

# NEWSLETTER

“The time is always right to do what’s right.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

## From the PA DEI Committee

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2022. As part of our commitment to ensuring that all families at UNIS are included in the DEI journey, the Newsletter is an important tool and means of communication. It provides information and resources to promote diversity, equity and inclusion for us all.



As the PA DEI Committee continues to work to advance diversity, equity and inclusion at UNIS, we would very much appreciate your insights and experiences. Please do not hesitate to send your ideas, suggestions and feedback to the co-chairs:

Cynthia Muffuh - [cynthia.muffuh@pa.unis.org](mailto:cynthia.muffuh@pa.unis.org)

Lamson Lam - [lamson.lam@pa.unis.org](mailto:lamson.lam@pa.unis.org)

PS Please keep an eye out for our **DEI Family Survey**. In your email soon!

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## Please Join On Wednesday, January 19th at 8:30 a.m.

### Informative webinar on Gender Identity and Pronouns

The UNIS Parents' Association in partnership with Tut House and the PA DEI Committee, have invited specialist Dr. Emily Meadows to give a presentation, followed by a Q&A moderated by Ms. Suzan Steinberg, Health Team Leader at UNIS. Here are the zoom details: **Webinar ID: 980 5760 6258** and **Passcode: 809225**

Please send your questions in advance [here](#). For those who are unable to attend, the session will be recorded.

See you on the 19th!

**JAN 17**

**MLK  
DAY**

**JAN 19**

**WEBINAR**  
for parents  
Gender Identity and  
Pronouns

**JAN 27**

International  
Holocaust  
Remembrance  
Day

**FEB 1**

**LUNAR  
NEW  
YEAR**

## MLK

### UNIS: The Beloved Community

The “Beloved Community” is a society where “caring and compassion drive political policies that support the worldwide elimination of poverty and hunger and all forms of bigotry and violence. At its core, the ‘Beloved Community’ is an engine of reconciliation.”

Dr. King believed that there are 6 key philosophical principles that when embraced by all societies, would help foster the Beloved Community.

“Nonviolence is a love-centered way of thinking and acting that leads to personal, cultural and societal transformation.”

- Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.
- Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.
- Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.
- Nonviolence holds that suffering for a cause can educate and transform people and societies.
- Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.
- Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.

Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth.

In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.

Source: [The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change](#)

#### Free virtual events - registration required

- [The 2022 Virtual Beloved Community Global Summit - Jan 13 & 14, 2022](#)
- [It Starts With Me: A Virtual Youth Book Reading and Puppetry Presentation](#)

Today when we commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. day, we think of doing *acts of service* to others in our community.

Service is intended to empower individuals, strengthen communities, bridge barriers, create solutions to social problems, and move us closer to Dr. King’s vision of a “Beloved Community.” Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebrates Dr. King’s life and achievements as an influential American civil rights leader.

## WAYS TO SERVE ON MLK DAY

- [Volunteer New York](#)
- [Building the Beloved Community](#)
- [MLK Day of Service](#)



## SPOTLIGHT

### Interview with JS DEI coordinator Mr. Mohammed Souali

The Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee is proud to introduce Mr. Mohammed Souali, a French teacher in the Junior School and one of the DEI Coordinators.

Mr. Souali is a true citizen of the world who embodies the diversity of UNIS. More than anyone, he understands the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and these principles are an essential part of his life philosophy.

Born and raised in Morocco, Mr. Souali is also a citizen of France, where he completed his higher education and worked as a teacher for several years. Mr. Souali has also worked extensively in the humanitarian field. He has lived literally around the world, in diverse places such as Morocco, France, Vietnam, Tanzania, Peru, Cambodia, Sudan, Romania, Nepal and Senegal. Mr. Souali is fluent in Arabic, French, English and Spanish, and can speak Khmer, Vietnamese, Dutch and Swahili fairly well.

When we asked Mr. Souali what DEI means for him, he simply stated that it means “becoming a better person”.

