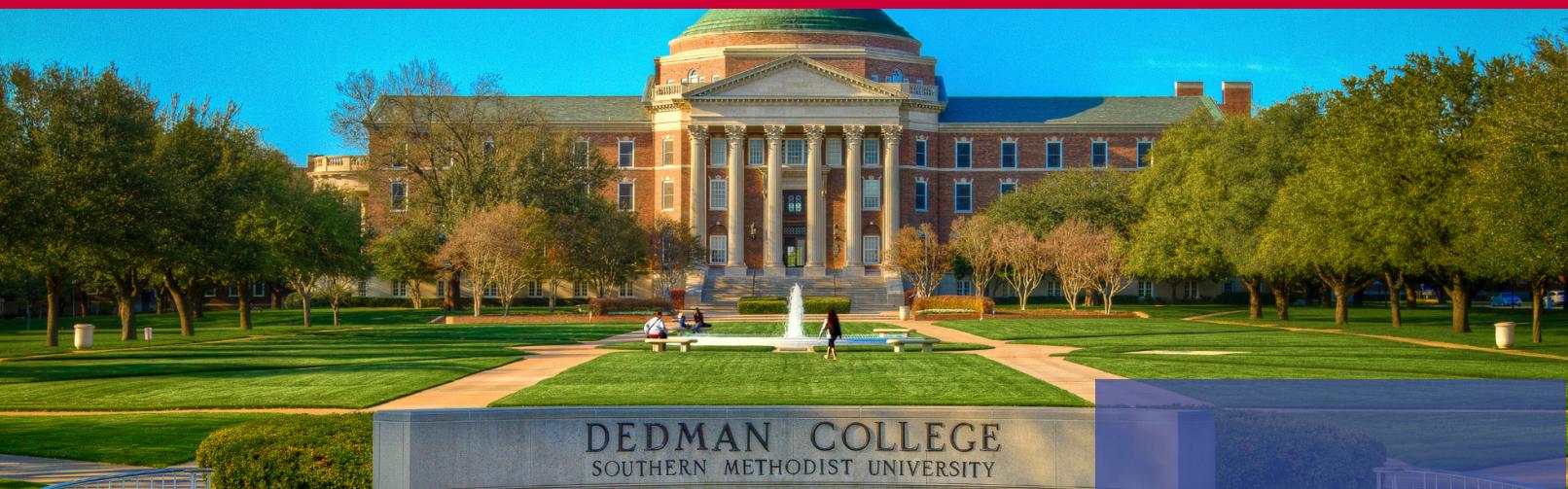




VOL. 1 | SUMMER 2021

# DC D&I INSIDE LOOK

Diversity & Inclusion Updates for the Dedman College Community at Southern Methodist University



Greetings! Welcome to the first issue of the Dedman College D&I Inside Look newsletter. We hope it will communicate diversity, equity, and inclusion-related updates and opportunities to our community and spotlight the work of the college's students, staff, faculty, and alumni. We are grateful to the student team—Jordyn, Chloe, and Guadalupe—for their work to put this together!

The goal of the university's diversity council is to create, foster, and sustain an equitable, diverse, and inclusive university. We recognize that equity is the catalyst for creating a sense of community in which all feel they belong and are seen in the fullness of their authentic selves. As such, we are dedicated to advancing processes and procedures to promote equity.

Perhaps most important to this work in the coming academic year, the university will re-launch its cultural sensitivity training via Canvas. As part of the university's commitment to the Black Unity Forum, all faculty, staff, and students will complete training. Our fabulous new Office of Diversity & Inclusion Training and Learning Coordinator Brice Mallet will lead sessions twice weekly, while faculty will complete an e-learning module, "Hidden Scripts," and an in-person engagement with diversity officers to help our community recognize and disrupt the scripts that can cause blind spots. Student Affairs and the Graduate School diversity officers will work with our students. Stay tuned for the launch announcement. Additionally, all faculty search committee members will be trained in "Searching Intelligently." This workshop is designed to give search committees the key tools for creating and implementing a strong recruitment strategy that yields an inclusive pool of qualified candidates. The diversity officers are available to consult on newly required search plans.

We welcome ideas and initiatives to create community here in Dedman College. Please reach out and start a conversation!

- Mr. John Georges and Dr. Jill Kelly

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## Student Spotlight

**Nia Kamau**

by Jordyn Harrell

Nia Kamau is a senior double majoring in Human Rights and International Studies with minors in Economics, Public Policy and International Affairs, and Arabic. She served as a resident assistant for Boaz Commons and will be serving as the SMU student trustee for the 2021-2022 academic year.

