

Race and Social Justice Initiatives

School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs

The School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs (SPPUA) and Northeastern University's Human Services Program are committed to taking action to advance social justice and racial justice. Our students, faculty, and staff continue to expand our efforts to transform our practices, processes, and policies to increase awareness of and proactively address racial disparities throughout our on-campus and off-campus communities. As an ethical and antiracist policy- focused educational organization, we are committed to elevating our collective and inclusive work on racial justice and social justice. This document reviews recent racial and social justice initiatives that are: (1) SPPUA school-wide and (2) university-wide contributions. This review is not comprehensive, but provides highlights and examples of the breadth of initiatives.

SPPUA School-wide Initiatives

SPPUA Racial Justice Working Group – The SPPUA Racial Justice Working Group, a core group of faculty and staff, meets bi-weekly to plan, design, strategize, and advance our collective efforts and check in on racial justice work across the university.

Promoting Principles of Anti-Oppressive Community Engagement – Through a collaborative co-creation process led by Rebecca Riccio, the Social Impact Lab co-produced the Principles of Anti-Oppressive Community Engagement for University Educators and Researchers (Riccio, Mecagni et al. 2022). This document has been circulated widely within and outside Northeastern. External appreciation, recognition, and application of these principles has been widespread.

Conference | Power to the People: Engaging Community Members in Research, Policy and Practice – In December 2021, the Dukakis Center and SPPUA convened an inclusive, public conference that brought together policymakers, public officials, and community members to discuss how we can elevate diverse community voices and shape policies that are beneficial to the widest range of urban residents and workers. Sessions included diverse voices focused on four interconnected issues: (1) Achieving Racial Equity and Social Justice, (2) Housing for Equity and Inclusion, (3) Reducing Inequality through Education and Workforce Development, and (4) Ensuring Climate Justice and Sustainability.

Open Classroom | Power to the People: Community Voices in Urban Decision-making – The Spring 2022 Open Classroom focused on racial and social justice by continuing the theme of the fall conference. Community partners and faculty partnered on weekly topics including the power and peril of university-community engagement, Boston's child care ecosystem, economic justice, participatory modeling, transforming rape culture, climate justice, and advancing equity and anti-oppressive practices in the nonprofit sector and philanthropy.

Capstone Reimagined – Professor of Practice, Kim Lucas, has taken on leadership of reimagining and restructuring the SPPUA capstone to more explicitly prepare all students with practical experience and perspective navigating the complex challenges of racial and social injustices in communities, organizations and throughout our society. Faculty from Mills College have joined this process so that we can also learn from their capstone program.

Publicly Engaged Scholar in Residence - February 17-18, 2022 The Social Impact Lab co-sponsored a 2-day campuswide program featuring Dr. Tania Williams, a nationally recognized scholar on service-learning and community engagement, who offered workshops on community-engaged teaching and research as a racial and social justice praxis.

BARI Conference – The May 2022 BARI Conference is focused on developing a civic research agenda which is a new way of conducting research that centers community needs from direct community input.

Racial Equity Workshop – In spring 2021, SPPUA partnered with Dr. Atyia Martin, All Aces, for a 3-part racial equity workshop series for faculty and staff. This workshop included a DIET Assessment (Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Transformation) to reflect on the organizational structures and individual experiences within the school, and the SPPUA community prioritized action steps that are being implemented.

SPPUA Advisory Committee – The SPPUA Advisory Committee is a diverse group. Two recent members of the SPPUA advisory committee, Dr. Atyia Martin, CEO and founder of All Aces, Inc., and Greg King, managing director of TSK Energy Solutions, are particularly well positioned to offer insights and guidance on integrating racial and social justice into all of the school's work. Among many things, they are interested in co-developing antiracist leadership trainings within SPPUA.

Hiring: Faculty and Staff Recruitment

Within every hire for faculty and staff within SPPUA, we prioritize how each candidate contributes to social and racial justice. Each of our new and incoming faculty and staff bring with them a commitment to social justice.

Curriculum Development

Faculty Workshop on Integrating Racial Justice into the Curriculum – Professors Matt Lee and Gavin Shatkin organized and ran a 2020 summer workshop to guide faculty on rethinking how to leverage their identity in the classroom, to facilitate challenging conversations, and expand their syllabus and curriculum to be more inclusive in terms of content, evaluation and teaching strategies.

New Required MUPP Course: Race, Justice and Belonging in Planning Practice. The MS in Urban Planning and Policy program has created a new 2 credit required core course titled Race, Justice, and Belonging in Planning Practice. The course will focus on key ideas in race and identity as they relate to urban planning, methods to engage communities in more just and equitable planning processes, and practices for building and leading diverse and inclusive planning organizations. This is currently in the final stages of approval, and the requirement will be effective for the incoming Fall 2022 class.

