

***Personal Journey toward Critical Consciousness:
Self-Reflection Questions***

Leaders' personal journeys help them operate effectively in a Shared Equity Leadership environment. The notion of the personal journey is centered around an ongoing reflection on one's identities and experiences and an understanding of the systemic or structural nature of inequities, which informs and strengthens one's commitment to equity work.

Questions	Reflection
1. What brought you to and continues to sustain you in being an equity leader?	
2. How does your position within your respective campus influence or shape your approach to equity leadership?	
3. What aspects of your identity are privileged in society? What aspects are marginalized or minoritized by society? How do these aspects of your identity shape your agency in your current role and spheres of influence?	
4. How do you think aspects of your identity or position (either privileged or marginalized) affect other leaders you might work with in a shared equity leadership effort?	
5. Reflect on a time along your personal journey when you encountered or were able to identify inequitable systems, structures, or policies within your institution. How did this encounter align with, diverge, or change your worldview?	
6. Select one of the personal journey case studies to read. How did this person's identity and experiences shape their journey? Did you see elements of their story that connected with your own experience?	
7. Pick 2 of the personal journey case studies to read. What similarities or	

<p>differences did you notice in these leaders' journeys? How do their experiences relate to or inform your own personal journey?</p>	
<p>8. How do you hope to further grow your personal journey as an equity leader and why? Reflect on what it is you may need from your team or your institution to further the development of your critical consciousness.</p>	

Case Study Examples

MARIA

Maria is a professor of mathematics at Valley University who also serves as a liaison with the Center for Teaching and Learning on inclusive pedagogies in STEM. Originally from Chile, Maria came to the United States at 23 to attend graduate school. Growing up in Santiago, her family owned several businesses and sent Maria and her siblings to elite private schools and the country's top universities. She noted how she was considered to be White while growing up in Chile, but when she came to the U.S. all of a sudden she was considered a person of color and lumped into the "Latina/Hispanic/underrepresented" category. This experience was somewhat jarring for Maria, as she had a privileged childhood and adolescence but was now in an environment where many people assumed she came from an impoverished or marginalized background. When she started her Ph.D. program in the U.S., Maria spoke fluent English but with a strong accent. She described several incidents in which faculty or other students treated her as if she must not be very smart, presumably because of her accent. After one of her faculty members made derogatory comments to her in a meeting, Maria went to her dean with a complaint. Fortunately the dean was extremely supportive of Maria and disciplined the faculty member, but the incident stuck with Maria and spurred her to get more engaged with affinity groups for students of color on campus and in her discipline. The relationships she formed with other students in these groups helped her learn more about racial dynamics in the U.S., in academia, and in STEM in particular. By the time Maria was writing her dissertation, she was also working with other leaders in one of her disciplinary societies to create an inclusive pedagogy interest group.

Once she completed her Ph.D., Maria got a tenure-track faculty position at a university in a mostly White rural area. In order to remain competitive for tenure she had to focus more of her time on research, but she still remained engaged with her colleagues doing work on inclusive pedagogy in mathematics. In addition to engaging her intellectually and informing her instruction, this group provided a space for her to process some of the isolation she was feeling as an immigrant in a predominantly White community.

After earning tenure, Maria was recruited to Valley University, which is located just outside a major urban center. Both the university and its surrounding community are extremely diverse with much more welcoming environments than Maria's prior institution. Maria was instrumental in helping start up the University's culturally responsive pedagogy initiative, working closely with other faculty at the university, leaders in the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Provost's office, as well as her colleagues across the country doing inclusive pedagogy in mathematics who have become a central part of her professional support network. Maria now has a buyout for part of her time to serve in a "liaison" position for the College of Arts and Sciences and works with faculty across all STEM disciplines to implement culturally inclusive practices in their classrooms. She attributes much of her success in connecting with faculty members of all different backgrounds to her personal experiences growing up with a White/majority identity yet identifying with racially minoritized groups in the United States. She feels she can relate to both White faculty and faculty of color and find common ground with colleagues from all

backgrounds, which helps her recruit more faculty to try out different culturally responsive strategies.

