



May Institute's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council

**Our Mission** is to foster and support an environment of inclusion, respect, fairness, and transparency, where differences are celebrated and all opinions are valued.

## The Neurodiversity Movement

There is growing recognition that differences in development exist across people and that such variation is a natural (and valuable!) part of life. Neurodiversity as a term acknowledges this: "Neuro" refers to neurological, cognitive, or general functioning, and "diversity" refers to the spectrum of variation.

Neurodiversity draws attention to how autistic or other neurodivergent individuals may differ, and how their differences may be viewed as unique instead of necessarily problematic. For example, for some children, motor stereotypies (e.g., hand flapping, finger posturing, body rocking) may be viewed as an unconventional form of play or even an adaptive way to cope with stressful situations rather than a behavior that inherently interferes with other activities.

While neurodiversity is often associated with autism, it includes anyone with neurodivergences. It may include those with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), intellectual disability, anxiety, and other neurological conditions (e.g., epilepsy), to name a few.

Those who embrace neurodiversity accept individuals for who they are, appreciate the value they bring to the world, and set up the social and physical environment so all individuals may thrive. When neurodiversity is not considered, neurodivergent individuals may face greater challenges in achieving the things they desire most. They may feel isolated, which can result in poorer quality of life. This perspective holds several implications for supporting neurodivergent individuals in workplaces like May. These include:

- ▶ **Where possible, involve neurodivergent individuals in decisions that affect them.** This may include asking their opinion about their own clinical services (e.g., selection of meaningful goals, and preferences for support strategies); including them on committees or in leadership opportunities; and/or seeking their feedback on inclusion and equity for neurodivergent people in relevant settings.
- ▶ **Educate yourself and others on neurodiversity.** Requiring neurodivergent individuals to educate others places the burden on them. Seek opportunities where you may learn on your own and take the initiative to send helpful resources to others who may benefit from such information.
- ▶ **Seek opportunities to promote acceptance.** Advocacy doesn't stop after learning about neurodiversity; it includes taking steps to foster acceptance. This may include making systematic changes to incorporate neurodivergent perspectives into decisions, initiatives to educate larger groups of individuals, and/or altering practices and the environment to better support neurodiversity.

Here at May Institute, initiatives to foster neurodiversity acceptance include prioritizing autistic individuals' assent to receive support services and including neurodivergent individuals on research teams to inform the most meaningful projects possible. May employees have also formed a

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## Celebrating LGBTQIA+ Voices and Culture, and Supporting the Community's Rights

As we near the end of June, Pride Month, we pause to again recognize and commemorate the impact of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) community on the world.

### Did you know?

On June 28, 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn New York City bar that served the gay, lesbian, and transgender community. These types of raids occurred frequently across the nation as bars and restaurants could get shut down for serving gay patrons or even having gay employees. On this particular night, the patrons of the Stonewall Inn decided to fight back. The following year, on June 28, 1970, individuals returned to Christopher Street to march. This would launch what we know today as the Pride Movement (History.com and CNN).



Just as the Pride Movement has evolved during recent years, so has its multicolored flag. The Progress Pride flag has become a blueprint design used by those with identities underrepresented within the LGBTQIA+ community ([vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk) and [grpride.org](http://grpride.org)).

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## One Hundred Fifty-Seven Years Later...

*"We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers."*

—Martin Luther King Jr.

We bid a thoughtful and thankful farewell to this year's Juneteenth, with even greater anticipation of the next.

Every Juneteenth, the Black community celebrates progress. Though progress is often delayed, the community's resilience and perseverance through history marshals it forward.

Juneteenth commemorates June 19th in 1865, when enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, were finally notified that slavery had ended in



the United States. By the time federal troops brought word to this last and most remote bastion of slavery, 2½ years had passed since the Emancipation Proclamation

was signed. Juneteenth is also known as African American Freedom Day, Juneteenth Independence Day, Jubilee Day, or Emancipation Day.

One hundred fifty-seven years later, the United States continues to grapple with systemic racism. The deep and pervasive scars left by our nation's history of slavery and racism remain.

Just over a month ago, one of the deadliest racist massacres in our country's history took place. An 18-year-old who believes in a white supremacist ideology known as replacement theory shot and killed 10 people, and injured three more, at a supermarket in Buffalo, N.Y.

