

ADVANCING AGE INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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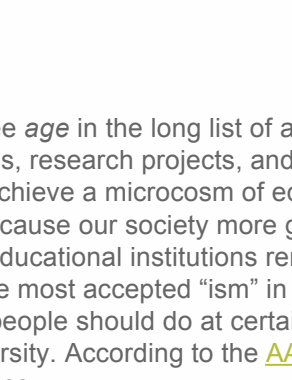
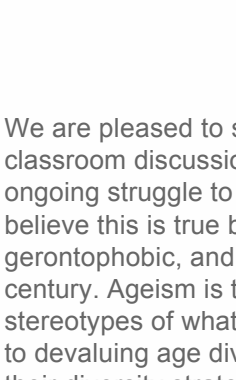
The *Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education Newsletter* is a place where educators, administrators, scholars, and community members can share news about how colleges and universities are responding to aging populations and the rise of more age-diverse campuses. As society confronts contemporary challenges of inequality and injustice, age-inclusive efforts in higher education are calling for connections to broader diversity and inclusion efforts. We share some of those efforts in this issue.

Comments and suggestions about Newsletter content and special areas of focus are very much welcomed from our readers. Please send correspondence to ageinclusive@geron.org.

Feature Article

Elevating Age Diversity Through the Lens of Intersectionality

By Nancy Morrow-Howell, Washington University in St. Louis, and Ernest Gonzales, New York University



Campuses across the country are stepping up efforts in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). They have centers, offices, and initiatives aimed at increasing the diversity of students, staff, and faculty members, as well as increasing educational efforts to address systemic racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, and gender bias. At [Washington University in St. Louis, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) states: *Washington University welcomes difference on our campus in the form of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, neurodiversity, geography, socioeconomic status, age, political views, religion, philosophy, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and veteran status. We excel at welcoming and including some of these perspectives and experiences; we continue to struggle to meaningfully include and engage others.*

We are pleased to see *age* in the long list of attributes that make people unique and bring important perspectives to classroom discussions, research projects, and community initiatives. We also appreciate the awareness that there is ongoing struggle to achieve a microcosm of equity; and for most universities, *age* remains a point of struggle. We believe this is true because our society more generally continues to be ageist. Contemporary society is largely gerontophobic, and educational institutions remain solidly age segregated, mirroring social structures of the 20th century. Ageism is the most accepted "ism" in our culture. Educational institutions are social engines reinforcing stereotypes of what people should do at certain ages - and not so different from other large organizations with regard to devaluing age diversity. According to the [AARP Public Policy Institute](#), fewer than one in ten CEOs include age in their diversity strategies.

Our challenge is to persuade university administrators, faculty, staff, and students to include age as a valued diversity characteristic. There are many arguments that we can mount: changing demographics, with fewer traditional-aged students in the pipeline; the need for longer and varied working lives, supported by education spread throughout the life course; and the value of learning to live and work in multigenerational settings. Older students on campus can shatter stereotypes, share perspectives and experiences with younger students, and collaborate to solve major issues from climate change to launching a new business. [NYU's provost](#) posits that "we ought to work hard to make this a community where everyone has a truly cosmopolitan mindset—as part of the broadest possible understanding that we can have about what humankind is. And to really make diversity, equity, and inclusion come about, we have an obligation to make all people feel comfortable in that space, because we have defined our community in the broadest possible way." People of all ages must surely be seen as part of this diverse community; and we must aim for a sense of belonging, rather than just checking boxes.

But we must be careful not to promote age in isolation of other social identities. If we focus only on chronological age, our efforts to increase participation will leave us in a familiar place: with more older people, but with older people who are advantaged in terms of health, socioeconomic status, and majority ethnic or cisgender identification statuses. We know that lifelong learning programs, encore career initiatives, and the volunteer sector have struggled to include people who have been excluded from employment and educational institutions over their life course. Increasing age diversity on our campuses without paying close attention to inclusivity along other dimensions will lead to the ongoing exclusion of older people who have been marginalized across the life course. In other words, we will be reinforcing and recreating the situation that our institutional DEI efforts are striving to eliminate in more traditional-aged student bodies.

Intersectionality must be front and center in our efforts to increase age diversity. Gerontologists have long taken the "multiple jeopardy" perspective, as age intersects with gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other diversity factors to affect life experiences and outcomes. It may be more compelling to DEI colleagues if we present the older population in all of its diversity and if we expand the common image of White, retired, economically secure, relatively healthy older people coming to the university for enrichment. We can argue that today's DEI efforts are shortsighted if they work for equitable access to education for all younger people, yet fail to break down barriers for these same people over their long lives ahead. It has been pointed out that ageism is discrimination against one's future self. Maybe this will ring true to those colleagues who are fighting now for students of color, low-income students, and students of other marginalized identities. Fight also for older people who are all of those things and more—they are our future selves.

