



May 2023 Executive Director Update

We are sorry to announce that after three phenomenal years with Challenging Racism, Alicia Jones-McLeod is stepping down from her role as Executive Director in order to take on a new challenge as Director of the Center for Racial Equity at the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester, New York. While we are sad to see her go, we are extremely grateful for the passion and energy she brought to this organization for the last three years. Despite the many challenges that COVID presented, with Alicia at the helm, Challenging Racism has grown and thrived. We are forever in her debt!



At the same time, we're excited to announce that Challenging Racism's own Monique Bryant will be stepping in as Interim Executive Director. Moe is a founding member of the organization and has served on the Board of Directors, as well as being one of our most experienced facilitators. She is excited to be taking on this new role and will be sharing more of her own Challenging Racism story in a future newsletter.



Please join us in thanking Alicia J-M for sharing her talents with us and wishing her luck on her next adventure. Join us also in welcoming Moe to her new role as we continue the work of Challenging Racism, one compassionate conversation at a time!

From Alicia Jones-McLeod

This month, I am leaving my leadership role at Challenging Racism. During this process, I thought I would share a few things I have learned in my position and how I have used them to make a difference in my life and my work.

First, I learned the [definitions](#) used to create the common language of dismantling systemic and individual racism. When I came to Challenging Racism, I felt the impacts of racism, but the words I shared in those moments did not have the fullness of what I was experiencing. Now, I am able to call out the actions with specific terminology, I am able to name it. I use terms like microaggressions and triggers. I am more understanding of allyship and what it means to have privilege in the world. To be clear, I don't think the language made my feelings more or less valid, but it allowed me to communicate effectively and see ways to change behavior or solve a problem. As Kimberlé Crenshaw said, "When there's no name for a problem, you can't solve it." Now I can call out these issues and start conversations about solving them.

I also learned about acknowledging where I have privilege and how to use it. I am a woman and that identity can often be marginalized in spaces, but I also have privilege because I identify as a [cis-gender](#) woman. My privilege is because I am afforded benefits that may not be afforded to a transwoman (i.e. [bathroom access](#)). So in other words, I can see the world from both lenses, a lens of privilege and a lens of marginalization. Similar to what is explained in this [video](#), I can use these experiences to better connect with others and understand their experiences. I use the insight to help me to [be a better ally](#). Since being in this position, I have often thought about how we can create more space in our sessions and prioritize the safety of marginalized people. To this end, we recently included the following statement in all of our programs - "We prioritize the safety of the

marginalized over the comfort of the privileged." This is important to make sure we are treating people equitably in our sessions, we are embracing safety and calling out discomfort. It is an important step in the process of creating a more equitable world.

To that end, I ask you to acknowledge your privilege, seek out how you can support others, learn to use your privilege for good, and create space for others. I urge you to be uncomfortable so someone else can be safe. Be quiet so someone else can speak. Extend a little more grace and sit with a little more discomfort each day. Practice being an ally and supporting others.

I am not leaving CR for good right away but will transition to an internal role to support our new executive director, Monique "Moe" Bryant. She has been a constant supporter with her vision and encouragement and above all she is an inspiring leader and an undeniable social justice warrior. I am excited she has decided to take on the full breadth of this work and am honored to support her as she takes Challenging Racism to the next level.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who have been with me on this journey and have helped to build a more sustainable and amazing organization. Thank you for your grace, your support, and your friendship. I am grateful for what we have been able to accomplish in the last three years. I look forward to Challenging Racism's future success in the continued effort to disrupt racism one compassionate conversation at a time.

CR Board Nominations - Spring 2023

Are you interested in racial equity? Do you want to contribute your skills and time to a growing nonprofit? Then maybe think about joining the Challenging Racism board.

Our mission is to empower and educate people to disrupt racism one compassionate conversation at a time. We have clients from DC, Maryland and Virginia and are looking to grow in an equitable and impactful way.

Board terms are 3 years and can serve for up to 2 consecutive terms. We ask for board members to commit to 10 hours per month and to consider a financial contribution that is meaningful to you. If you are interested, submit your nomination now.

[Board Nominations Website Page](#)

CR Programs Update

In the last couple of years Challenging Racism has developed a significant number of custom curricula for organizations in the area. This represents an exciting library of workshops that can be offered, with minor changes, to a broader audience. One example is the Race and Intersectionality series presented in partnership with Keegan theatre. As

we seek to meet the urgent need for Race and Equity work and to respond to the desire to have productive and respectful conversations about race. Many thanks to Christine Purka and Alicia Jones McLeod for visioning and securing opportunities for Challenging Racism to broaden its reach and influence.

On a personal note - for the last two years I have been studying at the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Reconciliation at George Mason University in pursuit of a Graduate Certificate in Contemporary Dispute resolution. It has been a privilege to study Mediation and Conflict Coaching, Conflict Analysis, and Transformative Conflict Resolution. I was fortunate to apply much of what we do at Challenging Racism to my studies. After considerable investment of time and treasure I will finish my work for the Certificate this month! I look forward to continuing to learn and apply the academic learning to the practice of Challenging Racism.

What's Coming Up - Spring 2023

Volunteers Needed - New Committees!

Join a Challenging Racism Committee! It is a great way to help us achieve our mission to empower and inspire people to disrupt racism one compassionate conversation at a time. Committees meet once a month and you can jump right in and work on something meaningful. Here's what is upcoming in our committees.

External Affairs

External Affairs will be working on a grant opportunity and an RFP (we need reviewers, writers, *those with experience in grants*), we will also be working on press releases about our programs and new curriculum.

Internal Affairs

Internal Affairs will jump in on the budget process. It is time for our new budget to be created and reviewed before it goes to the board, IA takes a look and shares insights. This committee also advises on our contracts and personnel.

Governance Committee

This is a great way to support the work of Challenging Racism. The Governance Committee is the group that makes sure our board is up to date and that the organization is in compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations.

****NEW** Events Committee**

This newly formed committee will work on planning and executing events for the public both online and in person. Planning and supporting our fundraising and outreach by way of events. We are planning on 2-3 events for the year.

****NEW** Curriculum Design & Review**

Are you interested in reviewing our curriculum and supporting the writing of new curriculum in racial equity and/or diversity, equity, and inclusion? If so, join our newly formed committee to support the design and review of our curriculum. We really need people who have written and/or reviewed curriculum previously but if you are interested in the work and have not done that, you can still support the committee.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities or would like more information, email admin@challengingracism.org.



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Challenging Racism

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