

# Equity Speaks: Culturally Sustaining Stories in Education

## Podcast 4: Culturally Sustaining Practices on Race for a Better Campus Climate

**Host Krystal Andrews:** For our fourth episode we explore the issue of campus racial climates that racially minoritized students experience and the rise of student activism. We also discuss how our higher ed professionals and faculty can leverage culturally sustaining practices to support racially minoritized student activists and the greater campus community. For this episode, we will hear from Joseph Alonzo, the director of student equity and success at Santiago Canyon College; Dr. Charles H.F. Davis, assistant professor, chief strategy officer, and director of research in the University of Southern California's Race and Equity Center; and Dr. Dominique Hill, an A. Lindsay O'Connor visiting assistant professor of women's studies at Colgate University.

I'm also joined by my colleague Mr. Colvin Georges Jr., a graduate assistant in the Office of Community College Research and Leadership, for an insightful and engaging discussion about the critical role campus climates play in the campus experience of racially minoritized students.

Thank you all for joining us today on this new episode of our Equity Speaks podcast. The topic for this episode to talk about campus racial climate. I will allow our panelists to introduce themselves and then we will jump into our questions.

**Joseph Alonzo:** My name is Joseph Alonzo. I am the director of the Office of Student Equity and Success at Santiago Canyon College, which is in Orange, California, just outside of Anaheim, just outside of LA. In my professional capacity I provide administrative oversight for our campus-wide equity initiative, which every college has in the state of California. And that initiative focuses on reducing the equity gaps for disproportionately impacted student groups, most of which include racially minoritized students. I also provide guidance and support and was co-creator of our equity core teams, which is a team of equity-trained and equity-minded faculty members that have been trained in cultural humility, and there's about 14 of our faculty that have gone through the training. And the model that we're using is that our teams will then train other faculty on campus to also be equity-minded and utilize the cultural-humility model.

I oversee all equity-focused professional development on campus. I oversee the Hawks Nest Food Pantry and Basic Needs Center. I oversee veterans. I oversee scholarships, our new program, which focuses on the success of black or African American students. I am the co-chair of our Dreamer Advisory Group, our Guided Pathways leadership team, and I also facilitate and implement our campus-climate survey, which is a partnership with San Diego State. Two years ago we surveyed over 2,500 students, and we're going to have another survey this spring.

**Dominique Hill:**

This is Dominique. I'm currently the A. Lindsay O'Connor visiting assistant professor in women's studies at Colgate University, where I teach classes on black feminist theory, girlhood, and feminist pedagogues. I typically build equity and anti-racist work into all of my classes. The current classes that I teach, one being an intro to women's studies class, is very built on very much centering on looking at the history and the realities of race and racism as it pertains to the university that our students are currently on, so them going into the archive and looking at those things. And currently in the black girlhood class, thinking about how do we create pleasure-centered and celebratory spaces in the face of racism.

Some of the other things that I currently am doing is due to a racist incident that happened last semester, we have been organizing at the center breathe events that are dedicated to sitting and building community and doing mindfulness work, but also thinking through how to build intimacy, not as a result of crisis, but to really build intimacy prior to. Some of my other work outside of the classroom deals with using performance-based work in art as a mode of telling narratives around racism, equity, and injustice.

**Charles Davis:**

Hi, my name is Charles Davis. I'm an assistant professor of clinical education at the University of Southern California. Previously, I occupied roles as the chief strategy officer and director of research at the USC Race and Equity Center. Prior to that role, I was the director of higher education research and initiatives at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, where I ran our campus-climate research portfolio. Subsequently, I've served on the advisory board for the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates, which is housed here at the USC Race and Equity Center, and I've done that work for the last six years. My research and teaching largely focuses on activism and student movements on campus and beyond, which we consider to be a symptom of campus-climate issues. My teaching has primarily focused on issues of race and racism, systems of domination, structures of oppression within education and its social context.

**Host Krystal Andrews:** This is going to be a very rich conversation. All of you all's backgrounds, in terms of research, your practitioner spaces, the spaces that you're holding on your campuses—I'm really looking forward to this conversation, so let's dive right in.

This past decade, institutions of higher education have seen an upsurge in racially motivated incidents. Based on a 2019 report on hate and bias at college campuses, 67.65% of respondents experienced racially motivated biases, and 54% reported experiencing hate speech based on their race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and other traits. Also, Joseph, as a community college leader, you have [written about](#) how students of color have experiences with racial microaggressions and stereotypes in the classroom and on campus, and how it hurts their overall success and retention. What are some culturally sustaining practices that higher education professionals can use to maintain a campus climate that is intolerant of institutionalized racism, while also creating a sense

of belonging for students, especially those holding multiple intersecting minoritized social identities?

