



Praxis Academy: Black Male Initiative

What is the initiative about?

The Praxis Academy is Loyola Marymount University's Black Male Achievement Initiative. Founded in 2013, the program focuses on the empowerment, enrichment, engagement, and retention of African American male students through an intentional focus on identity development, personal growth and maturity, and professional acumen. In doing so, it equips participants with a greater understanding of themselves as well as their futures, while maximizing their potential for success in school and in life.



The initiative is currently being reimagined and restructured. However, the Praxis Academy participants have focused on the process of understanding themselves, becoming more familiar with the historical Black male experience in the United States, and the concept of *Self to Community*. This was done through group discussion, exposure to the historical writings of WEB Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others. The group also spent a great deal of time grappling with and discussing the historical and contemporary impacts of police brutality and the killing of unarmed Black men across the country, as well as appropriate responses.



Additionally, Praxis has engaged in its first activity. The young men developed a relationship with the Jenesse Center, a South Los Angeles non-profit organization that houses and provides vital services to women (the vast majority of whom are Black), who have been victims of domestic violence. They constructed bins and collected toys and books from LMU students, faculty, and staff. They, then, presented the collected items to the center for distribution to the children of the victims. This event operationalized the concept of *Self to Community* and emphasized the historical importance of Social Justice in the Black Community.



What's the new vision?

The ultimate goal of Praxis is to change the narrative for Black male students at LMU. By connecting with participants and meeting them where they are, Praxis can assist young Black men in better understanding themselves, so that they can, in turn, begin to understand their own definitions of success, rather than the ones commonly presented to them by society or the media. Armed with these tools and resources, young Black males at LMU can, then, begin to imagine and take the steps necessary to succeed - in their personal lives, in their spiritual lives, in their various relationships, in the classroom, and in their communities - in school and in life.

How might an interested individual become involved or apply?

Recruitment is currently underway, as the initiative is preparing to expand later this semester! Any rising sophomores or juniors, who are interested in the initiative, should contact Dr. Nathan Sessoms at nsessoms@lmu.edu or visit the Department of Ethnic and Intercultural Services in Malone 301.