



# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

NEWSLETTER

Early Fall  
2023



Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month grew out of the Civil Rights Movement as National Hispanic Heritage *Week*, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on September 17, 1968. This celebration of the history, culture, achievements, and contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans began on September 15<sup>th</sup> and ended on September 21<sup>st</sup>. This particular week was chosen because it coincided with the independence anniversaries of several Latin American countries: September 15<sup>th</sup> for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua; September 16<sup>th</sup> for Mexico; September 18<sup>th</sup> for Chile; and September 21<sup>st</sup> for Belize. In 1988, President Ronald Regan extended the celebration from a week to a full month: September 15<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Celebrated in various ways across the United State, Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month is an opportunity for all of us to engage in activities and events that highlight the history, achievements, contributions, and rich cultural diversity of Hispanic and Latino Americans. Hispanic and Latino communities across the country organize festivals, gatherings, and parades open to everyone that feature traditional music, dance, food, and art. Cities host a wide range of related cultural events, including art and history exhibits, live music and dance performances, and culinary events that shine a spotlight on the rich traditions of Hispanic and Latino cultures. Museums, art galleries, bookstores, libraries, government agencies, and media outlets often feature books, films, documentaries, and articles that highlight the contributions and experiences of Hispanic and Latino Americans. Many K-12 schools, colleges, and universities promote cross-cultural understanding by organizing educational programs, lectures, and workshops that focus on Hispanic and Latino history, culture, contributions, and achievements. Many institutions also recognize and honor the specific achievements of prominent Hispanic and Latino figures in various fields, including the arts, business, politics, science, and sports.

Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month serves as an important reminder of the diversity that enriches American society and the contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans to the nation's history, culture, economy, and social fabric. It celebrates diversity, encourages dialogue about equity, fosters inclusivity, and promotes a deeper understanding of Hispanic and Latino heritage. The DEI Committee look forward to celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month with all of you.

## A Word from the Accessibility Office

\*Since accessibility is essential to providing equity and enhancing inclusivity, a portion of each DEI newsletter will provide space for the Accessibility Office to offer information or ideas for how we can better serve our students and our community.

### 1. How do I know if a student should receive accommodations?

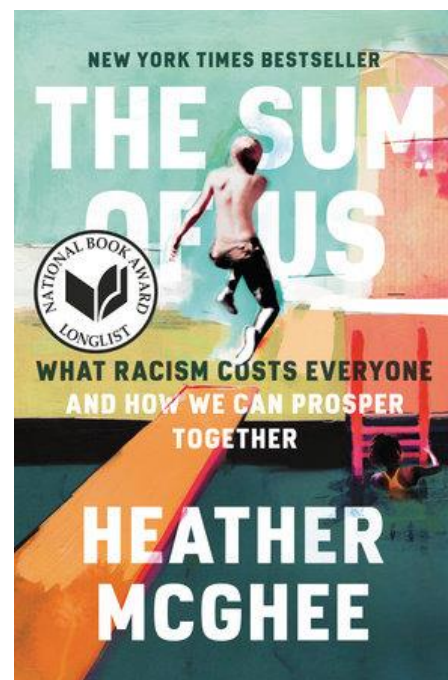
If a student is registered with the Access Office, you will receive a Letter of Accommodation either via email from the student or hand-carried by them. Students are instructed to give you their Letters of Accommodation as soon as they receive them, and most of them will send them at the beginning of each semester. But since students can register for services at any point in the semester, you may receive additional letters throughout the semester.

### 2. I feel that a certain accommodation is not appropriate. Do I have to provide it?

Please always feel free to contact the Access Office with any concerns or questions you may have regarding student accommodations. Accommodations are put in place to give students equal access to the course, but these accommodations cannot interfere with fundamental core components of the course. If you feel that an accommodation may indeed interfere with a fundamental core component of your course, let us know as soon as possible so that we can have a discussion about it. (This is not legally something you can decide on your own.) We may decide together on an alternative accommodation that provides the same access without compromising the fundamental core components of the course, or we may decide that the accommodation does not interfere with any fundamental core components of the course. In the meantime, yes, you absolutely must provide the accommodation to the student.