**Joseph Alonzo:**

Yeah, I really like that question, especially the end, because I think that specifically pertains to our campus as far as students holding multiple intersecting minoritized social identities. Just to give you a little bit of context, Santiago Canyon College is situated in Orange County, which historically has been, like, a neoliberal or conservative stronghold in southern California and recently turned blue. With that being said, we are on the east side of Orange County in Orange in a well to do area. We are a part of a community college district, which means there are two colleges within our district: Santa Anna College and Santiago Canyon.

And the reason I mention that is because Santa Anna College, historically, has been seen as the community college that serves “the people,” like the one where the Latinos go to, the one that the Asians go to. And it's situated *right* in the center of Santa Anna, which itself is an urban hub. Every stereotype that you would assume is situated neatly within this nice little urban area. And the reason I say that is because I worked at Santa Anna College, and we always viewed Santiago Canyon as kind of like the college on the hill where the white students would go. And so when I had the opportunity to get promoted and work on our equity initiative here at the campus, I realized quickly through data and through personal observations that this wasn't a white-dominated campus—by the numbers, I should say.

But what I did find was that the students that were most active, and the students that were holding positions of power, *were* white. And so I started talking to people and was talking to stakeholders, and I realized quickly that a lot of racially minoritized students felt like they *didn't* have a voice here on this campus even though they had the numbers. And specifically, one anecdote I'd like to share is I was talking to a communications professor about her observations here versus at Santa Anna. She also works as an adjunct professor in Long Beach. And it was right around the time of the 2016 election of the president, and she was telling me that there was a lot of derogatory language, racist and other bigoted language being used in her classes. And she said at Long Beach, the students rose up and said, “No, your language is inappropriate; you need to change your language.” And at Santa Anna College the students rose up and said, “Hey, that's inappropriate, we don't use those types of words. These are the types of words we use.”

She said, “But interestingly, here at Santiago Canyon,” she said her “racially minoritized students kind of sunk in their seat, and they really didn't say anything.” And so that kind of gave me a really good understanding that the students here, they are here in numbers but we haven't provided them with a voice. And we haven't provided them with space. And so in my four and a half years of being here that's something that I've tried to do is I've always tried to provide voice to students. We've had focus groups with students to provide

input, not only on formal campus-wide initiatives, but also on informal programming and activities that we have. I've worked hard on creating and co-chairing the Dreamers Advisory Group. After three years of trying, we finally established a black student union on campus, and last year we became an Umoja-affiliated campus.

But I also feel like you can't just rely on programming. You have to have strong leaders from the top down that are going to be willing to take chances and utilize some of their cultural capital to create policies, to create resolutions. You're going to need board members that are going to create board resolutions. And that's something that I'm really proud of, of our district, is that whenever we've seen the winds changing, our board and our executive leadership have all passed resolutions saying that we're going to remain an inclusive campus, we don't tolerate hate speech, we don't tolerate bigoted speech, and they won't be intimidated. Something that I also think needs to happen is that people need to *live* in equity. And what I mean by that is it's very easy to go to work and to argue for equity and create programs and things like that, but I really feel like the change that's necessary is going to occur at the legislature.

And I understand I have the privilege of living in California to be able to say that because the state is heavily blue and we pass a lot of what people would identify as liberal legislation. But just being able to be involved locally in politics, statewide in politics, getting out there and asking legislators to make sure that they are thinking about race when they're creating legislation, make sure they're thinking about immigration status, make sure they're thinking about income status, and as they're developing the legislation that's ultimately going to trickle down into the college campuses.

And one more thing that I have found, because I am situated in a moderate to conservative area, is that hearing people and coming together, I believe, is really important. I believe that from conservatives and liberals, to be able to understand where people come from. And that's something that's really helped me. Someone that's taught me a lot is Veronica Neal. She works at De Anza College, and she said, you know, you can't *always* call people out; sometimes you got to call them in. And that's something here that has worked for me at the college.

At one point there was a faculty leader in the academic senate. I was facilitating an equity retreat. I said at some point we're going to have to get to a place to where we stop blaming the students and we start looking at the institution to change, and to create success for these students. And he replied to me, "Well, when are we going to get to a point to where we realize that these students just genetically are not ready for college? Like when are we going to realize that? We've been trying to help these students for years, when are we going to get to that?"

And I think that would have been a really opportune time to be like, "Racist!" But I didn't and over the years I've just tried to work with him, and he's actually gotten more involved in our equity work as a result. He's one of our strongest allies now. I'm not sure if he fully understands the work or is fully invested, but I know that if I had called him out in that way that he would not be the ally that he is today. I'm not saying that all of the relationships that we build are going to be perfect, but seeing that he is one of the major power players on our campus, it was definitely necessary.

