

## "The history of the why"

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on behalf of

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Dear Colleagues,

Two weeks ago, we celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy with a day of reflections, actions and learning, learning about racism generally and anti-Black racism especially. Racism isn't a one-day issue. Racism affects us all, somehow, every day, whether we see it or not. It is multigenerational; it has multigenerational impacts. On us all.

This month is Black History Month. Has our educational history enabled us all to learn the history of Black U.S. citizens? Mine didn't. As part of my journey to the privilege of U.S. citizenship, I did my best to learn U.S. history, all parts of it. That learning journey didn't finish at my citizenship ceremony.

Some aspects of U.S. history are easy to learn about. Yet, because histories are written from one perspective at one time, there are multiple histories. They may be based on firsthand experience or be written from the distance of many years. They are necessarily subjective, and they may include objective data--or not.

But all histories are written only by those with the tools, the power, and the freedom to do so.

Last week I was reminded that while understanding *why* we do something is necessary, it is not sufficient: we must first know *the history of the why*.

In my own U.S. history journey, I have learned not just *why* we have a Black History Month but, more importantly *the history of why* we have a Black History Month.

We need to learn, find, recognize a more complete history - a history including all perspectives - so we change the *why*, and then find our better "hows". We can choose to face up to the legacy of anti-Black racism by changing *how* we [recruit](#) faculty, staff, and students. We can choose *how* we better provide the inclusive environment where everyone feels like they belong -- and proactively makes others feel the same.

Knowing the history of the *why* means we know how to be the most sought-after place to be a part of.

Sincerely,  
Shane

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