Fall 2020: Racial Literacy Course – Several of our faculty have played an instrumental role in the university-wide racial literacy course (Professors Ted Landsmark, Matt Lee, and Rebecca Riccio). Recordings from each session are available here.

Spring 2021: PPUA 5390 Seminar in Black Leadership (T/F, 9:50-11:30). Professor Ted Landsmark. This course enables students to conduct in-depth studies of transformative black leaders in a wide range of fields. Focuses on black leadership in the political arena as elected officials, leaders of pressure groups, leaders of protest organizations, cultural leaders, black nationalist organizations and feminist/womanist groups, and as advisers to political parties and presidential administrations.

Spring 2021: HUSV 2355 Race, Identity, Social Change, and Empowerment (T/F, 9:50-11:30; M/R, 11:45-1:25 [tentative]). Professor Matt Lee. This course examines racism, racial identity, and theories of social change and racial empowerment primarily within the U.S. context. Highlights different ways in which racism and racial privilege have been experienced by different racial communities, more specifically at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels.

2021: Inspiring Design: Creating Beautiful, Just, and Resilient Places in America (Myra Kraft Open Classroom, Wednesdays, 6 to 7 p.m.). Professor Ted Landsmark. COVID-19, the Black Lives Matter movement, and destructive fires and hurricanes in 2020 have illuminated the impact of increasing socioeconomic disparity, structural racism and climate change on our country. What is the role of design in confronting these issues?

Future New Course: PPUA 5390 ST Race, Energy Policy, and Energy Justice. Professor Shalanda Baker (currently on leave but plans for course to be taught when Professor Baker returns).

Student Engagement

21-Day Racial Justice Challenge – In 2021, Professors Matt Lee and Rebecca Riccio co-led this three-week event that challenged Human Services students and alumni to develop habits of integrating racial consciousness into their everyday lives.

Student Activist Open Classroom Session – The second session of the fall 2020 Myra Kraft Open Classroom featured six student activists who shared their experiences on the front lines of the converging crises looming over their generation in a panel facilitated by Professor Rebecca Riccio. The recording is available [here](#).

Northeastern Students4Giving – Over the past 2 years, the Social Impact Lab student-led program has awarded \$35,000 to local grassroots organizations responding to the impacts of the COVID pandemic and racial inequity in the communities adjacent to Northeastern. During the 2021-22 academic year, the organizations eligible for these grants were identified through a collaboration with the Mayor's Office for Resilience and Racial Equity.

Research to Practice

Voter Engagement Research – Professor Ted Landsmark has collaborated with colleagues from the Law School and Political Science on anti-voter suppression research work from North Carolina and Arizona into the Georgia Senate run-offs in January 2021.

New Faculty – SPPUA has welcomed multiple new faculty with research and practice focused on racial and social justice. Below are brief summaries of some of the new faculty.

Lily Song – Assistant Professor of Race, Social Justice, and the Built Environment. Her research and teaching demonstrate a deep commitment to understanding the complex relations between urban infrastructure and redevelopment initiatives, spatial inequality, and race, class, and gender politics in American cities and other decolonizing contexts. Her Boston-based initiatives include the Mattapan Mapping Project, a web-based interactive platform and participatory research initiative.

Cara Michell – Assistant Professor of Race, Social Justice, and the Built Environment, With a background in the arts, Professor Michell blends a professional practice in urban planning and design-based research on what it means to be a person of color in American urban spaces. She brings years of experience leading

complex community engagement processes that have directly resulted in capital public space investments within historically Black and Latinx neighborhoods.

Kaitlyn Alvarez Noli –Assistant Professor of Public Policy and HealthProfessor dedicates her research to inspiring change in communities that are disproportionately burdened by environmental harm. As an environmental justice scholar, Dr. Alvarez Noli confronts the ways local environmental disputes and public debate exclude the interests and concerns of marginalized groups and explores practices that can counteract this exclusion. Her current research examines the nuanced power relations in framing, coalition development, and advocacy involving farmworkers and intensive pesticide use.

Kim Lucas – Professor of Practice in Public Policy and Economic Justice. Professor Lucas is an academic-practitioner who is committed to community-driven civic research, in city-university collaborations, and leveraging our collective expertise for the social good.

Climate Justice Action Research - Transitioning from Urban Climate Action to Climate Justice–Prof. Joan Fitzgerald’s 2022 article in the Journal of the American Planning Association examines procedural justice in five US cities that updated their climate plans with the intention of prioritizing racial justice in all climate actions.