**Host Krystal Andrews:** Dominique or Charles, would you like to hop in?

**Charles Davis:** The only thing I will add is just to echo the overall sentiment of a need for us to shift to an understanding or a mode of institutional responsibility as we think about the climate and conditions within which students are expected to live, work, and learn. As was alluded to, so much of that often gets placed on the student as being solely responsible for their circumstances. And it's interesting that when we think about student success at an institutional level, we typically try to find everything except for racism to explain racial disparities in student-success outcomes.

And so when you think about actually taking responsibility and ownership of the ongoing and historical patterns and legacies of racism that our institutions have perpetuated, that has to have some role to play, if not a significant role to play, in why students are often not able to persist and sustain toward degree completion or to transfer. And I think that's just a really important shift that institutions should be thinking about is it's very easy to pass the buck, and this is sort of what we see, colleges and universities are passing the buck to high schools, high schools are passing the buck down to other K-12 institutions, those schools are then passing it on to parents. And so we see this sort of continuous shifting of who should actually be responsible for taking care of our youth in this particular set of situations. So I think it's just really important we focus on what institutions can and *should* do in ways that would support these specific students if they have initiatives that are already designed to support predominantly white students who have benefited from various programs and services to which we've been often excluded.

**Dominique Hill:** This is Dominique. I'm sitting with what everybody has been saying and I've also just been thinking about the different contexts in which people work. Thinking about schools, for example, where it's about \$70,000 a year to go to school here and thinking about the particular types of students of color who come to this particular institution and the sort of changes in demographics of now more recruitment of students of color who have come from boarding schools. And so how that then shifts these particular dynamics around the needs around race, the needs around understandings of culture, but then also the particular hardships that students experience when they come to a space that is in the middle of nowhere, that is cold, that has about the same amount of community

population as it has students, of 3,000, but then also this huge disparity around class.

And so thinking about that level of accountability, but then also thinking about the ways that we might think about normalizing radical justice work, for example, as a practice. The ways that reoccurringly students are talking about activism and feeling like they don't know what's happening or what happened here before, but there's *obviously* opportunities to archive this work. There's obviously opportunities to capitalize upon this. And then also thinking about the particular barriers in terms of although, for example, at this particular university there's a *huge* class disparity, but everybody that goes here is not rich.

And so when we think about, for example, attendance policies, and what I've been doing in my classes, and thinking about a universal design. Like, I don't care why you can't, why you need to miss class, but if you need to miss class because of wellness, because you need to get yourself together about something that happened, or if you need a break or if you need to tend to your mom, ways that don't require students to have to out themselves about the fact that they didn't come to class, for example, in speaking to a student who had a hold on their account, and they felt that it was embarrassing to show up not prepared and not able to make this request of a professor. And so really thinking about how can these systemic or practices that seem normal, how might they actually estrange students from the learning process?

**Host Colvin Georges:** All right, thank you for that. So our third question is, in a recent publication titled *Student Activism, Politics, and Campus Climate in Higher Education* by Dr. Demetri Morgan and Dr. Charles H.F. Davis III, the concept of institutional amnesia is highlighted. This is where white faculty and staff either reconstruct the reality or forget how their campus environments have historical pasts rooted in racism and discrimination against students of color. Students, faculty, and staff of color still experience this type of treatment on college campuses today. When thinking about institutional amnesia, do you believe that requiring higher education professionals to learn the racist historical pasts of their campuses is enough for them to be able to consciously design policies and distribute resources that are equitable for all students? Why or why not?

**Charles Davis:** I think the short answer is no. We all come from communities where the saying is if you know better you do better, and this country is, for a very long time, what it is, and what it's about, and how it got its genesis, and that is not preventative from perpetuating this particular system of power. I think that there is some usefulness, in part because as Michael Eric Dyson said, and where I pulled this phrase from, is that America, much like our postsecondary institutions, are committed to historical amnesia wrapped in nostalgia. So not only do we misremember and forget where it is that we came from, but then we romanticize what that looked like, and so we can think of no other perfect time to have this conversation than on the heels of Martin Luther King Jr.'s national holiday and birthday. We'll have MLK celebrations on their campuses, yet be

very deeply vested in white supremacy in various kinds of ways, this romanticization as well as forgetting the historical legacies of racism.

And the thing is we often do damage when people want to act as if these things are brand new or when we see Richard Spencer show up on the campus of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and everyone wants to be in shock and awe, and we don't want to even remember the fact that Richard Spencer has two degrees from UVA, that UVA itself was founded by Thomas Jefferson who himself, used slaves. I think that the combination of those two things is that we both can misremember, lack of remembering where we came from, but also can pretend that it was something other than what it was. That integration was a violent experience for those that first came to these campuses, and not something that we can't not commemorate, but we need to commemorate it in its truth and in its honor and in the fullness of that story.