She is a both a student worker and fellow in the Human Rights Program. As a Human Rights Fellow and a Caswell Fellow, Kamau has been able to develop a DEI project called In Their Own Voices.

Kamau has always been passionate about storytelling. Giving a voice to the voiceless was her initial drive but after her experience in the Voices of SMU oral history project and the development of her own In Their Own Voices project, her drive shifted.

"Even though I still love storytelling, I think I realized that I don't want to be a voice for the voiceless like before. Rather, I want to be the person who passes the mic, so that people who already have a voice, but just aren't being heard, can express themselves," Kamau said.

With the encouragement of her Human Rights Big, Kamau got involved in the Voices of SMU Project as a freshman. Voices of SMU is an oral history project that focuses on gathering the stories of SMU alumni of color through recorded interviews. Those interviews are accessible in the SMU archives.

The initial goal of the project was to diversify the archives while preserving the stories of students of color. Those shared stories both expanded the goal of Voices of SMU project and created the foundation of Kamau's In Their Own Voices. She asked: how could these stories be used to transform the SMU campus into a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive space?

As Kamau was preparing for her Residential Assistant position, a conversation with some of her friends about the project sparked the idea of cultivating those interviews to train residential assistants and SMU students on DEI matters. Those interviews added a real-life component to cultural trainings at the University, making it more personal and asking training participants to reflect on how they can make campus more inclusive.

In Their Own Voices "allows people with their own voices and facial expressions, to share their realities," Kamau said. "And then for students of color now on campus, it helps facilitates discussions and allows them to continue telling their own stories rather than someone else trying to tell it for them."

A challenge Kamau faced in the creation of In Their Own Voices was picking which stories to share; there were many to choose from. She had to be mindful of her audience—how deep were people really ready to go? Kamau made it a goal that she would assist her audiences in digesting the interviews. She incorporates facilitated discussions into her In Their Own Voices sessions. She wanted the focus to be on both storytelling and problem solving.

This upcoming fall semester, Kamau will be leading a class of seven students on storytelling and social change. She desires for In Their Own Voices to continue long after she graduates, and this class will discuss the vision and direction of these workshops in the future. She also hopes for offices across campus to use In Their Own Voices to train student leaders, staff, and faculty.



## IN THEIR OWN Voices



**World Changers Shaped Here**

# Professor Spotlight

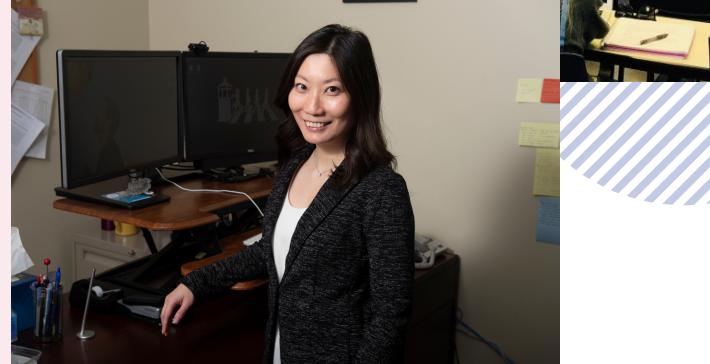
## Dr. Priscilla Lui, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology

by Chloe Richter

Dr. Priscilla Lui's research explores how sociocultural background affects one's view of the world, specifically how their cultural, ethnic, and racial experiences affect behavior and psychopathology, such as alcohol misuse. Dr. Lui received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Purdue University, and completed a predoctoral clinical psychology internship at the Northwestern School of Medicine prior to her faculty position at SMU. The focuses of her current research include:

- processes involved in intercultural contact, particularly acculturation and racial discrimination
- cultural values, practices, and beliefs
- romantic and marital relationships
- intergenerational conflict
- personality and individual difference determinants of psychopathology and addictive behaviors.

Students may access Dr. Lui's publications [HERE](#) and those interested in her ADAPT lab can get involved [HERE](#).



