



THE INSTITUTE FOR NONVIOLENCE IN LOS ANGELES

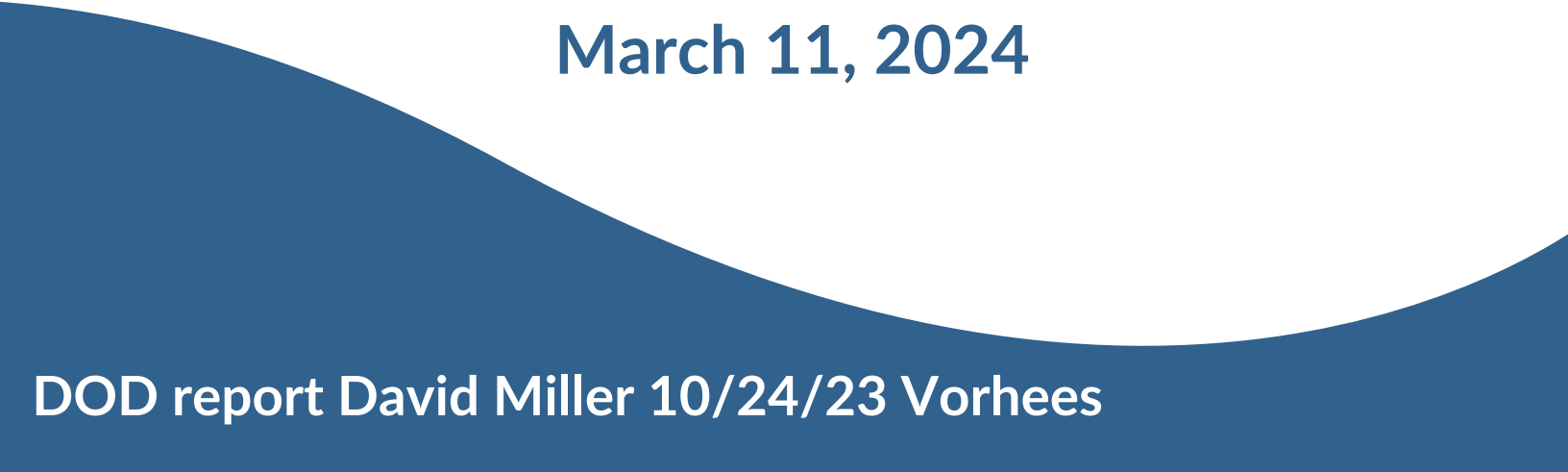
FACING RACISM AND BIGOTRY IN LOS ANGELES

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LOS ANGELES AND PACIFIC OAKS COLLEGE



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March 11, 2024



DOD report David Miller 10/24/23 Vorhees



Days of Dialogue on Racism and Bigotry
With Vorhees University Students and Staff via Zoom
October 24, 2023

Demographics

These sessions were attended by 83 African Americans participants, largely students ranging in age from 17 to 23 and some middle-aged staff.

Overview

Vorhees University, founded in 19897 is one of the nation's oldest HBCUs (Historically, Black, Colleges and Universities). This small, liberal arts, career-oriented college is located in Denmark, South Carolina. Though far afield from Los Angeles, David Miller, a member of the Days of Dialogue Advisory Board, predicted opinions from Black students and staff living in the rural South, would be illuminating, and useful.

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Vorhees University, one of the nation's oldest HBCUs (Historically, Black, Colleges and Universities), is in tiny Denmark, (population 3,100) South Carolina. A beneficiary recently of a \$4 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzieScott, ex-wife of Jeff Bezos who founded Amazon, this small school has a growing enrollment approaching 500 students and is spread out over more than 350 acres. Though far afield from Los Angeles, David Miller, a member of the Days of Dialogue Advisory Board, predicted opinions from Black students and staff, in the rural South, would be illuminating, and useful. This Dialogue, hosted on Zoom, was held on October 24, 2023.

Before the small groups began the dialogue focusing on Racism and Bigotry, participants responded to a series of general questions regarding their school. This Dialogue, hosted on Zoom, was held on October 24, 2023.



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Highlights from Facilitators

Group One, Donna Wilson

Who extended the invitation.

Attended by how many 83 African-Americans participants, largely students ranging in age from 17 to 23 and some middle-aged staff in three breakout rooms.

Among the commonalities with the experiences of similar students in South Carolina, the Voorhees students spoke freely about the disparate treatment from local police. EXAmPLEs.

Notably three students indicated they had police officers in their families.

Facilitator highlights.



Topics discussed:

- 1) One of the young staff members stated that there is a need for tools to assist individuals in domestic violence situations - and tools to have people relate better - in all types of relationships. She grew up in foster care and said that she is only realizing as an adult - observing students a little younger than herself - that she herself accepts forms of violence and microaggressions b/c she doesn't want to upset anyone and she was taught that is the norm. She'd like tools to heal herself and to be able to give to students who are relating in unhealthy ways with each other. She suggested maybe workshops be held to address this topic.
- 2) Three (3) students expressed concern that the campus is wide open - anyone can come on campus - they would like their security to be upleveled.
- 3) Two (2) students said that some students do not approach faculty in dialogue because they don't know how. Many are first generation in their family to go to college and they don't want to upset anyone. Adjusting to being away from home and in the college atmosphere with so many changes is daunting. They don't know what questions they should be asking - or how to have a dialogue - or how they could possibly benefit from conversations - with faculty. The students expressed a need for tools to assist more students in connecting with faculty and staff - and support in having students have those necessary conversations with their faculty members.
- 4) One of the major staff people stated that she is aware of the trauma that has come before her as a black woman - and before many of these students and stated that while they do not know it exists - it does exist for students - and many are carrying the weight of that trauma internally without even knowing it exists. There is a benefit to intergenerational conversations - the elders have stories that can inspire - motivate and engage students; and students often have insights and points of view that need to be heard in order for change to timely happen on a campus and in life.
- 5) When asked about police activity in the area - the girls said they haven't had any experience with the outside police - because they intentionally don't leave campus. All the students did agree they do trust the "on campus" police and have no complaints.
- 6) They stated that the campus is diverse: there are African Americans - Africans - people from the various islands and some Hispanics attending. In general - for the most part - they relate to each other and don't keep their various groups separate.
- 7) A student from the Islands said that in general he felt that other students were welcoming of him on campus. He stated he had a bit of catching up to do since he arrived later than others but that he feels that most students honor the diversity of each other. END OF REPORT