I think it would behoove institutions to ensure that that becomes a part of that work. And I think speaking to my other colleagues' points about the role that student activists have to play, that many student organizers and activists are taking it upon themselves to do the un-orientation, and sort of the different type of campus tour that gives you a sense of, like, this is not just a building that has a name on it, but in fact that name means something. That it's not just the Woodrow Wilson footprints but that Woodrow Wilson himself was a historian that perpetuated white supremacy, anti-black racism through his work.

And so I think that we need to take some of those cues, and one of the instructionals or pieces from our book, and it may seem very simple. People always ask, like, you know, "What can we do about these student activists?" And our first directive is to *listen*. Students have their finger on the pulse of what's going on, and they can both diagnose the problem and provide a prognosis for what can be solved. And I would say that, yes, that's a bare minimum: faculty and staff should be familiar with the institutional legacies of racism on their campus, but it would be a necessary yet insufficient condition for them to change their behavior.

**Dominique Hill:**

I think it would also be necessary, echoing Charles, is from which vantage point this narrative is coming in. Colleges and universities store these legacies, and so again, related to the romanticization, if we look at student documentation or we look at archives from particular student organizations, what are those narratives versus the narratives that have been neatly kept and confined and promoted as palatable around these things? If we contacted alum and went back and was like, "Hey, what was your experience? We found your name in the documents." How might then these particular sorts of narratives allow for a different triangulation, for a different narrative to be brought forth in terms of what these higher ed professionals are actually learning about the historical past of the school that they're attending and working in?

But then also thinking about the sort of multiple layers around what does it mean to even learn about this historical past? Like, obviously, absolutely not. Learning what happened doesn't convert to minimizing its reoccurrence, right? So then also interrogating how radical is the work that's being put forth? So when we think about policies, at least for me, I see, as someone who's had an opportunity to attend universities and then come back and teach at those universities, to see there's this repetition of, "Oh, y'all still doing this? Oh!" And so, you know, you have a decade in between: Okay, look, we did that then. If we're going to do it again, great, but how are we going to do it better now? And really being able to think critically about that and then think about how do we unpack these ideologies that are saturating why we keep coming back to the same idea that feels good, that we're okay with implementing, but it's not doing the necessary work of shifting.

**Joseph Alonzo:**

Yes. This is Joseph, and I agree with my colleagues. I would just like to say that from doing this work here, and I'm sure my colleagues being at Colgate and USC can attest that when you're one trying to fight against the institution, a lot of times you become *the* one and the person that is always leaned upon to do the work. And so I would just like to say it depends on who's delivering the message. Who's going to research the institution and then who's going to deliver that message? And after we decide that, deciding on is your institution ready to hear it? And if you decide, okay, yes they are, then what's going to happen after that? There's a lot of fatigue that comes along with this work, and when you're identified as "the one," not only are you going to be the point person for all things diversity and equity, but you're also going to be the person that students come to, that allies come to, and it's a wear.

So when I saw this question that's the thing that I kind of thought about: Who's that work going to fall on? Here at this institution, I imagine it would be me. And there have been times where I have kind of tapped out. And it wasn't because I don't appreciate the work or I'm not passionate about the work, but it's just like one of those things where, you know, I had to balance my self-care with my work life, and ultimately I decided, you know, I wasn't really ready to engage in a certain activity or something, simply because I knew that it would do harm to myself. I think it depends on whether or not the institution's ready and who's going to do the work and who's going to deliver the message.

**Charles Davis:**

Yeah, I want to just pick up on that point. We talked a bit about shifting to a mode of institutional responsibility, and I think an important note that's mentioned here is so often that for institutions is finding sort of the elder statesperson that's black or brown. They get put in this role, whether it's a chief diversity officer role or some other senior diversity official role. This expectation that they themselves will solve all the institution's problems, or a select few that's in a task force or working committee. And when we think about institutional responsibility, that means as a *whole*—that everyone at the institution, but *especially* white folks, right, and we're talking about racism and white supremacy, have a responsibility to be engaged in this work and it can't

just fall to those who work in sort of these critical studies paradigms or those who do really important—a set of work—recruitment, retention for our students there.

And I think that that's even more important so we don't go into this space, as we know from the literature of cultural taxation, and the things that people of color routinely experience by having to carry the load of their colleagues for either not doing the work, but actually doing things that are a detriment to the work, and then having to receive all those various students whether you're in a clinical role, you're a visiting professor or you're a part-time staff member or full-time administrator. Often the taxation that come along with this idea of institutional responsibility simply, again, just passes the buck to say that not just that our students are responsible for their own sets of problems but that the people with whom they identify the most that are professionals are also responsible, *even* if that's not their area of expertise.