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## LOVE—What's Color Got to Do With It?

Every year on June 12th, people around the world observe "Loving Day," a celebration of the 1967 landmark Supreme Court decision in the case of *Loving v. Virginia*. What is Loving Day and why is it significant? To answer these questions, we need to take a step back in time to the year 1958.

Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving grew up in Central Point, Va. They fell in love and, like many couples starting their lives together, wanted to get married. What was standing in their way? Mildred and Richard were an interracial couple, and interracial marriage was illegal in Virginia in 1958.

The couple made the journey from their home in Virginia to Washington, D.C., to get married. What the newlyweds did not realize was that leaving Virginia to get married and returning to the state was illegal.

Shortly after their return, the couple was arrested. Mildred and Richard were able to avoid jail time by leaving Virginia and agreeing not to return together for a period of 25 years. With a heavy heart, the couple moved to Washington, D.C.

Despite their hopes for a new start, the move to Washington, D.C., presented its own challenges and the couple longed to return to Virginia and raise their three children. The two began writing to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for help. Attorneys Bernard Cohen and Philip Hirschkop, both up-and-coming ACLU lawyers, took the Loving's case and brought it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Attorneys Cohen and Hirschkop argued that the Virginia laws violated the Equal Protection Clause of 14th Amendment to the Constitution. The Equal

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## continued: Juneteenth

Almost all of the victims were Black.

Lynching—violent public acts that were used to terrorize and control Black people in the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in the South (Naacp.org)—was declared as a federal hate crime only months ago, on March 29, 2022. It has taken more than 100 years and 200 failed attempts for the United States to pass a bill that criminalizes lynching. The new Emmett Till Antilynching Act makes lynching

punishable by up to 30 years in prison, can carry a fine, or both (Npr.org).

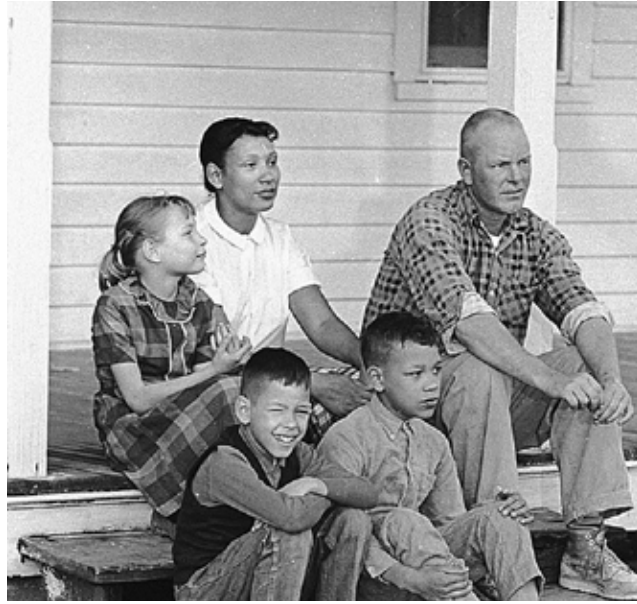
Our country is not alone in its deplorable deeds. Black people in many nations continue to face racism and discrimination. Even as the world watches with sadness and heartache as Ukrainians continue to flee their country, Black people there face barriers to their safety. In the midst of war, there are many reports of Black people being turned away at border crossings.

There are even reports of animals being allowed on trains before Africans.

Black Lives Matter.

May Institute's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council continues to work towards inclusion, equality, equity, and justice. The Council stands in solidarity with those who speak out against systemic racism and oppression and are working to dismantle it. We continue to stand with the African American and Black communities. ●

## continued: LOVE



Protection Clause guarantees all citizens the right to due process and equal protection under the law.

On June 12, 1967, the Supreme Court unanimously declared that bans on interracial marriage were unconstitutional, striking a major blow to segregation and Jim Crow laws. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the opinion for the court, stating that, "Under our

Constitution the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual, and cannot be infringed by the state."

In honor of Mildred and Richard and their legacy, let's take time to petition our local government for official recognition of Loving Day! ●

*Pictured: Mildred and Richard Loving with their children.*

## Meet Kevonne and Laura!

Newlyweds Kevonne Nurse, an Assistant Director of Residential Services in the May Center for Adult Services in Eastern Massachusetts, and his wife, Laura, discuss *Loving v. Virginia* with us. They share their thoughts about the impact of the Lovings on their marriage, and the significance, love, and beauty of their union.

