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Research Affairs: EDI Newsletter

Winter 2022 | Issue III

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EDI Committee Updates and Accomplishments for 2021

This was another busy year for the volunteer RAEDI committee and we are grateful for your input to the committee and for the opportunity to create a more diverse and equitable workplace. The RAEDI committee has continued to work closely with VCR leadership to refine the proposed solutions that address the issues identified by staff in the EDI survey last fall.

- Launched the RA-EDI website
- Launched the quarterly RA-EDI newsletter
- Hosted two interactive panel discussion events in conjunction with Black History Month and LGBTQ Pride Month, with several more events in the planning stages.
- Participated in Research Affairs Town Halls
- Worked with HR and VCR Leadership to update and edit job descriptions and requirements to increase equity in our hiring processes



- Worked with leadership on the Research Affairs EDI Accountability report and was an integral part of the report.
- Launched a follow-up EDI survey to the 2021 survey, focusing on the culture within Research Affairs. Results from the survey will be shared with everyone soon.

We look forward to continuing our work of sharing EDI information and educating colleagues so that we can create a more inclusive and accepting workplace where we can all show up as our authentic selves and thrive in 2022.

We are recruiting new committee members!

We are looking to increase participation on the committee and would like to have representatives from each of the VCR units to help us shape the committee's initiatives. If you are interested in joining or learning more about the committee, please email vcr-edi@ucsd.edu.

Why Do We Use the Term 'Caucasian'?

As we continue to learn about the struggles of people of color in our society, in this edition we take a critical look at a common word in our lexicon and examine its origin and usage throughout history and the role that it has played in perpetuating racial injustice.



Why Do We Use the Term 'Caucasian'?

By Meagan Rubel, Ph.D-MPH

Dr. Meagan Rubel holds a PhD in Biological Anthropology and a Master in Public Health from the University of Pennsylvania. A former postdoctoral researcher at UCSD, she is now a

data scientist at Janssen Pharmaceuticals. Her words and views are her own.

Where does the term 'Caucasian' come from?

It's not uncommon to hear people self-identify under the term Caucasian. Although much less common in the U.S. now than 50 years ago, this term can still be found in medical, legal, and social science contexts, as well as the ways people identify themselves.

In its most literal definition, Caucasian refers to people from the Caucasus mountain region, which passes through parts of Russia, Iran, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. German anatomist Johann Blumenbach popularized this term in the late 1700s after he developed five racial categories to define global populations: Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, American, and Ethiopian. Problematically, he also ascribed a hierarchy of beauty to his racial categories, and placed Caucasians at the top. This hierarchy was expanded with traits being

ascribed to different groups in a racist fashion by leading medical and scientific experts of their time over the next few centuries, and was co-opted into the Eugenics movements of the 1920s and beyond, where it was used to further racist ideals.

From its historic ubiquity, and without fully understanding the deeply problematic past behind its usage, Caucasian has crept into our contemporary lexicon. Further complicating this issue, discrete categories such as race persist, among other reasons, as a sorting device that humans use to interpret their world. Confusingly, people's self-identification of race may actually reflect their socio, economic, historic, biological, and/or geographic origin, or some combination thereof.

What are better options?

Given both the racist underpinnings and non-specific definition behind Caucasian, what are our better options? Certainly, if you have a connection—biological, sociohistorical, geographic, or otherwise—to the countries that overlap with the Caucasus mountains, Caucasian could still be an appropriate designator. In medical and scientific contexts, it may be more appropriate to specify genetic ancestry from a particular population instead of saying that you are Caucasian or White, a category that is also very broad. (For example, I identify as White with German and Irish genetic ancestry.) And there are entire ongoing discourses about what it means to be White-presenting and/or identifying when you hold an additional racial or ethnic identity (see Further Reading items 5 & 6 below). Ultimately, everyone's self-identification remains exactly that: how they choose to define themselves in their lived experience. By adding the context to the terms we frequently use, we can choose terms to identify ourselves that are more accurate, useful, and culturally sensitive.

Dr. Meagan Rubel holds a PhD in Biological Anthropology and a Master in Public Health from the University of Pennsylvania. A former postdoctoral researcher at UCSD, she is now a data scientist at Janssen Pharmaceuticals. Her words and views are her own.