**Dominique Hill:**

Thank you for that. I was thinking about that as well, specifically in terms of how schools will, for example, create new initiatives that actually came out of a particular moment of resistance or a contention, but won't lend itself to the credible fact that this new idea, which is working well, actually came out of a moment of tension. And then really erasing the work that was done and the people who worked really, really hard to help the school arrive at this idea. And so really thinking about the sustainability practice of maybe linking the fight and the tension and the challenges that have been put forth by these bodies that have been taxed and usually experiencing fatigue, but also then giving that credit to that but then also showing the linkage between, "Oh, now we've arrived at this idea."

So it's often the case that the rest of that gets erased. The people who did that work got erased, and then it just seems as if the institution cared about X group of students, or the institution cared about inclusion, or the institution cared about accommodations for people who can't move. You know, living on a hill, accommodations are rough here. You really can't use a wheelchair with mountains, really. So thinking about how easy it is for us to erase the work, the bodies, the people who did the work that then allowed for even the cultivating of such a policy that would show up on paper.

**Host Colvin Georges:**

All right, thank you for that. Our fourth question is, across the country, faculty, students, and staff at predominantly white campuses continue to collectively mobilize to challenge social injustices, a topic, Dr. Hill, you have written about based on your experiences with activism. When thinking about activism specifically related to dismantling systems of racism and white supremacy, what culturally sustaining practices can higher education professionals utilize to best support the needs of activists, whether they be students, faculty, staff, or members of the community? Also, what tangible and intangible strategies can activists use when fighting for and dismantling change in systems that were not designed for their success?

**Dominique Hill:**

I want to begin with a quote by Adrienne Maree Brown. She says, "Pleasure activism is work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy." So, one, to think about activism as also about being and creating, and not always about stretching yourself on the line and tiring yourself, not eating, not doing *well*. I think one of the things that higher ed professionals can do is normalizing wellness as integral to activism, and also as a form of activism, to really think about how are we cultivating better relationships with ourselves through activism?

I think some of the other things is because racism and white supremacy gets into the body and starts to affect literally how we move in the world, how we feel about ourselves in the world, that it's very important that we don't undermine the value of cultivating pleasure or cultivating enjoyable things in our bodies, so that that becomes a sort of, a resistance practice, a discipline, a regiment that is also alongside the standing up, the protesting, the tireless nights, the pushing against things. It's often the case that we forget about that, and I think that's super important. I also think finding support, specifically for resistance and activism. It's often the case that there are pockets of money everywhere. I know, for example, at this university and previous universities I've been at, there's always money but then there's always these red lines for if you want to do a certain type of thing.

So again, if we are formalizing the support of activist work and anti-racist work as a form of resisting institutionalized racism, that funding pocket should be there and should be asked for. That would allow people to do activist and social justice work explicitly on the campus. And so that can either be cultivating a retreat in which activists who do work can sit with themselves and be with themselves and sort of recalibrate, or it can be dedicated toward creating art or creating these other sets of things. But one just shifting the narrative about what activism is, not minimizing the body's importance to that, and also not minimizing creativity and joy in activism.

**Joseph Alonzo:**

That's interesting that you answered it that way. That's a really amazing take because it's actually something that my partner and I have discussed. She's a professor of sociology at UCI. And there was some point during her Ph.D. program where she was like, "You know what? I'm *done* suffering." And we just had this really amazing and in-depth conversation about how there's, like, this expectation that if you are a hard worker and that you suffer and you don't sleep and you don't take care of yourself that you're somehow performing this identity of a successful person. And she was like, "You know what? I'm just done. I'm done working crazy hours. I'm done stretching myself thin. I'm done getting sick. I'm done doing all these things. Like I'm going to treat this like a job. I'm going to work 8 to 5. I'm going to be there for you, I'm going to be there for our family."

She started setting boundaries, and once she started setting boundaries, she actually became much more successful. I'm not saying that'll work for everyone, but it worked for her. And I think that lends itself to the stigma that we often attribute to racialized folks and racially minoritized folks and low-income folks. You know, a lot of the arguments that people make around *us* is that, "Oh, look, they went on vacation. They must have enough money to do that. Why can't they do this?" Or, "Oh, look, they eat fast food, so they have money somewhere. Why do they need this, this, and this?" And there's always that stigma attached to, like, self-care and pleasure as my colleague mentioned. And I think that's a really amazing take and thank you for sharing it in that way.

Because I think it's something that's really needed, and it's something that needs to be addressed, especially for folks like *me*. I'm a first generation college student and I felt similarly growing up and coming into this work that if I wasn't suffering or if I wasn't working long nights that I wasn't really working. The other thing that I would say is that I think a lot of times we get bogged down in our titles and in our roles on the campus, and I think that change scares people. And so when students become active or energized around a subject, I think for some reason the institution kind of insulates itself, and it tries to *resist* the change or resist the students.

