An Anti-Racist Classroom: Teaching Strategies Across the Curriculum

Erika Gray, University of Ottawa
Jeffrey R. Farr, University of Illinois
Ehren Green, University of Louisville
Lauren Hindman, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Kerri Badin, University of Ottawa
Ashley Ryder, The Ohio State University
Swarali Patil, Western University
Georgia Teare, University of Ottawa

Abstract 2021-262

Sport is a reflection of society (Coakley, 1990), and as seen through recent events, can also help shape society (e.g., Black Lives Matter and the NBA/WNBA; Colin Kaepernick and the NFL). As educators, we have the opportunity to provide sport management students—a group that is more racially diverse than the general college undergraduate population, and who believe that racism is a barrier to increasing diversity in sport organizations (Barnhill et al., 2018; Vianden & Gregg, 2017)—with tools and knowledge to address systemic issues. Anti-racism has been used as a theoretical approach to understand and combat the effects of systemic racism since the early 1980s. However, systemic racism still exists across North America and the globe. A pedagogical approach to teaching race can break down stereotypes and misconceptions that students may have from growing up in an era of colorblind ideology (Robinson, 2007). Colorblindness, in this sense, is the inability to recognize the structural injustices that people of color experience as barriers to achieve their goals, attributing to racial inequalities and inequities (Parker 2010, Wise 2008, Bonilla-Silva 2006; Haltinner, 2014). A classroom setting provides the opportunity to critically reflect, break down, and guide the way higher educators teach using compassion and honesty (Kernahan, 2019). Currently, scant research exists on the discussion and teaching of systemic racism and anti-racism in higher education, particularly in sport management.

To address this gap, and in response to NASSM’s timely conference theme of Race Forward, the purpose of this year’s student symposium is to offer ideas and strategies for incorporating and teaching issues of race across all classes in sport management higher education. Higher educators must bring awareness, navigate, and moderate these potentially difficult conversations. Therefore, this 60-minute symposium will provide an opportunity for sport management educators and scholars to engage in a dialogue about incorporating anti-racist principles into their classrooms. It will also provide the opportunity to develop strategies for discussing sensitive topics and incorporating anti-racism into syllabi, thereby promoting an anti-racist sport management classroom.

The symposium will consist of three parts. Part A will include a series of three 10-minute presentations by a panel of experts in the sport management field. The topics will include: 1) Racial Bias; 2) Sexualization of Race; and 3) Race & The Intersection of Gender and Sex. Each expert will provide a brief overview and describe how they incorporate their topic in their classroom. During Part B, attendees will engage in small group discussions, moderated by student board members with questions designed to encourage critical thinking. Part C will consist of a question & answer session with the expert panel.

This symposium will provide participants with ideas and strategies to incorporate anti-racism in the sport management classroom. By doing so, participants will be better equipped to encourage students to think critically outside of the classroom; and to join in the larger conversations about systemic racism with accurate knowledge about the topic at hand (Kernahan, 2019).