center for Teaching and Learning's Inclusive Teaching Forum (February, 2016), which were adapted from: Guidelines for Planning and Facilitating Discussions on Controversial Topics, Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, University of Michigan, online at <http://bit.ly/21dJW9>; Establishing Ground Rules, Center for Teaching Excellence, Cornell University, online at <http://bit.ly/1p1Rwt4>; and Talking Circles, First Nation Pedagogy, online at <http://bit.ly/1Kl8jeA>.

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**Task Force on Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion: Glossary of Terms**

Here is a brief listing of terms that are often used in conversations about race, ethnicity and/or inclusion. Is there a term you would like to see added to this glossary? Please send us your ideas: [universitylife@columbia.edu](mailto:universitylife@columbia.edu)

**Accessibility**

This term refers to the consideration of various barriers to full participation in teaching and learning activities. This can include physical disabilities, family or work-related obligations, and access to resources and technologies. Components of accessibility can include: accommodations, adjustments in physical space and meeting individual needs.

**Implicit bias**

The presumptions about motivation and performance brought to learning environments by instructors and students based on stereotyping, which are often unexplored and unconscious.

**Inclusive spaces**

A term often used to refer to academic environments where diverse perspectives can be fully shared and honored. These spaces are sometimes formalized into training and designation of networks of support on a university campus.

**Intersectionality**

This is a concept used in critical theory to highlight the interconnected nature of socially constructed categories (such as race, class, and gender) as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Please note: These terms and definitions were taken from the Center for Teaching and Learning's Inclusive Teaching Forum held in February 2016.

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**Task Force on Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion**

2/3/2017 | 10 am – 11:30 am | 555 Lerner Hall

**Agenda**

- I. Welcome and introductions
- II. Reports from Working Groups
  - a. Inclusive Classroom
  - b. Campus Conversations
  - c. Awareness Project
  - d. Discussion Group
- III. Feedback on Meaningful Inclusion and Belonging Statement
- IV. Feedback on Friend of a Friend
- V. Working Group Check-Ins
- VI. Announcements
  - a. Full Task Force meeting – Tuesday, May 2, 2017, 10 am, Lerner 555
  - b. Screening of *13<sup>th</sup>* (a film by Ava DuVernay) - 2/28, Miller Theater, 6 pm
  - c. Mobile App

**Attachments**

- I. Task Force Overview
- II. Guidelines for Conversations and Guiding Principles
- III. Glossary of Terms
- IV. Inclusive Classrooms Feedback Form
- V. Campus Conversations URL Link
- VI. Meaningful Inclusion and Belonging Statement Feedback Form
- VII. Friend of a Friend Feedback Form
- VIII. Article: How Could You? (New York Times, November 18, 2016)

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**Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force:  
Inclusive Classrooms Feedback Form**

**Please note: These are working drafts of prompts for the Inclusive Classrooms' project. We welcome your feedback.**

Prompt A: Tell us a story about a time you felt included or excluded from a classroom setting or learning environment. Tell us what made you feel either included or excluded.

Prompt B: What constitutes an inclusive learning environment? When did you learn something about what helped or hindered meaningful inclusion and belonging?

We welcome your feedback:

1. Which prompt did you select and why?
  
2. Please rate the prompts (Circle one):
  - a. Prompt A:   Excellent   Good   Neutral   Poor
  - b. Prompt B:   Excellent   Good   Neutral   Poor
  
3. Would you be interested in contributing to the anthology? If so, what is your contact info:
  - a. Name:
  - b. Email:
  - c. Uni:

**Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force:  
Meaningful Inclusion and Belonging Statement**

**Please note: Below are three working drafts of a values statement. These drafts are meant to be conversation starters as we work together to build a statement that reflects the work of our task force. We appreciate your participation in the conversation and look forward to hearing your thoughts.**

**Meaningful inclusion and belonging at Columbia are values** that shape our interactions with one another and the projects we undertake as a community. They allow us to engage in conversations across differences, amidst difficulties and challenges, and toward understanding. They guide us to view each person at the University as an important member of our community. Meaningful inclusion and belonging are principles to which we recommit ourselves continuously.

At Columbia, **meaningful inclusion and belonging** guide us to ensure all have the opportunity to take part in this community in ways that are significant, valued and fully integrated. We treat with compassion ideas and people that are different than ourselves.

**Meaningful inclusion and belonging are values** that inform our interactions with one another and have the power to positively shape our experiences within this community. When we seek to build and maintain a campus community that is shaped by the values of meaningful inclusion and belonging, we reach for something beyond tolerance and acceptance. We push through difficulties and challenges in our conversations across difference and move towards understanding. And, we hold firmly to the belief that each person at the University is an important member of our community and should be supported accordingly. Not assumed, meaningful inclusion and belonging are principles to which we recommit ourselves continuously. Meaningful inclusion and belonging describes how we as Columbians maintain a campus community that concerns itself with a wide range of ideas. These principles are the foundation of our campus culture and provide a guide to compassionately engage with ideas and people across difference.

