

Advancing Racial Justice through UniServ Work (Revised 2022)



Participant Handouts

UniServ Directors work with members, supporters, and partners in many settings and must be highly skilled in leading, coaching, and organizing across racial differences. NEA Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support in partnership with the NEA Center for Social Justice created this training designed to build participants' understanding of individualized and structuralized racism and provide examples of union-led racial justice interventions. Participants learn how to deepen racial discourse skills in themselves and others, how to navigate issues of race that surface in their work, and how to access valuable resources for advancing racial justice.

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Community Agreements for Our Time

Awareness and Self-Knowledge

This requires self-knowledge and self-awareness. Self-knowledge allows you to see what causes you pain and conflict and enables you to embrace your contradictions and inconsistencies. It allows the space to work on things about yourself that you are not happy with. In turn, self-knowledge helps to prevent you from projecting your negative aspects onto other people. Bringing your best self also requires that you have a positive attitude, are willing to deeply explore your perspectives and remain open to the perspectives and experiences of others.

Listening for Understanding

Be an active listener. Active listening involves paying full and careful attention to the other person, looking him or her in the eye, avoiding interruptions, reflecting your understanding, clarifying information, summarizing the other person's perspectives and sharing your own. Remember that most people need time to open up and might not be willing to immediately share their personal stories, hopes, fears and/or concerns.

Being Gracious

Being kind is a vital way of bringing meaning to our own lives, as well as the lives of others. Kindness is about caring genuinely for others around you, wanting the best for them and recognizing in them the same wants, needs, aspirations and even fears that you may have. Being kind and generous allows us to communicate better with others, to be more self-compassionate and to be a positive force in other people's lives. We are gracious when we accept and genuinely work to use the pronouns that others ask us to use. Being gracious includes following the COVID protocols that are in place to protect the health of this learning community.

Staying Engaged

Staying engaged requires you to be morally, emotionally, intellectually and socially involved in the conversation. Staying engaged means that you are listening with curiosity and willing to deepen your understanding. Staying engaged might also require you to sustain the conversation even when it gets uncomfortable or diverted. This means a commitment to keeping your electronic communications to a minimum with folks not present in this learning community. This also means being present for all portions of the learning agenda.

Being Open and Suspending Judgment

Listening with an open mind includes being receptive to the influence of others. You can suspend judgment by becoming aware of preconceived notions and listening to everything someone has to say before jumping to conclusions. Most importantly, suspending judgment also means listening to what the speaker has to say for understanding, not just to determine whether the speaker is right or wrong. This means that we recognize each of us will make mistakes and that we have the capacity to grow. We should expect imperfections.

Saying "I" - tell your truth

Speaking your truth in authentic and courageous conversations about race and other issues where experiences/perspectives may differ widely from yours requires a willingness to take risks. It means that you will be absolutely honest and candid about your own thoughts, feelings, experiences and opinions and not just saying what you perceive others want to hear. Speaking your truth will require you to speak from the "first person" and use "I" statements.

Seeking Discomfort

Leaning in to discomfort will require you to let go of understandings and stereotypes that you may be holding onto in order to move forward. Leaning in means that you will avoid pre-judgment and be open to the kernel of wisdom in each individual's experiences. Leaning in to discomfort will require you to sit through moments of embarrassment, confusion, anxiety, and/or fear.

Reaching Empathy

Empathy and compassion allow you to understand the other person's point of view. When you are empathetic, you are more understanding, patient and kind. Expanding your capacity to feel empathy will also allow others to enter your circle of human concern. Sharing, using, and respecting pronouns is a very simple form of empathy.

Expecting Non-Resolution and Non-Closure

Expect and accept that there may not be closure. It is not likely that you will resolve your personal understanding about race or another person's racial experience in a single conversation. The more you talk about race or other issues with another person, the more you learn and the more they will learn. Authentic and productive conversations about race and other issues where experiences/perspectives may differ widely from yours are continuous and always evolving. This means that sometimes we will have unfinished, unexplored, and shortened conversations about some concepts.

**Adapted from "Embracing equity and inclusion", Annie E. Casey Foundation*

What questions do you want to ask about any of the ideas in these agreements?

What additional agreements do you need in order to be a fully participating member of our learning community?

Can you commit to these agreements? IF not, what would it take for you to be able to commit?

Setting the Stage

Resolution I: White Supremacy Culture (2018)

The National Education Association believes that, in order to achieve racial and social justice, educators must acknowledge the existence of White supremacy culture as a primary root cause of institutional racism, structural racism, and White privilege. Additionally, the Association believes that the norms, standards, and organizational structures manifested in White supremacy culture perpetually exploit and oppress people of color and serve as detriments to racial justice.

Further, the invisible racial benefits of White privilege, which are automatically conferred irrespective of wealth, gender, and other factors, severely limit opportunities for people of color and impede full achievement of racial and social justice. Therefore, the Association will actively advocate for social and educational strategies fostering the eradication of institutional racism and White privilege perpetuated by White supremacy culture.

Reflection – as a UniServ Director what do you think this means in your work?

New Business Item B (2015)

We, the members of the National Education Association, acknowledge the existence in our country of institutional racism—the societal patterns and practices that have the net effect of imposing oppressive conditions and denying rights, opportunity, and equality based upon race. This inequity manifests itself in our schools and in the conditions our students face in their communities. In order to address institutional racism, the National Education Association shall lead by: 1) spotlighting systemic patterns of inequity—racism and educational injustice—that impact our students; and 2) taking action to enhance access and opportunity for our students.

NEA will use our collective voice to bring to light and demand change to policies, programs, and practices that condone or ignore unequal treatment and hinder student success by:

- * Providing technical assistance to state, local, and national affiliates to dialogue internally and with the external community and develop plans of action to address institutional racism.
- * Partnering with a broad coalition of national stakeholders on campaigns and actions to eradicate policies that perpetuate institutional racism in education.
- * Partnering on campaigns and actions on critical social justice issues impacting students and their communities.
- * Convening high school students and young people to gather their perspectives to inform our work and the work of others (education stakeholders, policymakers, etc.).
- * Expanding the work of the Association on issues of institutional racism, including redirecting existing resources and providing grants to affiliates to lead and partner with us on site based projects, such as:
 - + programs aimed at improving school climate and culture, particularly ending the school to prison pipeline
 - + supporting campaigns to expand the development and implementation of community schools
 - + expanding local affiliate-school district partnerships that expand educator-led professional development, particularly in areas of cultural competence, diversity, and social justice in order to address institutional racism
- * Researching implications for NEA's Strategic Plan and Budget for 2016-2018.

NEA's Vision, Mission, and Values

Adopted at the 2006 NEA Representative Assembly

The National Education Association

We, the members of the National Education Association of the United States, are the voice of education professionals. Our work is fundamental to the nation, and we accept the profound trust placed in us.

Our Vision

Our vision is a great public school for every student.

Our Mission

Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

Our Core Values

These principles guide our work and define our mission:

1. **Equal Opportunity.** We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.
2. **A Just Society.** We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.
3. **Democracy.** We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.
4. **Professionalism.** We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due all professionals.
5. **Partnership.** We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.
6. **Collective Action.** We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

NEA also believes every student in America, regardless of family income or place of residence, deserves a quality education. In pursuing its mission, NEA has determined that we will focus the energy and resources of our 3.2 million members on improving the quality of teaching, increasing student achievement and making schools safer, better places to learn.

<http://www.nea.org/home/19583.htm>

Bylaw 3-1(g) and Leadership Diversity (2006)

The NEA policy Bylaw 3-1(g) has been a part of the Association's governing documents for nearly 40 years and is the Association's most effective and comprehensive measure for encouraging racial/ethnic diversity in leadership at all levels of the organization. At each Representative Assembly, a state delegation is accorded an ethnic-minority numerical goal for the combined number of ethnic-minority state and local delegates in attendance. This goal is based on the percentage of ethnic minorities within the state's population according to the most recent U.S. Decennial Census. 2012 marks the first year in which the proportion of identified ethnic-minority populations within each state is calculated based on the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census.

The degree to which each state delegation annually approaches, meets, or exceeds its ethnic-minority numerical goal provides an opportunity for us to broadly examine the racial/ethnic diversity present among delegate leaders in our state and local organizations, and in the entire Representative Assembly.

Bylaw 3-1(g) has always been about more than numbers in a report. In crafting ethnic-minority involvement plans, affiliates realize that a wide range of actions and approaches must be taken to achieve and maintain successful leadership diversity. These actions include educating and informing members about the Association's ethnic-minority involvement policies through delivering presentations, distributing brochures, and through other traditional, web, or social media; establishing ethnic-minority affairs or human and civil rights committees to coordinate plan actions and activities between state and local affiliates; identifying and encouraging ethnic-minority candidates to run for delegate and other governance positions, and submitting their names as candidates for appointment to state and national committees.

At NEA, the Executive, Ethnic Minority Affairs, and Credentials Committees serve as the Association's national stakeholders in monitoring the implementation of Bylaw 3-1(g), annually collaborating with state affiliate leaders to discuss the challenges involved in policy planning and to consider effective approaches to improve and reaffirm our efforts for one of NEA's most important and longstanding programs. The range and depth of our actions to support ethnic-minority involvement at all levels enhances and sustains our local, state, and national efforts to reflect the diversity found among the students, schools, and communities we serve.

