

Dear OLLI at UVA Members,

On June 5, 2020, hundreds of community members gathered at the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers at UVA and knelt in silence for 8 minutes and 46 seconds to commemorate the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others. Like many of you, we have watched the events of the past two months unfold with deep grief. Racial tensions in America have devastated Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities throughout our nation's history, and the profound disparities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic have shed light on a long-overdue need to more fully address issues of social justice, including the community of education and lifelong learning.

Our Acknowledgement

As an organization, we acknowledge that we have blind spots that have influenced the ways we have tried to live out our values around creating a community that is equitable, inclusive, and diverse. OLLI also acknowledges that our society often treats people with marginalized identities differently than others. We acknowledge that racism, not race, is a root cause of disease. We acknowledge that racism often intersects with other forms of systemic oppression and that those who live with multiple marginalized identities are often at highest risk for fewer educational opportunities and health disparities. As lifelong learners and educators, our profession offers us a powerful tool to support behavior change in individuals who are navigating their own challenges in lifelong learning. We also recognize that many of us have much to learn about these disparities and the issues of social justice.

Our Commitment

OLLI fully supports social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion. We stand with our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities, and we invite you to join us. OLLI is committed to deepening our learning across the organization and to supporting the continued development of our community. We encourage all members of OLLI to seek out resources to learn more about racism and other issues of social justice. A partial list of resources can be found [here](#). OLLI will be offering courses this Fall semester in which topics of race and diversity will be explored and we welcome future course proposals and instructors that reflect our commitment.

OLLI is committed to listening to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities and to seeking guidance from those with expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion. To that end, we commit to creating an *OLLI Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee* charged with guiding OLLI to review our processes and develop solutions to counteract potential inequity within our organization, including a fresh look at our curriculum development, program approval, and leadership practices. If you are interested in joining this committee, please send an email to olliuva@virginia.edu. We look forward to sharing additional information as this committee progresses.

The work of addressing racism and other forms of systemic oppression is lifelong. We hope that the OLLI community, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color individuals, will help us with this critically important charge. While we may make missteps along the way, OLLI is committed to learning from them and continuing to move forward.

Respectfully,

OLLI Executive Committee & OLLI Staff