



It's time to act.

*Championing Disability Justice
and Disability Joy in Social Work*

CSWE 71ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE | DENVER, CO



CSWE Annual Conference

Carl A. Scott Memorial Lecture

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Joy Through the Injustice

Social Action as Resistance and Liberation

Cassandra E. Simon, PhD, MSW

The University of Alabama

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2025 Carl A. Scott Memorial Lecture



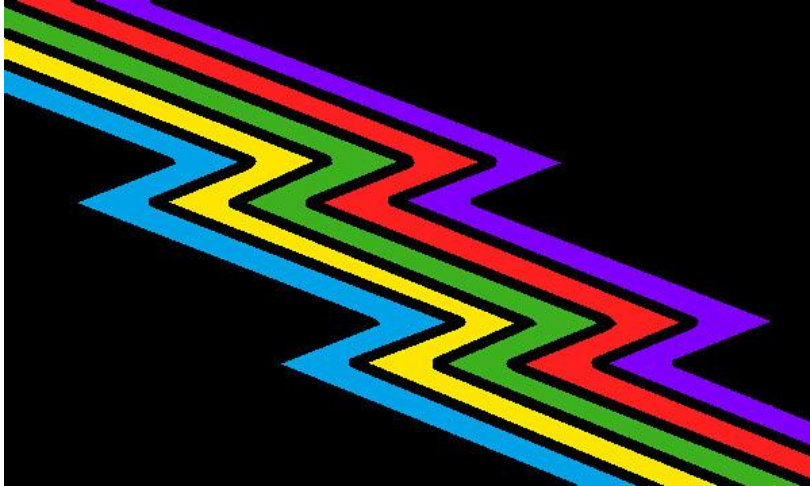
- Lecture established to continue his legacy of equity and social justice in social work through building knowledge and furthering the well-being of individuals and their communities.
- Carl A. Scott joined CSWE in 1968, a turbulent time in our country's history, as a senior consultant on minority groups.
- “Lecturers are individuals who are exemplars of inclusive excellence and bring an innovative perspective on diversity, equity, and inclusion in social work education.”

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Conference Theme and Focus



- Championing Disability Justice and Disability Joy in Social Work
- Theme: “It’s Time to Act: Championing Disability Justice and Disability Joy in Social Work: This theme emphasizes the importance of discussions around disability joy, justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion within the social work field.”

Disability Injustice is All Injustice

"INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE. WE ARE CAUGHT IN AN INESCAPABLE NETWORK OF MUTUALITY, TIED IN A SINGLE GARMENT OF DESTINY. WHATEVER AFFECTS ONE DIRECTLY, AFFECTS ALL INDIRECTLY."

-MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



#HireDifferent

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The Strain of Higher Education

- Increased workload expectations
- Decreased institutional support
- Influence of business model on higher education
- Erosion of faculty governance
- Questions of academic freedom
- Political and legislative pressures