<http://www.nea.org/grants/52500.htm>

NEA's Framework for Change



The National Education Association is uniquely positioned to impact racial justice in education by focusing the work on awareness, capacity building, and action. We will build a union of members who, through their organization, are more aware of racial justice, receive and use racial justice tools, and who, together with other educators and key stakeholders, take action to address racial injustice in schools and related institutions:

- If we build **awareness** about institutional racism and work towards creating racial justice in education, the National Education Association can provide shared knowledge and conceptual clarity in racially aware work;
- If we continuously create and disseminate **capacity building** tools, skills, strategies, and resources to our members, leaders, staff, students and partners, a more racially aware National Education Association can be the leader in publicly demanding racial justice in education in more powerful and meaningful ways;
- If we support, lift, connect and take **action** with an intentional focus on movement building, we will create racial equity in our classrooms, worksites, and in our communities.

Levels of Racism

Individual	
Internalized Racism lies within individuals. These are our private beliefs and biases about race and racism, influenced by our culture.	Interpersonal Racism occurs between individuals. Once we bring our private beliefs about race into our interactions with others, we are now in the interpersonal realm.
Systemic	
Institutional Racism occurs within institutions and systems of power. It is the norms, policies and practices that are structured into political, societal and economic institutions that have the net effect of imposing oppressive conditions and denying rights, opportunity, and equality to identifiable groups based upon race or ethnicity.	Structural Racism is racial bias across institutions and society. It's the cumulative and compounded effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

Key Points to Remember

Key Point 1 - There are not hard and fast lines between the levels - and changing one can affect another.

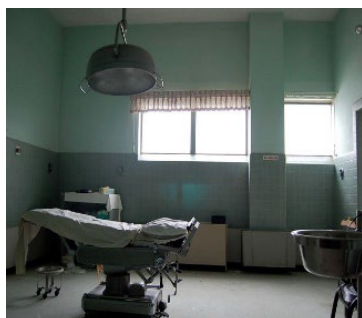
Key Point 2 - The way to effect change is by addressing institutional and structural racism - this is where injustice lives.

Expressions of Racism Exercise

INSTRUCTIONS: Please review the cases below and as a group, have a discussion on each case and decide which level of racism each case belongs to. Please ensure there is consensus in your group in your answers.

Scenario #1: Racism in Medicine

Expression of Racism:



Racism has influenced U.S. health care in the past and continues to do so today. The most shameful chapters in American history involve the U.S. government funding studies that allowed poor black men in Alabama to succumb to syphilis or Guatemalan prison inmates, mental health patients and soldiers to be afflicted with the disease and other sexually transmitted infections.

Government agencies also played a role in sterilizing black women in North Carolina, Puerto Rican women and Native American women.

Reflections:

Scenario #2: Assault in Charlottesville

Expression of Racism:

Posted Aug. 14, 2017 5:58 pm

Photographer captures apparent assault in Charlottesville garage



Zach D Roberts
@zdroberts



Earlier in a parking garage in #Charlottesville - white supremacists beat this black kid w/poles. [Photo for by @zdroberts @NationofChange]

7:52 PM - Aug 12, 2017

1,924 20,932 11,023

Reflections:

Scenario #3: The Doll Test**Expression of Racism:**

In the 1940s, psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark designed and conducted a series of experiments known colloquially as “the doll tests” to study the psychological effects of segregation on African-American children.

Drs. Clark used four dolls, identical except for color, to test children’s racial perceptions. Their subjects, children between the ages of three to seven, were asked to identify both the race of the dolls and which color doll they prefer. A majority of the children preferred the white doll and assigned positive characteristics to it. The Clarks concluded that “prejudice, discrimination, and segregation” created a feeling of inferiority among African-American children and damaged their self-esteem.

Reflections:

Scenario #4: Looking Death Worthy**Expression of Racism:**

According to a 2006 report, *Looking Deathworthy*, defendants with the most stereotypically Black facial features (i.e. dark skin, large/full lips, etc.) served up to 8 months longer in prison for felonies than defendants who possessed the least stereotypical features.



In this same study, researchers investigated the role of race in capital sentencing, and in particular, whether the race of the defendant or victim influences the likelihood of a death sentence. The study concludes that in cases involving a White victim, the more stereotypically Black a defendant is perceived to be, the more likely that person is to be sentenced to death.

Reflections:

Scenario #5: Biracial Boy Pushed Off Table**Expression of Racism:**

Associated Press September 12, 2017

CLAREMONT, N.H. — Teenagers in New Hampshire taunted an 8-year-old biracial boy with racial slurs and then pushed him off of a picnic table with a rope around his neck, injuring him, the boy's family said.

The child was treated at a hospital for cuts to his neck following the near-hanging Aug. 28 in Claremont, the boy's grandmother, Lorrie Slattery, told the Valley News of West Lebanon, N.H. He has since been released and has returned to school in Claremont.



Slattery said the children were in a backyard when some of the teens got on the table and grabbed a rope that held a tire swing. It's not clear how the rope got around the child's neck, but Slattery said the teens pushed him off the table. No adults are believed to have witnessed the incident.

An expert on abuse who spoke to the boy at the hospital said he swung from his neck three times before being able to remove the rope, Slattery said. None of the teens came to his aid, she said.

Reflections:**Scenario #6: The School-To-Prison Pipeline****Expression of Racism:**

A significant number of Chicago students are pushed into the path of juvenile and adult prisons as a result of harsh disciplinary policies and high stakes testing. By harsh disciplinary policies, we mean excessive security procedures and police involvement as well as the overuse of suspensions and expulsion for minor infractions. These policies feed the "School to Prison Pipeline", sometimes also called the "Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track". Research suggests that students of color, in particular African American students, are disproportionately impacted by these punitive policies.



As Matt Kelley has written: "Whether or not they realize it, the punishments school officials hand out can literally determine — and derail — the path of a student's life. Which makes it even more critical that when schools make these decisions, they hand out discipline that's fair."

The "School to Prison Pipeline" describes a reality in which many young people are being pushed OUT of schools through zero tolerance policies, suspension, expulsion, discouragement and high stakes testing requirements; and INTO the juvenile and adult legal system. These zero tolerance policies involve the police in minor incidents and often lead to arrests, juvenile detention referrals, and even criminal charges and incarceration.

Reflections:

Scenario #7: Woke Girls

Expression of Racism:

Excerpts from an article written by educator Mickey Maki, creator of Woke Girls. <https://medium.com/embrace-race/woke-girls-pushing-back-against-internalized-racism-in-children-of-color-ac048a599ab8>

Before school started every morning a 1st-grader student in my class, with very dark skin would visit me so I could apply cocoa butter lotion to his skin. I assumed it was just about the lotion, but when I tried to give him a bottle he could keep in his classroom, he cried and told me I was the only one who thought his skin was beautiful.



Just down the hall in the 3rd-grade ESL class, two Mexican American girls got into a fight. The cause? One girl called the other a “little Mexican girl.”

It made me sad to see that little had changed since I was a child myself, when I was policed for not being black enough, while simultaneously taught that being black meant fewer options and bad hair.

Besides modeling self-love and loving my students, I made an effort to fill my classroom library with books that would support my students to be who they already were. That was quite the challenge.

Reflections:

Scenario #8: Doorway To A Better Life?

Expression of Racism:

A state government agency decides that low-income housing must be built, which will house low-income Blacks and Latinos. The agency fails to look for locations near jobs and important infrastructures, like schools, decent public transportation, and other services. In fact, it is built in a poor, mostly Black and Latino part of town.



Often times the government locates the housing where it will have the least opposition. White neighborhoods tend to oppose public and affordable housing. Resources, whether public or private, often follow whites who flee urban problems for white suburbs

When the housing is built, the school district, already under-funded, has new residents too poor to contribute to its tax base. The local government spends its limited resources on transportation to connect largely white, well-to-do suburban commuters to their downtown jobs.

The public housing residents are left isolated, in under-funded schools, with no transportation to job centers. Whole communities of people of color lose opportunities for a good education, quality housing, living wage jobs, services and support-systems.

In this town, no one individual stands in front of the doorway to a better life and says, “No Blacks/Latinos/ Native Americans/Asians allowed.” Race, however, is the unspoken motivator behind a series of actions which lead to decisions about where to place the walls.

Reflections:

UniServ Director Expressions of Racism

As your group considers each scenario – discuss what decisions and actions the UniServ Director might make next under a racial justice lens. Your task is to think about which levels of racism MIGHT be addressed in those decisions and actions.

Scenario 1: A UniServ Director has been assigned to a new area. She has previously been assigned to a UniServ Area consisting of several mid-size to tiny rural locals. She has been well-known for identifying and developing strong worksite and local leaders -several of whom have begun to participate in state affiliate leadership roles. In her new role, she knows that the first step is to get into her schools, get to know her members and potential members to begin identifying leaders. Her new area is one, large urban school district.

What are the possible ways that we might see expressions of racism in this scenario?