PAMELA

Pamela is the Director of Career Development at Mount Lincoln Polytechnic Institute in the midwest. She identifies as a cis-gendered Latinx woman. Having worked in higher education for 30 years, she admits to both experiencing and bearing witness to a great number of inequities, especially on Black and Latinx students and staff. However, she has never thought explicitly about equity or racism within the context of her career development work. As the new president of Mount Lincoln, Joseph Bailey, has stressed the importance of placing equity and anti-racism at the forefront of all departments and divisions, Pamela, as a result, has needed to begin thinking critically with her staff about equity and racism in this space.

Hoping to find ways to learn more about equity and anti-racism in departmental and division siloes, Pamela turns to colleagues that she regularly communicates with in her work including the Office of Residential Life, Alumni Relations, and the Office of Student Life. Pamela has a trusted friend in the Office of Residential Life, Megan James, who agrees to sit with her and talk about the equity plan that the office of residential life has successfully created and implemented. The plan includes a working definition of equity and equity-mindedness, a strategy to ensure an equitable housing lottery, and even a tool to ensure they are using equitable practices to hire residential assistants and student staff.

After her extensive conversation with Megan, Pamela is eager and ready to begin developing an equity plan for the Office of Career Development. She works with the office manager to gather the names and email addresses of students who have visited the office for career services in the last 2 years. She also reaches out to the Alumni Relations office to gather the names of a few successful alumni who would be willing to share their ideas around making the office and the services available more equitable and accessible to students, especially those from disenfranchised communities. Together, Pamela, the office manager, a representative from the alumni relations office, and the office of career development's assessment coordinator, work to create a survey to be sent out to students.

After receiving a 65% response rate, Pamela and team discussed the results and began charting a path towards creating an equity plan for the office. One of the major results of the survey was that racially and ethnically minoritized students did not feel as if the office was an equitable or empowering environment. Many respondents felt that their career aspirations were devalued by career counselors. These findings disheartened Pamela. As a Latinx woman, she knew first hand how it felt to be disempowered in spaces or how it felt not to belong. However, she had not thought about these feelings in the context of her work until now. The survey results served, in part, as a reawakening for her and her staff. The results also proved that an equity plan was imperative to better serve students, especially those with disenfranchised identities.

KRISTIN

Kristin has been working as the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) at Palms University for the past seven years. A historian by training, she leads the University's largest college. As a leader, she has a strong commitment to social justice and equity for students in CAS. Kristin has worked with senior administrators at the university and faculty and staff within CAS to increase inclusion and belonging of students of color and first-generation college students in CAS's academic programs. They have also implemented many new programs and policies to better support these students, which have significantly closed racial gaps in persistence and completion. At the same time, they have meaningfully increased the number and proportion of tenure-track faculty of color within CAS.

Kristin, a White woman, grew up in the U.S. South with middle class parents who never attended college. With little knowledge about college, Kristin decided to join the military after high school with the encouragement of her family. Kristin vividly recalls lying during the military intake process about being gay, after being confronted about whether or not she had homosexual tendencies. She recounted the internal struggle she underwent while living through the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in the military, knowing all along that she was gay. It was this experience that made her extremely empathetic to people who feel marginalized. That experience of isolation and exclusion helped her to reflect on her childhood from a different and new perspective. Although she did not have the language then, she began to realize that she grew up in a racially segregated neighborhood that had many racist undertones and overtones. Her gay identity helped her to see the intersections of oppression and gave her an understanding that people's differences should be acknowledged and respected. This sparked her desire to live a life of service to make the world a more equitable place. After four years in the military, Kristin went to college and focused her studies on understanding the intersections of race, class, and gender inequality in American history. She continued her academic interests in graduate school focusing on historic injustices and systemic inequities while beginning her professional career working in higher education as a faculty member and academic administrator.

About a decade ago, Kristin adopted an African child alongside her partner who is also White. Reaching this new personal milestone in her life and working to raise a Black daughter in the U.S., she began to recognize the limitations of what her academic training around equity could teach her. Her personal experience has made her more aware and thoughtful in her professional work.

EVAN

Evan is an Associate Professor of Race and Political Science at Exposition College, a private four-year institution in the heart of Chicago. Evan grew up on the west side of Chicago in a neighborhood that was underresourced. Growing up, he realized that many of his peers aspired to attend college, but could not afford to do so because they lived within a system and structure that was purposely designed for them to fail, and even worse, make it painfully difficult to remain alive and afloat. Taking advantage of his dad's tuition remission benefit from his job on the facilities team at the University of Illinois, Evan was able to attend the University of Illinois for undergrad. There, he participated in a special college access program which gave him the opportunity to take courses the summer before the start of the Fall semester and introduce him to a network of other first-generation college students of color. He would then, after completing

undergrad, go on to serve as a special admissions counselor responsible for recruiting first-generation students of color into this program.