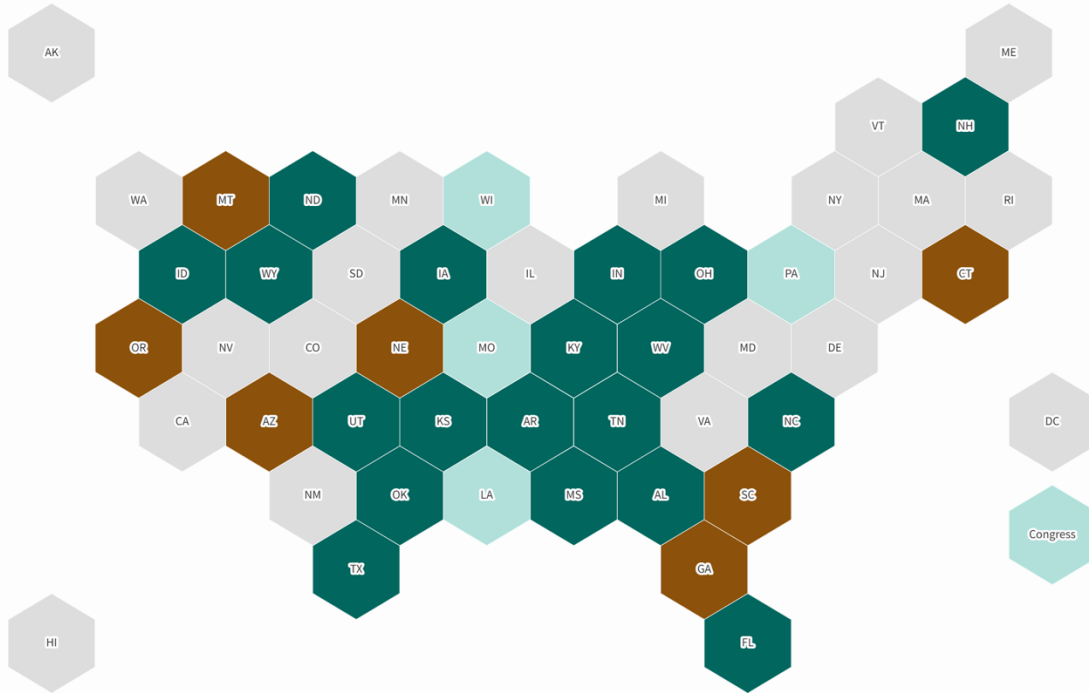


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Chronicle of Higher Ed: Anti-DEI Legislation Tracker



Where Anti-DEI Legislation Has Been Proposed:

- 136 bills introduced
- 29 have final legislative approval
- 29 have become law
- 99 have been tabled, failed to pass, or vetoed

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts>

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Anti-DEI Legislation Effects on Higher Education

- Defunding DEI offices
- Bans the use of diversity statements in hiring
- Curriculum restrictions
- Academic freedom concerns
- Freedom of speech questioned
- **Chilling** effect on DEI content



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Anti-DEI | Executive Orders and Disabilities



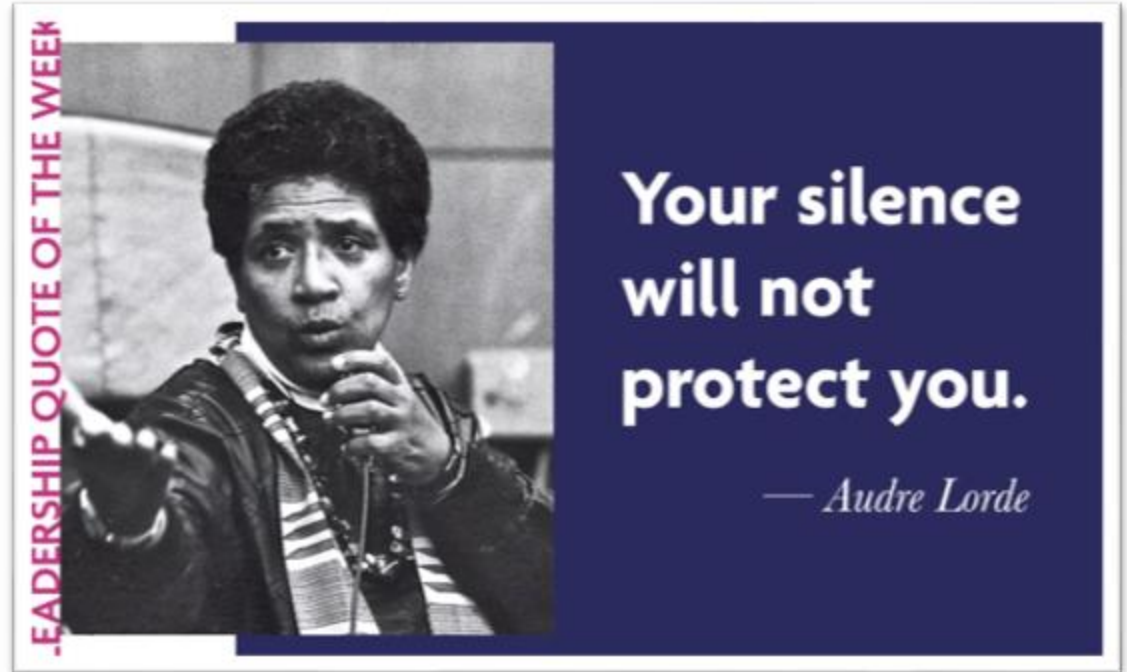
- Elimination of DEI offices and accessibility programs
- Impact on federal employment and accessibility
- Healthcare and clinical practice disruptions
- Workplace protections lessened
- Loss of accessibility services
- **Chilling** of disability advocacy