## DEI Bookshelf

Heather McGhee's *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* was released in February 2021, but I just had the opportunity to read it this past summer. It is a brilliant book. In it, McGhee delivers a sobering diagnosis of race relations in America and articulates a clear-eyed path forward. McGhee begins her analysis with what she labels the "zero-sum paradigm": the pervasive mindset among many white Americans that progress for people of color must come at white people's expense. This false narrative has led to what McGhee calls "drained-pool politics." The term stems from the history of municipalities across the country that, when ordered to desegregate public pools, chose instead to close them—thus denying a public good for white people and people of color alike. One of those pools was the Fairground Park pool—the largest public pool in the United States when it closed—right down the road in St. Louis. "The narrative that White people should see the well-being of people of color as a threat to their own is one of the most powerful subterranean stories in America," McGhee declares. "Until we destroy the idea, opponents of progress can always unearth it, and use it to block any collective action that benefits us all." McGhee draws on her background in economic and social policy to offer a powerful vision for a way forward—for all of us. She musters evidence from history, economics, and sociology to offer compelling quantitative data in support of what she dubs "solidarity dividends"—the mutual benefits all Americans can realize by working together.



Court Montgomery

# Definition Dispatches

## **Hispanic and Latino: Ancient Origins**

- Both *Hispanic* and *Latino* came into use in the U.S. in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by way of the ancient world.
- Referring to languages of Latin descent (e.g. Spanish, Portuguese, Italian) as *Romance* languages comes from *Rome* and the Romans conquering many of the lands where those languages are spoken.
- Rome was at the heart of *Latium* in what is today central and western Italy; hence, *Latin*.
- Due to Spanish and Portuguese colonization, most peoples throughout Central and South America speak Spanish, Portuguese, or both.
- Romans called the province that is now modern-day Spain *Hispania*. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term *Hispano* was used in the United States to describe people of Spanish descent who had settled in the Southwest in the days before American annexation; *Hispanic* was adopted shortly thereafter.
- *Latino*, a clipping of the word *latinoamericano* (“Latin American”) was coined just as a pan-national, pan-ethnic movement of independence spread in Latin America in the 1850s.

## **Early Complications: The U.S. Census**

- When the U.S. Census Bureau began classifying Americans of Latin descent, they counted them as part of [the same “Other” category](#) that had been used for Irish Americans, Italian Americans, etc. [Activists pointed](#) to the disparity in poverty rates between the former and latter groups and lobbied for the bureau to collect data that would help address the issue.
- Things became only [marginally better in 1930](#), when—for one time only—census takers used the term catchall “Mexican” for anyone that reported being of Latin descent.

## **A Growing Debate**

- By the time the Johnson administration launched Hispanic Heritage Week in 1968, there was already widespread debate within government agencies regarding what term to use.
- It wasn’t until the 1970 census that Americans were asked to identify as “Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, Other Spanish, or No, none of these.”
- This addition, however, was itself confusing, and activists pointed out that Americans of Latin descent were almost certainly being undercounted.
- [Latinos in the Nixon and Ford administrations](#) widely supported adopting the term *Hispanic* to try to clarify the Census question, and so it was added to the 1980 Census.

## **Continued Controversy**

- Neither the use of *Hispanic* nor *Latino* has ever been without controversy, largely because of the history of colonization and the lack of complete inclusion each term carries with it.
- *Hispanic* is itself problematic, too, because its history points to those of Spanish descent alone rather than including those who descend from Portuguese and other ethnic groups but still think of themselves as part of Latin America. For example, the Census Bureau specifies that *Hispanic* and *Latino* refer only to those “of Spanish culture or origin” thus leaving out those of Brazilian descent.
- There have been additions and alternatives offered, such as *Latina* to account for gender, and the even more recent *Latinx* to also include non-binary people.
- Other terms like *Chicano/a/x* are used specifically for Americans of Mexican descent, *Boricuas* for those of Puerto Rican descent, *Afro-Latino* for those of African descent living in or with a connection to Latin America, and *Mestizo* for those of mixed indigenous and European descent.

As we celebrate what is still officially known as National Hispanic Heritage Month, we continue to listen and contribute to the debate over what words mean, who they include, and who they might also exclude.

## What DEI Means to Me

I am a cis heterosexual male who has benefited from white privilege. If you dig a little deeper, I have a multiracial background. I grew up the son of two women—feminist lesbians whose friends spanned the entire LGBTQIA+ spectrum. My moms were both factory workers, also, so I grew up working-class. My birth mother's own surrogate mother was her high school English teacher who was Jewish. From her I learned at an early age about antisemitism and the Holocaust. That's the milieu in which I grew up. Before I had ever heard words like *diversity* and *intersectionality*, I experienced them every day.