Further Reading:

1. [6 reasons to Not Say 'Caucasian'](#)
2. [Why Do We Keep Using the Word 'Caucasian'?](#)
3. [Taking Race out of Human Genetics](#)
4. [White, European, Western, Caucasian, or What? Inappropriate Labeling in Research on Race, Ethnicity, and Health](#)
5. ['Mestizo' and 'mulatto': Mixed-race identities among U.S. Hispanics](#)
6. [The loneliness of being mixed race in America](#)
7. [Too many scientists still say Caucasian](#)





Working Remotely: Zoom and the Propagation of Global Diversity in the Work Space

By Japhet Perez Estrada

The 2020 pandemic has undeniably shaken up the workplace culture domestically and internationally. At UC San Diego, what was initially a 2-week stay-at-home order has morphed into a years-long adaptation process of working remotely and in a hybrid model on occasion. We have all had to adapt to the fact that the office environment has changed and might not return to pre-pandemic normalcy any time soon. But the silver lining is

that working remotely has allowed for easier communication between coworkers—even in topics that previously might have been uncomfortable.

Working from home has allowed for office departments and teams to collaborate without jeopardizing anyone's health. In a twist of events, Zoom has unintentionally become a catalyst for the proliferation of global diversity awareness in the workspace. Many workers adorn their backgrounds with places of their ancestral home, with symbols of their cultural heritage, and other ways that foster a multicultural environment. During the month of October, I noticed several Latinx coworkers change their background to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month. Pictures of the murals found in Chicano Park in Barrio Logan, as well as images of their ancestral home of México, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, et al., were illustrated in their background screens. During Indigenous Peoples' Day, I saw another coworker display a map of the United States outlined with the former geographical locations of Native American tribes.

Pre-Zoom, conversations about diversity, ethnicity, or culture might have been uncomfortable to touch upon naturally in-person in an office environment. Whereas now via Zoom, if an image representing any of the aforementioned is observable in the background, a quick, "That's a great background you have. What is it?" can open up a great educational conversation. Anecdotally, I have recently seen a beautiful picture in a coworker's background and inquired about it. This led to an excited conversation from my coworker explaining her recent trip abroad to her ancestral home. She touched upon the geography, the history of the land, traditions of the population, and the activities she partook in while there. I left the conversation wanting the visit, but more importantly, I gained a deeper respect and understanding of her native culture and their different way of life.

But why should cultural awareness and global diversity matter in the work space? In a world where technologic connectivity and diversity are exponentially increasing, workspaces that can utilize both will have an edge over those that haven't bridged that gap. As we know, complex problems normally have complex solutions. Some problems can't be solved in a linear fashion; those problems are solved by being attacked on all sides. The differences that are part of a multicultural workplace can be used to solve these complex problems. Rather than avoiding the unknown, take the time to understand the differences found in the work space. There is strength in diversity, and that diversity can be used to buttress all facets of any department or team.

Japhet Perez Estrada is a contract and grants officer on the Ancillary Research Agreements team in OCGA, and the newest member of the RA-EDI Committee.

Resources

Impactree

Are you looking for a resource that will help support your self-growth in JEDI? Check out [Impactree](#) an alumni-led company that is helping organizations engage their staff and customers in JEDI work with an aim towards action.

The platform tracks user actions which will make it easier for staff to track the work they've done over the year and support the Performance Appraisal process.



UC San Diego Library Anti-Racism Resources

The UC San Diego Library has put together some anti-racist resources, actions and recommendations. These folks have their finger on the pulse of information and resources, so check out their curated list of articles, news clips, and cultural pieces.

- [Anti-Racism Guide: Resources for Education and Action](#)
- [Anti-Racist Resources from Our Librarians](#)

Implicit Bias Resources

If you would like more information on Implicit Bias, check out the resources below which include book and video recommendations as well as a link to the Harvard Project Implicit bias tests, which are free to take.

- [Harvard Project Implicit](#)
- [Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People by A. Greenwald and M.R. Banaji](#)
- [Book Lists: Best Books for Diversity in the Workplace](#)
- [Implicit Bias video series on PBS Point of View: Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism](#)
- [YouTube Video: What Kind of Asian Are You? This 2-minute parody video gets to the heart of bias against Asian Americans](#)

Take a [R.I.D.E.](#)

RIDE has been developed to provide information, best practices and resources to assist UC San Diego in its efforts to further diversify its staff workforce.

<https://ride.ucsd.edu/>



If you would like to know more about the **UCSD InterTribal Resource Center** on campus, please visit their [website](#) where you can find more information about their events and the latest newsletter along with the Land Acknowledgement.

If you have a question or would like to share a story, event or cultural celebration, please contact us at vcr-edi@ucsd.edu or submit anonymously via the [feedback form](#) on our website.

Visit our Website

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