### What are your thoughts about the case of *Loving v. Virginia*?

The first thing I (Kevonne) think about when revisiting the case of *Loving v. Virginia* is how recently this occurred and the fact that this mindset still exists within our society. Virginia's argument was based on white supremacy. These beliefs are still prevalent and are bringing in a new-age form of discrimination that goes by the ideologies of the great replacement theory.

### What have you both appreciated most about being in an interracial relationship?

We appreciate that for us, our relationship is like any other. Our relationship is solely based on our love for each other. We are able to learn from each other's life experiences from our own perspectives.

### As an interracial couple, how do you deal with the challenges you face?

One challenge is, of course, realizing the biases of some people. We may learn about others' mindsets when they unwittingly share their points of view, without knowing that we are in an interracial relationship. We deal with challenges by not taking things personally and educating ourselves about our own implicit biases, while using those opportunities to educate others.



### The impact of the Lovings on your union is significant. What if their efforts didn't bring about the freedom to marry whomever one chooses?

We appreciate what the Lovings accomplished that now gives us the freedom to be married, without fear or prosecution. We truly believe that we have found our

soulmate in one another. It would be devastating if there were any obstacles keeping us from being together. We would hope that if we had to go through the same adversity, that we would have the strength and resilience to stand up for what we believe in and for our love. ■

## continued: Neurodiversity

monthly Neurodiversity Reading Club that meets via Zoom to increase knowledge on this topic.

Individuals interested in learning more about the neurodiversity movement may benefit from:

- ▶ Joining the Neurodiversity Reading Club @May
- ▶ Reading articles or books\*
- ▶ Seeking webinars or training in neurodiversity
- ▶ Following autistic and neurodivergent self-advocates on social media with an open mind to listen and understand different perspectives

### Neurodiversity Reading Club @May

While neurodiversity frameworks hold important implications for supporting autistic (and other neurodivergent) individuals, there are few structured opportunities for practitioners and allies to learn about this perspective. In an effort to address this need, May employees have formed the Neurodiversity Reading Club to increase accountability for learning about neurodiversity and its implications.

This club meets to discuss articles written by autistic individuals and/or articles that are relevant to neurodiversity. The goal is to increase attendee knowledge on this topic and attendee ability to promote an inclusive and supportive environment for all neurodivergent individuals through everyday interactions and clinical practice.

The reading club is open to all May employees with an interest in learning about neurodiversity. While there are no formal criteria to join, our group comprises those who have (a) a desire to learn, and (b) an openness to consider different perspectives. Meetings occur monthly and are optional based on member availability and interest in the selected article/topic. CEUs for BCBA's and psychologists are often available. If you would like to learn more about the group or join, contact Summer Bottini at sbottini@mayinstitute.org. ▼

*Authors Summer Bottini, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Post-Doctoral Fellow, and Research Scientists Kait Gould, Ph.D., BCBA-D, and Ryan Martin, Ph.D., BCBA, NCSP, are with the May Center for Applied Research and the National Autism Center at May Institute. \*Citations available upon request.*

## continued: LGBTQIA+ Voices

With the advancement of the Pride Movement, including a newer flag, progress and representation waves for all in its community.

The Progress Pride flag was developed in 2018 by non-binary American artist Daniel Quasar. Based on the iconic rainbow flag from 1978, the redesign celebrates the diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community and calls for a more inclusive society.

Quasar added a five-colored chevron to the classic rainbow flag to place a greater emphasis on "inclusion and progression." The Progress flag includes black and brown stripes to represent LGBTQIA+ communities of color, along with the colors pink, light blue, and white, which are used on the Transgender Pride flag.

Here at May Institute, we value Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) of all people. The Employee Resource Group (ERG) Subcommittee of the DEI Council has established its second ERG, Pride @ May! The subcommittee recently held its first event, an introductory meeting, via Zoom. Look out for upcoming events! All are invited, and anonymous participation is welcomed. ■

## JOIN US – COUNCIL SEEKS NEW MEMBERS!

Application for membership on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council is due by July 12. The process takes only five minutes! May employees at all levels and across all programs and centers are encouraged to apply. For more information, please reference the email sent to All May on June 13.