

The School of Family Life's Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, and Unity in Higher Education at Brigham Young University



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We are committed to creating an inclusive¹ environment that provides all the opportunity to thrive in the School of Family Life regardless of their background. We support the [BYU administration](#) and [FHSS](#) leadership speaking out against bigotry and discrimination on campus. We in the School of Family Life are seeking ways to help students, faculty, and staff across races, sexes, sexual orientations, and other identities.² As children of God³, we believe we can come together as a strong, unified human family, appreciating the diverse gifts granted to us by our Heavenly Parents and fulfilling the greatest mandates given to us by our Savior: “To love God” with all we are (Luke 10: 27) and “to love thy neighbor as thyself.” Ultimately, we seek to become “one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27-28).

We recognize that rooting out racism⁴, building bridges of understanding⁵ and cooperation⁶, and helping everyone feel welcome on campus will require institutional⁷ and individual⁸ change. We support the prophetic call to repentance: “The Creator of us all calls on each of us to abandon attitudes of prejudice against any group of God’s children. Any of us who has prejudice toward another race needs to repent!”⁹

We further support the formation of the [BYU Race, Equity, and Belonging Committee](#). We agree with the committee’s statement that “rooting out racism, healing its wounds, and building bridges of understanding is the responsibility of every member of the BYU community.” In the School of Family Life, “[w]e can achieve greater unity as we foster an atmosphere of inclusion and respect for diversity”¹⁰ and we acknowledge that we can do better than we are doing.¹¹ Thus, we commit to engaging in that work. We explicitly state that “We condemn racism by any group toward any other group,” and “Black lives matter! That is an eternal truth all reasonable people should support.”¹² Racism in any form is wrong and the School of Family Life will address it. As scholars and educational leaders invested in the betterment of families worldwide, we acknowledge the devastating multigenerational effects of racism¹³ and systemic discrimination¹⁴ and commit to “review processes, laws, and organizational attitudes regarding racism and root them out once and for all.”¹⁵ Below are some ways in which we will root out racism, build bridges of understanding, and help everyone feel welcome in the School of Family Life.¹⁶

Institutional Ways

1. Maintain a diversity, inclusion, and unity committee in the School of Family Life to discuss and steer school plans for increasing diversity¹⁷ and inclusion in the School.
2. Continue to require SFL 354: Cross-Cultural Families and Human Development for HDFS majors, SC ED 353: Multicultural Education for Secondary Students for FCSE majors, and MFHD 695r: Race/Ethnicity & Multicultural Families for MFT students. Prioritize adding similar content¹⁸ to existing courses which encourage awareness, inclusion, unity, and diversity within our undergraduate and graduate programs to help students become aware of and sensitive to: differences across individuals, families, and groups; disadvantages faced by individuals, families, and groups; and the variability that exists within individuals, families, and groups.
3. Encourage¹⁹, financially support, and conduct research including and focusing on diverse families.

4. Identify and recruit diverse faculty to teach in the School of Family Life.
5. Identify and actively recruit a more diverse student body.
6. Examine our policies and practices in the School to actively root out racism. As we seek to become a more inclusive, unified, and diverse program, we will continue to identify racism, understand its consequences, and actively dismantle it. This will include educating ourselves so that we may honestly acknowledge racism and other forms of bigotry where they exist or have existed in our own religious community.
7. Leverage the SFLSA so students in the School will have social opportunities to meet each other in a way that will help them increase exposure and proximity to diverse groups so that SFL students will increase inclusion and build unity.

We believe that rooting out racism and growing in unity will ultimately require individuals to change their hearts through Christ. The list below is not exhaustive but offers a few individual ways that each of us may work toward this goal.

Individual Ways²⁰

1. Educate ourselves about diversity, inclusion, racism, and other similar issues.
2. Create representative and inclusive syllabi through multiple individual faculty means such as: 1) representing BIPOC and other diverse scholars in our syllabi; 2) encouraging under-represented voices in class; 3) celebrating diverse families through art and song within our lectures and activities; 4) teaching about prejudice, implicit bias, oppression, microaggression, racism, violence, intersectionality, and stereotyping and how they influence individuals and families; 5) contributing to FHSS minority student scholarship and research programs.
3. Ask the Lord to help us examine our own thoughts, attitudes, stereotypes, opinions, and behaviors as they pertain to individuals of various groups including race/ethnic groups, religious groups, sex groups, socioeconomic groups, sexual orientation groups, gender identity groups, political groups, those with emotional or physical challenges, etc.
4. Ask the Lord to help us through this examination to identify thoughts, attitudes, stereotypes, opinions, and behaviors that are not in keeping with His charge to love our neighbors as ourselves and that prevent us from seeing and treating everyone as His children.
5. Ask the Lord that we might repent of and overcome these problematic thoughts, attitudes, stereotypes, opinions, and behaviors through the power of Christ's atoning sacrifice and grace. Then continually strive to make these changes.
6. Ask the Lord daily for opportunities to build bridges of understanding and help everyone on campus feel welcome.