I first encountered those words when I matriculated to Mizzou, and my experiences with DEI continued to expand. My first three supervisors there were gay men. The last of them, Dean Andersen, is my best friend to this day. I met Dean when he was a residence hall coordinator and I was a community advisor (think resident assistant) in another dorm, Hillcrest Hall on the Stephens College campus, which housed freshman overflow from Mizzou that semester. I was doing educational programming for my dorm, and I asked him to come speak about homophobia. A few months later, he hired me to work for him in Laws Hall. I was the CA for the International Experience floor; in each room an international student was paired with an American student. We had folks from all over the world living together and learning from one another. It was about that same time that I was diagnosed with a learning disability, and I quickly became all too familiar with ableism.

Those experiences taught me a few things. First and foremost, I learned that my central role vis-à-vis DEI is to be an ally to those who have been marginalized and oppressed and to speak up when needed. Just one example: I share with my Comp I students an example of a self-expressive essay that I wrote about growing up with two moms. I have lost count of how many students have told me that my having read my essay aloud in class made them feel safe—that they belonged.

Just as importantly as speaking out, I learned that oftentimes the best thing that I can do to promote DEI is to shut up and listen. I believe that everyone—absolutely everyone—has something that makes them unique, which means that everyone counts when it comes to diversity; everyone is—or should be—in fact, included. DEI isn't a zero-sum game. We're in this together.

Growing up with so many people with such diverse backgrounds, I also learned the importance of *empathy*. I think that empathy is crucial to progress and to preserving our great democratic experiment. Anyone who knows me well knows that while composition classes are my bread and butter, my true passion lies in the electives that I am lucky enough to teach—literature, film studies, mythology. One thing they have in common is an emphasis on storytelling. I tell the students that, to me, storytelling is one of the best vehicles for empathy. We read and/or watch stories about people that are very different than us. We walk in their shoes. We experience what they experience, if only for a moment. Ideally, we understand each other a little bit better as a result.

The DEI Committee wants to invite anyone interested to use this space that we have reserved each newsletter to hear *your* stories—about what DEI means to you.

*Court Montgomery*

## From the Editors

Welcome to our first issue as editors of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee newsletter. We gladly accepted this responsibility because we have very specific goals we would like to accomplish with this newsletter: certain ideas we have about how to make it most effective as a vector for sharing ideas and providing news in the DEI arena. Moreover, we thought it might be valuable to make those goals explicit to you, our readers, in the expectation that knowing why we are making specific choices and knowing what to expect will make readers look forward to each new installment, easily digest the ideas provided, and, ideally, encourage readers to submit their own ideas or words to the newsletter.

First, we plan to standardize the newsletter. This means that readers will see very similar sections in successive newsletters. We might change these or evolve them over time as needs and feedback necessitate, but we believe it is useful for readers to know what to expect in each newsletter. Perhaps readers find one specific section interesting, useful, or encouraging; if so, they can look forward to what that section will have to say to them each time the newsletter arrives in their inbox.

Second, we have decided to publish the newsletter every other month instead of every month. As we often tell our writing students, sometimes less is more, and we'd prefer to use the time to focus on particularly helpful and engaging material.

Third, and most importantly, we'd like to combat the notion that "DEI isn't about me." DEI is about all of us, and we'd like to use the newsletter to prove that to you. To reach that goal, we will be including a "What DEI means to Me" section in each newsletter. Ideally, these will come from all of you, and you should consider this the first, but certainly not the last, solicitation from us to all of you for you to compose a brief (or lengthy depending on your particular verbosity) article explaining the ways you've considered or encountered ideas about diversity, equity, or inclusion. We'd like to see articles from a diverse range of voices (although we'll write them all if we have to) showing that we are all stakeholders in making MACC a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community. Email the editors at the addresses below to let them know if you are interested in writing one of these articles. Associate Professor Court Montgomery has written the first of these for us. Feel free to use his as inspiration or to branch off in your own direction: celebrate your voice. Submissions for any article in the newsletter, questions, or feedback can be sent to either [allens@macc.edu](mailto:allens@macc.edu) or [courtm@macc.edu](mailto:courtm@macc.edu). We look forward to hearing from you.

*Allen Shepard and Court Montgomery*

## Take a Look, the DEI Committee Is Launching a Book Club

The DEI Committee has had tentative discussions about launching a DEI Book Club, and we're putting out the call for anyone interested in joining. If you are interested, please send an email to DEI Committee chairs Allen Shepard ([allens@macc.edu](mailto:allens@macc.edu)), Court Montgomery ([courtm@macc.edu](mailto:courtm@macc.edu)), or Rita Wheeler ([ritaw@macc.edu](mailto:ritaw@macc.edu)) and please send, too, any nominations for books that would be relevant to diversity, equity, and inclusion. If there is enough folks interested to move forward, we will send out more information about the book selection, scheduling (probably for next semester), etc., as we put together the details on our end. Thank you.