Something that I've always done, even in other roles, is that I've always tried to assist the students in mobilizing. And I've found that it really helps them engage in conversation and it builds *our* understanding of what the students want and what they're actually requesting, and it allows us for more input into creating policies and creating procedures and actually having qualitative and quantitative data that will provide us real insight into the needs of our students. So instead of the students who want to protest or march and we're like, "Oh, you can't be in this area," or making campus safety or the police go out there, making sure that students don't get "rowdy" or whatever it is, why not help them? Why not us go out there and be a part of the protest, be a part of the march, be a part of the resistance to create change?

I've just felt like when I've been on *that* side where assisting the students with their protest and with their activism, it has ended more amicably and the students feel heard, the students feel like they have power, the students feel like what they're saying is being heard, *and* they also feel like now they have an ally in administration or on the staff that they can turn to for support. And I feel like when we try to marginalize the students, it just creates *more* resentment and more frustration, and I don't think it does any good for the institution or the students.

**Charles Davis:**

I very much appreciate sort of a paradigm shift that we're calling for, and thanks to Dr. Hill for bringing in Brown's work on this particular topic. I think in addition to being able to both shift that focus as we think about some of the material conditions and things that students are dealing with, I think one thing that can be helpful to kind of pick up on the role that faculty and staff can play, but also

folks who study and work on the study of higher education, that I have found in our work working with student activists, in part, that often for students they don't ultimately understand how these institutions work, and sort of the complex bureaucracies that have been ingrained, which really are disorienting as students are trying to issue demands and make calls for certain things to happen. So I think one thing that could be really helpful is being able to coach students through understanding higher education governance, for example, in the way that these places are actually structured that would lend themselves to know where they can officially place appropriate targets when they're trying to get certain things done.

So, for example, when we're looking at issues of faculty diversity, yes, you could sit in the president's office, and depending on your institution that might be an effective strategy. But if you're at a big R1 institution like USC or some of the other places, you would probably be better suited to go to a provost's office, to lead with the chief academic officer of an institution who's actually in part related to faculty or the academic senate or places that are more directly aligned opposed to perhaps a president that's more concerned with fundraising and external relations. And I think that that is something that's very simple and easy enough to do, but often the thing that we don't think about when students are looking at their own efficacy of an ability to get institutional change to happen is whether they're finding the appropriate targets for the interventions that they're prescribing.

So I think that can be, you know, also a strategy that faculty and staff can lend themselves to just help them know how these places work. We've been here for a lot longer and will probably be here a lot longer than they will, and we know if anything about that administration is that they're really just trying to wait folks out. And so if you can help them within that four- to six-year path, understand how these places work, they could ultimately be more effective in achieving the things that they want.

**Dominique Hill:**

Those are really super-important things. When I was in southwest Ohio, and we were doing work and came up with the Mobilizing Anger Collective after the killing of Mike Brown, the murder of Mike Brown. Intergenerationality became super important, so as three faculty of color who wanted to mobilize, one being a postdoc, myself, and then other two being pretenure, feeling compelled that something had to be done but also recognizing the risk in those things. The intergenerationality became super useful, but also the cross-unit support. So having staff, having faculty, having students *all* come together to make space to come up with, what are we going to do? How are we going to do it? How are we going to make sense of things?

Like you were mentioning, Dr. Davis, to pull in together: What do the processes actually look like realistically? But then also creating that sense of support so that students don't feel estranged in terms of being able to not feel like it's either they're at it alone. They either have to drop out of school to do this work,

or that they can have people sort of moving things along while they're also still in classes, while they're also still doing things of support. I think those sort of cross-pollination approaches are super important to actually get stuff done.

**Host Krystal Andrews:** I was thinking about a time where, as an administrator, I found myself in a precarious position with my students. I think it was around the time where we had the verdict from Trayvon Martin's trial. And the students at the institution that I was at, they decided to have a die-in for the amount of time that Trayvon was on the ground before he was picked up and moved. And as an administrator, the students were looking to us to be like, "Well, what do we do? Where should we go? We need your support." And trying to kind of tell students more about what you were talking about, Dr. Davis, in terms of this is kind of the way the system works and this is *where* you can do this, and this is where this would be most effective and most feasible.

So even as an administrator, I just found myself like, "I can't die-in with you, but I can be there with you. I can't advocate or be an activist in the way that the protesting and certain things while I'm a part of this system." More so I can do what I can on my end in the way that I use my agency in the space that I uphold versus the means that they wanted to go about it. So, yes, that definitely is a large task for anyone who is engaging in campus climate, racial climate, working with student activists or anything like that on a college campus. So yes, very thought provoking.