He explained that getting involved in this important work as a DEI Coordinator gave him an opportunity to read, to reflect, to share and to go deeper and explore not what he knows, but what he does not know. In his own words, he is always mindful that he is “in front of other human beings” in his interactions with his students, with other faculty members and with the parents.



### “DEI means becoming a better person.”

As a language teacher, Mr. Souali is keenly aware of the importance of respecting other cultures. He says he brings a DEI perspective to his daily work as a teacher by striving to understand his students’ backgrounds. Beyond the teaching of French as an additional language, he takes into account all the other languages that the students are in contact with to guide them in building “plurilingual” and “intercultural” competencies. This allows him to connect better with the students, which, in turn, improves their learning experience.

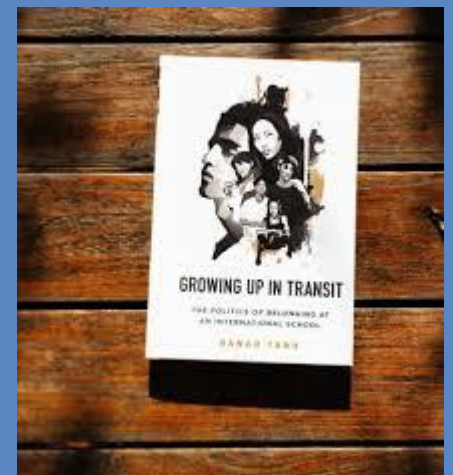
The DEI Committee is fortunate and grateful to be working hand in hand with passionate and committed faculty members such as Mr. Souali.

## BOOK CORNER

### GROWING UP IN TRANSIT: The Politics of Belonging at an International School

This book by Danau Tanu speaks uniquely to the experience at a school like UNIS. It is the first and only book that addresses structural racism within international schools.

“The number of international schools that claim to promote ‘global citizenship’ has grown rapidly over the last few decades, shaping the identities and worldview of millions of young minds. Yet, the ideology of being ‘international’ that is at the heart of the ethos of these schools is Western centric.”



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

### 2022 Theme: Black Health & Wellness

Black History Month is celebrated for the entire month of February. The theme for Black History Month 2022 is Black Health and Wellness. While this is an opportunity to celebrate iconic doctors and physicians, the theme also acknowledges other wellness practitioners across the African diaspora, such as midwives, doulas and herbalists. It is also a year to recognize inequities surrounding healthcare in Black communities, especially with the disproportionate effect of COVID-19.

### [Read about these Black Women at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19 on CNN](#)



### Ways to celebrate BHM

Celebrate Black History Month with the National Museum of African American History & Culture. Throughout the month of February, NMAAHC Kids will be hosting Joyful Fridays! Registration available at the links below. All events are free.

- [4th February 2022 - The Black Panthers](#)
- [11th February 2022 - Maya Angelou](#)
- [18th February 2022 - Granville T. Woods & The Roller Coaster](#)
- [25th February 2022 - Black Creativity & Abstract Art](#)

### Black History Month Trivia! Enjoy!!

We have 2 options for you. The first one can be done immediately. The second one will require you to register online and will be done via Zoom. Good luck!!!

- [WHO SAID WHAT????](#)
- [BLACK HISTORY TRIVIA CONTEST!!!](#)

## WHY COVID-19 HAS HIT THE BLACK COMMUNITY SO HARD!

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought social and racial injustice and inequity to the forefront of public health. It has highlighted that health equity is still not a reality as the impact to the Black/African American and minority communities has been disproportionate. Factors such as discrimination, healthcare access and use, occupation, educational, income and wealth gaps and housing are just some of the factors which have resulted in these communities being put at increased risk of not only catching the virus but ultimately succumbing to it.

Watch more on YouTube here: [Why COVID-19 Has Hit The Black Community So Hard](#)



## SPOTLIGHT

### Interview with the Akhtar-Lasker Family

#### 1. What is your background?

“While both of our family origins are from Bangladesh, Romano was born and raised in Italy, and did his university years and Masters in the UK. Lushana was born in the United Arab Emirates, spent her early years in Iraq and Bangladesh, after which her family moved to Queens, NY.”

