

# Black Administrators and Black Student Activism: Social Media's Impact on Navigating Relationships and Transforming Learning - *A Planning Guide*

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## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, the administrators who participated in this project, and Lorri Riggs, my research assistant.

## Introduction

The article, "Black Administrators and Black Student Activism: Social Media's Impact on Navigating Relationships and Transforming Learning", illustrated that colleges and universities need to be prepared to support Black administrators and Black student activists. This planning guide provides a sample space for college and university administrators to engage in planning before an event occurs on their campus. It is a way to begin proactively infusing the work into all aspects of institutional missions, planning, agendas, policies, practices, and resource allotments. This guide is an opportunity for white colleagues to think about what they need in order to support Black administrators and Black student activists.

## Planning and Action Steps

### Personal Considerations

In any work around race, social media, and activism all individuals must start with their own personal relationships to these issues. This involves open, honest, and consistent reflection. Please answer the questions below. It is useful to write or type out the answers so that you can revisit and revise them regularly.

#### **Theme: How Do You Know What You Know About Race?**

- A. What are your most salient personal experiences with race?
- When did the experiences begin?
  - What is the first interaction you remember?
  - What was your role in that interaction?
  - How did it make you feel?

B. What narratives about race were you raised with?

- How did the conversations occur in your family?
- Where else did they occur?
- Did you believe the narratives? If not, why? If so, why?
- How have your beliefs changed?

**Theme: Understanding Racism**

A. Do you believe racism exists? Why or why not?

- What is your understanding of racism?
- What worries you most about your understanding of racism?
- How do your beliefs about racism inform decisions you make in your life?
- Are you open to learning more about racism? How would you go about doing so?

B. Engaging With Race and Racism

- How often and with whom do you discuss race and racism?
- How often are you in situations with people who are a different race than you ?
- How do you feel in those moments?
- How would you like to feel?
- What do you think you need to do to be better equipped to have discussions about race and racism?

**Professional Considerations**

All individuals working in higher education must also think about their responsibilities related to race, student activism, and equity within the college or university where they work. This involves open, honest, and consistent reflection and planning. This work should align with stated institutional values, which may be different than your personal values. It should also identify needs and areas of support and training. Please answer the questions below. It is useful to write or type out the answers so that you can revisit and revise them regularly.

**Theme: Expectations Regarding Race, Student Activism and Social Media at Work**

A. What are the expectations regarding race, student activism, and social media work at your institution? In your division? In your department?

- How do you know what the expectations are?
- Who do you talk to about expectations if you have questions?

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- What are your concerns about the expectations or lack thereof?
- How do you use social media?
- How has social media impacted your work with students?
- What are your concerns about social media and working with student activists?

### B. How do you support Black administrators and Black student activists?

- How do you collaborate with Black administrators at your institution?
- What worries you about collaborating with Black administrators?  
What have you done about it?
- What responsibilities do you have to support Black student activists in your work?
- What worries you about supporting and collaborating with Black student activists?  
What have you done about it?
- Can you show support even if you disagree with the students or the administrators about race and racism? How would you do that?
- Have you ever signed a petition from Black student activists? How did you decide to sign the petition? Did you make this decision alone?
- What was the result of you adding your signature?
- What do you enjoy about supporting Black student activists and Black administrators at your institution?

### **Theme: Increasing Institutional Capacity to Engage in Work about Race, Student Activism, and Social Media**

#### A. Where do you go to get training about race, student activism, and social media at your institution?

- Is training accessible and regular?
- Is training supported by your supervisor, department, division, and leadership?
- What barriers have you encountered trying to access training?
- Have you participated in training? What type of training?
- Was it useful?
- Do you want more training? How would you go about getting it?

#### B. What does your campus, faculty, staff and students, need in order to have the capacity to support Black administrators supporting Black student activists?

- What would this capacity look like to you?
- What would it change at your institution?
- Who would you talk to about creating this capacity?

- Where could it be built into institutional policies, programs, and process that are already in place?
- Who would be your allies in this discussion?
- What are obstacles you might face?
- How would you get over the hurdles?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions or considerations. Be sure to spend time reflecting on your own experiences and talking with others about their perspectives. Raise and answer questions that support learning.

### Resources

It is important to have an arsenal of resources to reference when planning and working with Black student activists and when helping your institution address challenges related to race, activism, and social media. Below is a list of readings that can be useful. This is short and limited list to get you started. Please continue to find resources on your own to add to this list. Mark the readings as you go and make notes. Congratulate yourself on your progress and learning and be open to sharing the list and the experience with others, remembering to meet them where they are.

