

## What is the *Listen* Campaign?

The *Listen* campaign gives voice to various members of the Pacific Lutheran University community to share their personal narratives with vulnerability, honesty and sincerity. Weaving together 16 stories from PLU students, faculty, staff, and alumni, *Listen* illustrates the importance of narrative and counter-narrative in the telling of a fuller, truer story of a community, where all voices are heard and valued.

The goals of *Listen* are

- To create, enhance and sustain a community where authentic listening is an essential component of the campus culture;
- To assess the campus climate for multiple communities on campus in order to provide intentional strategies that can improve the climate for all members of the community;
- To provide space for various members of the community to share their stories for empowerment, healing and truth-telling.

## Components of *Listen*

There are four components to the *Listen* campaign: listening, recognizing and mitigating microaggressions, establishing learning spaces that are conducive to learning for all members of the community, and creating and sustaining communities where all members feel a true sense of belonging. The four videos in the *Listen* campaign can be watched on their own, however each video also builds upon the other, creating an integrated narrative of how communities should listen and learn from each other in order to create social change.

### Listening

Listening is one of the first steps in affirming the experiences of others. Listening allows individuals to feel fully human – it grants us the opportunity to empathize with others and to try to understand the world through multiple lenses and perspectives. We learn about others and ourselves, when we are fully engaged in the listening process.

### Recognizing and Mitigating Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation and religious slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, et al., 2007). For minoritized populations, marginalization still exists at PLU, as it does nationally, in the form of microaggressions. First, we must listen and affirm the often unintended impact of microaggressions on others, while also exploring the conscious or unconscious intent of our words and actions. Listening to both the intent and impact of microaggressions moves us to more authentic relationships that are needed to enact social change.

### Establishing Equitable Learning Spaces

Learning occurs in multiple places and spaces on campus and off campus. Every member of the university has the capacity not only to learn, but also co-construct knowledge and learning in every space on campus. The entire university is abundant with educators who live out the PLU mission of educating not only students, but also each other. It is imperative that all spaces on campus are spaces where all can learn and thrive.

### Creating and Sustaining a Sense of Belonging

A sense of belonging for all students “consists of both cognitive and affective elements. That is, an individual assess his or her position or role in relation to the group (cognitive), which in turn results in a response or behavior (affective)” (Strayhorn, 2008, p. 304). For students of color in particular, a strong network of peers, faculty and staff must be established. If these connections are not formed and nurtured, students of color may not feel a sense of belonging to the institution, which may affect their persistence (Braxton, Hirschy, McClendon, 2004). Freeman, Anderman and Jensen (2007) determined that the earlier students feel a sense of belonging with their institution, the more likely are to be motivated to persist. Faculty interactions, interactions with peers and perceptions that the campus climate is welcoming to all students are some of the predictors of a sense of belonging. All members of the community should be invested in the sense of belonging not only for students, but also for all members of the community.

### Discussion Questions

- How do you describe the differences between hearing and listening? Why might hearing and listening both be important in understanding the stories of others?
- Have you experienced a microaggression? Can you share the impact of that microaggression? Have you been the perpetrator of a microaggression? Can you share the intent of your words and/or actions? Why is it important to explore both intent and impact?
- In what type of spaces have you learned the best in? What were some characteristics of those spaces?
- How do we share responsibility for creating inclusive learning spaces?
- What is the significance of micro-communities? What micro-communities do you belong to and why?
- What’s the difference between welcoming and belonging? What are steps to developing and sustaining a community where all members have a sense of belonging?

*“To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.” – Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of The Oppressed*

## References

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