**Feedback Form**

1. Please underline ideas that resonate with you.
2. Does it communicate expectations of community citizenship at Columbia?
3. What comes to mind as you read this statement?
4. Possible revision:

**Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion Task Force:  
Friend-of-a-Friend Proposal**

**Please note: This is a working draft. We welcome your feedback on ALL aspects of the project.**

**Introduction:**

It's been said that thoughtful, honest conversations about race and ethnicity are critical to ease tensions that exist throughout the nation. We also hear that people don't know how to have these types of conversation. The Office of University Life proposes Friend-of-a-Friend as a way to get these conversations started on our campus.

**How the Conversation Works:**

1. Ask a friend to introduce you to a friend of theirs. It should be someone you don't already know well. Or just ask someone you don't know well.
2. Spend about 30 minutes together talking through the friend-of-a-friend question guide, below.
3. Let us know, through this quick google form, one thing you took away from the conversation and one thing you hope the other person took away.
4. If you want to be entered for a \$10 Joe's coffee card (we're giving away 50 of them), include your name and uni on the form.

**Conversation Tips:**

- Offer the benefit of the doubt. Assume the other person has generally good intentions. Almost everyone does.
- Just listen to the answers to your questions. Your turn is next.
- Enjoy the conversation.
- Our hope is that you get through the 10 questions and come away with greater insight about your own perspective on race and ethnicity, while also experiencing understanding of someone who has had a different experience from you in this world. If you need to end the conversation before making it to the 10<sup>th</sup> question, however, feel free to do so. No problem.

**Conversation Guide:**

1. If you have a friend in common, share with each other how you know the friend.
2. Why did you choose to come to Columbia?
3. How is being at Columbia/New York different/same from where you grew up?
4. What's something that you've experienced while being at Columbia that you really appreciate?
5. What's been a challenge for you while at Columbia?
6. While at Columbia, have you had conversations about race and/or ethnicity? If so, how have they gone? How have these conversations been different from the ones you had with your family and/or your friends growing up? If not, why do you think that is?
7. Have your views on the issues of race and ethnicity changed while you've been at



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**Task Force on Race, Ethnicity and Inclusion**

5/2/2017 | 10 am – 11:30 am | 555 Lerner Hall

**Agenda**

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Working Groups Updates
  - a. Inclusive Classrooms
  - b. Campus Conversations
  - c. Awareness Project
  - d. Discussion Group
- III. GSAS Life Histories Project
- IV. Student Leadership and Engagement
- V. Working Group Check-Ins
- VI. Wrap-up

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## *Appendix C – Identity-Themed Packet (Draft)*

### **IDENTITY discussion group:**

Laila Maher, Sahar Ullah, Alexander Serner-Wallender, Kuheli Dutt

#### **Opener/ Introduction:**

1. Go around the room asking people to introduce themselves
2. Present questions for private self-reflection:
  - a. What is the first identity that people perceive about you?
  - b. What is one aspect of your identity that people do not perceive about you?
  - c. If you were to describe yourself in one word, what would it be?

Participants will be given color-coded pieces of paper/ post-its for each question. These will be put up on the wall for everyone to discuss and reflect on the diversity and/or similarity of the responses.

#### **Main Discussion:**

**Supporting text:** For the supporting text we will be using an excerpt from Claudia Rankine’s “Citizen”. Specifically, we will be using: **“Citizen, VI [On the train the woman standing]”**. The poem will be read out aloud, and participants will be given copies, following which they will do a silent reading.

Following this, the questions for discussion are:

1. Why is there an empty seat?
2. Who or what characters did you visualize when reading this poem?
3. Why does the narrator sit down? What do you think of the narrator?
4. What does it mean to “travel as a family”?
5. Why would this be included in a collection called “Citizen”?

**Visual Aid:** For the visual aid, we will use a group photo of people at Columbia – from the Columbia website (exact picture yet to be determined). We will then

reflect on our Columbia identity – both as individuals and as part of the larger Columbia community. The group photo will include diverse people (race/ethnicity). The questions relevant to this visual aid are:

1. What sort of message is Columbia sending out about its identity?
2. How accurate, in your opinion, is this picture in terms of reflecting the demographics at Columbia?
3. How is your own identity included or excluded in this image? Do you identify with this image?

### **Closing Thoughts:**

We will revisit some of the questions raised in the earlier sections, and close it out with some broader discussions on identity. The goal is to have the participants do most of the talking, and have the facilitators guide the discussion and offer prompts as needed. Some back-up/ reserve topics we can discuss if appropriate are:

1. Who “owns” identity and how is it defined? That is, how much of it is based on how you see yourself versus how others see you?
2. Official definition of White: Includes Middle Eastern, North African, Brazilian people, whether or not they relate to the “white” experience or see themselves as white.
3. Evolving perceptions of identity: how did Jews and Irish become White? When did Muslim become an ethnicity?
4. Identity & Intersectionality (race, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, etc.)

The overall goal of the event is for the participants to have an open and honest discussion in a safe and supportive space.