

OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION PRESENTS

DEI NEWS

Welcome to "DEI News"!

As the voice of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), this newsletter will serve as a resource for all of us at Empire State University regarding DEI topics and activities happening across the university and the global community.

This quarterly newsletter is the result of months of conversations and planning by the DEI Council's Events and Communications Group. DEI News will highlight news, resources, and topics that advance DEI and social justice. To help build a sense of belonging, DEI News will give members of the SUNY Empire community a forum to share their thoughts and DEI work. We hope this will inspire conversations and respectful interactions with others.

DEI News debuts soon after we commemorated Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May and LGBTQ Pride month in June, two groups that have come under attack in our country in recent years. These celebrations remind us that we must continue to exchange ideas that raise awareness of the diversity of our world.

As we move toward the next academic year, we invite everyone to reflect on the achievements we have made together, while acknowledging the work that remains to be done as an institution and in our communities.

And as the group continues to work, we would very much appreciate your insights and experiences. Please do not hesitate to send your ideas, suggestions, and feedback to odei@sunyempire.edu.

We hope you enjoy this inaugural issue and contribute to future editions of DEI News.

In This Issue

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Is Qu'ran**

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Diversifying the
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MY NAME IS QU'RAN

Some of you will look at my name and not know how to pronounce it. You may have heard of me or even met me, but there's a good chance you said it wrong, and admittedly I never corrected you.

My name has been mispronounced my entire life, and honestly, I'm more surprised when people say it right than when they say it wrong. I've been called everything from *Key-ron*, *Core-Ann*, *Crayon*, and the most popular *Ka-RAN*. Once, a former coworker looked me in the face and said, "Quran is tough to say. Can I call you Shakira?"

When I'm at a doctor's office and the nurse starts looking around the waiting room nervously, I know it's probably my turn to be called. I understand when I'm called 'Ms. Bell' it's not always because they're trying to be respectful; it's to avoid admitting they don't know how to say my name and are afraid to ask.

Fun fact: The legal spelling of my name is Qu'ran. But I started simplifying it because God only knows how much people would butcher my name with the apostrophe.

I finally began to confront this issue when I started working at SUNY Empire this past year. It was the first time in ages that people truly embraced me and my talents, and I felt seen for who I am. However, when some of those same people began botching my name, the core of my identity, it hurt in a way that it never did before.

After talking about this with a trusted colleague, I realized that continuously mispronouncing my name (or giving me a nickname, even as obnoxious and racist as Shakira) isn't just an aggravation; it's a name-based microaggression.

Name pronunciation is critical. When someone gets it wrong, it can be more devastating than many realize. I know someone reading this shortens their name or goes by a nickname solely to make it easy for others rather than for personal preference. However, we must put an end to that today.



written by
Qu'ran Bell
pronounced Ka-Ron

"As a university, if we want to practice and promote inclusion, we can start with a concerted effort to pronounce everyone's name correctly."

MY NAME IS QU'RAN

continued

Our name is a part of our DNA, ethnicity, and culture, and the ultimate symbol of us as human beings. It's time for us to be seen and respected for who we are.

As a university, if we want to practice and promote inclusion, we can start with a concerted effort to pronounce everyone's name correctly.

A few months ago, I began using **NameCoach** in my signature. It's an easy-to-use tool that allows you to record the correct pronunciation of your name. There are similar tools on LinkedIn, and they enable you to figure out how to say a name like Qu'ran discreetly.

I encourage everyone to use these resources and to take the time to ask, "How do I say your name?" if you're unsure. If you hear someone else saying my name or other names wrong, speak up! These small steps make us a school that not just discusses inclusion and allyship but acts on it.



Qu'ran Bell '21, '22

is a student success coordinator and two-time SUNY Empire alum with a B.A. in communications and media and M.A. in social and public policy.



NameCoach is an audio tool that lets users record how their names are pronounced. NameCoach bridges different cultures and communities and helps people learn how to pronounce unfamiliar names. Users can share a URL that links to an audio recording whenever they write their name. Learn more about [NameCoach](#).