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McCarthyism Revisited



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Disability Joy | Linda Norah Davis



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Social Work and the Fruit Trees



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Social Work's Response

- Increased commitment to social justice
- Collaboration with leading social work organizations
- Development of support and strategy groups
- Curriculum changes and rebranding
- Increased attention to scholarship on Anti-DEI its effects
- Moral/ethical challenges
- Examination of teaching pedagogies



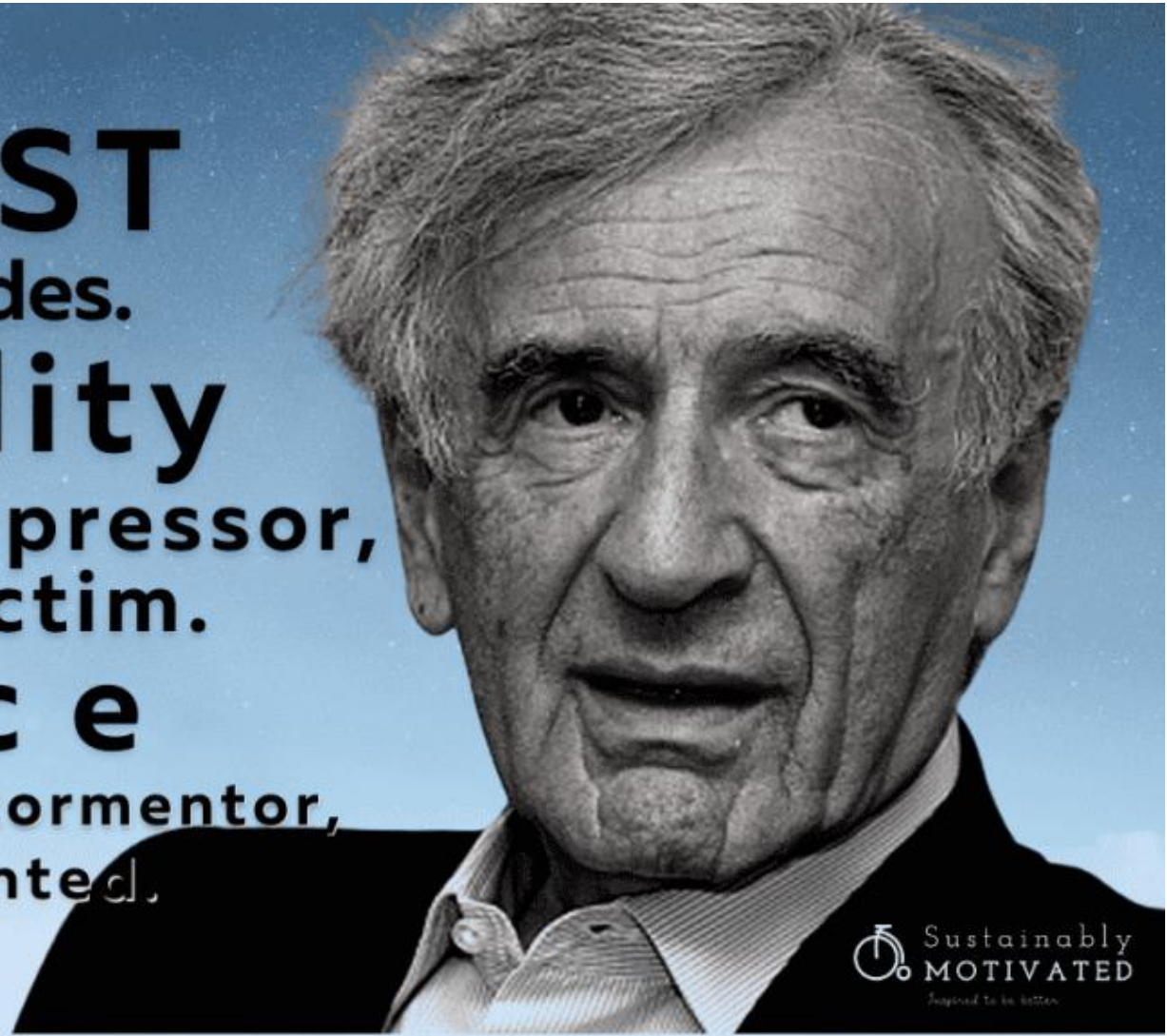
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WE MUST
always take sides.
Neutrality
helps the oppressor,
never the victim.
S i l e n c e
encourages the tormentor,
never the tormented.