Individual
Interpersonal
Institutional
Structural

Scenario 2: A UniServ Director with many years of experience juggling the duties of organizing, advocacy and bargaining is once again setting up his plan to balance work and life. He is reviewing his calls for advocacy and those that might be potential for organizing and follow-up. Working with his manager, he reports on issues coming from the new teachers recently hired in the schools with large Native American student populations, issues from the larger more urban school district regarding loss of planning time and issues coming from the ESP Bus Driver's Unit about lack of proper uniforms. They are working on a plan for focusing the UniServ Director's efforts to maximize Union presence.

What are the possible ways that we might see expressions of racism in this scenario?

Individual
Interpersonal
Institutional
Structural

Scenario 3: A UniServ Director is supporting a local as they develop a plan to win a local tax levy that would ensure more local school funding. Recognizing that this fight will not be won without a major organizing effort, she works with the local leaders on a plan to identify and engage community partners and supporters. This is a community where most of the wealth is concentrated into one segment of the city where large, valuable single family homes are. The largest proportion of residents in this community are living in rental units.

What are the possible ways that we might see expressions of racism in this scenario?

Individual
Interpersonal
Institutional
Structural

Scenario 4: A UniServ Director has received several calls from one of his worksites. The employees have a variety of complaints that they have tried to address through their building representative. These issues include being written up for what they wear to work, the appearance of their hair, and how they speak to students when correcting behavior. The manager is not from the community and most of the employees are.

What are the possible ways that we might see expressions of racism in this scenario?

Individual
Interpersonal
Institutional
Structural

Ten Things everyone should know

Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race

There's less—and
more—to race
than meets
the eye.

- 1 Race is a modern idea.** Ancient societies, like the Greeks, did not divide people according to physical differences, but according to religion, status, class or even language. The English word "race" turns up for the first time in a 1508 poem by William Dunbar referring to a line of kings.
- 2 Race has no genetic basis.** Not one characteristic, trait or even gene distinguishes all the members of one so-called race from all the members of another so-called race.
- 3 Human subspecies don't exist.** Unlike many animals, modern humans simply haven't been around long enough, nor have populations been isolated enough, to evolve into separate subspecies or races. On average, only one of every thousand of the nucleotides that make up our DNA differ one human from another. We are one of the most genetically similar of all species.
- 4 Skin color really is only skin deep.** The genes for skin color have nothing to do with genes for hair form, eye shape, blood type, musical talent, athletic ability or forms of intelligence. Knowing someone's skin color doesn't necessarily tell you anything else about them.
- 5 Most variation is within, not between, "races."** Of the small amount of total human variation, 85% exists within any local population. About 94% can be found within any continent. That means, for example, that two random Koreans may be as genetically different as a Korean and an Italian.
- 6 Slavery predates race.** Throughout much of human history, societies have enslaved others, often as a result of conquest or debt, but not because of physical characteristics or a belief in natural inferiority. Due to a unique set of historical circumstances, North America has the first enslaved human system where all those who were enslaved shared a common appearance and ancestry.
- 7 Race and freedom were born together.** The U.S. was founded on the principle that "All men are created equal," but the country's early economy was based largely on slavery. The new idea of race helped explain why some people could be denied the rights and freedoms that others took for granted.
- 8 Race justified social inequalities as natural.** The "common sense" belief in white superiority justified anti-democratic action and policies like slavery, the extermination of American Indians, the exclusion of Asian immigrants, the taking of Mexican lands, and the institutionalization of racial practices within American government, laws, and society.
- 9 Race isn't biological, but racism is still real.** Race is a powerful social idea that gives people different access to opportunities and resources. The government and social institutions of the United States have created advantages that disproportionately channel wealth, power and resources to white people.
- 10 Colorblindness will not end racism.** Pretending race doesn't exist is not the same as creating equality.

Practice the Shift

From...	To...
Blame – Who's a racist?	Causes – What is causing the racial inequity
Intentions – What did they mean? What was their attitude?	Effects – What were the actions? What are the Impacts?
Prejudice- What beliefs made them do it?	Systems – What institutions are responsible?
Grievances- How can we fix what happened?	Solutions- What are proactive strategies?

Which scenario are you working on?

What are some questions that were particularly useful in shifting your focus to the systems level?

White Culture Handout⁴

White Culture defines what is considered normal—it creates the standard for judging values.

For example, think about by whom and how these terms are defined: good parenting, stable family, well-raised child, individual self-sufficiency and effective leadership.

In your organization, what are the characteristics of a good employee? How were you informed? If unwritten rules, how did you learn about them?

White culture privileges a focus on individuals (not groups).

Independence and autonomy are valued and rewarded. An individual is in control of their environment: "You get what you deserve."

In your organization, what is rewarded? Examples: Is there encouragement to compete? Collaborative decision-making? Decisions based on common good?

White culture assigns a higher value to some ways of behaving than others. It often defines the "other" behaviors as dangerous and/or deviant.

For example: Right to comfort. Avoid conflict and emotion. Be polite. Comfort level is defined by whites, and those that cause discomfort or are involved in conflict can be marginalized. Individual acts of unfairness become equal to the pain and discomfort of systemic racism that daily targets people of color (based on Tema Okun's White Supremacy Culture).

In your organization, what behaviors are considered uncomfortable? E.g. conflict, loud voice, crying? How does the organization's culture respond when these behaviors happen?

Decision-making often reflects white cultural assumptions about the primacy of individuals, standards of behavior and the use of power "over" others.

For example: Deciding and enforcing, either/or thinking, those less affected define the problem and solution.

Reflect on the different groups you belong to. Who is included in the decision-making process? What is the rationale? Is the process different on paper vs. in reality?

White culture values certain ways of knowing and not others.

For example: If you can't measure it, it is not of value. Focus on cause and effect relationships and rational linear thinking.

In your organization, who or what informs you that a program/service is working? How is success defined? Who decides what is sufficient time?

⁴ White Culture description comes from many sources, including: Tema Okun, *White Supremacy Culture*, 2001; Judith Katz, *Some Aspects and Assumptions of White Culture in the United States*, 1985; Robette Ann Dias, *Transforming Institutional Values: Revisited*, 2008; Joseph Barnhardt, *Understanding and Dismantling Racism: The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White America*, p. 234, 2007; Barbara Major, Chapter 7—"How does White Privilege Show Up in Foundation and Community Initiatives?", *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*, 2005.

I'm pretty sure I know what it is...

VocabularyDefinition

Race	
Ethnicity	
Nationality	
Prejudice	
Racism	
Privilege	
Heterosexism	
Ableism	

Sexism	
Oppression	
Nativism	
Classism	

Appendix A

Glossary

"I'm very sensitive to the English Language. I studied the dictionary obsessively when I was a kid and collect old dictionaries. Words, I think, are very powerful and they convey an intention." – *Drew Barrymore*

This list is neither comprehensive nor inviolable, but it's a work in progress toward those goals. With identity terms, trust the person who is using the term and their definition of it above any dictionary. These definitions are the creation of a cultural commons: emails, on-line discussions, and in-person chats, with the initial curation done by me, then growing into a collaboration between Meg Bolger and me at TheSafeZoneProject.com.

advocate – **1 noun** : a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group. **2 verb** : to actively support/plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance, educating others, etc.

agender – *adj.* : a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.

ally /"al-lie"/ – *noun* : a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. We consider people to be active allies who take action in support and respect.

"Coming out" as an ally is when you reveal (or take an action that reveals) your support of the LGBTQ community. Being an active supporter can, at times, be stigmatizing, though it is not usually recognized, many allies go through a "coming out process" of their own.

androgyny; androgynous /"an-jrah-jun-ee"; "an-jrah-jun-uss"/ – *adj.* : a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity.

androsexual; androphilic – *adj.* : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to some men, males, and/or masculinity.

aromantic – *adj.* : experiencing little or no romantic attraction to others and/or has a lack of interest in romantic relationships/ behavior. Aromanticism exists on a continuum from people who experience no romantic attraction nor have any desire for romantic activities, to those who experience low levels, or romantic attraction only under specific conditions; and many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see *demiromantic*). Sometimes abbreviated to “aro” (pronounced like “arrow”).

asexual – *adj.* : experiencing little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior. Asexuality exists on a continuum from people who experience no sexual attraction nor have any desire for sex, to those who experience low levels, or sexual attraction only under specific conditions; and many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see *demisexual*). Sometimes abbreviated to “ace.”

Asexuality is different from celibacy in that it is a sexual orientation whereas celibacy is an abstaining from a certain action.

Not all asexual people are aromantic.

bigender – *adj.* : a person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (or sometimes a third gender in place of man or woman).

bicurious – *adj.* : a curiosity about experiencing attraction to some people of the same gender (similar to questioning), in addition to attraction to those of a different gender.

biological sex – *noun* : a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned at birth.”

Often seen as a binary but as there are many combinations of chromosomes, hormones, and primary/secondary sex characteristics, it’s more accurate to view this as a spectrum (which is more inclusive of intersex people as well as trans*-identified people).

Is commonly conflated with gender.

biphobia – *noun* : a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have or express towards bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the LGBTQ community as well as straight society. **Biphobic** – *adj.* : a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards bisexual people. Example of bi-invisibility and bi-erasure would be the assumption that any man in a relationship with a woman is straight or anyone dating someone of the same gender means you’re gay. In neither case do we assume anyone could be bisexual.

