

Thematic Analysis of CODRE Campus-Wide Listening Session #3

Topic: “The Impact of Racism and Discrimination on Mental Health”

Racism and Trauma

How UofL is perceived internally when racism happens on campus or in the world

- UofL is great on sending out an email communication solidarity statement supporting anti-racism
- They talk a big game but ... talk is cheap

The experience of racism

- You question your encounters, and it puts you in a mindset that you start questioning everything. It disturbs your confidence and puts you in an anxious mood, kind of paranoid.
- Anxiety about your lived experience especially in the case of intersectionality
- Feeling of hopelessness, events in the world today make it feel like this will never end
- Feeling of not belonging anxiety from Asian hate. International students don't want to speak up/out for fear of becoming a target. You can't be authentically who you are. What you see in the mirror conflicts with who you feel you are.
- I feel that if I minimize my identity I won't be targeted
- I don't feel safe. The hatred and racism is real, while I pay attention to my safety.

How the trauma of racism affects job performance at UofL

- Feeling of being alone in your own office but working from home has also been hard to focus with the problems going on in the world. Struggling with thoughts of your family's safety
- I had to work in spite of my experiences. Institutional values minimize my experience. You cannot bring your emotions and your whole self to work
- Hard to get to the expected level when you are emotionally tired. We are expected to come present every day and to leave our emotions at the door.
- With COVID and the riots mentally I had too much on my plate. Some work & reports just didn't feel as important when people are literally dying.
- The past few weeks have been hard “my people” are dying but people don't seem to care. People in my office are just business as usual. The expectation of professionalism/ separating personal from professional is difficult.
- Supervisors need to know we are not robots, we are emotional. But they expect us to leave our emotions at the door. It is draining and I am drowning in the mental fatigue. People may notice me distancing myself and label me as anti-social, or if a woman they say she must be on her period. People should not be the one to judge what is acceptable behavior when we are experiencing racial discrimination and mental fatigue.

Reducing Trauma, Improving Mental Health

What we have learned about our own mental health this past year

- It is okay to be vulnerable and tired. Let other people know what you are going through in order to protect yourself mentally
- Step back and take time off from work (vacation/sick days) when needed. A staycation is a mental vacation You have earned your vacation days use them when you need them
- Use your anger for good. Channel your frustrations from racism by helping to write better anti-racist policies in your departments
- Turn your passions into action. (example starting an Asian ERG)
- Suggestion, a self-care cardinal fair in the fall. A mental health wellness fair for students, perhaps partner with HR

Taking care of your mental health

- BIPOC find it hard to take care of ourselves
- Racism and mental health we tend to take care of others and not ourselves, especially women of color.
- I find strength by immersing myself in my culture and surrounding myself with people like me
- Friends, family, colleagues, mentors can help but there is a feeling of being tired of being black
- Being in spaces and with people that identify with me. Teaching here is a different experience from being in a HBCU
- I stop watching the news & some movies that trigger my feelings of mental stress
- Journaling helps me get thoughts out of my head
- Finding escape in black twitter sites and other black only spaces, BFSAs where I can talk and use black slang & be myself where others can relate to what I am saying
- Shopping at black owned businesses
- Getting off social media
- A variety of activities to help relaxation (gaming, baking, art, movies, yoga etc)

What can UofL do better on racism & mental health

- Less emails more action. We need more follow-up. Avoid performative actions.
- Improve the mechanism for reporting and measure the incidents of bias & racism
- Need transparency on actions that are taken to reach solutions
- More work from upper management, less on the backs of oppressed people
- Clean house, don't be shy about kicking racist people out
- White people need to hold white people accountable
- More accountability to the Cardinal Principles. How will CARA measure when people are not living up to the cardinal principals?
- Mental health and wellness breaks. 30 minutes outside of the regular lunch breaks given. Build in more flexibility.
- Have more designated spaces for getting out what needs to be said like the "CODRE Campus-Wide Listening Sessions".
- Supporting professors who are minorities to get federal grants and be promoted through the ranks. It is disheartening to see mostly white faculty get big grants to work in communities of color