



ANTIRACIST RESEARCH
& POLICY CENTER

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

OUR MISSION AND BELIEFS

OUR MISSION

The Antiracist Research and Policy Center stands as an interdisciplinary hub for the study and practice of racial justice. We catalyze and conduct research that generates critical knowledge around race, power, and difference and informs the work of policymakers reckoning with race and imagining worlds beyond domination.

We convene antiracist scholars from decolonial, pluriversal, and other intersectionally liberatory traditions. Together, we undertake research agendas, shape community partnerships, advocate for truth, and inform policy initiatives that expand true democracy and advance justice in all its dimensions.

OUR BELIEFS

- In a democracy, academic freedom and truth in education are basic human rights.
- Knowledge production, analysis, and dialogue are vital for social transformation.
- Intersectionality is central to our analysis and our mission.
- The digital era demands vigorous antiracist consciousness raising about bias, race propaganda, and hate-group radicalization.
- The anti-antiracist era is upon us, and our struggles for justice continue.



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September, 2026

The passing of the baton between one leadership team and the next happens through interim executive directors. From August of 2025 through June of 2026, I had the honor of carrying the work of the ARPC from my phenomenal predecessors into what is now the beginning of my three-year term as executive director.

It has been both a whirlwind and a delight, a time in which I returned to a learner's stance and began a position of leadership at the same time.

It has also been a year of thrift, marked by the challenge of doing meaningful work, charting out possibilities for sustained growth in an undercapitalized center, while universities shift priorities and the federal government freezes its funding of work like ours.

Fortunately, I've had a strong and allied Center staff, college and university leadership, outside advisors, colleagues, and Interim Year Advisory Board (IYAB) members. I've leaned heavily on those who helped make possible what we accomplished and what we will continue into the future. In the pages that follow, you'll see the results of their dedicated co-leadership.

When I started last summer, my thoughts were on the increasingly authoritarian world around us. The racialized hegemony has risen back up. They've leveraged mis-, dis-, and malinformation; flawed digital technologies; and data erasure to serve White supremacist ends. They've defunded science and social justice and, in so many spaces, stripped multicultural truth from education. In this climate, words themselves have taken on racialized redefinition, and science, empiricism, and criticality themselves are daily subverted. The health and well-being of marginalized communities are under renewed assault.

The center could address all of this and would.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONT.

As I started wrapping my head around it, though, I had several questions. How do research and policy centers work when they work well toward high impact? How do we pull down the resources we need in an environment increasingly hostile toward our ideals? What are our strengths as a center, and what is a director's role in leveraging those strengths toward social justice?

In the months since, our team has leaned into the scholarly literature on research centers and think tanks. We've consulted around and outside the university. We've gone inward to assess our own strengths and peeled back the layers, taking hard looks at whatever threatened our longevity from within. We've put our heads together and strategized, and, as I trust that the following pages will show, we came up with some answers. Today I can say, we continue the ARPC's 7-year tradition of meaningful work that will prove to be far-reaching. As you peruse it all, please do so knowing that any such body of work can only be the result of a great deal of invisible labor.

I barely have the words to express my gratitude for the people who moved alongside me this past year of learning and of doing a lot with a little. Senior Administrative Assistant, Nalani Love-Harris; all nine Advisory Board members; our amazing and brilliant affiliates; each of our fellows and interns; and all of our community partners make possible and lovable the work I'm so honored to do.

In particular, this year, my gratitude goes out to College of Arts and Sciences Dean Linda Aldoory; Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Núria Vilanova; Interim Vice Provost for Research and Innovation, Julie Baldwin; and the philanthropists whose monetary and moral support made everything possible.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONT.

As I take this new step into the future of the Center, I do so on the solid ground of their support. I also stand on the terra firma of the peacemakers of and world-changers of the past. The images of a mere dozen of these countless elders ancestors, who charted bold paths in far more treacherous times, don the shelves and walls near my desk and remind me daily:

We who hunger and thirst for justice will prevail.

In peace and solidarity,

Sarah J. Trembath, EdD
Executive Director
Antiracist Research and Policy Center (ARPC)



INTERIM-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Our students, faculty affiliates, and community partners have always been conscientious, scholarly, dedicated, and mobilized change makers. These days, they find themselves both sobered and energized by the challenges this era brings.

