



MEMORANDUM

TO: Administrative Professional Advisory Council
FROM: Jenny Glass, APAC DEI Committee Member
RE: Black History Month – Get Curious
DATE: February 2, 2023

After 30 years working in university sciences, it still surprises me how often I get nuance and information from opportunities provided by WSU. Many of these changes in understanding or perspective are things I never wondered about on my own. For example, yesterday while working, I was listening in the background to a presentation from the WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine's 2023 Health Justice and Belonging Conference when a question caught my attention. The presenter, Edwin Lindo, UW bioethics faculty asked (paraphrased) 'Why race and ethnicity are included on a list of risk factors for Type II diabetes, given that nothing about the visual appearance or ancestry of a person contributes to disease development? And why are social and economic risk factors, such as lack of nutritious food options from living in a food desert or not having the resources to cook/store food, or lack of access to affordable preventative medicine, or being unable to access recreational activities/facilities that promote exercise, excluded from the list?' Despite living/parenting in an ethnically and economically diverse part of Tacoma, I had never considered these questions. An "Ah ha" moment for sure.

So, my suggestion for observing this Black History Month at WSU is to "Get Curious!!"- not just about history but about the society and culture and institutions that have been created from all history.

If you hear a racist comment or inaccurate statement at WSU or in professional setting, or anywhere, stop the conversation, and then ask, "Why did you say that?" and listen if they respond, and then use one of the phrases to let them know that this talk was not okay. I try to keep a few stock phrases on the ready ("Your comment hurts me because... "or "What you said is not aligned with WSU values." or just a plain "OUCH!")

If you encounter someone with beliefs not aligned with you own, instead of beginning by arguing, first try asking "What lived experiences have led you to this opinion/belief?"

And for the times you encounter racist, biased, discriminatory thought or belief within yourself: pause, breath, remind yourself that you are always learning, and you can try to do better in the future.

Best wishes on the journey!

Jenny Glass
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