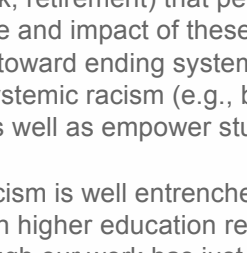
Nancy Morrow-Howell, PhD, is the Betty Bofinger Brown Distinguished Professor of Social Policy at Washington University in St. Louis.

Ernest Gonzales, PhD, is Associate Professor at the New York University Silver School of Social Work.

Campus Spotlights

Time for an Anti-Racist Age-Friendly University

By Rona J. Karasik and Kyoko Kishimoto, St. Cloud State University



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While many are examining age inclusion in higher education—especially within the Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative launched by [Dublin City University](#) whose principles are endorsed by GSA's [Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education \(AGHE\)](#)—we argue that now is also the time to consider what it means to be an anti-racist university. Anti-racism refers to actively opposing racism in all its forms, including the systemic racism that pervades our public policies and social institutions. Anti-racist pedagogy is an educational and organizing approach grounded in anti-racism that helps build skills needed not only to recognize the existence and impact of systemic racism, but also to work toward dismantling it. At St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, anti-racism is very much a work in progress involving faculty and staff from a broad range of departments and disciplines, including the university's gerontology program.

Gerontologists have long been aware of the many disparities (e.g., health, life expectancy, access to social services, later life work, retirement) that persist between older adults of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Documenting the existence and impact of these disparities by including racial content in our curricula, while essential, is only one of many steps toward ending systemic racism. We must also help our students and endeavor ourselves to identify root causes of systemic racism (e.g., by examining theory, structure, and practice of racism and power relations embedded in history) as well as empower students and faculty to become more self-reflexive and bring about change.

Systemic racism is well entrenched within our social policies and practices so it should not be surprising that anti-racist work in higher education requires perseverance. While we have learned a great deal over the last 10 years, it feels as though our work has just begun. The July 2020 AGHE webinar [Starting the Conversation: Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Gerontology](#) offered us and many others who joined this conversation a starting point for thinking about how gerontology, with its history of combatting ageism, can also actively stand to oppose systemic racism. As we continue the journey, we look forward to adding the AFU Principles to our ongoing efforts for social change.

For more information about incorporating anti-racist pedagogy into the gerontological curriculum and current anti-racist pedagogy initiatives at St. Cloud State University, we recommend the following resources:

- [Anti-Racist Pedagogy Across the Curriculum \(ARPAAC\)](#)
- [Community Anti-Racism Education \(C.A.R.E.\)](#)
- Karasik, R. J., & Kishimoto, K. (2018). Is gerontology ready for anti-racist pedagogy? A survey of educators' practices and perspectives. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 39(1), 3–20. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2015.1115984
- Kishimoto, K. (2018). Anti-racist pedagogy: From faculty's self-reflection to organizing within and beyond the classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21(4), 540–554. doi: 10.1080/13613324.2016.1248824
- Kishimoto, K., & Karasik, R. J. (2018). Applying anti-racist pedagogy to the exploration of senior housing. In H. E. Baker, T. M. Kruger & R. J. Karasik (Eds.), *A hands-on approach to teaching about aging: 32 activities for the classroom and beyond* (pp. 178–206). New York, NY: Springer.

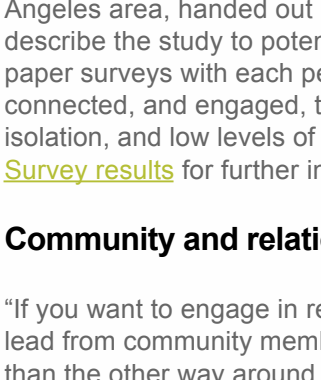
Rona J. Karasik, PhD, is Professor of Gerontology at St. Cloud State University.

Kyoko Kishimoto, PhD, is Professor of Ethnic Studies at St. Cloud State University.

Campus Voices

Older Black Lives Matter

Karen Lincoln at the University of Southern California, an AFU partner institution, shares the foundations and achievements of her work with Advocates for African American Elders.



In recent months, many students, faculty, and staff at academic institutions across the country have increased pressure on administrators to confront systemic racism, racial disparities, and injustice in admissions, within the classroom, across campus units, and throughout their larger surrounding communities. The growing Black Lives Matter movement spurred many institutions to adopt increased diversity, equity, and inclusion programming for its affiliated stakeholders. However, those of us in aging and health-related fields, and in the Age-Friendly University (AFU) movement, are examining whether our campuses are supporting Older Black Lives and Black Aging Lives in the neighborhoods and cities where we live and work.