Evan's background as a Black man from the West Side of Chicago, his identity as a first-generation college student, and his professional experience working in higher education led him to continue onto his Ph.D in Political Science. His background, identity, and experiences also shaped his research interests where he opted to focus on the intersection of race, higher education, and civic engagement. He conducted research around how college access programs promoted civic engagement for and with communities of color and even worked with higher education faculty members to investigate the role and importance of Chief Diversity Officers in helping higher education achieve their diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. After completing his Ph.D, Evan was recruited to return to his alma mater, University of Illinois as an assistant professor in the Political Science department. After 5 years, he transitioned to Exposition College as an Associate Professor.

Recognizing the fact that Evan researched issues around race and higher education from a political science standpoint and had a personal investment in the work, the President of Exposition College, Jolene Taylor, recruited Evan to join the president's commission on equity and anti-racism. Jolene Taylor created a position for Evan within the President's cabinet: Equity and Anti-Racism Faculty Fellow and Consultant. The position came with both course reductions and administrative responsibilities. Here, Evan was afforded the opportunity to help develop a special college access program specifically for Black students coming from the West Side of Chicago. For Evan, this position and this opportunity was the perfect blend of all of his interests. He worked with staff and community members to recruit students to the program and help develop a curriculum with a particular focus on community service and anti-racism. For Evan, his greatest accomplishment in the role was to see the staff and administrators he worked with become more socially conscious around issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. His personal journey was guided by an amalgamation of his upbringing, his research interests, and his position within the university. He was able to help people along the journey, in part, because of how far along he was in his own journey.

LILIANA

Liliana has been the director of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at Center City University for the past two years. Liliana's own experiences as a first-generation Latina in academe and growing up in a low-income agricultural immigrant community are inextricably intertwined with her professional commitment to equity. She recounts numerous personal experiences of the challenges she and her family encountered while navigating inequitable institutions. Her father was a migrant worker while her mother worked in a factory. Both had less than a high school level of education and spoke limited English when she was a child. Acting as a cultural broker at a very young age, Liliana assumed mature roles while helping her parents translate and navigate institutions in the U.S. She recalled many painful and uncomfortable experiences of both witnessing and being targeted for racism and discrimination.

The college application and selection process was one of the toughest times Liliana can recall. Her sights were set on the prestigious private college in her state, but she knew the high cost of

tuition made it unattainable for her family. Even though she had her parents' support and the grades and test scores to meet the institution's average student profile, she was figuring it out on her own and had little knowledge about the college application process. Therefore, she attended the local community college. While working full-time, she earned her associate degree after three years before transferring to the state flagship. At the state flagship institution, Liliana discovered and quickly enrolled in support programs for first-generation, low-income students. As an upperclassman, she both participated in and worked as a peer advisor for EOP. She felt empowered helping communities like her own. Her experience in this program revealed a world previously unknown to her. She realized she had missed out on many resources that she was qualified for but not aware of when they could have assisted her. This fueled her passion to create and improve access to educational opportunities to people like her.

Upon graduating, Liliana continued her professional career as an administrative assistant in the EOP office while simultaneously earning her graduate degree in higher education. She slowly climbed the ladder, working her way up to a director-level position over the course of 13 years. During that time, Liliana always went above and beyond to improve equity initiatives for the students she served. This work has always been personal to her. Her experiences of marginalization while attending predominantly White institutions gives her a lens into what students have felt throughout their academic journeys and strengthened the commitment to equity she developed in childhood.

KEN

Ken was recently selected as vice chancellor of student affairs at Lakeside College, a predominantly White private liberal arts college in New England. Ken is a graduate of Lakeside and has spent nearly all of his career working there. Ken is White and grew up in a racially homogeneous and affluent town in the mid-Atlantic region and had several family members who also graduated from Lakeside. As an undergraduate, Ken was a highly involved student and took advantage of an opportunity to be a resident assistant (RA). He greatly enjoyed this experience and worked as an RA for the final two years of his undergraduate career. Taking an interest in residential life and unsure of what he wanted to do long term, Ken worked at Lakeside as an assistant hall director upon graduating. Over the next 15 years, Ken worked in a few different student affairs roles at his alma mater and one other local institution and acquired a graduate degree along the way as his interest in student affairs leadership grew. During his tenure working as director of student affairs at Lakeside, he was asked to incorporate and lead diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives after the institution adopted inclusive excellence as one of its primary values amidst its push to diversify the student body. Ken had taken a few workshops on diversity and inclusion and attended DEI leadership meetings over the course of his time in leadership roles. He knew he was no expert, but at this point he felt like he was doing DEI effectively.