Safe Zone TRAINING



EMPIRE STATE
UNIVERSITY

The four-hour training is a pilot project funded by a DEI mini grant that's designed to reduce homophobia, transphobia, and cisheterosexism. Employees who receive the training will be given a Safe Zone sticker for their workplace and identified (with their permission) on an internal Safe Zone webpage so students, faculty, and staff can easily connect with a Safe Zone ally.

The project, named the Empire State University Safe Zone, is spearheaded by Brian Frederick, Ph.D., an assistant professor of criminal justice and queer criminologist. Joining them on the project is Joshua Boardman, the university's health and wellness coordinator; and Em Vaianella, an undergraduate student and PRODiG Scholar.

According to Frederick, the goal of Safe Zone is to make the university and New York state a safer place for all people, across all sexual orientations, romantic orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and intersections of identities. "We aim to create a network committed to ongoing education and advocacy to support LGBTQIA+ communities at SUNY Empire and beyond," they said.

Specifically, the Safe Zone program aims to identify, educate, and support faculty, staff, and administrators — known as "allies" — who are open to learning about issues affecting the LGBTQIA+ community and openly provide support and advocacy for them. The DEI Mini Grants program was launched this year by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The grants support efforts to improve the workplace and learning environment by providing financial assistance for trainings, conferences, research, immersion activities and programming that strengthen excellence in diversity and inclusion at SUNY Empire. A follow-up report documenting the impact of the Safe Zone pilot will be prepared by the project team this summer. If successful, a full training program will launch in the 23-24 academic year.



WORD OF THE DAY: *Neurodiversity*

BY MATTHEW BERGE '21 '23

The neurodiversity movement began in the 1990s as an offshoot of the disability rights movement when Australian sociologist Judy Singer coined the term to "promote equality and inclusion of neurological minorities." Typically, neurodiversity is associated with developmental disorders like autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and Tourette Syndrome. The spectrum of neurodiversity extends beyond these disorders to include conditions such as anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which cause people to think differently than the general population. Roughly 20 percent of the global population "exhibits some form of neurodivergence." These individuals possess unique qualities that foster outside-the-box thinking, which is precisely what's needed for innovation and societal evolution. All too often, those who identify as neurodiverse are taught to "mask" these differences. But it's time to take off the mask and showcase the beauty of thinking differently.

**ROUGHLY 20
PERCENT OF THE
GLOBAL
POPULATION**

*"exhibits some form of
neurodivergence"*



**JOURNAL OF ENGAGED
RESEARCH**

Call for Submissions

The Journal of Engaged Research seeks to give a voice to the voiceless and marginalized groups in academia. Our next issue will spotlight neurodivergence, in the hopes of destigmatizing these innovative thinkers and grant them a voice. The Sustainable Progress and Equality Collective, which publishes the journal, is looking for submissions around the topic of neurodiversity for an upcoming issue. We are looking for articles, artwork, and poetry, either about neurodiversity or depicting how neurodiverse people think differently through an artistic lens.

**PLEASE SEND SUBMISSIONS TO
SUBMISSIONS@SPECOLLECTIVE.ORG**

THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION'S
webpage has been updated!!

**CHECK OUT THE NEW
FEATURES AND EASY ACCESS
TO RESOURCES, SUCH AS THE
NEW INSTITUTIONAL
DEI ACTION PLAN,
THE CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS
AND OBSERVANCES, AND
EXTERNAL RESOURCES.**

www.sunyempire.edu/diversity/



DIVERSIFYING FACULTY RANKS AT EMPIRE STATE AND BEYOND



In the fall of 2020, Empire State University launched the Empire PRODiG Scholars program with the goal of ensuring that the next generation of higher-ed faculty better reflects the world we live in. The concept was born out of SUNY Empire’s efforts to diversify the faculty in response to the SUNY PRODiG initiative. PRODiG stands for Promoting Recruitment, Opportunity, Diversity, Inclusion and Growth. The SUNY-wide initiative supports growing faculty diversity and aims to improve campus efforts to increase the number of faculty members who come from historically underrepresented populations.