For our last question, how does campus racial climate affect the college pathways of racially minoritized students? There are a number of frameworks, like guided pathways, that were designed to support community college students' academic success. How can frameworks do a better job of considering how the campus racial climate impacts racially minoritized students, academic success, and overall well-being?

**Joseph Alonzo:** I'll start since we are implementing guided pathways right now. I do feel like there is an opportunity right now to create a model of guided pathways that will support racially minoritized students. I don't have faith in the way a lot of campuses are implementing it, but I hope that with us being in our infancy phase of creation and implementation that we will create an equitized pathway. And I think it kind of speaks to what you were just talking about—*your* capacity and whether or not you could participate in activism or in the protest. I think that, ultimately, we get down to this is a capitalist society that functions on quantitative outcomes, and ultimately I'm in the same boat as you in a lot of ways to where I have to rely on my salary to sustain my family and childcare and cars and those types of things.

So, in that way, I feel like as administrators, while we do have to push and resist, there are limits to our ability to kind of rattle the cage. And so something that I've done is I've leaned on faculty who, at least at our campus, have a little bit more freedom to say the things that I might not be able to say and to do the

things that I might not be able to do. And so this is one of the areas where creating an equitable guided pathway for our students, because I sit as a leader on the professional development inquiry group, where we create all of the trainings for our guided pathways task force. But we've also strategically placed faculty that serve on their equity teams in the other groups so that they can advise and provide input on the creation of the guided pathways so that we are focusing on new students and creating opportunities for these students.

I've done research and, as I said, my colleague and dear friend, Veronica Neal, has provided me with some literature on equitable pathways. But I really haven't found a model that works specifically for racially minoritized students. I know that some pathways that have worked for these students have simply raised everyone's boat, if you will, but not ones that are closing the equity gap. We're in our second year of implementation, so hopefully we'll get to a point to where we are focusing our pathways and focusing our resources and services around racially minoritized students, with our Umoja program being one of those programs.

**Dominique Hill:**

I think about this question and I think about having an opportunity to look at guided pathways and also coming through enrichment or bridge programs related to education. I think these programs provide a sort of communal space for bringing together and forging relationships or networks for students. When I think about some of the students that I have right now who have come through programs, when looking at it feels similar, like a first-generation program or a bridge program, if you will. I think about the opportunities that get touched upon but don't get necessarily spelled out in terms of creating opportunities and networking that connects students to internships or connects them outside of where they are located in terms of being in school.

When I think about, for example, the Posse Program that sends a posse of students off to college and do this work together, which is super, super important, but then also related to this idea of amnesia, there are obviously faculty of color, staff of color, or students of color who have come through these schools and these spaces. And so by giving students not only a new network, but a network to be able to tap back into that history, one gives them a sense of legacy but also a sense of strength in terms of the fact that if these people finished, I can also finish.

I think also providing formalized opportunities that foster imagination and envisioning. I know, again, as a student who was very much a product of enrichment programs, everything was about hard work, everything was about academics, everything was about taking that straight and narrow path rather than really thinking about, how do we help cultivate these youths' sense of self? How do we cultivate their spirits? How do we cultivate their energy? So having that as a part of the project in terms of these programs' framework. And then also forging relationships between programs and key stakeholders to forge climate-change initiatives. So I think about, for example, students have a lot to

say. Being at Colgate, you have these link programs where students come in, you get a link, you're a part of that group for the entire semester. And if you came through a bridge program in the summer, you quickly get on campus and the campus looks totally different to you now because there's this mass movement and of whiteness, and this mass movement and of a culture that you somehow forgot about in the summer when it was just y'all hanging out.

And so, really thinking about, one, what happens within that moment? Imposter syndrome sets in. I can't tell you how many students of color have come and talked to me about now them not feeling capable. And I'm just like, "Sweetie, you got here just like everybody else." Or feeling like they can't adjust to the culture. So how do we then forge opportunity? We have first-gen programs for students. Why not first-gen programs for faculty that allow students to pair with faculty to sort of cultivate a sense of hope but also an understanding of we didn't show up refined as we are. Like, we've gone through these pathways in similar ways that they have that allow them to see the sort of trajectory as both iterative and absolutely possible I think is something that's super important.

**Charles Davis:**

So only thing I'll add to that as we think about frameworks, and I appreciate both of my colleagues and the things that they mentioned, and ways that we might think about, again, supporting and focusing on students. Because, you know, as much as we might critique, and I'm one of those people to talk about grit and resilience and perseverance and cope, we also have to deal with things as they are, so those things are equally important as we think about navigating these particular waters. But I think from an institutional standpoint, as we were talking over the course of our conversation, a big part about institutional responsibility is a willingness to be transparent and honest about what's actually going on. And I don't think enough institutions and institutional leaders have the moral and ethical courage to say what it really is.