#### 2. Why did you choose to live in Queens?

“We didn’t choose Queens, Queens chose us! After Romano transferred to NY (from Iraq, via Geneva) for the UN, he hopped around first in Manhattan and then to Brooklyn. Once we got married, it was almost a magnetic pull to come to the “world’s borough” of Queens - for family, cultural and quality of life reasons.

With both of us working for the UN, knowing that we will likely be called to serve elsewhere in the world, we wanted to ground ourselves in a location that was in touching distance from all of our various cultural roots, especially the food! Equally importantly we set our roots in Queens knowing that our three kids would have an opportunity for a world-class education with a curriculum that sets them up for the IB, right here in Queens at UNIS.”

#### 3. Why did you decide to enroll Rahima at UNIS Queens? How did you hear about UNIS Queens?

“From the warmth and academic excellence of Mrs. Kennedy and UNIS Queens teachers and staff, diversity of the students, the posters and work displayed in the school hallways, we knew that this campus would allow Rahima to flourish as a Queens girl ready to be a global citizen.

Even though we have worked in the UN for many years, the presence of the Queens campus is not widely known or promoted. We discovered UNIS Queens rather fortuitously through word of mouth.



Romano Lasker (left), Lushana Akhtar-Lasker (right), with their three daughters in between. From left to right, Rahima (10y), Lily (3y) and baby Luna (4 months).

We are eager to keep the Queens campus open and welcome the opportunity to work with UNIS administration to conduct comprehensive outreach to the 600+ UN families living in Queens/Nassau county!”

#### 4. How do you think UNIS Queens contributes to DEI at UNIS?

“Queens, the most diverse place in the world and a more affordable real estate market than Manhattan, attracts students more racially, ethnically and financially representative of NYC than the Manhattan campus.

There is a robust population of UN families in Queens because of its proximity to headquarters, excellent quality of life and its tradition as a landing pad for UN staff from other duty stations. UNIS Queens has been more diverse than UNIS Manhattan over the years, and there is a melding of Manhattan and Queens that happens in Tut House that has contributed to the sense of UNIS being a truly diverse school.”

**“Without UNIS Queens, many believe UNIS as a whole will take a huge hit in terms of DEI, and that having a “feeder” school that organically attracts a very diverse student body is an envious position for any independent school in Manhattan.”**

## International Holocaust Remembrance Day

January 27, 2022

January 27 is designated by the United Nations General Assembly as International Holocaust Remembrance Day (IHRD). Since 2005, the UN and its member states have held commemoration ceremonies to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and to honor the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and millions of other victims of Nazism.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Day honors the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and promotes education about the Holocaust throughout the world. Member states of the UN are encouraged to actively preserve sites that the Nazis used to commit atrocities against their victims and to reject any form of Holocaust denial. The UN resolution that established this day also incorporated tenets from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by condemning all forms of “religious intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief” throughout the world.

- Since 2010, the UN has designated specific themes for the annual commemorations that focus on topics such as collective experiences and universal human rights.
- In addition to International Holocaust Remembrance Day, many countries hold national commemoration ceremonies on other dates connected to the Holocaust.



### Virtual Commemoration Events

#### Museum of Jewish Heritage

[International Holocaust Remembrance Day](#)

[RBG Brave and Brilliant Jewish Women Sweet Tea and the Southern Jew](#)

[The Jewish Diaspora](#)

[Nazis on Long Island](#)

[HMTC Events](#)

**Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center** [Inspire Events](#)

**Holocaust Museum & Center for Tolerance and Education** [Event](#)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Upcoming Parent Activities:

- Training: DEI 101
- Training: How to be an Upstander and not a Bystander
- Harlem Renaissance Tour

### Coming in the March Newsletter:

- Women’s History Month
- International Women’s Day

## UN INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

### United Nations Theme 2022: Memory, Dignity & Justice

United Nations Holocaust Memorial Ceremony marking the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust

#### January 27 at 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EST

The ceremony will be live-streamed worldwide through [UN Web TV](#).