7. Frequently reflect on our efforts.
8. Seek healing through Christ's atonement.

Concluding Remarks

In his recent devotional (March 3, 2020) President Ballard stated, "[The Lord] is anxious to heal any 'wounded souls' on this campus and to bring together each and every one of you in love and peace. We can help in the process as we love, seek forgiveness, offer forgiveness and seek to build bridges of understanding" (emphasis added). As President Ballard taught, loving one another as disciples of Christ "does not deny the need for open and honest discussions on campus to resolve issues and deal with challenges. What this provides is an antidote to anger, ill feelings, distrust, hate, or demonizing one another."²¹

We also acknowledge that only through Christ's gospel, atonement, and grace can we achieve these objectives. President Ezra Taft Benson noted, "Only the gospel will unite men [and women] of all races and nationalities in peace."²²

We also recognize that the changes we desire will take time. As Sister Sharon Eubank stated, "Unity doesn't magically happen; it takes work. It's messy, sometimes uncomfortable, and happens gradually when we clear away the bad as fast as the good can grow."^{23, 24}

Endnotes

- 1 We define inclusion here as feeling part of, respected by, and valued within the School of Family Life. This also includes purposefully reaching out and bringing people into the group.
- 2 See “How to Act While Being Acted Upon” by Kevin J. Worthen
- 3 See [The Family: A Proclamation to the World](#)
- 4 Racism is defined here as one or more of the following behaviors: 1) Stating that any racial group is superior or inferior to another, 2) perpetrating stereotypes of any race/ethnic group through speech or action, 3) speaking to or treating individuals or groups in a discriminatory fashion, including using racial slurs (See “The Need for Greater Kindness” by Gordon B. Hinckley).
- 5 See “Children of Heavenly Father” by M. Russell Ballard.
- 6 See “Building Bridges” by Russell M. Nelson.
- 7 See “Locking Arms for Racial Harmony in America” by the NAACP and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- 8 The Mission of Brigham Young University is to “assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life.”
- 9 Russell M. Nelson, Facebook, June 1, 2020. <https://www.ldsliving.com/President-Nelson-Calls-for-Repentance-in-Statement-on-Racism/s/92936/>
- 10 See “Hearts Knit in Righteousness and Unity” by Quentin L. Cook.
- 11 See “Love Your Enemies”
- 12 See “Racism and Other Challenges” by Dallin H. Oaks.
- 13 In “Love Your Enemies,” Dallin H. Oaks said, “There are many examples of racism in recent American history. The examples most familiarly reported by the media today are those that victimize Black Americans. These include the police brutality and other systemic discrimination in employment and housing publicized recently. Racism is still recognizable in official and personal treatment of Latinos and Native Americans. Less familiar in our day is America’s history of racism against Asians, which began with Chinese immigrants who worked on the transcontinental railroad. It was not until a century ago that Native Americans were considered U.S. citizens and that Asians were allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship.”
- 14 “Racism and Other Challenges”
- 15 “Locking Arms for Racial Harmony in America”
- 16 This list is neither meant to be exhaustive, nor to proscribe individual efforts students, faculty, and staff make.
- 17 We define diversity as the characteristics of a group whose members are of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, sexes, cultures, socioeconomic statuses, ideological points of view, etc.
- 18 The School of Family Life subscribes to BYU’s Academic Freedom Policy. If the current document, or issues arising from this document, conflict with BYU’s Academic Freedom Policy, the latter will be considered the supreme arbiter. Thus, while the School of Family Life may encourage its faculty to use specific ways and methods to address diversity and inclusion in the classroom, including suggesting curriculum and representative syllabi, these suggestions will not constitute a requirement. A future faculty body may change this through our established procedures of a faculty body vote.

- 19 See BYU's Academic Freedom Policy. Such research encouragement will not constitute or lead to a requirement to conduct such research. Further, the "diversity" of an individual faculty member's research agenda shall not be used in any matters of faculty evaluation including (but not limited to): CFS and rank decisions at the school level, PAR document review, or merit raises. This does not preclude the School funding individual faculty members' diversity research or establishing a School diversity research award. This also does not preclude future SFL faculty bodies from incorporating this statement (through established procedures of a faculty body vote) into the PAR/merit raise process or rank and status decisions.
- 20 See "Healing the Wounds of Racism" by Darius Gray.
- 21 "Children of Heavenly Father"
- 22 See "Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson," Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988, p. 167.
- 23 See "By Union of Feeling We Obtain Power with God" by Sharon Eubank.
- 24 Please note: this document is considered a "living document" in that we anticipate updates over time to reflect new knowledge and experience.