Our job this past year, then, was to collaborate and lead in “meeting the moment,” in the words of the university’s 2026 strategic plan. In practical terms, that has meant focusing our energies on (1) Center resource-security and sustainability; (2) Center futurity; (3) ARPC adaptation to the era as alignment with the needs of antiracists working in the digital, post-truth era; and (4) ARPC-project emphasis on empiricism in antiracism...despite and because of White supremacist creep into mainstream thinking through pseudoscience and propagandizing.

These four priorities reverberated throughout our five interim-year goals.

OUR GOALS

- 1** Consult on, strategize toward, and increase the Center's financial resources; expand the Center affiliate base; and shore up the office infrastructure for robust and efficient transition of the next team.
- 2** Work within our means to create meaningful content of immediate use to our stakeholders, followers, affiliates, and community partners; live by the adage, "slow and steady wins the race" (i.e., incremental growth, pilot projects, introductory launches, and initial connections for forward-thinking collaborations).
- 3** Work with the ARPC Advisory Board to conduct a nation-wide search for the next ARPC executive director.
- 4** Plan programs that catalyze and convene marginalized people and our advocates in the digital age and the arch-conservative world order through scientific/empirical research and policy work; rebrand the Center accordingly.

OUR GOALS CONT.

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Catalyze and convene antiracists in the digital age and the hegemonic world order through scientific/empirical research and policy work.

Connect with the outside world on these projects to (a) make real-life impact and (b) draw in support for continued high-impact work.

INITIATIVES

Our interim team began shortly after the high-impact work of the previous team ended in July of 2025. As their initiatives in Reproductive Justice; Race and Carcerality; Educational Equity; and Climate, Land, and Environmental Justice came to fruition, our 2025–2026 team stepped in and named new Areas of Work.

We focused metadisciplinarily, choosing **Education, Media and Communication, Health and Well-Being**, and **Critical Information Literacy**. Antiracist work in these areas is highly needed in these times and were aligned with Interim ED experience. As metadisciplines—fields of study that include and overarch, influence and are influenced by other fields—they afford us the space to respond to the rapidly changing times.

We also strategized on how we could (a) promote affiliate work across their wide range of disciplines on crucial topics that may fall outside of those select areas; (b) nurture the development of future antiracist scholar-researchers; (c) connect more antiracist faculty and staff across the university; and (d) connect with the broader Washington DC community and world. All of our initiatives in these areas are highlighted in Year-at-a-Glance.

2026 YEAR AT-A-GLANCE

We connected globally.

- The ARPC met with a UN High Commission for Human Rights Officer (UNHCHRO) and two of UNHCHRO's Eminent Experts from the African and European regions to design our upcoming collaborative work together.

We collaborated.

- The ARPC Executive Director provided an input paper for the UNHCHRO's "Education as a Tool to Prevent Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance" report. She was invited to present it in Geneva in April of 2027.
- The ARPC summer policy research fellow met online and worked with the UNHCHRO's Group of Eminent Experts. She submitted her report on the Experts' core area of migration and human trafficking in August of 2026.

2026 YEAR AT-A-GLANCE

We connected locally in our city and our campus.

- We contributed staff and material support to the “Chocolate City Speaks” Humanities Truck oral histories project and will be taking the project over in Fall of 2026.
- We reached out to DC’s Teaching for Change (TFC) and discussed long-term collaboration on their Teaching Truth initiatives. We recruited AU alum and TFC Deputy Director Nakeesha Ceran to serve on our next Board.
- We opened up ARPC affiliate status from faculty-only to include AU’s antiracist staff, and we planned and piloted projects aimed at promoting all affiliates’ work.
- We began a 3-year initiative to garner leadership and affiliates from all 7 schools and colleges. We built new relationships and onboarded many new affiliates.
- Our postdoctoral fellow worked closely with the university’s Critical Information Literacy Committee, revising the encyclopedic entries and milieu-specific revisions of their Antiracist Subject Guide. It will roll out in stages this Fall and Winter.
- We built a relationship with AU’s Center for Leadership and Community Engagement and designed initiatives for ARPC student-volunteers to get university credit for their work with us.

2026 YEAR AT-A-GLANCE

We designed and piloted.

- The Interim ED designed a multifaceted, 3-year megastudy on the claims of the anti-“CRT” and “divisive concept” laws.
- The ARPC graduate fellow codesigned and completed a focus group study that will constitute Pillar 1 of the pilot phase of our educational megastudy. Pillar 2 has been financed and will pilot in Spring.
- Our post-doctoral fellow codesigned the AU ARPC Press, which will launch a series of pocket works in the Spring.

