On February 24th, the Honors College Equity Team, the Inclusive Excellence Center, and Student Involvement hosted the first ever Honors College Race, Justice, and Power Conference.

Honors College Professors Lindsay Daigle and Jill Budny are the faculty leaders of the conference, and they worked closely with students to organize the event.

“The conference will continue growing, and that’s due in large part to the brilliance and hard work of the student presenters and the students on the Equity Team,” Lindsay shares. “I’m incredibly proud of them.”

Adam Carr, the event’s keynote presenter, began the conference discussing race relations at UWM and the fight to break barriers of segregation in education.

Carr’s presentation included images from community protests at UWM depicting community members flooding the chancellor’s office in support of racial diversity.

“The fact that the protestors were able to import their spaces into campus is beautiful,” Carr shared. “These kinds of methods of protests are still happening.”

To gather his stories, Carr depends on engaging himself in the community by talking to strangers for his work at 88Nine Radio Milwaukee.

“If you tell someone they’re interesting, there’s about a ten second window in which their resistance to questioning can be opened up. I’ve depended a lot on the kindness of strangers.”

Onisha Dale (Accounting), Ian Schmitt (Political Science), and Liz Karpowitz (Psychology) presented both sides of Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard/UNC.

The group’s presentation began as an assignment for Professor Budny’s Political Science class, but the group found an interest in sharing the case details and how it could impact both students of color at UWM and broader society.

“If we do not have diverse student bodies, we will not have diverse leaders, health care workers, or teachers,” Liz shared.

“Lack of representation in these key fields will mean under-represented communities without agency in power. When our institutions lack diversity, we all suffer.”

Alejandra Gonzalez (Spanish) presented on her experience with anxiety as a Latina in a Hispanic household. According to her research, Hispanic women experience more depression than both African American and Caucasian women.

“When it comes to Hispanics with a mental disorder, less than 1 in 11 contacts a mental health specialist. Just 5% of Hispanics report using antidepressants, even though 27% suffer from depression,” Alejandra shared.

Samawia Akhter (Psychology) educated the audience on Islamophobia in America. She is studying to become a therapist for the Islamic community and is excited to become an advocate for a struggling community in the United States.

“It would be helpful for the American people to understand that Islam actually means peace and that it is known as the religion of peace,” she argues.

Trauma is developed when one constantly has harmful interactions stemming from Islamophobia, like the one she describes in her poem, “The Name Grenade.”

The Race, Justice, and Power Conference was a resounding success, with the audience engaging with each presentation and every presenter adding a new perspective on the issues being discussed.

Look for more opportunities like this from the Equity Team in the future.