

Learning Together To “Get It Right”

****This post was written by Elizabeth Watkins Price, Associate Director of Curriculum and Administration, The North Carolina Judicial College, UNC Chapel Hill School of Government**

Since its founding in 2005, the mission of the Judicial College has been to provide “education and training to judicial branch personnel to develop the abilities and values necessary to provide justice.” In the nearly four years that I have been in my role, I’ve consistently encountered a similar dedication to learning and fairness expressed by our clients: the judges, magistrates, clerks, and other court officials of North Carolina. The great news is that the individuals who make up our judiciary are working hard to do incredibly complicated and difficult jobs, and they want to “get it right.” So, when we zoom out and see that the system we’re working in has a disparate impact on different communities, it can be hard to understand how our best efforts aren’t adding up to the creation of the fair and just system we all want to be a part of.

The murder of George Floyd and subsequent protests have shone a light on how structural inequalities and systemic racism can still distort good people’s best efforts. It is worth keeping in mind that while some aspects of this cultural moment may seem extreme, the central goal is a modest one about improving human lives in this country, a goal consistent with the broader mission at the School of Government, where the Judicial College is housed: “to improve the lives of North Carolinians by engaging in practical scholarship.” The second clause of this mission statement is key—the need for ongoing, engaged scholarship. Indeed, when our Dean, Mike Smith, blogged about the recent swell of awareness regarding race and equity in our country, he stressed the vital importance of actively enlarging our own understanding of these issues as an essential means of supporting the work being done on this subject by the leaders of North Carolina.

We are all at different places in our learning and awareness about these subjects. We all have to begin where we are. This moment in American history calls us to move beyond where we’ve been, and we invite you to boldly explore the resources that suit your learning needs. This is the first step. As we move forward in our learning and reflection, it can be tempting to feel like we’ve made progress – and we have. But that internal growth becomes valuable only to the extent that it supports us in taking the next step: using that knowledge to inform us as we choose actions that lead North Carolina and our justice system toward becoming the fair and just one – for us all – that we aspire to, one that really does “get it right.”

To this end, over the last tumultuous month, our colleagues and our clients have been engaging in new conversations about questions of diversity, fairness, and access. The goals of these conversations range from reflection to course-planning; from learning to leading. The more some of us learn about these subjects, the more we realize we don’t know. Nevertheless, this is not a new conversation, so there is an enormous amount of scholarship available to us as we each consider

where and how to dig in.

The following is a list of resources that may help those looking to take that crucial first step.

Books on Fairness and Access in Justice System:

[Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America](#) by James Forman Jr.

[Race, Racism and American Law](#) by Derrick A. Bell

[The Color of Law](#) by Richard Rothstein

[Minding the Law](#) by Anthony G. Amsterdam and Jerome S. Bruner

[Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption](#) by Bryan Stevenson

[The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#) by Michelle Alexander

Books About Race in America:

[So You Want to Talk About Race](#) by Ijeoma Oluo

[I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in A World Made for Whiteness](#) by Austin Channing Brown

[Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America](#) by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

[How To Be An Antiracist](#) by Ibram X. Kendi

Critical Race Theory Journals:

Berkeley Journal of African American Law & Policy

Columbia Journal of Race and Law

Georgetown Journal of Law & Modern Critical Race Perspectives

Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review

Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice

The Law Journal for Social Justice (Arizona State)

Michigan Journal of Race and Law

Rutgers Race and the Law Review

University of Miami Race and Social Justice Law Review

Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice

Podcasts:

1. Scene on Radio Season 2, Seeing White

Scene on Radio is the Peabody-nominated podcast from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University dives into questions about the renewed embrace of white-identity politics, racial inequity in schools, housing, criminal justice, and more. Episode times vary from around 30-46 minutes each.

2. Code Switch

From NPR, this is a series of conversations about race and how it impacts every part of society — from politics and pop culture to history, sports and everything in between.

3. 1619

The Pulitzer Prize winning 1619 Project was developed by New York Times Magazine in 2019 with the goal of re-examining the legacy of slavery in the United States and timed for the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans in Virginia.

Videos Streaming Now:

[Just Mercy](#), the film adaptation of the book by Bryan Stevenson is currently streaming on Amazon Prime.

13th_a 2016 Netflix documentary film by director Ava Duvernay, which explores the intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration in the United States

PBS News Reel's RACE Power of an Illusion is [here](#). The online companion resource is [here](#)

Other Organizations:

[REI blogs/studies](#)

[Othering & Belonging Institute](#) at Berkeley

Ohio State's [Kirwan Institute for Study of Race & Ethnicity](#)

[Alamance Racial Equity Alliance](#) (A.R.E.A.)

[CORE](#) (Chatham Organizing for Racial Equity)

[Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods](#) in Winston Salem

[OAR](#) Orange County, Durham and Wake Organizing Against Racism

[Racial Equity Cabarrus](#)

Other Reading Lists:

Duke Resources on Race, Oppression, and Social Change are [here](#)

The New York Times anti-racism reading list is [here](#).

Harvard Gazette reading list on race is [here](#)

Seattle Times Reading List is [here](#)