We supported young researchers and incubated their projects.

- The ARPC piloted our Sonia Sanchez Social Justice Scholars program in which four AU undergraduates studied design thinking for college credit and developed antiracist projects with real-world impact. They will present their projects at our September colloquium.

2026 YEAR AT-A-GLANCE

We created tools.

- ARPC public scholars created and posted open-access, user-friendly materials on inclusive journalistic standards, critical AI use, critical information literacy, word usage in the post-truth era, fact-checking, and narrative analysis. They go live on our website in September.

We dug deep.

- Our summer fellow and executive director did deep-reading of the federal laws, executive orders, and state laws regarded as anti-CRT and divisive concept laws—a pillar of the pilot phase of the ARPC's megastudy about the effects and best practices of racially inclusive educational content.

2026 YEAR AT-A-GLANCE

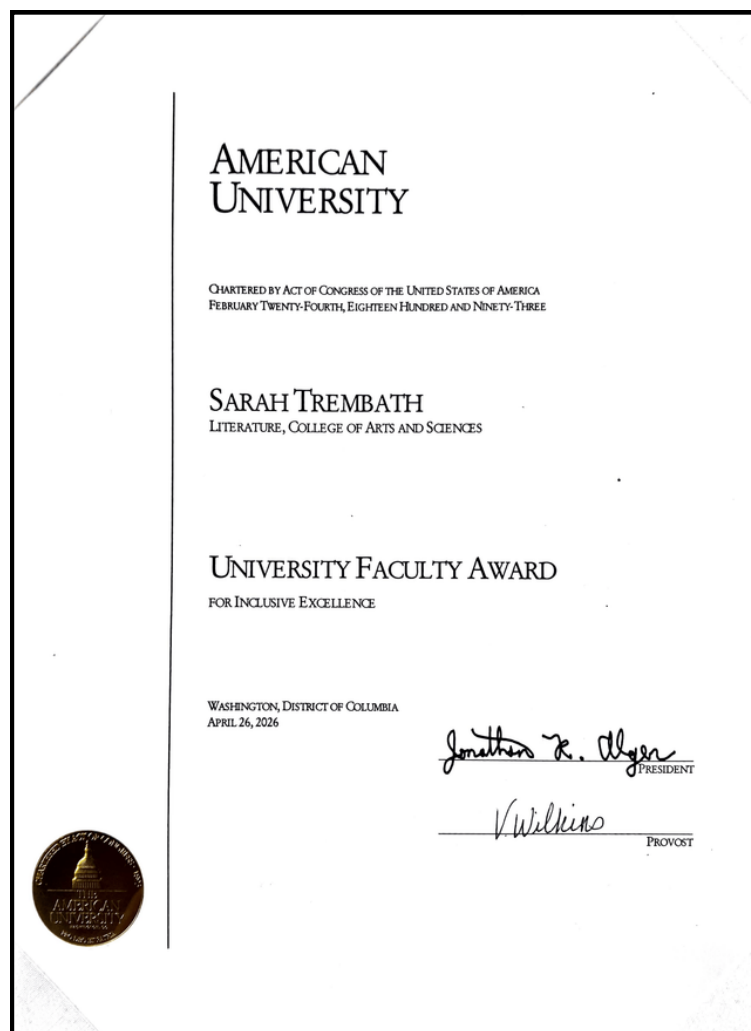
We strategized.

- Our Advisory Board discussed 10-, 3-, and 1- year planning and strategized our best path from limited liquidity to prosperity through incremental growth to a sustainable and high-impact future.
- We drafted sections of an ARPC policy manual to support long-term stability, growth, and high-impact work. We defined “ethics-aligned fundraising” and named it as an ongoing top priority.
- We studied the political fundraising climate, and did professional development work with Candid/Foundation Center. The Interim ED did (external) consultation with philanthropic strategist Matthew Hart and made (internal) connection with AU’s Office of Interim Vice Provost for Research Innovation.
- We began our praxis of incrementally aggressive external grant-seeking with sound, sustainable programming; internal-grant proposal writing; internal funding requests; and modest-size external funding. We were successful on some fronts and have been able to fund the programming that will give us the basis to move forward with our large, external grant-seeking program and larger-scale initiatives.

2026 YEAR AT-A-GLANCE

We were noticed.

