

Public health school asks, “How do we undo racism?” in practice

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New initiatives at the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine are focusing on revising the way racial health disparities are discussed, studied and taught in the classroom and beyond.

“All of these discussions and workshops aim to elevate Tulane’s commitment to diversity, justice and equity, especially when it comes to health and how systems have been designed to negatively impact communities of color,” said Kat Theall, director of the [Tulane Mary Amelia Women’s Center \(MAC\)](#) and associate professor of global community health and behavioral sciences at the School of Public Health.

Students, school administrators, faculty, staff and partners from local organizations participated in public seminars and discussions this spring. Among the questions raised was “How is racism operating here?” The participants looked at personal and professional situations and began to strategize actions to recognize and address racism.

In late May, two Undoing Racism workshops, facilitated by the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, were hosted by the [Tulane Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health \(CEMCH\)](#) and MAC. More than 50 people attended.

Another series of public seminars this spring, “Racing Toward Equity,” also focused on cultivating equity.

Each workshop is designed to educate, challenge and empower people to “undo” any racist structures that might hinder effective social change. The People’s Institute regularly facilitates this kind of training worldwide. The training is based on the premise that racism has been systematically constructed and that it can be

“undone” when people understand where it comes from, how it functions, why it is perpetuated and what can be done to dismantle it.

“We anticipate attendees will take what they’ve learned — new language and methods for examining and addressing racism — and apply it to their work, whether that’s in classes, research or community engagement,” said Shokufeh Ramirez, assistant director of CEMCH.

Naomi King Englar is the communications coordinator for the Tulane Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health.