

## **NADOHE Statement on DEI Training**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 14, 2020 - Fort Lauderdale, FL. - As the United States continues to reel from a global pandemic, protests demanding justice after witnessing Black men and women killed by police, a white, seventeen-year-old carrying a rifle which is videotaped shooting and killing two protesters in Kenosha, Wisconsin, recent reports that women have been subjected to unnecessary hysterectomies while being detained by ICE, and the FBI director warning lawmakers that violent white supremacist groups rank among the top threats to U.S. security, the Trump administration issued a recent memorandum directing that training of employees in federal agencies on diversity, equity and inclusion cease. NADOHE vehemently opposes eliminating such education and development of federal employees, many of whom work in federal agencies charged with providing federal assistance to diverse communities nationally and globally. At a minimum, these learning opportunities are designed to explore cultural differences, the range of social identities that are impacted by these federal agencies' work, and racism and structural racism as part of United States history. Racism is deeply embedded in U.S. history, and this nation was built on conquest, colonization, slavery, and violence perpetrated against African Americans and Indigenous people. To deny this is to deny history.

In a memorandum, written by Russel Vought, Director of the Office of Management and Budget (September 4, 2020), Vought stated that "The President has directed me to ensure that Federal agencies cease and desist from using taxpayer dollars to fund these divisive, un-American propaganda training sessions. Accordingly, to that end, the Office of Management and Budget will shortly issue more detailed guidance on implementing the President's directive. In the meantime, all agencies are directed to begin to identify all contracts or other agency spending related to any training on "critical race theory," "white privilege," or any other training or propaganda effort that teaches or suggests either (1) that the United States is an inherently racist or evil country or (2) that any race or ethnicity is inherently racist or evil. In addition, all agencies should begin to identify all available avenues within the law to cancel any such contracts and/or to divert Federal dollars away from these un-American propaganda training sessions."

This directive was issued in a time when our country is engaged in a national awakening, and indeed, a reckoning reignited by the Black Lives Matter movement and the realization that African Americans are disproportionately impacted by racism. Racism and resultant violence have always been a part of the Black community's experience, but social media and the internet's speed have allowed us to witness many racial tragedies and senseless killings. As a country, we are confronted with racism's violence and dangerous consequences, and, in good conscience, we cannot tolerate this violence and inequity. As a society, we are compelled to end the discrimination and systems of oppression that allows unequal opportunities, senseless violence, and even death.

There has also been an awakening in every state of this union and higher education, particularly as it welcomes students back in the fall that Anti-Blackness has permeated every sector of our society. The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, from infection and death rates to access to quality health care, high unemployment rates, the risks associated with being essential workers, and housing and economic insecurity. At this time of racial reckoning with our past, the President deepens the divide and eliminates any possibility that individuals within the federal government can learn the consequences of racism and its deadly effects. Worse yet, it is a signal to our citizens and the world that racism does not exist and never existed. Eliminating these critical conversations on race is an erasure of history at a time when we need this understanding more than ever to transform our society into a just one.

Doing away with DEI education and development designed to foster dialogue on race and the effects of structural racism is unfathomable. More than ever, our country needs dialogue and facilitated DEI workshops. Recalling this commitment does not make one more American or patriotic. On the contrary, we cannot think of anything more American than to fight for justice, freedom, and equality. It is also patriotic to own up to our failings to create a better country, right past wrongs, and build our capacity as Americans to work together. As a country, we strive to be a shining example to the world of what a shared democracy governed by the people for the people truly means.

NADOHE urges higher education to continue and strengthen its existing commitment to racial equity and DEI workshops, seminars, courses, and lectures that explore racism in all its harsh reality. We cannot fix the scourge of racism if we negate its existence. We cannot end violence against the Black community and other minoritized groups if we do not foster dialogue and understanding. We cannot welcome our students without addressing structural racism. It is our responsibility to prepare our students to work and live in a diverse society. We cannot accomplish this goal if we cannot discuss race and work toward ending structural racism.

As the pre-eminent voice for chief diversity officers in higher education and with more than 1,100 members representing 750 colleges and universities, NADOHE's mission is to lead higher education towards inclusive excellence through institutional transformation. For more information about NADOHE, visit [www.nadohe.org](http://www.nadohe.org).

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