

"Seeing" Latinx Students: Efforts to Journey Beyond Color-Blind Services

The J. Eugene Smith Library at Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) is on a journey to be anti-racist. One strategy is to be color-conscious instead of color-blind. We want to "see" differences, acknowledge and celebrate assets/strengths, and provide empowering services. We do not want to ignore or deny the realities of structural racism in the lives of BIPOC students. Our first effort is to "see" our Latinx students!

What is Racial Color-Blindness?

It is Whites saying they don't see color. People may have good intentions when they say this. But it actually is harmful and racist. It denies the real existence of disparities that exist for BIPOC. Not "seeing" or ignoring differences creates a way for privileged people to deny uncomfortable racial and ethnic differences and realities. To be anti-racist, we have to celebrate differences and acknowledge them and not deny the reality of structural racism in the US. ²

What is anti-racism? It is the practice of actively identifying and opposing racism. ¹

What is implicit bias? Attitudes that are largely unconscious but nevertheless influence behavior. ³

What is Latinx? A gender-neutral racial-ethnic term for Latino/a peoples of Central American, South American, and Caribbean heritage. ⁴

What is BIPOC? It stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

Color-Conscious!
"Seeing" Latinx

2020-2024

Not Color-Blind!
"Seeing"
differences

2024 and
beyond

See
outreach



See survey
questions



See partial
literature
review



COLOR-CONSCIOUS ACTION STEPS FOR LATINX STUDENTS:

1. 2020-present – building relationship with OLAS Club through emails, blog, and in person visits to meetings
2. 2021-present – curating book lists and exhibits; performing diversity audits; keeping abreast of literature on Latinx in higher education and Latinx in academic libraries
3. 2022 – do online survey; collect and analyze feedback; reflect, report and share with campus community
4. 2023 – act on survey results by implementing changes and innovations
5. 2024 – assess outcomes and impacts of the changes and innovations; and publish my research

Notes:

1. verywellmind, *What is Anti-Racism?*, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-anti-racism-5071426>
2. YWCA, West Central Michigan, *Colorblindness*, <https://www.ywcawcmi.org/our-services/prevention-and-empowerment/prevention/socialnorms/colorblindness/>
3. National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University, *Two Types of Bias*, <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/bias/module-3/1.php>
4. Keels, M. (2019), *Campus Counterspaces*, 7

References:

- Asare, M. (2017) Debunking the myth of color blindness in a racist society, *The Bowdoin Orient*, <https://bowdoinorient.com/2017/04/13/debunking-the-myth-of-color-blindness-in-a-racist-society/>
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (4th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Burke, M. A. (2017). Colorblind Racism: Identities, Ideologies, and Shifting Subjectivities. *Sociological Perspectives*, 60(5), 857–865. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121417723827>
- Keels, M. (2019) *Campus Counterspaces*, Cornell University Press
- Neville, H., Gallardo, M., et al. (2016) Introduction: Has the United States really moved beyond race?, in *The Myth of Racial Color Blindness*, American Psychological Association, 3-21
- Williams, M. December 27, 2011. "Colorblind Ideology Is a Form of Racism" *Psychology Today*, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/201112/colorblind-ideology-is-form-racism>

NOT Color-Blind, Anti-Racist Actions:

Follow the same action steps previously used for Latinx students for each BIPOC student group:

- Black/African-American students
- Asian & Pacific Islander students
- Native American & Alaska Native students

Color-Blind!
"Seeing"
no differences

Before
2020

Color-Blind, Racist Actions: Services and outreach targeted to all, without acknowledging any differences, treating students of color the same as White students (see definition above)

Background:

- 20% of all college students in US are Latinx, Sep. 2020 (unidosus.org)
- 12.5% (519) Latinx students enrolled, Fall 2021, at ECSU
- 3 dedicated Latinx clubs at ECSU: OLAS (Organization of Latin American Students), Freedom at Eastern (for DACA students), and LatinX Dance Sensation