Important to recognize that many of our “stereotypes” of bisexual people (e.g., they’re overly sexual, greedy, it’s just a phase) have harmful and stigmatizing effects (and that not only straight people but also many queer individuals harbor these beliefs too).

bisexual – *adj.* : **1** having the capacity to be emotionally, physically,

and/or sexually attracted to some men and women. **2** having the capacity to be emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to some people of one’s gender and another gender. This attraction does not have to be equally split or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders an individual may be attracted to.

Can simply be shortened to “bi.”

Many people who recognize the limitations of a binary understanding of gender may still use the word bisexual as their sexual orientation label, this is often because many people are familiar with the term bisexual (while less are familiar to the term pansexual).

butch – *noun & adj.* : a person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally, or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but is also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

cisgender /“siss-jendur”/ – *adj.* : a person whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity align (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a man). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.”

“Cis” is a latin prefix that means “on the same side [as]” or “on this side [of].”

cissexism – *noun* : behavior that grants preferential treatment to cisgender people, reinforces the idea that being cisgender is somehow better or more “right” than being transgender, and/or makes other genders invisible.

cisnormativity – *noun* : the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans* identities or people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

closeted – *adj.* : an individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one’s safety, peer or family rejection, or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being “in the closet.” When someone chooses to break this silence they “come out” of the closet. See *coming out*.

coming out – **1** the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). **2** The process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.).

This is a continual, life-long process. Every day, all the time, one has to evaluate and re-evaluate who they are comfortable coming out to, if it is safe, and what the consequences might be.

constellation – *noun* : a way to describe the arrangement or structure of a polyamorous relationship. Also called a *polycule*.

cross-dresser – *noun* : someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

demioromantic – *adj.* : little or no capacity to experience romantic attraction until a strong sexual or emotional connection is formed with another individual, often within a sexual relationship.

demisexual – *adj.* : little or no capacity to experience sexual attraction until a strong romantic or emotional connection is formed with another individual, often within a romantic relationship.

down low – *adj.* : typically referring to men who identify as straight but who secretly have sex with men. Down low (or DL) originated in, and is most commonly used by communities of color.

drag king – *noun* : someone who performs masculinity.

drag queen – *noun* : someone who performs femininity.

dyke – *noun* : referring to a masculine presenting lesbian. While often used derogatorily, it can be adopted affirmatively by many lesbians (both more masculine and more feminine presenting lesbians) as a positive self-identity term.

emotional attraction – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in emotional intimate behavior (e.g., sharing, confiding, trusting, interdepending), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

fag(got) – *noun* : derogatory term referring to a gay person, or someone perceived as queer. Occasionally used as a self-identifying affirming term by some gay men, at times in the shortened form 'fag'.

feminine-of-center; masculine-of-center – *adj.* : a word that indicates a range of terms of gender identity and gender presentation for folks who present, understand themselves, and/or relate to others in a more feminine/masculine way, but don't necessarily identify as women/men. Feminine-of-center individuals may also identify as femme, submissive, transfeminine, etc.; masculine-of-center individuals may also often identify as butch, stud, aggressive, boi, transmasculine, etc.

feminine-presenting; masculine-presenting – *adj.* : a way to describe someone who expresses gender in a more feminine/masculine way. Often confused with feminine-of-center/masculine-of-center, which generally include a focus on identity as well as expression.

femme – *noun & adj.* : someone who identifies themselves as feminine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Often used to refer to a feminine-presenting queer woman.

fluid(ity) – *adj.* : generally with another term attached, like gender-fluid or fluid-

sexuality, fluid(ity) describes an identity that may change or shift over time between or within the mix of the options available (e.g., man and woman, bi and straight).

FtM; MtF – abbreviation : female-to-male transgender or trans- sexual person; male-to-female transgender or transsexual person. Sometimes abbreviated F2M and M2F.

gay – *adj.* : **1** individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex and/or gender. Can be used to refer to men who are attracted to other men, and can be applied to women as well. **2** An umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

“Gay” is a word that’s had many different meanings throughout time. In the 12th century is meant “happy,” in the 17th century it was more commonly used to mean “immoral” (describing a loose and pleasure-seeking person), and by the 19th it meant a female prostitute (and a “gay man” was a guy who had sex with female prostitutes a lot). It wasn’t until the 20th century that it started to mean what it means today. Interesting, right?

gender binary – *noun* : the idea that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two.

gender expression – *noun* : the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

genderfluid– *adj.* : a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of boy and girl. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more man some days, and more woman other days.

gender identity – *noun* : the internal perception of an one’s gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don’t align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans*, and more. Often confused with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth.

gender neutrois – *adj.* : see *agender*.

gender non-conforming – *adj.* : **1** a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or feminine man). **2** a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as “GNC.”

gender normative; gender straight – *adj.* : someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, conforms with society’s gender-based expectations.

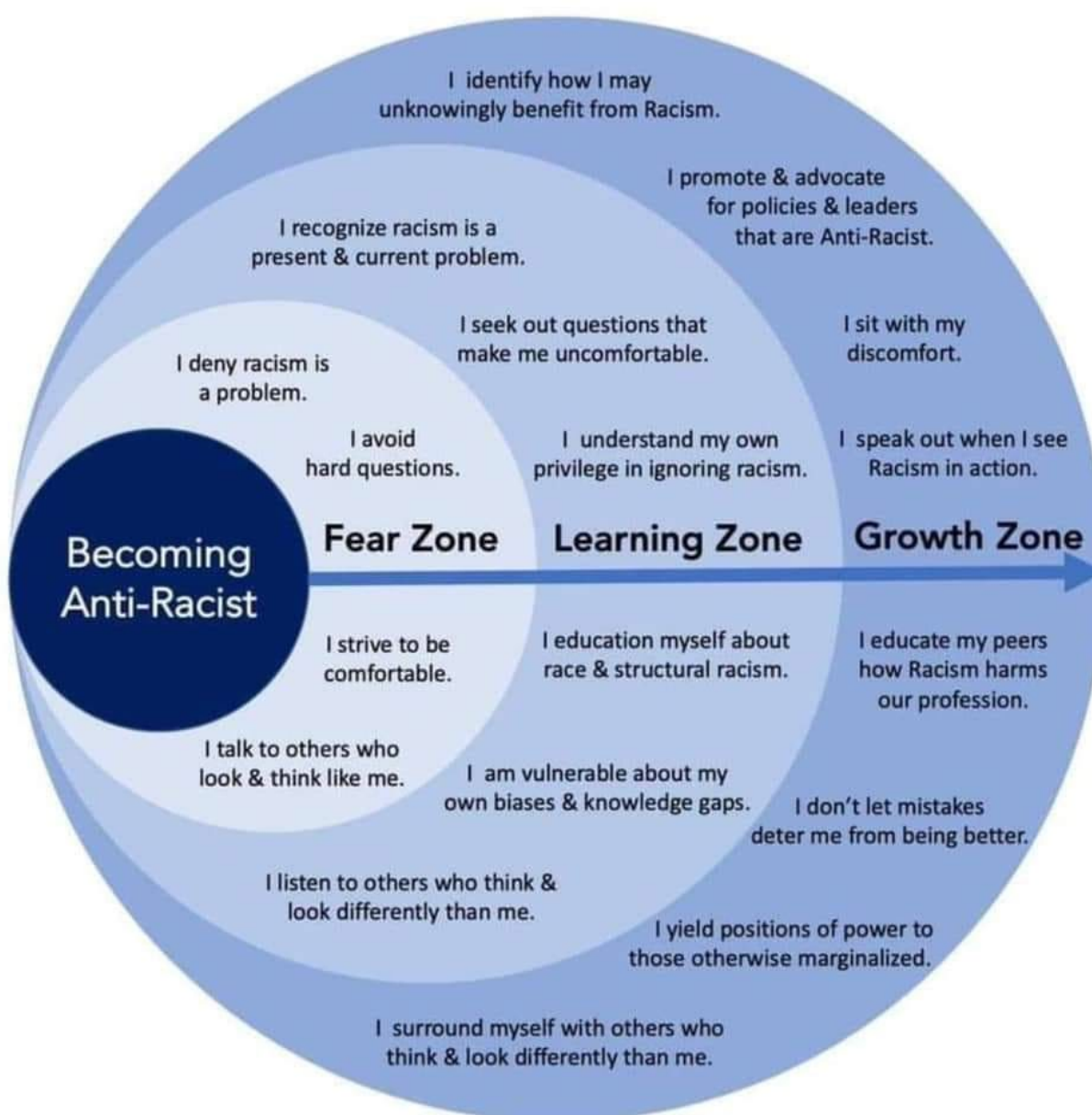
Reflections, Connections and Notes to Remember

Where am I currently in learning to become anti-racist?

Using the graphic below, circle any of the descriptors that you feel match how you think and act as it relates to your learning about anti-racism. The goal is for you to become aware of where you are in your “journey” so that you can more finely tune what you need to continue to grow.

Once you have circled the descriptors that best match your actions and thoughts, notice which of the three zones you are primarily operating in.

