



My dear colleagues,

Sending empathy, positive thoughts, and shared concerns for the many challenges and crises we are facing. July has been hot, humid, and beautiful as New York summers tend to be. And it has been crowded with endings, demands, and the ever-present need to distance and protect ourselves, strangers, and loved ones. Five months of living into the unknown. The smallest moments of joy seem so much more valuable.

Half a year ago, summer might have promised us relief from work, time to restore ourselves and to reconnect with those we love. 2020, in July, continues to confront us with shock, grief, loss, fear, and deprivation. Suffering has not touched us equally. Injustice has persisted in tearing a longer and more distant gap between privilege and its absence. And we persist in our commitments to create and share knowledge as means of addressing this imbalance, this inequitable, imperfect world.

This summer, with so much grief, violence, and violation infused through quarantine and social distance, many of us, from many different positionalities, are taking racial justice and equity as our objectives in our personal and professional lives. We are individually and collectively educating ourselves to hear and respond to our students' voices and needs. We are reflecting on our courses and teaching with questions of representative content, authors, and methods. We are finding those places of discomfort that can indicate a gap or friction in need of adjustment.

In these explorations, I want to recommend that we keep our awareness of our privileges directly related to our teaching. There is privilege in having had an education that prepared us for professional lives, in particular a college or university education, as many people living in this country do not have access to this kind of learning and the opportunities it creates. There is privilege in being employed, even underemployed, in a country with unemployment figures far higher than reported, with hunger and homelessness widespread. There is privilege in the authority we are given over students' grades and their presence in our classes. There is privilege in students' perception of the imbalance of power we own when they enter our classes and entrust us with their professional futures. If we are not uncomfortable, at minimum, with these privileges, we cannot address racial justice in our teaching and cannot hear and see our students in their authentic questions and learning. Our students see us as far less complex beings than we are; we are responsible for seeing ourselves through their eyes even as we wrestle with understanding and transforming ourselves in our own identifications.

It is imperative that we read, listen, and think with the resources and leadership on racial justice easily within our reach through college, university, and wider sources. At the same time, we can catalyze our understanding of what our teaching and courses lack or do ineffectively through careful self-questioning and reflection. With this in mind, I encourage the following areas as places to begin rethinking the presence of racial justice in our courses:

- Who are the authors and experts of the course content?
- What are included and excluded in course content?
- How are content and skills presented and with what expectations?
- What aren't students responding to as expected?
- What aren't students regularly succeeding at?
- Are there processes that feel as though a step or more is missing?
- Have there been comments from students that are surprising and seem at odds with what's been offered?

All of these are likely to have questions of racial justice as a context that for many of us was not primary when designing our courses. For those that have embraced a racial justice context, the reflection recommended here may lie in working even more closely with culturally responsive and accessible teaching and learning and in challenging students to transfer their experiences in these classes to others. We can encourage sharing of practices and perspectives not only across our collegiality but also across our student communities.

Please remember that now more than ever, we must hold ourselves accountable to our students as well as our disciplines. We must hold our courses accountable because our students hold their education accountable to their futures. In the midst of this accountability, we find greater equity, greater justice, and greater possibilities for living and sharing joyful, meaningful lives.

Thank you. My deepest sympathies to those who are bearing the losses of loved ones. Sending trust and positive thoughts to those who have lost work or are feeling overwhelmed with challenges. Please be as safe and well as you can.

Sincerely,

Gina

Recommended Resources for Teaching and Learning Racial Justice

<https://www.jjay.cuny.edu/tlc-teaching-resources>

Next Week: TLC Open Conversation

Racial Justice and Our Students: How Do I Identify and Address Racial Justice Gaps in My Teaching?
Tuesday, July 21, 2-3 pm

Click [here](#) to register

Save the Dates!

Define, Refine, and Shine core teaching workshops (week of August 10-15, details TBA)

In our 4th summer of this series, we are offering virtual workshops on the following topics:

- **Inclusive Syllabus Design**
- **Culturally Responsive Classroom Engagement**
- **Equity and Assessment throughout the Term**

Details and registration links coming soon!

Faculty Resilience Week workshops (week of August 18-20)

Please join us for our 1st Faculty Resilience Week!

Descriptions and registration links coming soon.

Tuesday, August 18, (time TBA)

Building Resilience in Times of Adversity with Gabrielle Salfati, Psychology

Wednesday, August 19, 1-3 pm

Aligning Self-Care with Resilience with Gina Rae Foster, Teaching & Learning Center

Thursday, August 20, 1-2:30 pm

Embracing Our Emotions to Manage Stress with Katherine Stavrianopoulos, Counseling & Human Services

Faculty Development Day

Tuesday, August 25, 9 am-3 pm

- 15 faculty and staff-led panels, workshops, and presentations during breakout sessions
- Social opportunities to meet fresh faces and reconnect with friends
- College-wide discussion focusing on "The Inclusive Syllabus: Not the End, but the Beginning of Journey towards Inclusivity"

Registration and program available soon!

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[Lyric Dwelling: the Art and Ethics of Invitation and Occupation](#)

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[Beautiful Laceration](#)