- Elie Wiesel



 Sustainably
MOTIVATED
Inspired to be better.

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Critiques of Social Justice and Social Work

Identify Misalignment

Reflect on areas where your **actions** may not **align** with your **values**.

- The Disconnect between the Dots (rhetoric vs. action)
- Lack of critical examination of how we teach supports the status quo
- Do we focus on development of scholar activist and practitioners?
- Individual problems vs systemic issues
- Task oriented curriculum vs transformative education approaches

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Intersection of Disability Justice, Joy, & Social Work



- Hierarchy of oppression
- Medicalizing and individualizing of disability
- Barriers to participation (UDL, accommodations, etc.)
- Resistance to Disability Justice Framework

It's Time to Act – The Power of Disability Joy

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Teaching Pedagogies for Social Justice & Activism

Critical Pedagogy

Intergroup
Dialogue

Reflection and
Critical Self
Inquiry

Critical Relational
Theory

Community
Engaged and
Service Learning

Social Action
Oriented
Learning

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Examples of Social Action in Teaching

Divestment in
Sudan for
Retirement Fund
at UA

“Advocates for a
Better Alabama”

HIV Testing on
Campus

Diversity
Evaluation of
School of Social
Work

Reporting of
Campus
Microaggressions

Preparing
Alabama
Students for
Success

Not Isolated

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Recent Social Action Projects in Classes



 University of Alabama

RATE MY CAMPUS Through Roll Mobility

01 **Understand**
Most people will either have a disability or know someone who does at some point in their lives.

02 **Rate**
Roll Mobility's mission is to make the world more accessible for people with mobility issues. By rating buildings and reporting inaccessibility, you ensure everyone can attend campus classes and events at The University of Alabama.



- 58% of bathrooms on campus are not accessible.
- Less than 7% of bathrooms on campus are considered fully accessible.
- Less than 17% of campus buildings fully accommodate physical disabilities
- In 42% of classes, low-top tables with removable chairs are not available for disabled students.

 Learn more about Roll Mobility



 visit additional resources <https://ods.ua.edu/>

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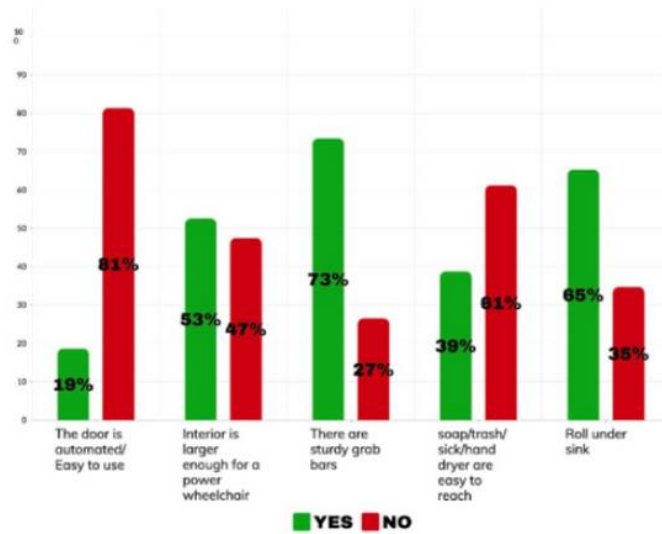
Roll Mobility