Reflection Question: How does this help you think about what your next steps might need to be?



restorative justice

implementation guide

A Whole School Approach



*Oakland Unified School District
Restorative Justice Implementation Guide:
A Whole School Approach*

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Using This Guide

This guide is designed for a Restorative Practices Facilitator to support their school to create an implementation plan to introduce restorative practices to a school, school wide.

We hope this guide supports you to establish the following RJ Principles:

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

- Builds relationships.
- Strives to be respectful to all.
- Provides opportunity for equitable dialogue and participatory decision-making.
- Involves all relevant stakeholders.
- Addresses harms, needs, obligations, and causes of conflict and harm.
- Encourages all to take responsibility.

- 1. IF CRIME HURTS, JUSTICE SHOULD HEAL.**
The focus is on repairing harm if it has occurred
- 2. NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US.**
Those impacted feel welcome and safe to speak and participate.
- 3. THERE IS SIMPLY NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE PERSONAL.**
Building respectful relationships is foundational and an outcome of any process.
- 4. THIS CAN WORK, I CAN LIVE WITH IT.**
Agreements are made by consensus
- 5. I AM WILLING TO DO THIS.**
Participation is voluntary.

Stepping Stones to Creating a Restorative School

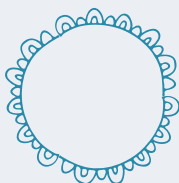




STEP 1

Frame Restorative Justice for Your Site

Welcome to Oakland Unified School District's restorative justice initiative. Each school's journey to understand, implement and institutionalize restorative practices will be unique. However, we all begin by understanding the history and roots of the Restorative Justice movement. As you read the following text, consider your site, and what is most relevant for you.



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

In your role as a Restorative Practices Facilitator, you will be asked to explain what Restorative Justice is to many different audiences. The following paragraph offers one definition of RJ. Read this definition, then respond to the questions below.

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

Inspired by indigenous values, **restorative justice is a philosophy and a theory of justice** that emphasizes bringing together everyone affected by wrongdoing to address needs and responsibilities, and to heal the harm to relationships as much as possible. Restorative justice is a philosophy that is being applied in multiple contexts, including schools, families, workplaces, the justice system, global conflict, and as a tool to transform structural and historic harms. Though only about 40 years old, the restorative justice movement is rapidly expanding, with tens of thousands of initiatives worldwide.

Many people mistakenly assume restorative justice is solely a conflict resolution process that comes into play after harm has occurred. Though school-based restorative justice offers a more equitable and respectful alternative for dealing with disciplinary infractions, it is also a proactive strategy to create a culture of connectivity where all members of the school community feel valued and thrive. Restorative justice is a profoundly relational practice.

How would you describe restorative justice in your own words?

Think about your school site. How would you tailor your definition for:

A Principal?

Teachers?

Parents?

Students?



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

A good rule of thumb is that about 20 percent of a school's restorative practices

respond to conflict while 80 percent are proactively creating shared cultures and building strong relationships.

This approach cultivates a climate where destructive responses to conflict are less likely to occur.

REFLECTION

Think back to the last conflict you experienced at your school. Describe it:
(What happened? Where? Who was involved?)

The primary difference between *restorative* and *retributive* justice can be categorized by the types of questions that inform our analysis of a problem. To illustrate the difference, walk through each set of the questions in the table below, with your scenario in mind. Write down your responses to each question in the spaces provided, then use the reflection questions that follow to analyze the difference between restorative and retributive justice.

THREE QUESTIONS RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE ASKS:

What law or rule was broken?

Who broke it?

What punishment is deserved?

THREE QUESTIONS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ASKS:

What is the harm?

What are the needs and obligations
of all affected by the harm?

How can all the affected parties
create a plan to heal the harm as
much as possible?

What is the difference in the types of responses you generate from retributive vs. restorative thinking?

What problems has retributive thinking created in our community?

What resources and supports would we need to embed restorative thinking in a school?

A restorative culture supports all school stakeholders to shift their analysis of a problem from using exclusionary discipline tactics to support healing and accountability.



STEP 2

Assemble the Restorative Justice Team

The first step is to create a restorative school culture team.



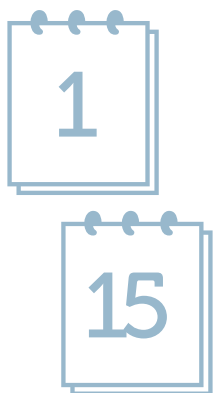
TO BUILD YOUR TEAM of four to six people, consider:

Are there already existing school climate teams?

How will you optimize existing resources?

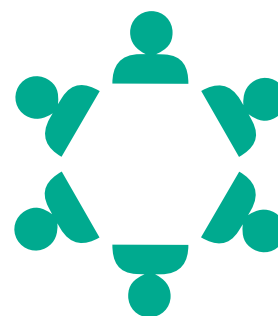
Ideally, the team will include the Restorative Practices Facilitator (or another individual primarily tasked with implementation), an administrator, two to three early adopter teachers, a school security officer, a counselor or clinician, students, representatives of support staff and after-school program staff.

A full-time Restorative Practices Facilitator working for the school is ideal. Alternatively, a trained and motivated vice principal, dean, teacher on special assignment, or counselor can manage training and school-wide implementation of restorative practices.



This team should **MEET BI-MONTHLY** to:

- Develop shared values
- Assess the school's strengths and needs
- Create an implementation plan for the site
- Develop a training and professional development plan for staff and students
- Use data based decision making to streamline and hone in on the challenges, successes, and problems of practice
- Continually reflect upon what is working, what are areas of growth, and how RJ practices might continuously be improved at the site



Ideally, the team will use the **TALKING CIRCLE PROCESS**, the core practice of whole school restorative justice, to conduct most of its meetings.

Ultimately and ideally, each member of the school community will be trained to play some part in the school-wide implementation of restorative justice. The **KEY CHAMPIONS** and their roles are:

PRINCIPAL

- Hires or participates in hiring Restorative Practices Facilitator for the site
- Has had first-hand experiences of sitting in Tier I, II, and III Circles
- Engages entire school community and parents in pre-implementation phases
- Makes sure the district discipline matrix is utilized in a restorative fashion with training on the restorative justice protocols for classroom-managed and office-based disciplinary referrals

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES FACILITATOR

or other designated individual

- Is trained and experienced in RJ community building, RJ discipline, RJ reentry, and in offering RJ trainings (Tiers I, II, and III)
- Offers continuous training, coaching, and technical assistance to site-based practitioners and parents
- Uses Model-Mentor-Transfer process to Coach and cofacilitate classroom Circles with teachers
- Facilitates recurring professional learning community convenings of practitioners
- Coordinates Advisory Circles and other school-wide restorative practices
- Facilitates ongoing restorative interventions as alternatives to punitive discipline
- Facilitates restorative intervention to help students re-integrate into school following an absence
- Engages parents in site-based restorative practices, including training and supporting parent dialogue circles

TEACHERS

- Receives introductory training (Tier I) in whole school restorative justice
- Are coached to facilitate classroom Circles and engage in restorative conversations
- Develops adult capacity to share power with youth
- Facilitates classroom Circles with students, including a Shared Values Circle
- Uses restorative conversations to address students' struggles and misbehavior
- Uses restorative practices to address tensions with colleagues
- Uses trauma informed restorative practices in the classroom

STUDENTS

- Co-creates norms and practices of a restorative classroom and school culture
- Facilitates Conflict Circles to build community and respond to conflict among peers

PARENTS

- Reinforce restorative values and processes at home
- Participate in restorative processes at the school site

SCHOOL SECURITY OFFICERS

- Receives Tier I training and coaching in engaging in Restorative Conversations and effective communication and de-escalation strategies
- Participates in Community Building and Conflict Circles

DISTRICT RJ SUPPORT STAFF

(Ideally, a school has access to school district resources, but this may not always be available.)

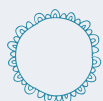
- Trains and coaches the site RP Facilitator and other leadership at the school site
- Shares lessons, strategies, stories, and data from other schools and districts
- Offers technical assistance to RJ Coordinator, Principal, and others to develop a three-tier restorative justice infrastructure

SUPPORT STAFF

- Participates in and/or facilitate Community Building Circles

COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Participates in and/or facilitate Community Building Circles



IMPLEMENTATION TIP Engaging as many members of the school community early on in the planning and training process is important. But don't wait until you have assembled the "perfect" team to get started. Even if your team is small to begin with, move the process forward, especially if school leadership is on board and staff have generally expressed an openness about proceeding.



STEP 3

Assess Your School

PART A: ADOPT A SOCIAL JUSTICE ANALYSIS

RACE EQUITY & RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

IMPLICIT BIAS

Implicit Bias. Some argue that racism is a thing of the past. Others assert that skin color still plays a huge role in the way people are treated. Today, overt racism is less common than it was in the past. Although it has not been eradicated, these days people are less likely to express racist views openly and intentionally and more likely to express them unconsciously. This is known as “implicit bias.”

Implicit bias occurs when someone rejects stereotypes on conscious levels yet holds onto them on unconscious levels. And because their racial prejudices are unconscious, people don’t know they have them. More than 85 percent of all Americans view themselves

as unbiased, yet studies show that most people in our country have implicit bias.