[Sign up to receive a reminder with the link to watch the ceremony live](#)

Ms. Melissa Fleming, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications will host the ceremony. Invited speakers include:

- United Nations Secretary-General
- The President of the 76th General Assembly
- The Permanent Representatives of Israel and the United States
- Dr. Petra Gelbart, granddaughter of Romani survivors
- Mr. Elisha Wiesel, son of Holocaust survivors Marion and Elie Wiesel.

Professor John K. Roth will deliver the keynote address. The ceremony will include testimonies from the Holocaust survivors from Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States. Mr. Pinchas Zukerman and Mr. Shai Wosner will perform a musical piece. Memorial prayers will be recited.

For those who didn't get to see it. [Link to last year's event](#) by the PA DEI Committee to honor International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This was an incredible conversation with ***Auschwitz Survivor Ms Bronia Bradman***. It is a MUST SEE!

## NEWS CORNER

### Third Culture Kids at UNIS

Many of our community members -students, parents and staff - are Third Culture Kids (TCKs), whether they come to UNIS from another country, or have always lived in New York. When asked "Where are you from?", many of us stop and think before we answer. At UNIS we frequently find ourselves welcoming new community members or saying goodbye to friends when they move away.

There is now an initiative that focuses on Third Culture identity and the impact of high mobility on the whole school community. This initiative is coordinated by the PA Bridge2UN Committee, PA DEI Committee, UNIS DEI Director Dr. Judith King-Calnek and is supported by PA ExCom and school senior management.

Please stay tuned as these efforts come to fruition.



## LUNAR NEW YEAR

### The Year of the Tiger

The Chinese New Year, also known as Lunar New Year or Spring Festival, is just a few weeks away. The year of the Tiger will begin on Tuesday, February 1st, 2022. This holiday is one of the most important in Asia.

Chinese New Year celebrations last for 16 days, starting from Chinese New Year's Eve to the Lantern Festival (January 31st to February 15th in 2022).

As a national holiday in China, the New Year is celebrated with seven days off from work (January 31st to February 6th in 2022).

Important dates for the Chinese Lunar New Year 2022 are the following:

- New Year's Eve on January 31st, 2022
- New Year's Day on February 1st, 2022
- The Lantern Festival on February 15th, 2022

The dates of the Chinese New Year are determined by the Chinese lunisolar calendar. As such, it is celebrated on different dates in January or February each year.

As the tiger is powerful and daring, those born in a year of the Tiger are predicted to be brave, competitive, unpredictable, and confident.

### Common Traditions of Lunar New Year

#### Hang Door Gods pictures

The Door Gods, known as mén shén, are the guardians of an entrance and date back to the Tang Dynasty. They are believed to protect homes from evil spirits and come in pairs that face each other. By hanging pictures of the gods on their doors, it is thought they will bring good fortune and protect the family in the upcoming new year.

#### Decorate with color

Red decorations are hung on streets, storefronts and homes to ward off Nian – a lion-like monster. The color red is also associated with wealth and good fortune.

#### Share wealth with loved ones

Children and unmarried adults are gifted red lai see packets that contain cash.

In Korea, red satchels containing monetary gifts and blessings of good luck for the new year are gifted. The holiday is called Seollal.

In Tibet, where the holiday is called Losar, children present gifts to their elders. On the first morning of the lunar new year, children wear traditional clothing and bring a basket with cooked meats, steamed dumplings, fruit, sweets and amdo balep, a traditional bread.