BATHROOM ACCESSIBILITY

Overall Bathroom Rating



■ Accessible to everyone
 ■ Not Accessible
 ■ Mostly Accessible

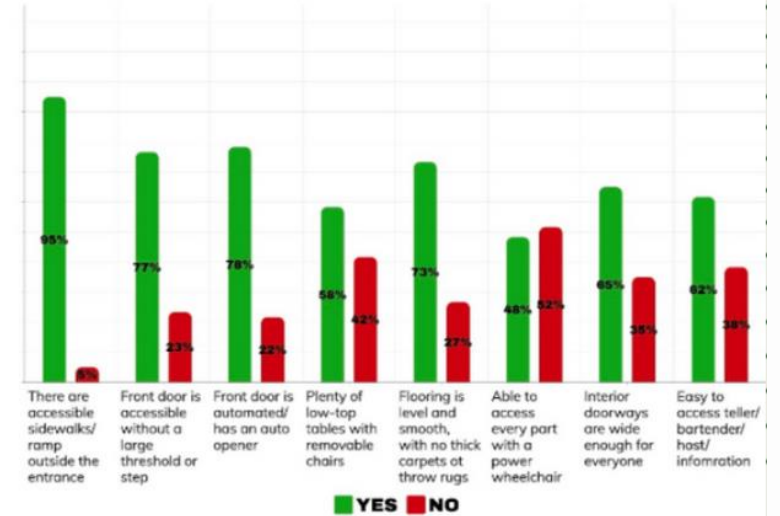


BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY

Overall Building Rating



■ Accessible to everyone
 ■ Not Accessible
 ■ Mostly Accessible



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Delete Dixie



<https://deletedixie.wixsite.com/ddi22?wix-vod-video-id=8c57df2b1ea84332ad32d323fa871dc1&wix-vod-comp-id=comp-l822no4r>

Delete Dixie Initiative

[Home](#) [About](#) [Take Action](#) [Contact](#) [Endorsements](#) [Sources](#)

What is DDI?

Delete Dixie Initiative

The Delete Dixie Initiative is a coalition of students, faculty, and friends who wish to create a more inclusive campus culture. Our mission is to remove the word, "Dixie", from the Alabama Fight Song ("Yea Alabama") and replace it with a more appropriate term, such as "Bama".

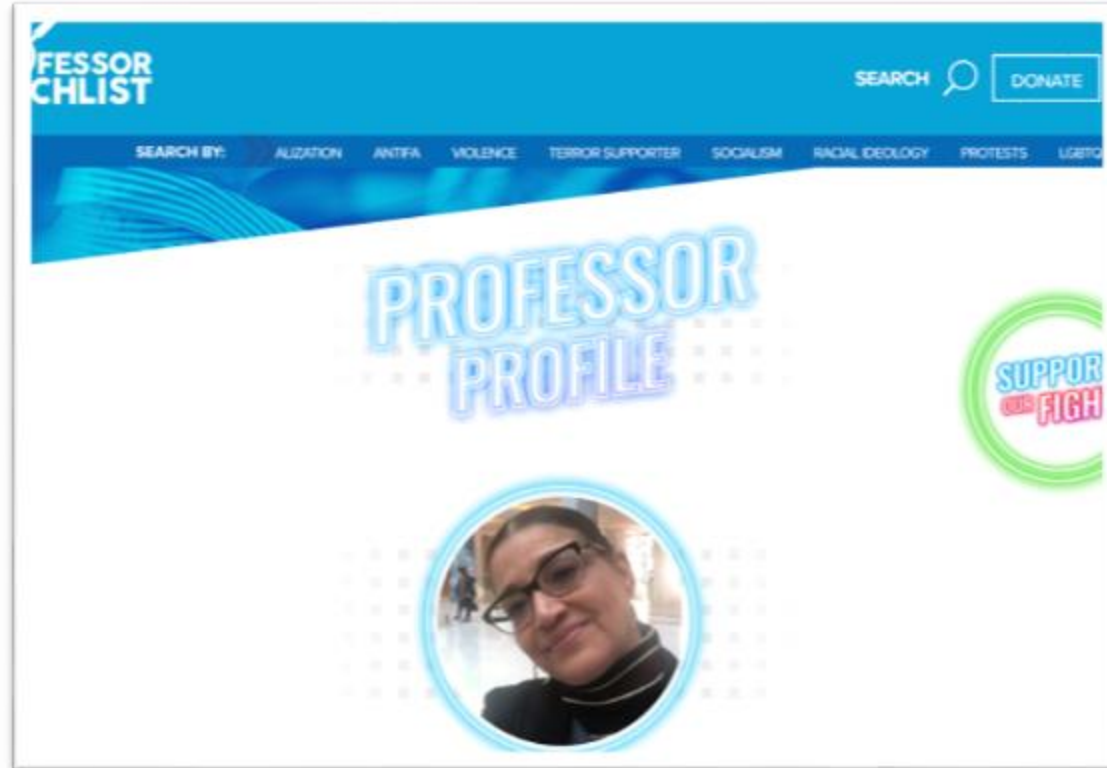
Throughout American history, the term "Dixie" has been used in a direct or indirect reference to the Confederacy and the institution of slavery. One of the most well-known uses of the term comes from the 1859 song, "Dixie". The song was first performed by a minstrel group, a group of white performers dressed in blackface. The performance was intended to represent a freed Black slave longing to return to