# Staff Spotlight

## Sherry Aikman

by Guadalupe Roman

Ms. Sherry Aikman is the Administrator for the Human Rights Program in Dedman College. She has served the SMU community for thirty years. Her journey at SMU first began at the Women's Center and then the Community Involvement Office. Ms. Aikman transitioned to the Human Rights Program office when it was founded in 2010. She has always worked with a diverse groups of students whose interests and identities are all unique and entangled with their individual activism. Her greatest highlight is "seeing students rise and give voice to issues they are passionate about." Ms. Aikman is especially known for her photography, which she describes as the way she speaks. Some of the most impactful photographs are those of her favorite and evolving Poland trips that the Human Rights Program embarks on yearly. In two words, Ms. Sherry Aikman describes her journey at SMU as *blessed* and *inspired*. She invites current and incoming students to come to the Human Rights Program office located in Clements Hall for security, support, guidance...and snacks!

**World Changers Shaped Here**

# Event Spotlights from Spring 2021

## #BlackAtSMU Film

by Jordyn Harrell

The film #BlackAtSMU will continue enlightening people about the racial injustices that have occurred on SMU's campus after its initial premiere on April 21st and its virtual screening on May 29th.

The #BlackAtSMU film emerged from assistant professor of SMU Film and Media Arts Amber Bemak's desire to share the stories of students who tweeted during the 2020 resurgence of the hashtag #BlackAtSMU. The student directors Aysia Lane and Crislyn Fayson brought this desire to life with the help of the producer, student Gillian Taylor; the assistant director, student Shara Jeyarajah; and the rest of the production team and cast.

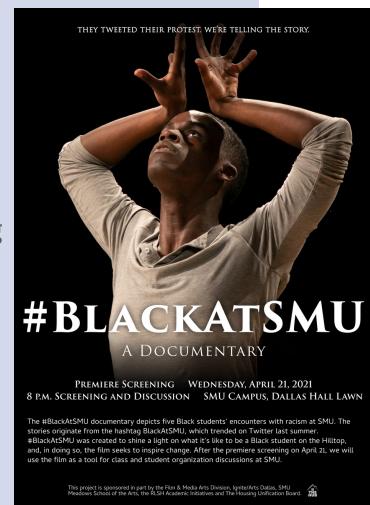
"We wanted to carry on the legacy of the people who were brave enough to tweet in the first place because #BlackAtSMU was made to draw attention to the grievances of Black students and that takes bravery," assistant director Shara Jeyarajah said.

Jeyarajah shared that the film is pretty intense because it unveils the kinds of experiences that Black students had and continue to have on SMU campus.

"It's meant to be thought provoking, a conversation starter," Jeyarajah said.

After the showing of the film, there is a facilitated discussion. This discussion is led by students who are trained in conducting dialogue about racial justice. The conversation allowed viewers to mentally unwrap what they have seen as well as give them a chance to formulate actions they can take if they ever witness these forms of racial injustice.

The #BlackAtSMU film will continue to be shown on campus in classrooms during the 2021-2022 academic year. You can request to have the film shown in your class or unit through the [#BlackAtSMU film website](#).



## Diverse Women In the Workforce

by Chloe Richter

Dedman College's Office of Diversity and Inclusion partnered with the Hegi Career Center and the Women & LGBT Center to host a diverse panel of accomplished women professionals in honor of Women's History Month. A huge thank you to our panelists: Tammy Suh Meinershagen, Marty Overman, Kristol Johnson, Hana Elliott, and Elisa Klein. The panelists discussed their unique experiences, both professional and personal, and shared the challenges they've faced breaking into male-dominated industries.

[Click HERE to access the recording](#)

## Retention of Underrepresented Faculty: Strategic Approaches & Initiatives

by Jordyn Harrell

In April, Dedman college hosted Dr. Beronda L. Montgomery. The distinguished professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology - Microbiology & Molecular Genetics, American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow, and former assistant provost for faculty development at Michigan State University discussed the importance of racial climate assessment and methods to create an environment of success for underrepresented faculty. She used some of the lessons she learned from plants to strengthen her message.

[Click HERE to access the recording](#)



Beronda L. Montgomery, PhD  
Michigan State University

# World Changers Shaped Here

# NEW: Dedman College Student Advisory Board

## Announcement

by Guadalupe Roman

Dedman College Student Advisory Board Design Committee met for the first time with Dean DiPiero on Monday, May 12, 2021. At this meeting there were twenty students in attendance to share their concerns regarding Dedman's duty to increase diversity and inclusion through course curricula, faculty standards, and student voices. During the summer, the group met to plan an official advisory board that will act as a facilitator between students and the college administration. The design committee drafted an advisory board constitution that they will present to the dean in September. A number of representatives from this new board will serve as liaisons to the college's D&I climate committee. Applications for the inaugural board will open soon.