Whether our campus is a new member of the AFU Global Network or experienced in age inclusiveness, and whether we as faculty and staff are newly hired and new in town or veteran campus colleagues and lifelong residents, finding the right community partnerships and beginning with the appropriate intentions are key. [Advocates for African American Elders \(AAAE\)](#), founded by GSA Fellow Karen D. Lincoln, PhD, MSW, MA, is a sterling example in Los Angeles, home to the University of Southern California (USC).

New in town, Dr. Lincoln relied on the connections of a few key stakeholders to build trust.

Dr. Lincoln is Associate Professor of Social Work, Director of the USC Hartford Center of Excellence in Geriatric Social Work, a senior scientist at the USC Edward R. Roybal Institute on Aging, and founder and chair of AAAE. When she arrived at USC, Dr. Lincoln noticed a lack of organization, recognition, and support for local African American older adults. Notably, aging service providers in the megalacity of Los Angeles must address the needs of older adults in many racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, and language groups. Having experience building outreach and programming in Seattle, Dr. Lincoln thought the African American community in proximity to the USC campus (and all over the county) was being overlooked. She sought out African American leaders knowledgeable in aging services, garnered grant funding from The California Wellness Foundation, and founded AAAE as an outreach and education organization, focusing primarily on health education and advocacy for access to services.

Dr. Lincoln emphasizes that she did not want to start off with any research owing to distrust (stemming from historical cases) in the community toward research studies. "Too often, universities start with conducting research in African American communities without first building relationships and establishing trust with residents," she said. Instead, AAAE engaged individuals, built relationships, and then brought community members experienced in aging services to the table to create a survey of knowledge of, access to, and use of aging services and programs to identify gaps in services.

"We asked African American residents if they were aware of aging services in their community, and if they used them, were they satisfied with them," Dr. Lincoln said. Her team canvassed several neighborhood sessions throughout the Los Angeles area, handed out hundreds of culturally competent flyers, and held information sessions at senior centers to describe the study to potential participants. The team recruited 550 participants in 4 months and administered printed paper surveys with each person. While Dr. Lincoln and her team found that many of the respondents were healthy, connected, and engaged, they also discovered many had low computer and health literacy, food insufficiency, isolation, and low levels of awareness about programs and services available to them. (See the AAAE [Community Survey results](#) for further information and recommendations.)

Community and relationship building are key.

"If you want to engage in research with African Americans, you have to engage them first. This requires taking the lead from community members and providing a service. You follow their lead, and then you partner with them rather than the other way around. That's the way I have been able to move forward and be successful. I don't lead them, they lead me. We respect each other and we all see the value in the work," Dr. Lincoln said. In addition to the community needs assessment survey, AAAE uses talk-show style gatherings to bring community members together for face-to-face interaction to provide health education, share information about available resources in their communities, and find out what interests and concerns them the most.

"In order to have a sustainable effort, you need to get the end users involved. So, we work with community members, providers, and health plans to ensure that our efforts are centered around the priorities of African Americans and that providers are informed about these needs and have the capacity to meet them. It's not by accident that I am the only academic in AAAE," Dr. Lincoln said. Dr. Lincoln goes out into the universe until they have their eyes on it—they approve it."

After several years of outreach, relationship building, and establishing trust, Dr. Lincoln has a research program that is a true partnership with the community. She said, "Any study that I do starts with them. They identify what the research questions should be, who we recruit, and they also collect the data. My staff and volunteers, including members of my senior advisory committee, are trained to collect quantitative and qualitative data. They implement surveys, conduct focus groups, and even collect blood, hair, and saliva. They have been hired by my colleagues outside the university as trained interviewers. They didn't start off with a respect and appreciation for research, but now they understand how crucial it is to better serve our community. But, before we could even get there, we had to have a relationship."

- **Visit:** [Advocates for African American Elders website](#)
- **Read:** Advocates for African American Elders. (2014). [Understanding the service needs of African American seniors in Los Angeles County: Findings from the Advocates for African American Elders Community Survey](#). Los Angeles, CA: USC Edward R. Roybal Institute on Aging.
- **Watch:** BrainWorks. (2018). [How to improve Alzheimer's education among African Americans](#) [video].