And in my experience in doing the campus climate work, and this is talking to literally thousands of students at colleges, universities all across the country, most folks are not disillusioned to the fact that racism's going to be a part of their college-going experience. They do get disillusioned to, and building a bit on Dr. Hill's point, is when, you know, come to campus as a visiting student and they make sure you see all the other black folks or all the other brown folks, right? They do this to us as faculty when we interview for jobs. And then you get there, you know, "Yo, where are my people?" And you realize, well, all those people are in different majors or they're in different departments, and so you may not ever see any of them again unless we put you all on a committee together to do this work.

When I think about what type of framework could be useful, it's a mode of transparency that tells students that you're not going to not experience these things, but here are some of the supports and resources we have. If and when these things happen, here's how we will, as an institution, respond and take seriously your concerns around issue of racial climate. And I think that goes a

long way because what people don't want, and what this country has been very good at, and our institutions have been very good at is telling a lie, and perpetuating the lie, then asking us to believe and internalize that lie. Then we come to see the truth, we're almost broken in two and left in parts instead of being whole, which is what we should be doing as institutions. And so I think that becomes a critical part of something that we have to adopt is what is this mode of transparency, and radical transparency at that, that says we're willing to tell the truth because we can't have any level of reconciliation if the truth cannot be told.

**Host Krystal Andrews:** Wow. I'm full just to have a real conversation about the realities that our students are facing, that our faculty and staff are facing on their campuses, and really what that looks like now, what the realities are. And so for us to not get amnesia about what actually is going on, but for us to be present, and see, and to act upon what it is that we see in the best way possible, but to also practice care, self-care for our own selves and for our students and those that we serve in that same manner. This was a great conversation. If you all have a social media handle or a website or places where people can find you, if you would like to share that, now would be the time to do that.

**Charles Davis:** You can find me on Twitter and Instagram, @HFDavis, and my website is HFDavis.com.

**Dominique Hill:** You can find me on Twitter and Instagram, @DrHillGroove. Groove as in "Groove is in the Heart."

**Host Krystal Andrews:** Well, we thank you all today for being with us, for having this candid conversation, and for keeping it real, for giving us the truth and for speaking about an area of education that we need to be present and be truthful and honest about. So thank you all so much.

**Davis and Hill:** Thank you.

**Dominique Hill:** Thank you all.

**Host Colvin Georges:** To close out our episode, we would like to thank our panelists: Dr. Dominique Hill, Dr. Charles H.F. Davis III, and Joseph Alonzo for speaking with us today. Your expertise and insight on campus racial climate will be helpful to campus administrators and faculty as we work together to dismantle institutionalized systems of oppression within postsecondary education. From today's podcast, we have learned that there is still so much work to be done, and we have to be mindful of our self-care. As Dr. Hill mentioned, faculty and staff administrators must cultivate culturally sustaining practices that normalize wellness as a form of activism. So often we see that the work of activism is tiresome and exhausting for both students and professionals. However, we must develop healthy routines and habits that will allow us to be the best allies and support mechanisms for students.

Our panelists mentioned there are some faculty and staff who fight against the racist and white supremacist structures that dominate our college campuses daily, and in doing so, they become “the one” that the institutional community rely on. Our panelist Joseph Alonzo mentioned that these folks become burned out and fatigued by doing this work alone. Therefore, we need to develop a more sustainable practice where the work of ensuring campuses are safe, equitable, and inviting for all students, particularly those from minoritized racial backgrounds, is the responsibility of *all* professional staff and faculty, especially those who are white. People of color should not have to burn themselves out regularly while attempting to dismantle the very systems that they did not create.

We are reminded by our panelist Dr. Davis that faculty and staff should not romanticize about the troubled history of higher education, but recognize and acknowledge that the reality that these institutions are rooted in racism, slavery, and white supremacy do exist. Dr. Davis reminds us that integration was a violent time for people of color attempting to enroll and navigate through college campuses. With that being said, faculty and staff should make intentional efforts to learn and understand the histories of their institution if they are genuinely invested in their students' success, especially student activists who are regularly organizing for systemic change.

Faculty and staff have a responsibility to equitably support the growing needs of student activists by providing resources and funding opportunities that focus on anti-racist work. When students are assisted with these efforts, this allows for meaningful and transformative relationships to be established with campus administrators. In this way, administrators are able to gain more input from students, both qualitatively and quantitatively, when designing policies and procedures that will impact them. When there is a divide between students, faculty, and professional staff, this causes more resistance from students, which is not effective long term and will not lead to favorable outcomes for anyone.

Once again, we would like to thank our amazing panelists for their thoughts and insights on this critical topic, and we would like to also thank our listeners for joining us on another episode of Equity Speaks: Culturally Sustaining Stories in Education. Stay tuned for our next episode, where we will discuss culturally sustaining practices within institutional types.