- Interim Director Trembath was given the university's Inclusive Excellence Award for her "sustained commitment to advancing equity through teaching, research, and institutional leadership." According to CAS Dean Aldoory, Dr. Trembath's "laudable efforts as the interim Director of ARPC, her teaching, research and continued commitment to university service reflect a sustained and far-reaching impact on inclusive excellence at the university."
- Dr. Trembath was also reappointed for a 3-year term



STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE:

The IYAB was tasked with advising the Interim ED in long- and short-term planning. Given the Center's fiscal condition in the Fall of 2025—underfunded, defunded, and cash-strapped—the team focused most on what needed to be done in the short-term. These efforts could be described as “doing the most with the least” and going back to the drawing board with financial planning and grant-seeking. The results of those efforts are described above in “Year at a Glance” and below in “Financials.”

The IYAB input influenced the first draft of the Director's 3-Year Plan. It will be discussed in Advisory Board meetings in the Fall of 2026 and finalized for January 2027. It will commit the ARPC to action on the Director's vision in this posttruth, anti-antiracist moment in these key areas:

- Research
- Impact through Policy Work
- Defense of Theory
- Transparency of Perspective (vs False Neutrality)
- Criticality
- Community
- Expertise and Promotion of Experts as Experts
- Academic Programming and Public Scholarship
- Prosperity, Transparency, and Ethics-Aligned Fundraising

FINACIALS

As described in the Executive Director's letter above, ours is an extremely challenging funding landscape. Though we prioritize science as the vehicle for antiracist research, science has been largely defunded by the federal government. Our university is making sweeping changes to mitigate its budget deficit. But we take heart.

We look to private philanthropists and foundations for support, and we stand firmly on the tradition of our elders and ancestors who worked outside of systems and did so much with so little material wealth.

We claim alignment with our university's proud R1 status and commit to prioritizing external fundraising. We trust AU's patient support of us, though, as we navigate the challenges named above.

We also claim

- thrift
- slow, steady, and strategic growth, and
- outside-the-box planning

as our current modes of thinking about the relationship between fundraising and doing meaningful, high-impact social justice work in these times.

FINACIALS

We note transparency as crucial for trust and trust as crucial for growth.



It is in this spirit that the ARPC ED offers Fiscal Year 2027’s highly streamlined budget. The below chart demonstrates how we will continue our important work, contained within a modest \$120,000 spending limit.

\$120,000	
Category	Amount
People	
ED stipend	N/A paid by College of Arts and Sciences
SAA 80% FT salary + benefits	\$54,000
Fellowships and research expenses	\$31,500
Internships	\$8,500

FINACIALS

Projects & Events	
UN Indep. Eminent Experts/ ARPC Collab work in Geneva, New York, and DC	\$8,500
ARPC Press pilot	\$3,500
Subject Guide completion	\$2,600
“Chocolate City Speaks” oral histories completion	\$1,450
Sonia Sanchez Social Justice Scholars (UG social justice design) program	\$1,250
Colloquium	\$900
Hospitality for community collaborations	\$600
Public Scholarship, not named above	\$0
Affiliate interviews and promotions,noncolloquium	\$0

FINACIALS

Office and Operations	
Subscriptions & Supplies	\$3,300
Professional Development	\$1,600
Misc.	
Cushion for unexpected expenses	\$2,300

CONTINUED IMPACT AND EVOLUTION

In strategic planning, leaders and their teams focus on aims and objectives. In Annual Report writing, we reflect back as we look ahead. We scan the outside world and turn inward to see how we measured up. We meditate on impact and evolution in very goal-oriented ways, even though reaching the goal is just part of a worthy endeavor.

In this past year, relationships have been built and broken, talents have been nurtured, allegiances have realigned, and new ways of thinking about the work we do have emerged.

Also, we met our goals. We exhaled.

I want to say that it's enough, that the satisfying nature of this work is enough. The relationships are enough. The achievements are enough. But rights are eroding and authoritarianism is swelling, and we know that it isn't enough. We look forward.

On this day, I contemplate that privilege with a measure of joy and a massive heap of gratitude. I have a sense of being a part of something that matters, that aligns ARPC affiliates and staff with those people on the shelves behind my desk.

I take none of the challenges lightly, and I experience our achievements as Blessings, worthy of my utmost effort to sustain.

I thank you, stakeholders, friends, and colleagues, for letting me say all that has been said in this report. I look forward to pressing on and meeting you along the way.

Sarah