## Course Spotlights

### Check these out!

- Offered Fall 2021
  - SOCI 3370 Minority-Dominant Relations with Dr. Nancy Campbell
  - SOCI 3371 Sociology of Gender with Professor Anne Lincoln



## Dedman College Black Student Mentors Program

### Announcement

by Jordyn Harrell

The Dedman College Black Student Mentors Program will be launched in full in Fall 2021. This program will provide academic, social, and moral support for Black students in Dedman College. One of DCBSM's goals is to build community among the Black students, faculty, staff and alumni. The mentors are composed of volunteer faculty, staff, alumni, graduate students, seniors, and juniors, who will provide first-year, sophomore, and transfer students with motivation and advice. Mentors are also given the opportunity to share ideas for community-engaging activities and events within Dedman College.

[Click HERE to fill out the Mentor interest form](#)

[Click HERE to fill out the Mentee interest form](#)

### Current Mentors:

- Carol L. Dickson-Carr, M.A. (English Department)
- John B. Georges, M.S.Ed., M.A. (Dedman College Records & Academic Services)
- Kenneth M. Hamilton, Ph.D. (History Department - Ethnic Studies)
- Tiffany R. McCray, ASL (World Languages and Literatures)
- Sanderia F. Smith, Ph.D, M.A., M.F.A. (English Department)

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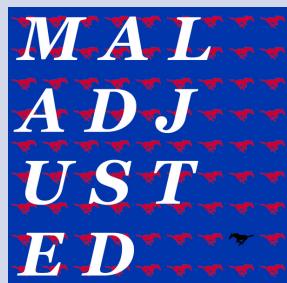
# Student Initiatives

## Maladjusted: A Podcast about the History of SMU through a Racial Justice Lens

by Jordyn Harrell



Shara Jeyarajah, Class of 2022,  
Human Rights and Music majors



Maladjusted is accessible on  
[multiple platforms](#)

Human Rights Fellow Shara Jeyarajah produced her own podcast that navigates listeners through the racial history of Southern Methodist University, a topic not often discussed. Shara Jeyarajah's podcast reflects her passions for pursuing racial and social justice, making education easily accessible, and continuing the justice legacy of those who came before.

"I think we really have to operate in the vision of what we want with the understanding that what we want may not be executed in our lifetime," Jeyarajah said. "I wanted to give little footholds for folks to discover something new and create a new, maybe more ambitious vision for what they want to see."

Her podcast's title, *Maladjusted*, was inspired by a quote from [Dr. Martin Luther King's speech at SMU in 1966](#), which read: "But I must honestly say there are some things in our nation and the world to which I am proud to be maladjusted and wish all men of goodwill would be maladjusted until the good society is realized."

Jeyarajah shared that she hopes her podcast expands to discovering the good society described by Dr. King and SMU's role in that society.

Jeyarajah has already released several episodes. One episode covers the naming of SMU and its desegregation. She is most looking forward to releasing the episode that includes her interview with SMU President R. Gerald Turner.

"I wanted to get his gauge on the state of the #BlackAtSMU movement and the Black Unity Forum," Jeyarajah said.

We look forward to listening!

## Values Statement

An informal organization of SMU faculty and staff with input from students and alumni of diverse backgrounds designed a statement to serve as a suggested model that faculty members can use and edit as they see fit. Check it out at [www.smu.edu/values](http://www.smu.edu/values).

## Contact Us!

Office: Dallas Hall 222

Email: [dedmandiversity@smu.edu](mailto:dedmandiversity@smu.edu)

Website:

<https://smu.edu/DedmanDiversity>

## Dedman College DEI Student Assistants



**Jordyn Harrell**

Jordyn Harrell is from DeSoto, Texas, and is double majoring in English with a specialization in Creative Writing and Journalism and minoring in Cultural Anthropology. She applied for this position because she wants to see a safe space where differences are cherished and open communication is encouraged.



**Chloe Richter**

Chloe Richter is a Junior from Vancouver, Washington, majoring in chemistry and math on the pre-med track. Using this position, she aims to help cultivate an open-minded and inclusive culture here at SMU.



**Guadalupe Roman**

Guadalupe Roman is from Dallas, Texas, and is triple majoring in Educational Studies, Spanish, and Human Rights. She applied for this position because she is passionate about the equitable access to education for everyone regardless of income, gender, race, or sexuality.

**World Changers Shaped Here**