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# What Does It Mean For Us To Move Forward: Combatting Marginality and Institutional Racism

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# What does it mean for us to move forward?:

## Combatting Marginality and Institutional Racism



**Karyn Dyer**  
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values and views, and that is okay. We have been on the wrong side of justice for so long that activism is considered wrong. We should not be condemning students, faculty, and staff who are sacrificing their academics, their physical and mental wellbeing to ensure that the future students of color do not have to experience institutional racism any further.

For me, if I cannot leave a direct impact on a student or a colleague, I need to be brave. I need to raise my voice in all ways possible and not feel guilty for wanting better for myself, my students, and my colleagues. I need to express my frustration and my anger in different ways. This reflection cannot be the only way that people know what I stand for and what I truly want to do to change the institutional systems.

**I need to raise my voice in all ways possible and not feel guilty for wanting better for myself, my students, and my colleagues. I need to express my frustration and my anger in different ways.**

To the Black students and non-Black students at the University of Missouri, Yale University, Occidental College, and other institutions with problematic systems in place, I will never stop thinking of you all as I continue to pursue higher education. I encourage all Black students and other students of color to continue to speak up, organize, and act in the name of racial justice in higher education. I encourage you all to hold these institutions accountable for what they say that they believe in and strive for. You all represent what it means to move forward.



Image by Chris Wiseland

**W**hat does it mean for us to move forward? That is the question as I continue to process my current feelings on the role of racism in higher education. White supremacy is constantly at work and continues to oppress Black people and other non-Black people of color. Higher education professionals and those who are learning more about this field need to be aware of how White supremacy is being upheld in higher education. It is often in spite of trying to be more "inclusive" and more "diverse." It is frustrating to implement cultural and racial diversity trainings while many institutions continue to look the same and continue to disregard and isolate students of color. Black students still feel like they are putting in more time, energy, and finances into their education just to be ignored and isolated.

Moreover, there are faculty and staff of color who these students turn to in those times of institutional oppression, who receive little to no support from the institution. These people have multiple identities and have different roles other than the roles institutions pay them to fulfill. As I think about my current journey

in becoming a student affairs professional, I realize that many of the professionals of color were in the same shoes and entered the field to be those agents of change. It is a very difficult journey because while undergraduate students have to deal with these issues, graduate students of color are caught in between dealing with those issues, learning about the field, and their current roles as interns, graduate assistants, or full-time/part-time employees.

*What does it mean for us to move forward?* It means more representation in the student population of Black and non-Black people of color. It means that administrators need to do more than changing mission and vision statements and dialogue programs. Racial justice does not come from apologies and powerful words. It comes with taking action and understanding that those actions may come with White people and others feeling uncomfortable.

*What does it mean for us to move forward?* It means that we are going to feel uncomfortable for a really long time as we try to change societal perspectives,