The good news is that studies also show that if we put race on the table and talk about it instead of ignoring it, and if we are motivated to change it, we can overcome implicit racial bias. If we don’t have conversations about it, bias will continue.

So it’s important to create spaces in our schools where we can talk about race in a nonthreatening and productive way. Circles are excellent ways to have these difficult conversations.

Note: Do you or your colleagues have implicit bias? Take the Harvard University Implicit Bias test online.

ZERO TOLERANCE & RACIAL DISPARITY

In recent decades, out-of-school suspensions have become the norm for not only brandishing weapons and assault but also for talking back to teachers, dress code violations, and tardiness. School-based arrests result from playful adolescent behavior such as milk fights in the cafeteria and even for a child’s temper tantrums.

Suspension rates have more than doubled over the last three decades for all students. At the same time, racial disparities are growing: Black students are three-and-a-half times more likely to be suspended or expelled as their white peers, according to the US Department of Education. Studies also reveal gaps between white and Latino/Chicano students.

START RACE & GENDER EQUITY CONVERSATIONS AT YOUR SCHOOL

Our goal is to create a school climate that is inclusive and feels welcoming to all persons, regardless of race, culture, or sexual orientation.

Use the following process to determine whether discipline at your school is impacting one racial group disproportionately compared to others.

- 1. Analyze the Data:** Gather recent school discipline data to analyze. (Data like this is available from the Restorative Justice District Office.)

SOURCES OF DATA YOU CAN COLLECT:

- Discipline handbook
- School improvement plan goals
- Annual Action Plan for meeting school-wide behavior support goals
- Social skills instructional materials/ implementation time line
- Behavioral incident summaries or reports (e.g., office referrals, suspensions, expulsions)
- Other related information

As a group look for the following patterns in your data:

- Are students of a certain race, gender, or age disproportionately represented?
- Are behavior issues occurring in a particular teachers' class, or at a particular time of day?
- Are students who struggle in some times/classrooms more successful in other times/classrooms?

- 2. Build Staff Comfort Discussing Race:** When staff feel uncomfortable or scared to talk about race, it can be swept

under the carpet, but racial disparity is rampant in Oakland Public Schools. We can only address it by first accepting it. Organize Circle conversations to explore feelings about race before a conflict or troublesome incident occurs. Using talking Circles to address race and gender equity issues in a preventive way is very important.

Use the agenda templates in the appendix of this guide to get your school's race and gender Circle conversations started. These templates are drawn from *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community*, Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Living Justice Press (2015).

- 3. Make the Time!** Try your best to allot enough time for these difficult conversations, especially when getting them started at your school.
- 4. Consider launching a series of Circle race conversations.**

As the RJ Coordinator, you can support teachers to build their comfort and skill to bring intention to making all people feel included and welcome!

5. Use the following questions to identify your next steps:

In what contexts do you wish to have race conversations in Circle? In classrooms, advisories, staff meetings, professional development sessions?

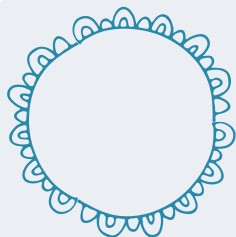
Are there teachers knowledgeable about race studies who you can bring into your Circle?

Do you have a plan to conduct conversations when important racial issues are in the news?

Has your school scheduled intercultural programs throughout the year?

STRATEGIES TO INTEGRATE RACE DIALOGUES INTO EXISTING STRUCTURES

- Hold race circles in staff meetings
- Organize school-wide introductory circles on race and gender for advisories
- Hold a circle to address national or local events in the news involving race/gender violence
- Partner with ethnic studies teachers or school district agencies like African-American Male Achievement Office to co-sponsor educational presentations to your school
- Connect with history teachers to have an academic discussion on the historical events that led to racial tensions in the US, or Oakland in particular.



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

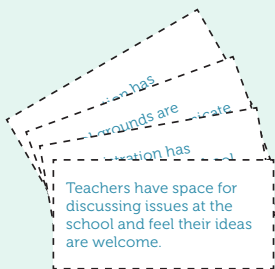
When an issue of race or gender bias arises in a Circle that is meant to focus on another subject, address that issue immediately when it arises in Circle if at all possible.

For example, if an African-American woman expresses discomfort at using a stuffed monkey for a talking piece, even though it may be uncomfortable, don't just ignore it and keep going with the Circle as if nothing happened.

Rather than moving forward with the discussion round, the facilitator

might stop everything, validate the discomfort, acknowledging that the explicit association of monkeys with African-Americans has been part of the dehumanization and degradation of African-Americans for centuries in the nation. An apology for the lack of awareness might be in order. Then the facilitator might invite others to share, including the black woman who voiced concern over the monkey-talking piece in the first place. Resume the original Circle discussion after it feels the issue has been satisfactorily addressed by all.

PART B: CELEBRATE YOUR SCHOOL'S BRIGHT SPOTS

1. **Invite** your RJ Culture and Climate team to a group meeting.
2. **Print** out a set of **What's Going on at Our School Cards**, which can be found in the appendix, as well as on our Resources Website.
 
3. **Place** the header cards "We Do this Well," "This is in Place but Needs Work," and "We Don't Do This" on a large table in three separate columns.
4. Equally **divide** the cards by the number of team members. **Distribute** the divided stacks to each team member.
5. Use a speed-sort process to have team members **place** each of the cards into three piles, placing each under one of the header columns as appropriate.
6. Once the piles have formed, pause, and **review** the cards that landed under each heading. Invite participants to **ask** questions and ultimately find consensus about where to place each card.
7. Explain to the group that they will now use the debrief question to celebrate all the things that are going well. These represent your schools **bright spots**. Rubber-band the remaining two piles together and set aside to use in Part B.

WE DO THIS WELL

THIS IS IN PLACE
BUT NEEDS WORK

WE DON'T DO THIS

DEBRIEF

- How do cards in the "We Do This Well" column create a positive school climate and culture?
- Do you remember a time when some of these bright spots were not in place?
- What did it take to make these bright spots happen consistently?
- How do your teachers, students, and parents experience these bright spots?
- Who/what would you like to appreciate for these bright spots?

PART C: ALIGN YOUR CARDS WITH OUSD'S RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION MODEL

OUSD uses an implementation strategy based on the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. This ensures that all students receive support tailored to their needs and

circumstances. The goals of whole school restorative justice are to:

- (1) strengthen community
- (2) repair harm
- (3) reintegrate and provide

individualized support for students who have been absent due to suspension, truancy, expulsion, incarceration, or who simply do not feel welcome.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION MODEL



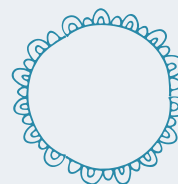
REFLECT: How does this model support the inclusion of all young people?

Now let's organize the **Whats Going On in Our School Cards** to correspond to the three tiers of this framework.

1. **Reproduce** the color-coded RTI model from page 16 on a large piece of flipchart paper.
2. **Gather** the three stacks of cards from Part A.
3. **Take** the cards from the first category, "WE DO THIS WELL," and **place** each one inside the appropriate circle using the color-coding to guide placement.
4. Now **take** the cards from the second category, "THIS IS IN PLACE BUT NEEDS WORK," and **place** them outside the three circles. This will represent the elements of your school's RJ-RTI model that need to be addressed.
5. Each of the cards outside of the circle **indicates** a need or an action item to to consider as you build your work plan (in step four).
6. **Debrief** using the questions below.
7. **Take a picture** of the completed model with the cards to document your starting place. Replicate this process quarterly to see what has shifted.

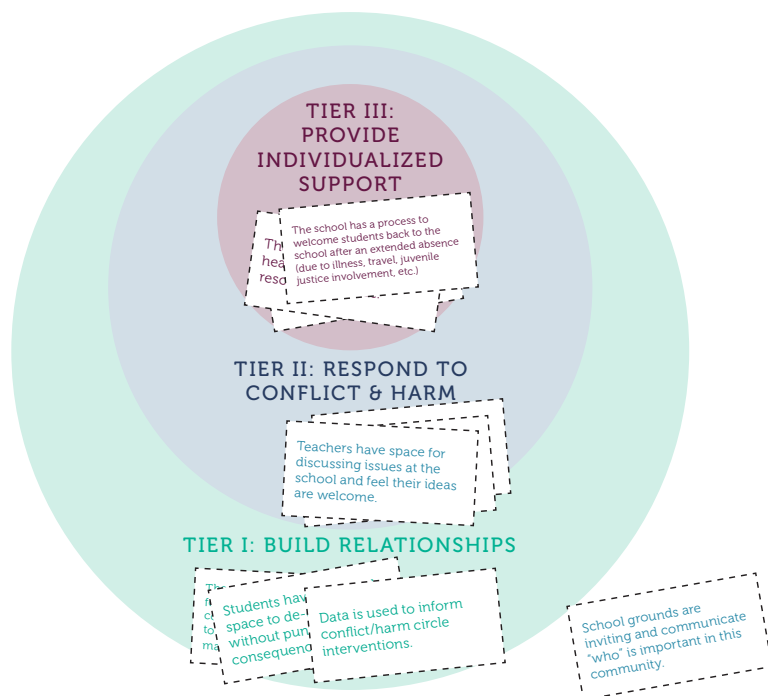
DEBRIEF

1. What did you like about this process?
2. What items feel most urgent or important to do first?
3. What are you excited about?
4. What is missing from these cards?