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Turning Point USA



<https://stg.professorwatchlist.org/professor/cassandrasimon>

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Most Recent Project

- **SB129:** Signed into law in March 2024, effective October 1, 2024
- **DEI Offices and Programs:** Public entities like state agencies, schools, and universities cannot maintain offices or sponsor programs focused on DEI
- **Compelled Affirmation:** Students, employees, and contractors cannot be forced to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to a "divisive concept"
- **Mandatory DEI Training:** Individuals can't be required to attend or participate in DEI training or orientation that promotes or requires assent to a "divisive concept"
- **Restroom Designations:** Public higher education institutions must designate multi-occupancy restrooms based on biological sex

What Are Divisive Concepts?

That any race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin is inherently superior or inferior.

That individuals should be discriminated against or adversely treated because of their race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin

That the moral character of an individual is determined by his or her race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin.

That, by virtue of an individual's race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin, the individual is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or subconsciously.

That individuals, by virtue of race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin, are inherently responsible for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin.

That fault, blame, or bias should be assigned to members of a race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin.

That any individual should accept, acknowledge, affirm, or assent to a sense of guilt, complicity, or a need to apologize on the basis of his or her race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin.

That meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist.

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Student Selected Project



The poster features an illustration of four hands of different skin tones (light, medium, dark brown, and black) clasped together in a circle. To the right of the hands is a red circle with a diagonal slash over the text 'SB 129'. Below the hands, the text 'Unity In Diversity' is written in a large, elegant script font. Underneath, in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font, it says 'JOIN US FOR A SIT IN TO VOICE OUR SUPPORT FOR DEI INITIATIVES AND DISCUSS THE EFFECTS OF SB129'. To the right of this text is a QR code with the words 'SCAN ME' below it. At the bottom, the event details are listed: 'WHEN: NOVEMBER 13TH 2-4PM', 'WHERE: THE QUAD GRASS', 'WHAT TO BRING: CHAIRS, BLANKETS & POSTERS', 'WHAT TO WEAR: INCLUSIVE CLOTHING', and 'CONTACT US AT UIDSW@OUTLOOK.COM'.

SB 129

Unity In Diversity

JOIN US FOR A SIT IN TO VOICE OUR SUPPORT FOR DEI INITIATIVES AND DISCUSS THE EFFECTS OF SB129

WHEN: NOVEMBER 13TH 2-4PM
WHERE: THE QUAD GRASS
WHAT TO BRING: CHAIRS, BLANKETS & POSTERS
WHAT TO WEAR: INCLUSIVE CLOTHING
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Their Courage!



UPDATE ! ! ! ! !

The event has been rescheduled after being forced to cancel/postpone by the University of Alabama. The event will take place on the Quad from 2-4pm on Monday, November 18th.

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View on Anti-DEI and Social Work Education



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The Results



SB129 Passed: March 2024



Effective Date: October 1, 2024



Federal Lawsuit Filed: Early January 14, 2025 (*Simon et al. v. Ivey et al.*)



Hearing: June 25, 2025, at the Hugo L. Black U.S. Courthouse in Birmingham



Court Opinion Issued: August 14, 2025, at the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama

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What We Can Do

Stay informed

Resist and disrupt

Model advocacy/activism

Document the impact

Support student-led initiatives

Develop ways to support colleagues

Build cross discipline alliances

Use experiential learning

Embed critical reflection
Transformative
+Competencies

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Believe What You Say and See What You Do



“I can't believe what you say,
because I see what you do.”

- James Baldwin

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Makoto Ikegami



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Training in Teaching Social Action

Teaching Social Action

[Courses](#) [Campaigns](#) [Resources](#) [Events](#) [Our Team](#)

Our Events

We host in-person and virtual **Institutes on Teaching Social Action** on how to teach social action. The Institute is for faculty who want to implement this experiential social action model in a course in the next 18 months. In the past several years, we have had 500 faculty apply to our Institutes, with 300 accepted from 190 college campuses.