Racial and Economic Equity and Boston’s Climate Action - The Dukakis Center is conducting a biannual assessment of Boston’s climate action, with a particular focus on racial and economic equity. This project is funded by The Boston Foundation. The project team includes Joan Fitzgerald, Ted Landsmark, and Kaitlyn Alvarez-Noli. PhD students Johan Arango-Quiroga and Elijah Miller have been research assistants on the project during the spring semester.

Advancing Antiracist, Feminist Leadership – Director Jennie Stephens’ 2020 book *Diversifying Power: Why We Need Antiracist, Feminist Leadership on Climate and Energy* provides inspiring examples of antiracist, feminist leadership linking climate and energy with economic justice, housing justice, health and transit equity. The foreword of the book was written by Professor Ted Landsmark.

Urban Affairs Association (UAA) – SPPUA holds an institutional membership with UAA, and until April 2022, Professor Thomas Vicino was the chair of the Board and president of the UAA. For half a century, UAA has had a deep commitment to social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some recent activities include:

- Issued two formal statements (here and here) about these commitments (to racial and ethnic justice, in particular), and then issued a subsequent statement on concrete, action items to fulfill these commitments, including a community survey.
- The association recently launched a second, peer-reviewed journal, *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity and the City*, along side its flagship journal, *The Journal of Urban Affairs*.
- Developed programming on a monthly basis to engage the membership with webinars, panels, and conversations to support professional development for colleagues during the global pandemic, with a particular focus on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. These resources are open to our community and provide excellent supports for key constituencies.

University-wide Contributions

Campus Climate Survey – Professor Matt Lee has been a key contributor to the committee that analyzed the campus climate survey data. Although the survey results have not yet been released as of end of April 2022, the potential for impact with this effort is large.

Resisting Anti-Asian Violence - Prof. Matt Lee from Human Services, and members of the Steering Committee of the Asian Faculty Staff (AFS) organization at Northeastern University hosted the “Honoring Atlanta Victims and Uplifting APIDA Voices amidst Anti-Asian Violence” memorial and community meeting event on March 31, 2022, at the Asian American Center Annex. For more information on the work of the Asian Faculty Staff affinity group, please visit: <https://provost.northeastern.edu/odei/affinity/asian-faculty-staff/>.

Faculty Senate Committee on Climate Justice Action – Jennie Stephens co-chaired the 2021- 2022 faculty senate committee on climate justice and contributed to the formation of Northeastern’s new Hub for Climate Justice and Sustainability. The goal of this work is to reframe sustainability and climate action in terms of social and racial justice.

NUPD Community Advisory Board – Professors Rebecca Riccio and Shalanda Baker (before she went on leave) served on the Northeastern Police Department Community Advisory Board, which has been established to review and make recommendations on NUPD policies and protocols, particularly as they relate to issues of racial equity.

Essential Conversations – Together with the ADVANCE Office, Professor Rebecca Riccio co- created and piloted a workshop series for faculty to develop facilitation skills oriented toward conversations about race, identity, and power. Plans to expand the scale of this offering are under development.

Presidential Council for Diversity and Inclusion – Professor Ted Landsmark is a member of this group focused on expanding the impact of university-wide efforts.

Faculty Senate - Senate Agenda Committee – Professor Ted Landsmark is a member of the Senate Agenda Committee providing leadership on issues of social and racial justice through our faculty governance process.

Humanities Faculty of Color Conference – March 2021. Professor Ted Landsmark was part of the organizing group to plan this Mellon Foundation-funded on-line conference for humanities faculty of color throughout the region, sponsored by the New England Humanities Council and the CSSH Humanities Center.

Voter Engagement Among Students – Professor Landsmark has co-chaired the University’s Voter Engagement working group and Professor Linda Kowalcky has also contributed. This work has resulted in a dramatic increase in student voting participation. Northeastern recently received a silver seal for our high student voting rates from the ALL In Campus Democracy Challenge. In the 2020 election (69% -our highest turnout to date and up from 48% in 2012 and 58% in 2016). We are continuing the effort to get Joseph Aoun to sign the President’s Commitment to Full Student Voting.

Expanding Our Impact

As SPPUA strives to expand our collective impact on race and social justice in the 2022-2023 academic year and beyond. As our community welcomes our new Director in summer 2022, we are open to innovative ideas and new forms of community engagement to further advance racial and social justice in everything we do.

References

Riccio, R., G. Mecagni and B. Berkey (2022). Principles of Anti-Oppressive Community Engagement for University Educators and Researchers. Boston, MA, Social Impact Lab, Northeastern University.

This document was co-developed by Northeastern University's School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs Racial Justice Working Group including Joan Fitzgerald, Ted Landsmark, Matt Lee, Rebecca Riccio, Gavin Shatkin, Jennie Stephens, and Hoai Quach.