### Readings

1. [\*What Snowflakes Get Right: Free Speech, Truth, and Equality on Campus\*](#)  
by Ulrich Baer
2. [\*How To Be An Antiracist\*](#)  
by Ibram X. Kendi
3. [\*Free Speech on Campus\*](#)  
by Sigal R. Ben-Porath
4. [\*Campus Uprisings: How Student Activists and Collegiate Leaders Resist Racism and Create Hope\*](#)  
by Ty-Ron M.O Douglas, Kmt G. Shockley, Ivory Toldson, Editors.
5. [\*Being White, Being Good: White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility, and Social Justice Pedagogy\*](#)  
by Barbara Applebaum
6. [\*The Intersectional Internet: Race, Sex, Class and Culture Online\*](#)  
by Safiya Umoja Noble and Brendesha M. Tynes

### Institutional Change

Institutional change can be slow. At times it is because of values, policies, and practices that have deep historical and traditional roots to which faculty, staff, administrators, alums, students, and boards of trustees are deeply wedded. Other times it is because changing an ideal, policy, or practice is costly in terms of

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economic and human resources. What can you do in your role to enact change now? Use the outline below to identify a change at your college or university and develop a plan to put it into action. It can be related to your department and position or it can be a plan to present to institutional leaders. It might be useful to put together a team to create this agenda.

Value, Policy or Practice:

Department or Program:

Goals (short term, medium term, long term):

Considerations:

Leader:

Collaborators:

Action Plan:

Action Steps:

Timeline:

Obstacles:

Solutions:

Evaluation and Assessment Plan:

### **Case Study: Social Media, Student Athletes, and Black Lives Matter versus Blues Lives Matter**

Studying and reflecting on real life cases of Black student activism is a useful way of planning approaches and identifying areas of strength and areas of need. Below is one case study showing the complexities of how race and social media come together in Black student activism and the role of Black administrators in managing the moment. Please read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Drake is the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion at a private, medium sized, university in the northeast. During an interview, he recalled the following story:

“Most of it [protests on campus] have been on social media because I started in the summer, when we weren't here and people were posting these different things. And then as we were getting closer to this semester, athletes started to come back to campus.

There was tension on teams... Like I met with the women's basketball team and with the men's basketball team. Both head coaches are white and the teams are majority Black. The men's basketball team coach is a male and the women's basketball team coach is female. Some of the players of color[on the women's team] were like, 'well, the coach didn't respond and say Black Lives Matter fast enough'.

And then I'm speaking with the coach, and the coach was like 'I didn't release a statement because I didn't know what to say. I didn't want to further offend anyone with my statement, so I waited to make sure it was appropriate'. And then we released it and so there was a misunderstanding.

Well, since it took so long, [the students felt] this person doesn't care. Then you have a [white] player on the team whose father is a career law enforcement officer and she said Blue Lives Matter. I think that the Black players on the team are like, 'how can you say Blue Lives Matter'? And she responded 'my father, is a good cop and he would never'... and they said, 'cops are bad'.

So then I'm brought into this discussion. So how do we navigate these things? How do we understand the context of this player, who sees her father as divorced from what's happening with police. Right? And how does your experience happen? How do we get to the same place to understand our lived experiences with police?...I was able to kind of work with those teams. And then as we move to campus, it is just more on Instagram, right?

... it is almost like people feel that the more snarky you can be, the more revolutionary you are. Right? If you can say something that's really slick and cool and cuts, I'm a revolutionary. It's like you didn't change a damn thing like don't think, don't judge your activism by the amount of likes that you get because those same people who are liking your comments, they're not out there doing anything with you.

A lot of the activism has been on Twitter on Instagram. But we've had some students actually reach out.

And send an email and say look, this is what we're seeing. This is what's being posted. Can you give us an update on what's happening? Can you address these issues that people are bringing forward? Can you tell us about this case or the investigation related to this incident that happened on campus?"

### Questions to Consider:

1. What is happening in this case study? What are the issues related to race, student activism, and social media?
2. What is the impact of the coach's lack of confidence and uncertainty about what to say in the statement on the students? On Drake, the Black administrator?
3. What skills are needed by the student athletes, other students, the coaches, and the administrator to navigate this moment? What would be a desired outcome?
4. What institutional practices and policies should be in place to proactively give students information and updates while maintaining confidentiality when necessary?

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5. How do institutions stay aware and ahead of issues and trends that will impact the Black student activist experience and provide programming to prepare the campus?
6. What do you do when comments and stories about racism on campus are posted on social media? Who on campus should be part of the discussions and who is responsible to respond?
7. What else does this case study raise for consideration?

### Conclusions

Proactive planning and preparation for student activism is the best way to ensure transformative learning and positive results. This document is not exhaustive but it does give knowledge for consideration. It also provides opportunities to learn, practice planning, and work at putting a plan into action. The information presented is generalizable. If implemented it can provide ideas, tools, skills, strategies for all members of college and university communities. Preparing and planning can build positive relationships and support Black administrators and Black student activists in their work. It can facilitate lasting institutional change.