2022-23 PRODiG SCHOLARS

LISA BILLUPS

SHARON BROOKS

EM VAIANELLA

EDWIN APONTE

CRISTINA PAGAN

NAOMI ARNDT

SUSAN ABARE-WALKER

ERIKA BLAIR

EMMANUELA EMEDO

LAUREN FEIST

HANNAH MOSKOWITZ

LEONARDO
MONTI GOMEZ

ADRIANNE HORTON

CASSANDRA CLEMENTS

LADONNA COX

KIIANA REYES-
CAMPBELL

EVY FUNG

CRISTAL FARRINGTON

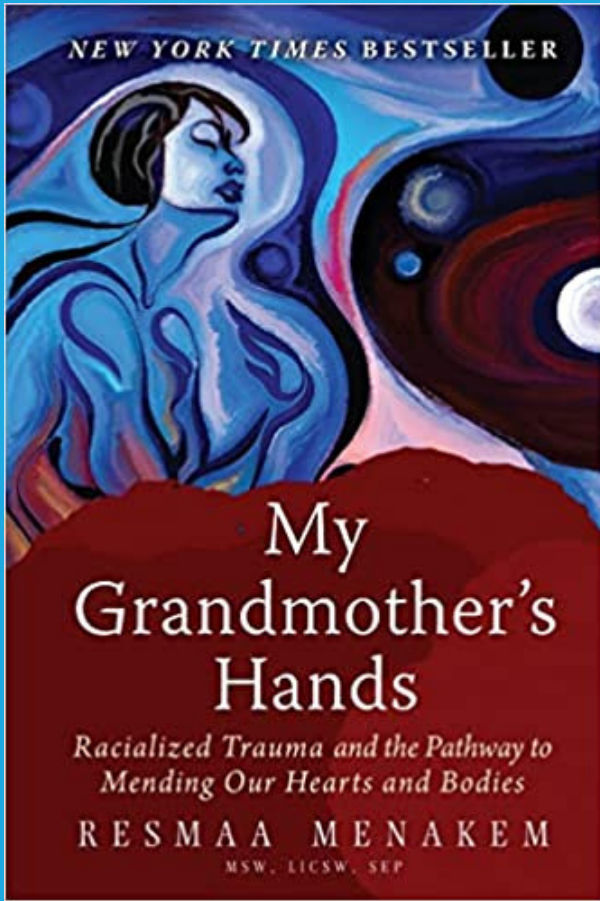


Scholars participate in monthly virtual programs that introduce them to the faculty profession, teach them steps and skills needed to enter academia, and provide them opportunities to network with faculty members and former scholars. Other sessions include how to prepare for graduate admissions, overcome impostor syndrome, conduct research, and reflect on their philosophy of learning. Previous scholars have gone on to M.S., Ed.D. and J.D. programs or to work as editors at research journals.

The Empire PRODiG Scholars Program is one of three components in SUNY Empire's efforts to diversify faculty across the university. SUNY Empire is proud to participate in this SUNY initiative and is committed to its mission. In addition, SUNY Empire is one of 13 SUNY comprehensive institutions that participate in the PRODiG Fellowship Program. This initiative funds late stage pre-doctoral (all but dissertation), post-doctoral, and other terminal degree students interested in exploring academic careers at teaching-centered institutions.

The program fosters the success of these students with professional development opportunities. Scholars are assigned to a faculty coach and engage in teaching- or research-focused assistantships that expose them to the professional responsibilities of faculty members while supporting the academic work of SUNY Empire faculty.





Book of the Month

"MY GRANDMOTHER'S HANDS"

Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies

SUGGESTED BY DANA BROWN

The consequences of racism can be found in our bodies - in skin and sinew, in bone and blood. In this ground-breaking, inspiring work, therapist Resmaa Menakem examines the damage and the physical consequences of discrimination, from the perspective of body-centered psychology.

"My Grandmother's Hands" is an extraordinary call to action for all of us to recognize that racism affects not only the mind, but also the body, and introduces an alternative view of what we can do to grow beyond our racial divides.

We Want to Hear from You!

Our goal is to keep the community up to date on activities around our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and showcase the work we're doing around DEI. We also want to use this as a forum for everyone to share thoughts, ideas, and reflections around these topics. To that end, we're looking for op-eds, essays, and short podcasts about topics related to DEI. We also welcome reviews of books, movies, or TV shows.

If you want to propose a story idea, email us at odei@sunyempire.edu.