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

Notice the emotions that come up for the participants in this process. It is common to want to be perfect in every category, and to feel disappointed at areas that still need work. As the RJ coordinator, create space for the emotions that may come up for the participants. Consider holding a circle to process these emotions.



PART D: ESTABLISH SCHOOL GOALS

Looking at all the cards at once can be overwhelming! Try not to be concerned if many of your cards are outside of the triangle. Creating a Restorative Justice initiative is a process and will take time. Don't take on too much at once.

1. Based on what you learned from your RTI RJ model read the questions below and for each one, **brainstorm** as many ideas as you can on index cards (write one idea per card).
 - How could we take what is already working well and boost these areas through more intention and focus.
 - How could we tweak our current practices or systems with a restorative lens.
2. Now **look** at your third stack of cards, "WE DON'T DO THIS." Is there one goal you would like to work on this year from this set of cards?
 - How could we take some of the cards that live outside of the triangles?
 - Is there something that we are not working on that we could develop new practices or procedures around?
3. Finally, **select** 5-10 of your index cards as priority areas for this year.

What are the priority goals your school has chosen to focus on this year:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

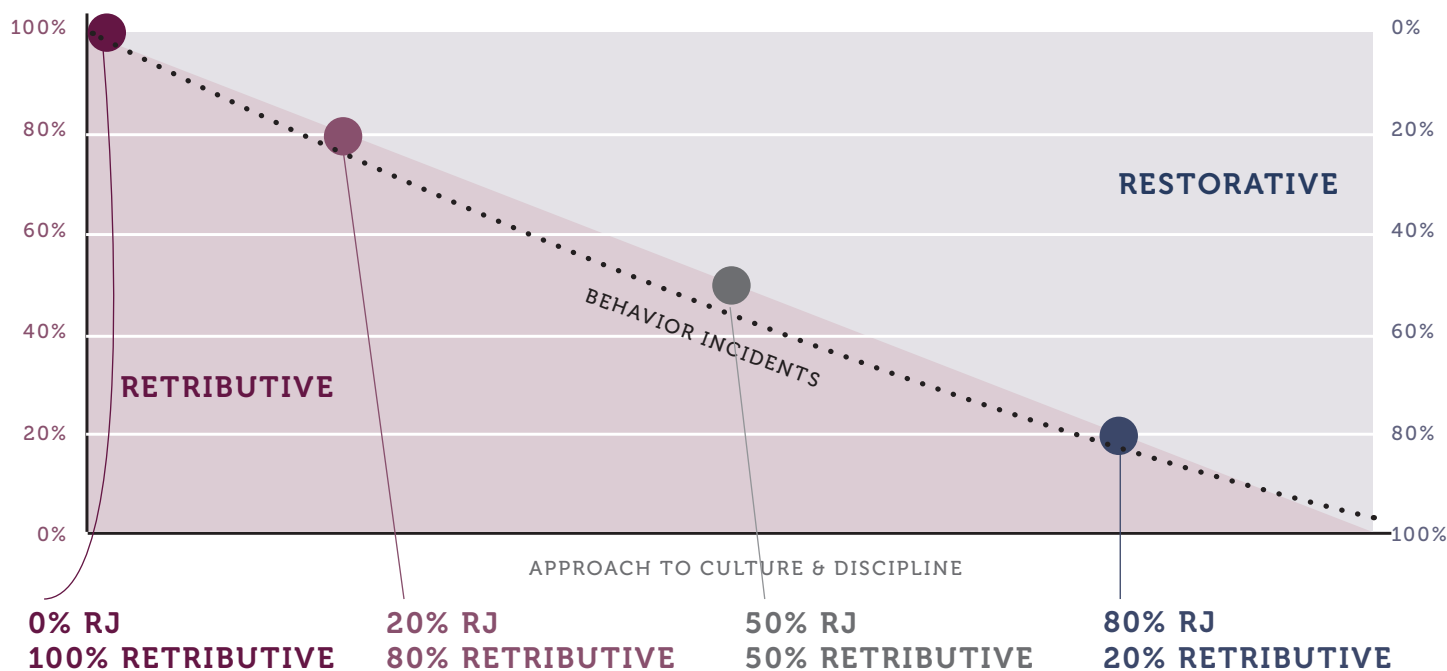


STEP 4

Moving From Punitive to Restorative Practices

You can't institute RJ overnight! The most sustainable way to institutionalize whole-school restorative practices is to gradually increase restorative practices over time.

GRADUALLY INTRODUCING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES TO REPLACE RETRIBUTIVE PRACTICES WILL DECREASE BEHAVIOR INCIDENTS.



- Little structured time for community building is provided.
- Rules are established by adults with no input from students.
- Time outs, phone calls home and suspension are primary disciplinary tactics.

- A few teachers use community building circles in classrooms.
- An RJ Coordinator addresses some behavior issues.
- Sometimes circles are used to address harm and healing with families and community.

- Regular community building circles are held in classrooms.
- Teachers use circles to address harm and restore relationships as issues occur.
- Most times circles are used to address harm and healing with families and community.

- A peer RJ group is used to address most conflicts.
- Retributive practices are reserved for severe, infrequent instances of harm.
- Circles are always used to address harm and healing with families and community.

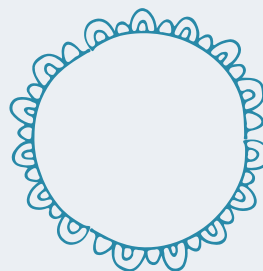
Start off by placing more emphasis on prevention (Tier I), by establishing strong relationships. This will eliminate some behavior issues before they even start, de-escalate others, and equip more students and teachers with the capacity to handle conflict restoratively.

DOES RJ ALWAYS WORK?

There may be times when a restorative process won't work, because the conditions have not been fully established. Here are some common challenges sites face, and some suggestions on how to proceed.

If...	Then ...
The person responsible will not admit to the harm and be accountable for their actions or doesn't want to participate in a harm circle.	RJ may not be appropriate at this time. RJ only works when the parties involved are open to the process.
A person has gone through multiple circles and it doesn't seem to be working.	Reflect on why the environment created in the circles did not support accountability. Make sure mental and behavioral health services are also provided
There is a bullying situation. The person responsible for the bullying behavior will not be accountable for their actions. The person harmed is not willing to meet with the aggressor.	Create individual circles of support for the student engaged in the bullying behavior and the target of their aggressions.
The RJ Circle Keeper is concerned that further harm will be done by bringing the impacted parties together.	Create individual circles of support for the student and the students involved in the harm.

If members of your community are not willing or ready to address harm through restorative practices, it is an indicator that more community building (tier 1) work is needed.



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

BUILD A PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PLAN

1. With your School Culture team, make a list of common behavior challenges.
2. For each one, determine how you will address harm and restore relationships.



STEP 5

Include Others in Your Vision

A restorative approach requires input and buy-in from the whole community. Your draft rollout plan will serve as a starting point for you to share your vision with others, but will need to be filled in and adapted based on the feedback and input of other teachers and school stakeholders involved.

Connect with district RJ staff to create a professional learning opportunity to orient your staff to what RJ is, why you care about it, and your draft plan for implementation.

Schedule a staff retreat or meeting to introduce the RJ approach and model restorative practices with your staff using the Introducing RJ to Your Staff Agenda in the Supporting Documents website.

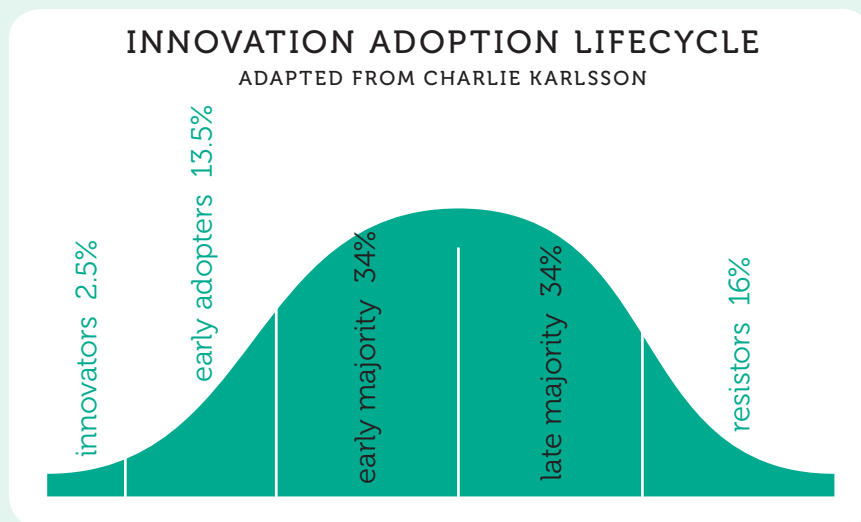
Download the Appetite for RJ Staff Poll from the Supporting Documents website, and distribute to staff at the end of the PD.

Schedule a follow-up meeting with your implementation team to review the results.

