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Virtual series to examine history of racism, segregation in Dayton area

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Wednesday October 14, 2020

By Shannon Miller

Three University of Dayton faculty and staff are partnering with the mayor's office to host a three-part series examining the region's history of racism, segregation and systemic bias.

The Roots of Racism: Exploring the Legacy of Dayton's Racial Divide takes place at 6 p.m. Oct. 14, 21 and 28. Each 20-minute session can be viewed live on the [Dayton Daily News Facebook page](#).

Kelly Bohrer, director of community relations for the School of Engineering and acting director of The ETHOS Center, will lead the first session Wednesday, Oct. 14, which explores historical events from the 1700s to 1900. Leslie Picca, professor of sociology and Roesch Chair in the Social Sciences, will address the period between 1900 and 1950 on Oct. 21, and Tiffany Taylor Smith, executive director for inclusive excellence education and professional development, will be part of the final segment on Oct. 28 exploring the 1950s to today. Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley will host the series.

Picca said the idea for the series emerged when the mayor's office approached the University about expanding on an Inclusive Excellence Academy learning session for faculty and staff that discussed the history of the University within the context of the city's history.

"The events of the summer and the Black Lives Matter movement helped put concepts such as systemic racism in the news for the first time," Picca said. "We hope this event can provide an education to help people in the greater Dayton area understand the current realities of what we see in our communities and how historic events, including the 1913 flood, influenced which groups settled where within the region."

Bohrer's session on early Dayton history will include topics like indigenous removal and the contradiction between Dayton's position as a city where many held pro-slavery views and its presence in an anti-slavery state. Picca's session will look at the heyday of Dayton innovation and how the area shifted from one of relative integration to severe segregation between 1920-40, and the significance of the 1935 redlining map in that process.

Taylor Smith and Will Smith, a member of the Dayton Public Schools board of education, will co-host the final segment, which will include recorded interviews with Dayton elders about their lived experiences from 1950 to today.

Roots of Racism is part of the University's ongoing efforts to collaborate with city and regional leaders to take a critical look at the area's history. Next spring, UD faculty and staff will be involved in Undesign the Redline, a traveling exhibit that details the history of redlining across the country. A future scheduled symposium will address the University's role in the city's history.

Shown above (l to r): Kelly Bohrer, Leslie Picca and Tiffany Taylor Smith.