

A World Shaped By Race

Doctoral candidate teaches anti-racism

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In the two months since George Floyd was killed by police, protesters have continued to call for change. They might not march every day in every city, but they are still marching. That stories on the protests have, for the most part, fallen off the front pages of newspapers around the country doesn't mean the issue of racism has gone away. If anything, it shows the need for conversations — real, honest, down-deep conversations —to continue.

“I think that we have to reckon with the fact that there is no such thing as ‘not racist,’” says Kate Slater, a doctoral candidate in UNH's [higher education leadership and policy program](#) and lecturer for the course Teaching Race. “We all live in a world shaped by

race — and in that, I mean that race is a real and actual determining factor in life outcomes for all of us.”

“In America, if we are white, we are more likely to achieve a certain socioeconomic status, attend better-funded schools, graduate from college, inherit intergenerational wealth. That’s not an accident, that’s the legacy of generations of racism.”

Slater’s research explores the idea of pre-college summer bridge programs for underrepresented minority students to help them build support networks before starting their college career as a way to increase the likelihood of graduating. Earlier this month she presented the webinar [“Four Steps to Begin an Anti-Racist Education”](#) as part of UNH’s Inclusion Series.

She works for the Institute for Recruitment of Teachers (IRT) program, serving as the associate director. Located at Phillips Andover in Massachusetts, IRT aims to bring racial equity to the educational sector by supporting and mentoring people of color in their pursuit of graduate degrees.

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Challenging that legacy means people need to consciously strive to be anti-racist, a commitment that, when met, will help eradicate racism everywhere — including in ourselves. And that commitment, along with a willingness to have tough conversations about racism, requires us to become educated about social justice.

“I think learning about the history of racism in this country is absolutely essential to be anti-racist. Once we (white people) begin to dive into an American history that centers on the voices and experiences of Black people and people of color, we realize that the founding ideals of our country — equality, liberty, democracy — were only available to a percentage of the population, i.e., white folks,” Slater says. “This country has continuously marginalized, oppressed and enacted violence on people of color for generations. And that oppression and violence continues today. We have so much work to do.”

But, step by step, protest by protest, course by course, that work is being done. It happens when we educate ourselves and call out racism when we see it. We when push to break down barriers for Black people and people of color. When we teach our children at an early age about racism and prejudice, and its cost to all of us.

“Talking to kids about inequality and oppression in a way that is age-appropriate but doesn’t shy away from the pain and unfairness of racism, is the way that many of us white people can begin to move the needle. This was the focus of Teaching Race. I wanted my students to think about their own K-12 experience and the stories they were

told,” Slater says. “Think about how things would change if a whole generation of kids grew up in an era where conversations about race, racism, oppression and liberation were normalized. Think of how the conversation might shift.”

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