

Spring Equity Dialogues by Matt Colburn

This semester the Office of Equity and Inclusion held its inaugural Spring Equity Dialogues with a daytime event on February 7, 2020 and an evening event for second and third shift employees on February 11, 2020. The theme chosen by co-chairs Matt Colburn and Diana Benson, inspired by Dr. Pollard's call for a "speak up" culture at Montgomery College, was "Speak Up, Speak Out." The Feb. 7th event focused on combating racism while the Feb. 11th event centered around career advancement.

Dr. Pollard opened the February 7th event with a speech that noted the importance of checking one's own bias. The first 50 registrants for this event were sent a copy of Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, prior to the event. This book was the basis for one of the two breakout sessions held during the event. The other breakout session, designed by Stacy Ford, accessible technology coordinator, introduced participants to the process of making documents accessible. Attendees were also treated with a skit on implicit bias performed by Montgomery College students and directed by KenYatta Rogers.

Co-chairs Matt Colburn and Diana Benson gave speeches to open and close the event respectively, and they got personal. Prof. Colburn talked about his experience teaching in a predominately black and Latino school and recognizing his unconscious racism and how it impacted his students. Ms. Benson talked about her experience in elementary school when a teacher reacted to her disfluency in speech (sometimes called a "stutter") by telling her to find a job where she would not have to speak. In a closing activity, Queenstar Akrong led participants through the social justice board game Factuality.

Panelists for the evening session were Montgomery College employees Maria Morena Uribe, Alice Boatman, Jose Medrano, Juan Serrano, and Carlo Sanchez. They spoke of their experiences moving up in the ranks at Montgomery College and other organizations where they worked.

The feedback received for both events has been overwhelmingly positive. An anonymous survey participant wrote, "The [Factuality] game really brought to my attention that certain races have more privileges."