I have personally gone through the Institute and found it incredibly helpful in developing a social action course. Teaching social action has been one of the highlights of my career, as it provides students with concrete tools with which to organize social action campaigns. I highly recommend it!

Dr. Arun Agrawal, Director of Just Transformations to Sustainability Initiative, Notre Dame University

"The Institute was one of the most effective uses of my time in my 30+ years in higher education. The Institute provided a structure and the tools to implement social action in an organized and meaningful way as a part of the educational experience. I left the Institute invigorated, armed with new knowledge and tools. I wondered where the Social Action Institute had been all of my higher ed life."

Dr. Cassandra Simon, Social Work, University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa

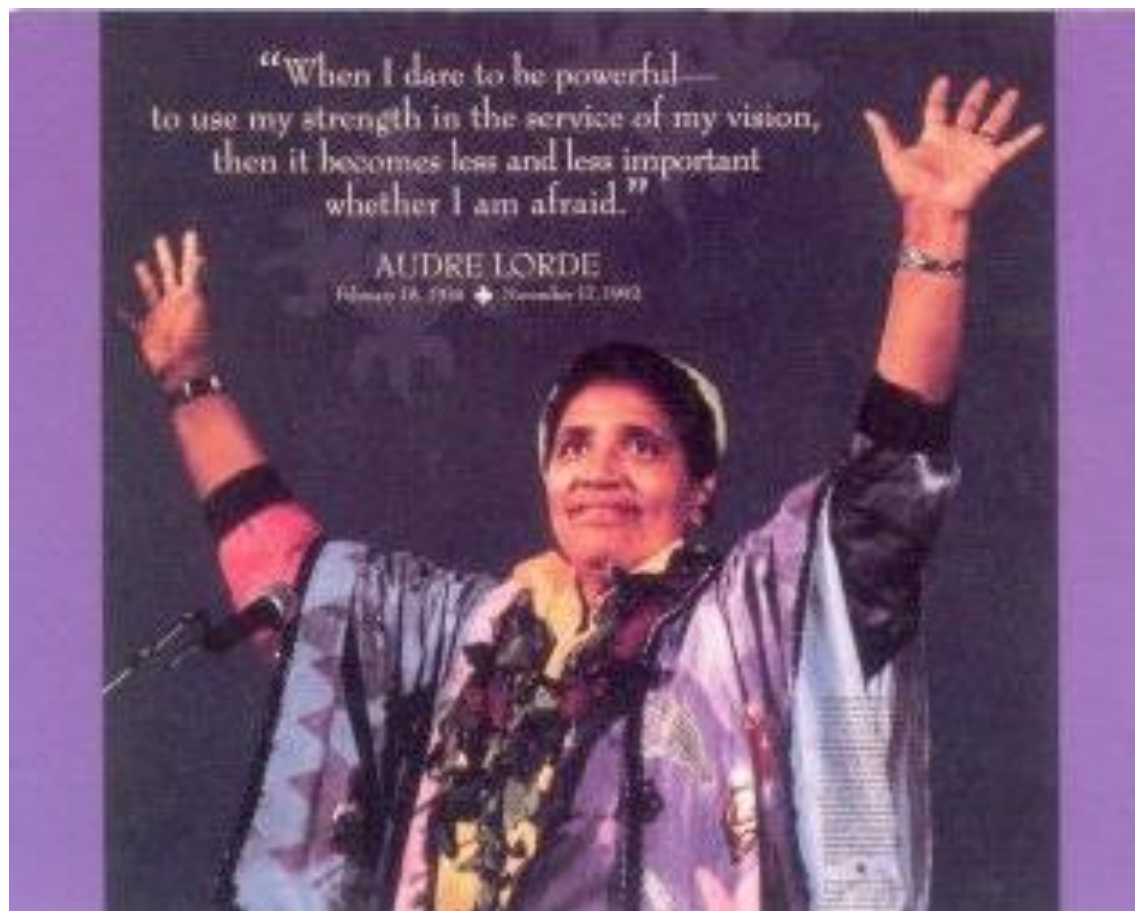


<https://teachingsocialaction.org/>

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