News and Notes

- The Council of the American Psychological Association recently adopted a [Resolution on Ageism](#), developed by its Committee on Aging, in response to negative stereotypes of aging (ageism), which continue to raise serious problems that lead to discrimination and unfair treatment of older adults.
- AFU partner [Drexel University](#) hosted the workshop "[New Normal for Higher Education: Understanding and Embracing an Aging Society](#)," featuring leaders in higher education and the aging field who shared examples of how to include age diversity in thinking about institutional inclusion efforts and transform the "demographic cliff" into a "demographic lift."
- "[Aging in Your 20s and 30s](#)," a webinar presented by Allyson Brothers, Michelle Foster, Rick Perry, and Gloria Luong, and sponsored by the Columbine Health Systems Center for Healthy Aging, [Colorado State University](#), explored what people can do now to age healthily in the future.
- AFU partner [Arizona State University](#) established the [Center for Innovation in Healthy and Resilient Aging](#) to advance transdisciplinary research to solve challenges in aging from the individual to the policy level by connecting faculty, students, and community partners in biomedical research, clinical studies, and behavioral interventions. Advancing aging education, the Center launched the [MS in Aging](#) online interdisciplinary degree program.
- The Institute for Successful Longevity at AFU partner [Florida State University](#) (FSU) supported a virtual version of the sixth annual Transportation Day, hosted by the Center for Accessibility and Safety for an Aging Population. Transportation Day offers the opportunity for the public to learn about research that makes transportation more accessible for people of all ages and abilities. Explore FSU's University Transportation Center [driving resources](#).
- The [Senior Adult Learning Center \(SALC\)](#) at AFU partner [Portland State University's](#) Institute on Aging continues its age-friendly support of lifelong learners in Oregon during the pandemic with the opportunity to take undergraduate and graduate courses as auditors at little to no cost. With student and staff support, SALC developed a new digital registration process so learners can register safely and home.

Resource Corner

- [AGHE Research Brief—Starting the Conversation: Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Gerontology](#)
- Learn more about what's happening across campuses and the AFU initiative in these presentations from the [GSA 2020 Annual Scientific Meeting Online](#) (available mid-November through the end of 2020 to registered Annual Scientific Meeting participants):
 - AFU Interest Group Symposium - Age-Friendly Universities: Confronting Ageism and Fostering Age Inclusivity
 - AGHE Symposium - GSA and AGHE: 75 Years of Leading Innovative, Interdisciplinary, Intergenerational, and Engaging Education
 - Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSS) Symposium - Putting Age in the Context of Behavioral and Social Science
 - AFU – Directors of Aging Center Collaborative Symposium - Steering an Age-Friendly University Initiative (AFU): Insights from Directors of Aging Centers
 - Intergenerational Learning, Research, and Community Engagement (ILRCE) Interest Group Symposium - Evaluation Research for Intergenerational Programs: Rigorous Methods, Best Practices, and Challenges
 - Older Adults as Teaching Allies: Opportunities for Age-Friendly University (AFU) Innovation
 - Older Learners in Higher Education: Age-Friendly University (AFU) Models in and Beyond the Classroom
 - Age-Friendly University (AFU) Models for Engaging with Retired Community Members
 - Why Age Matters to Higher Education: Age-Friendly Tools and Techniques for Culture Change
 - Assessing Age-Friendliness in Higher Education: Introducing the Inventory and Campus Climate Survey
 - Age-Friendly University (AFU) Models for Engaging with Retired Community Members
 - From Ad Hoc to Association to Academy: Developmental Milestones Over 48 Years for AGHE
 - Campus-Wide Buy-In for an Age-Friendly University: One Goal and Many Paths
 - Age as an Overlooked Element of Diversity: Approaches to Addressing Intergenerational Perspectives
- Older Learners in Higher Education: Age-Friendly University Models in and Beyond the Classroom GSA Webinar Series—Equity, Justice, and Inclusion for Older Workers: Recommendations and Solutions. This two-part series aims to identify the challenges of underrepresented older workers in their efforts to obtain or retain employment, and the presentations suggest strategies (including educational options) for overcoming those challenges.
 - [Part 1: Enhancing Economic Security for Older Low-Wage Workers](#)
 - [Part 2: Systems of Inequality Affecting Older Workers](#)
- International Federation on Ageing (IFA) Virtual Town Hall Series—COVID-19 and Older People:
 - [Opportunities to Combat Ageism](#): Jane Carmody, DNP, MBA, RN, of The John A. Hartford Foundation, and GSA CEO James Appleby, BSPHarm, MPH, discuss the effects of ageism in the United States and explore opportunities to collectively combat ageism.
 - [Addressing Inequalities of Older LGBTQ People](#): Samantha Edmonds and Michael Adams address issues faced by older marginalized groups during the pandemic who are vulnerable on several fronts.

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Editor: Joann M. Montepare, PhD, GSA Age-Friendly University Working Group Chair
Assistant Editors: Caroline Cicero, PhD, MSW, MFL, and Andrea Zakrajsek, OTD, OTR/L

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1220 L St. NW, Suite 901, Washington, DC 20005.



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