

Let's Talk! - Transformative Change & Radical Vulnerability

The Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) started the Let's Talk! series on June 2, 2020 with the topic "A Discussion on the American Subjugation of the Black Community." Panelists were Montgomery College faculty members Dr. Andrae Brown, Psychology and Captain Sonia Pruitt, Criminal Justice. The series was organically organized in response to the killing of George Floyd. The Black Lives Matter movement was thrust to the forefront of the national discourse through the nationwide protests around police brutality and the subjugation of black lives that have been unceasing since George Floyd's death.

The Office of Equity and Inclusion pivoted quickly to respond to the many questions that arose during the first Let's Talk!. Participants asked for more opportunities to talk about what the black community is experiencing now and how to be an ally and provide safe spaces to communicate freely but respectfully.

The Let's Talk! – Part 2, on the topic of "What's Up with 'Karen' Memes," featured Montgomery College faculty members Dr. Andrae Brown, Psychology; Dr. Satarupa Das, Economics; Professor Emerald Jones, Sociology; Dr. Naliyah Kaya, Sociology; Dr. Shah Mehrabi, Economics; Captain Sonia Pruitt, Criminal Justice; Dr. Frances Raphael-Howell, Psychology; and Professor Karl Smith, History and Political Science, who shared their perspectives on the following questions:

1. What's up with "Karen" memes?
2. How is overt vs. covert white supremacy demonstrated?
3. Why is there a call to "defund the police?"
4. How can we support community resource investment as cities like Minneapolis turn toward abolishing their police systems?

Let's Talk! – Part 3 focused on "Say HER Name," #sayhername, bringing attention to the black women who have been victims of racial violence and oppression. Dr. DeRionne Pollard, College president, joined this last conversation and shared her own perspective and experiences, introducing radical vulnerability as a foundation for being present and mindful during discussions on race and justice.

With nearly 700 participants attending the Let's Talk! series, it became apparent that the open conversations on white privilege, white supremacy, racism, and police brutality were events just waiting to happen. Every discussion was transparent, raw, and filled with empathy and kindness. Radical vulnerability was seen and heard in every discussion. Participants cried, laughed, and were heard at a time when the black community at MC and in the wider Montgomery County community need a safe space in which they can participate and be heard.

As a result of the feedback received by the Office of Equity and Inclusion, the Let's Talk! series will continue through the FY 21 Fiscal Year.

Our next Let's Talk! event, on September 15, 2020, "Hate Speech/Free Speech," will feature students and their perspective.