## NYC Things to Do for Lunar New Year

**Temple Mahayana:** This is the oldest Chinese temple on the east coast of the United States. (Address: 133 Canal St, Subway J Z to Canal St)

**Columbus Park:** Columbus Park is the biggest park in Chinatown and is a great place to have a seat and watch life unfold around you. (Address: 67 Mulberry St, Subway J Z to Canal St)

**Museum of Chinese in America (MoCa):** The Museum of Chinese in America is the place to go if you want to learn more about Chinese culture and Chinese history in NYC. (Address: 215 Center St, Subway 4 6 to Canal St)

**Super Taste:** The amazing food is reason alone to visit but with the amazing prices on offer, this is a no-brainer to get a quick and delicious bite to eat on your way through Chinatown. (Address: 26 Eldridge St, Subway F to E Broadway)

**Chinatown Ice Cream Factory:** The family-run Chinatown Ice Cream Factory has some of the best ice cream in the whole of NYC. (Address: 65 Bayard St, Subway J Z to Canal St)

**Lunar New Year's Celebration in Flushing FREE:** Saturdays January 22 - Sunday, February 13 The Queens Botanical Garden welcomes children for Lunar New Year-themed days, including take-home craft kits. In true garden fashion, you can learn about Lunar New Year's lucky plants and purchase one of your own to take home.

**Pearl River Mart in Chelsea:** Stop by Pearl River Mart in the Chelsea Market to celebrate the Year of the Tiger. Exact dates to be announced on its website.

**Cultural Festival to Celebrate the Lunar New Year in Chinatown FREE:** February 3 Kick off the Year of the Lion with the Firecracker Ceremony and Cultural Festival by the Better Chinatown Society.



**Things You Didn't Know about Chinese New Year**

**Lunar Ice in Battery Park City FREE:** Wednesday, February 2 - Saturday, February 5 Ring in the Year of the Tiger with a multi-day celebration that includes a live ice carving, kids crafts and more.

**Brooklyn Children's Museum's Lunar New Year Festival in Crown Heights, Brooklyn:** Saturday, February 5 BCM hosts this Lunar New Year fest where kids can learn about the festival and traditions of Lunar New Year through storytelling, live music, plus a calligraphy workshop and a rooftop lion puppet parade led by the Chinatown Community Young Lions.

**Lunar New Year Festival FREE:** Saturday, January 29 Celebrate the Year of the Tiger with performances, interactive activities, and artist-led workshops for all ages at the MET. The full schedule of events will be available soon and be available in Korean, simplified Chinese, and Spanish.

**An Afternoon of Chinese Opera FREE:** Sunday, January 16 Gather at the Flushing Town Hall for an afternoon of music, culture, and arts in celebration of Lunar New Year and to welcome the Year of the Tiger. Presented in partnership with the Chinese American Arts Council, this performance includes seven renowned and popular Chinese opera plays, each with its own unique storyline, music, vocal performance, mime, and dance. For those unable to attend, virtual audiences from across the globe can still join the live stream and tune in for free via Flushing Town Hall's YouTube Channel.

**Lunar New Year Celebration:** Saturday, January 29 Join BKCM in celebration of the passing of a new lunar year with an afternoon of traditional and contemporary Chinese music, a performance of the lion dance, crafts, calligraphy and much more. Bring the family and enjoy a traditional Chinese celebration of the Year of the Tiger! The event will be held outdoors in the BKCM Garden and on the block with masks required. More details to follow.

**Korean Lunar New Year Celebration in Staten Island:** Saturday, January 29 Celebrate Seollal, Korean Lunar New Year, through a variety of crafts and activities including Korean calligraphy and games. Prizes for the winner! This program is produced in partnership with the Korean Community Development Center.