When his longtime mentor and boss retired, Ken decided to apply for the position of vice chancellor of student affairs at Lakeside. After interviewing for and receiving the job, part of Ken's charge was to lead the development and implementation of a DEI strategic plan for the Division of Student Affairs. Immediately, Ken was confronted with many challenges given the growing diversity of the campus's student body and the complexity of his task. Although he was

committed to equity, Ken quickly realized his previous DEI training was both limited and superficial, leaving him to feel severely underprepared for this new role. In order to be successful, he knew he needed to prioritize his personal development and invest in his own learning and understanding of the students and communities he now served. He embarked on a journey investing in numerous professional development and learning opportunities related to issues of DEI both within and outside of the institution (e.g. town halls, public forums, and trainings on implicit bias, campus climate, and microaggression, etc.). In these spaces, he had eye-opening and profound learning experiences as he listened to and learned from his students and trusted colleagues about their experiences with discrimination and prejudice on campus and beyond. He began to understand how students from different backgrounds might feel unwelcome due to institutional barriers and hostile campus climates. Learning about the challenges of those he cared about only strengthened his personal commitment to equity. Recognizing how limited his experiences had been, he developed a more vested interest in unpacking his own identities using the literature and tools he'd engaged in his trainings. He also spent a lot of time learning about the college's history and its involvement in past traumas to the local indigenous communities. Ken took any opportunity to engage in one-on-one conversations with trusted colleagues while also collaborating with the institutional research office to make sense of disaggregated student data. After engaging in this process iteratively, he grew considerably and realized he better understood his own privilege and power. This allowed him to readily and confidently discuss DEI leadership and issues on campus. He acknowledges that he still does not have it all figured out but is much farther along in his own personal development than he was previously.

KATY

Katy is Senior Advisor to the President at Horizon University and leads the Presidential Diversity Commission, which directs campus diversity assessments, educates the campus community about diversity and inclusion, and holds the university accountable for meeting the goals in its DEI strategic plan.

Born in a middle-class White family and raised in a racially diverse urban neighborhood, Katy was generally aware of inequities that existed in society but never spent a lot of time reflecting deeply on them until she got to college. An anthropology major, she studied abroad in Brazil her junior year and spent time living and learning with several different indigenous tribes in the Amazon basin, as well as with people of indigenous descent living in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Following her passion for human rights, social justice, and the needs of indigenous populations specifically, she pursued a dual master's degree in international education and anthropology. After working for several years in global non-profit organizations, she applied for an administrator position at Capitol University at the International Center, later advanced to the director position, and then to vice provost of international affairs at Capitol. Through this work, she developed a greater sensitivity to the ways in which international work on college campuses is linked to equity issues and the importance of intercultural understanding and competency. Further, as her campus increasingly engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion work, she found that her intercultural values and professional skills and experiences developed through her work in global contexts were transferable to some of the domestic equity work happening on campus. She began to participate in committees and groups on campus pushing for greater diversity

among faculty and campus leadership, as well as a group advocating for decolonizing the general education curriculum.

As Katy progressed in her career and became increasingly engaged in equity work in higher education, she came across the position opening for a new Senior Advisor to the President at Horizon University. The position was intended to focus on DEI issues at the university, and Horizon has a unique context situated in a state with a large Native American and indigenous population. While the role represented a big departure for Katy as her formal roles had all focused on global or international affairs until this point, her early experiences working with indigenous groups and her growing advocacy for equity at Capitol made her a strong fit for the position. After she was hired, she grappled with her White identity and her role as the top DEI leader on campus. Students, faculty, and staff from minoritized groups on campus were initially skeptical of her ability to effectively drive change. Katy has had to explicitly and publicly reckon with her racial identity and her relatively privileged background in her new role in ways she wasn't expecting, but these reflections and conversations have led to significant personal growth and learning for her.