

“Student Perceptions of Race Relations at the University of Alabama: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives”

A Symposium in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of Desegregation at UA

The College of Arts and Sciences, the Institute for Social Science Research, the Department of Gender and Race Studies, the Department of Political Science and the School of Social Work are proud to sponsor a symposium titled “Student Perceptions of Race Relations at the University of Alabama: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.” The event will feature research presentations on several dimensions of campus race relations by University of Alabama faculty, as well as several distinguished researchers across the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and political science. The event will be held on the University of Alabama campus on November 6 in room 205 of the Gorgas Library from 1:00pm-4:00pm. The event is open to UA faculty, students, and members of the community.

The symposium will largely be devoted to the presentation and discussion of the results of a recent survey of the racial attitudes and behavior of over 4,000 University of Alabama students conducted in January 2013. This survey is the latest in a series of similar surveys that have been conducted on campus beginning as early as 1963, when The University of Alabama was first integrated. In 1963, two UA sociologists conducted the first of these surveys to measure white students’ attitudes toward the presence of black students on campus. These surveys were replicated periodically on campus until the late 1980s. Over the years, several articles using these data have been published in major social science journals (Muir 1971, 1974, 1990; Muir and McGlamery 1968, 1984).

There have been significant changes in the student body and in the policies at UA since the 1980s; therefore, the purpose of the most recent survey was to examine the status of race relations at the University of Alabama today. This will mark the first time that the 2013 survey results have been publicly presented. In addition to discussing the methodology and implementation of the survey, presenters will address several specific questions about racial attitudes and behavior on campus, such as:

- How have race relations changed on campus since 1963?
- To what degree are UA students racially segregated today when it comes to socializing and dating?
- How do white students’ perceptions of race relations differ from the perceptions of black and other minority students?
- Is racial prejudice still a problem on campus, and if so, to what degree?
- What strategies should be employed to improve race relations on campus?

Symposium Schedule

Welcome and Introductions (1:00-1:15PM)

- Dr. Richard Fording, Moderator (Department of Political Science, University of Alabama)

Racial Attitudes in the United States (1:15-1:45)

- *"Continuity and Change in Racial Attitudes in the United States"* Dr. Steven Tuch (Department of Sociology, George Washington University)

Student Perceptions of Race Relations: 2013 UA Racial Climate Student Survey (1:45-2:15PM)

- *"The Methodology for the Survey"* Dr. Debra McCallum (Institute for Social Science Research, University of Alabama)
- *"Student Perceptions of the Survey"* Dr. Utz McKnight (Department of Gender and Race Studies, University of Alabama)
- *"Exploring Student Comments"* Gabrielle Smith (Department of Psychology, University of Alabama)

BREAK: Refreshments Provided (2:15-2:30)

Racial Attitudes and Race Relations at the University of Alabama (2:30-3:15)

- *"Racial Attitudes among Students at the University of Alabama, 1963 - 2013"* Dr. Michael Hughes (Department of Sociology, Virginia Tech)
- *"Racial Differences in UA Students' Assessments of Campus Race Relations"* Dr. Celia Lo (School of Social Work, University of Alabama)

Reactions and Discussion (3:15-4:00PM)

- *"Where Do We Go from Here?"* Dr. Rupert Nacoste (Department of Psychology, North Carolina State University)

References

- Muir, D. E. 1971. "The First Years of Desegregation: Patterns of Acceptance of Black Students on a Deep-South Campus." *Social Forces* 49:371-78.
- Muir, D. E. 1974. "Through the School-House Door: Trends in Integration Attitudes on a Deep-South Campus during the First Decade of Desegregation." *Sociology and Social Research* 58:113-21.
- Muir, D. E. 1990. "A Comparison of 'Black' and 'White' Integration Attitudes on a Deep-South Campus: A Research Note." *Sociological Spectrum* 10:143-53.
- Muir, D. E., and C. D. McGlamery. 1968. "The Evolution of Desegregation Attitudes of Southern University Students." *Phylon* 29:105-17.
- Muir, D. E., and C. D. McGlamery, 1984. "Trends in Integration Attitudes on a Deep-South Campus during the First Two Decades of Desegregation." *Social Forces* 62 (4):963-972.