## REST IN PEACE

### SIDNEY POITIER (1927 - 2022)

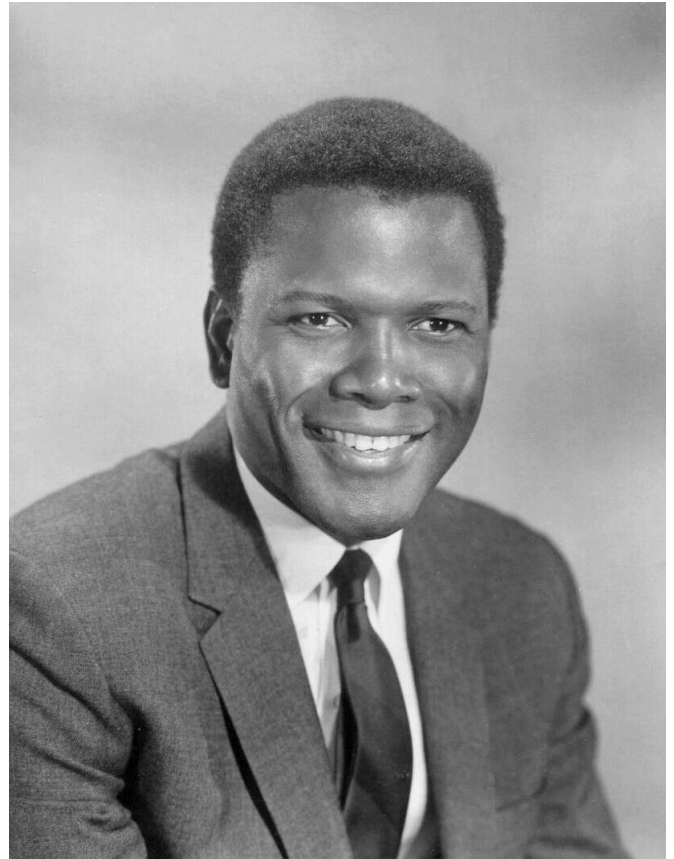
Oscar winner, trailblazer, groundbreaking and Hollywood's first black movie star Sidney Poitier died on January 6, 2022 at the age of 94. He transformed the way black people were portrayed on screen and in 1964 became the first Black actor to win an Academy Award for best lead performance.

Mr. Poitier knew all too well that representation matters and was very intentional in his movie choices. In a 1967 interview, in response to how and why he chose his roles, he was quoted as saying, "It's a choice, a clear choice," Mr. Poitier said of his film parts in a 1967 interview. "If the fabric of the society were different, I would scream to high heaven to play villains and to deal with different images of Negro life that would be more dimensional. But I'll be damned if I do that at this stage of the game."

**"If the fabric of the society were different, I would scream to high heaven to play villains and to deal with different images of Negro life that would be more dimensional. But I'll be damned if I do that at this stage of the game."**

He is survived by his wife of 46 years Joanna Shimkus and 5 of his 6 daughters.

**Rest in Power!**



- Born in Miami, Florida but grew up in the Bahamas.
- Nominated for 2 Academy Awards but only won 1. Also received an honorary Oscar.
- He lied about his age and joined the army at age 16 and pretended to be insane to obtain a discharge 9 months later according to his autobiography "The Measure of a Man: A Spiritual Autobiography."
- He had a heavy Bahamian accent and that was proving challenging to him in trying to obtain acting roles. Once he lost the accent his luck changed.
- In 1959 he became the first African-American to receive an Oscar nomination for Best Actor for "The Defiant Ones." Although he did not win on that occasion. In 1964 he did win the Academy Award for Best Actor for "Lilies of the Field." He is the first African-American to win for Best Actor and only the second to ever win an Academy Award. Hattie McDaniel was the first; she won Best Supporting Actress for "Gone with the Wind."
- In 2009, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama.

# About the PA DEI Committee at UNIS

“The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee was formed during the 2020-2021 academic year to collaborate on efforts across the school community in support of the fundamental UNIS principle that acknowledging, understanding, respecting and accepting diverse beliefs, ethnicities, cultures, and lifestyles are critical underpinnings of a successful education.

This committee will work vigorously towards equal access for all community members to participate fully in the life of the school, particularly to better involve Black American families at the school and to bring to light current events related to racism in the U.S. and globally.”



## MORE DEI at UNIS



@eib-unis      Equity & Inclusion Board - [unis.org/eib](https://unis.org/eib)  
@unisjsu      UNIS Jewish Student Union  
@unisblack      Black Student Union  
@blackatunis      Black at UNIS



[About UNIS - Diversity Equity Inclusion](#)  
[To join the PA DEI Committee](#)