ANALYZE YOUR STAFF BUY-IN

We don't expect every teacher or other staff members to jump on board right away, but no initiative can work without support from a critical mass. The Innovation Adoption Lifecycle visual to the right shows the different ways staff members may respond when invited to adopt restorative practices. This tool will help your implementation team make strategic choices to target your RJ implementation efforts. This process will help you identify who is more inclined to pilot RJ Practices, who might need to see concrete results to get on board, and who might resist.

1. **Gather** together your Implementation Team.
2. **Write** each staff person and administrator's name on an index card.
3. **Review** the Innovation Lifecycle graphic below, and read the descriptions of each category.



4. Using the Appetite for RJ Staff Poll results, **decide** where you believe each person in your staff falls within this chart with regards to adopting school-wide restorative practices in 3 tiers.
5. Now **review** your RTI RJ model and your RJ coordinator work plan. Given the buy in of your staff, do you have the right goals in mind?

Don't worry about the members of your team with a low appetite for Restorative Justice. These people represent those that will need to see a proof of concept to feel brought in, which will take time. Get curious about what each of the staff members in the early majority, late majority and resistor categories will need to buy into whole school RJ. Providing all staff opportunities to experience the power of circle will help move those that are skeptical.



STEP 6

Implement Tier I Strategies

Launch your whole-school RJ implementation with an emphasis on Tier I restorative strategies. Tier I includes training and coaching teachers, counselors, administrators, school security officers, support staff, and after-school program staff in facilitating restorative conversations and community-building circles school-wide. This proactive approach builds the capacity of adult staff to utilize restorative practices to create a restorative school. Children learn by emulating the behavior of the adults in their lives. Implementing Tier I interventions can foster a strong interconnectivity that can radically transform the culture and climate of the entire school.

TRAINING

Schedule an **INTRODUCTORY TRAINING** early in the school year for as many staff as possible. Ideally, the introductory training prepares the school to implement proactive community-building processes school-wide.

At the next level, a smaller group is trained to **FACILITATE RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE PROCESSES** to address rule infractions and alternatives to suspension.

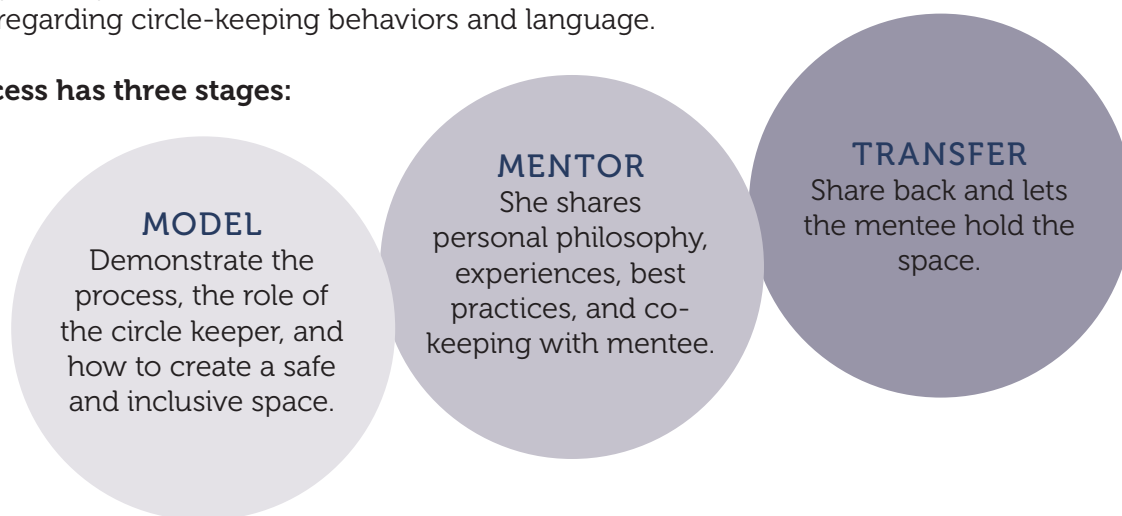
Create a **SCHOOL-WIDE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY** that allows RJ practitioners at the site to continually reflect throughout the school year on what is working, what are areas of growth, and what tweaking is needed. Depending on the size of your school, it may take more than one year for all or most staff to complete the Tier I training.

OUSD offers several off-site training opportunities. Ask district RJ staff for a current list of training offerings to plan your attendance.

COACH USING THE MODEL, MENTOR, TRANSFER PROCESS

The RP Facilitator can support teachers in circle-keeping and restorative conversations using the Model, Mentor, Transfer (MMT) process. This is a process that involves a coach, usually the RP Facilitator, partnering closely with a new practitioner. The coach uses an observation tool to promote a processing dialogue regarding circle-keeping behaviors and language.

This process has three stages:



INTRODUCING THE MODEL, MENTOR, TRANSFER (MMT) PROCESS TO YOUR STAFF

1. **Schedule** a meeting for teachers who have been trained in RJ for the Classroom.
2. **Present** the MMT framework, as described in this guide.
3. Ask for one volunteer to **practice keeping a circle** for your staff team.
4. **Explain** that the RJ Coordinator will use the MMT process to provide feedback to the volunteer facilitator.
5. Have the volunteer **keep a check-in circle** with their colleagues for about 20 minutes on an interesting topic. The topic will ideally generate differing viewpoints and lively discussion, using their facilitation skills.
6. **Call**, "Time" after 20 minutes, and have the mentor and volunteer **assess** the circle using the assessment tool.
7. Have your team **reflect** on the process:
 - What do they like about the MMT process?
 - How do they feel about being mentored?
 - How would they feel about mentoring a colleague?

SUGGESTED TOOL

The MMT processing tool may be used by the coach and/or mentee to observe circle-keeper behavior and language. This process can be gradual where the mentee initially co-facilitates parts of the circle process agenda, gradually moving to facilitating the entire circle process on his own. This tool can be used in sections or all at once. It is designed for anyone who is keeping circle or who wants to improve their circle process.

ENGAGING THE MMT PROCESS, STEP BY STEP

1. **Schedule** a time to meet with each teacher (mentee), and orient them to the circle process, using the following roles of a circle keeper:
 - The circle keeper is not responsible for “fixing” or “managing” anything.
 - The circle keeper is a servant of the circle. The circle keeper does not run the circle, but empowers the circle to run itself.
 - The circle keeper is responsible for creating and holding a safe space, the keeper models the art of listening and asking well formulated prompting questions.
2. **Invite** the mentee to observe you holding an RJ Circle.
3. **Give** the mentee a copy of the observation tool which appears on page 22, and ask them to take notes, focusing on one aspect of the circle.
4. **Establish** a time to debrief the circle and provide feedback.
5. **Schedule** a time for the mentee to facilitate a circle, while the RJ Coordinator observes and fills out the observation tool.
6. **Set a time** for the RP Facilitator to provide feedback and identify strategies to build circle-keeping skills.

OBSERVATION TOOL

Date:

Circle Type: Tier I II III

Circle Keeper(s):

Grade Level: TK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Mentor:

Mentee:

Select a focus: **THE CIRCLE-KEEPER...**

☐ Has adequately prepared.

☐ Engages as a circle participant while holding the space.

☐ Addresses and redirects harmful or problematic behaviors in circle.

☐ Addresses racial and gender inequities that arise in circle.

☐ Creates a safe space.

☐ Shares power and responsibilities in the circle.

☐ Addresses the needs of circle participants.

☐ Creates an inclusive space.

Describe 3 examples of the selected focus area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

SEE



What did you see from the circle keeper?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Questions

What did you see from the on-task students?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Questions

HEAR



What did you see from the off-task student(s)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Questions

What did you hear from the circle keeper?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Questions

What did you hear from the on-task students?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Questions

What did you hear from the off-task student(s)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Questions

STEP 7



Support Teachers through Ongoing PD

Restorative practices requires facilitation skills—listening, empathy, validating, mirroring—all tools that are not taught in every teacher-credentialing programs. Creating a restorative school culture will require un-learning as well as new learning for your staff. Build the following systems of support to decrease teachers' barriers to engage, participate, and explore.

SET UP IN CIRCLE.

Ask all teachers to consider how to best quickly get the desks or chairs in a circle when needed. It is helpful to practice getting in and out of circle prior to your first circle.

ESTABLISH SCHOOL-WIDE CLIMATE CIRCLES

Create time for community building, values-creation, and norms-building for the first six-weeks of school in each class and school-wide. Revisit activities midyear to refresh commitment to values and practice.

Some teachers may be able to set up a physical conflict resolution space or a peace table in the classroom where students can resolve problems on their own using a "talk it out" or circle model.

TRAINING CALENDAR

Build out an RJ training calendar for the school year. See the sample RJ training calendar below.

Sample Staff PD Calendar

AUGUST School Year Launch Staff Retreat: a 2-6 hour orientation to RJ Training with the staff.	SEPT Welcome Circle with Teachers Community Building Circles	OCT Holding a Restorative Conversation
NOV Using a Circle to Address a Current Event	DEC Addressing Harm with a Circle	JAN Community Building Circle
FEB Teaching in Circle	MAR Reflecting on Restorative Practices	APRIL What Happens in a Circle of Support and Accountability (COSA)
MAY Celebrating the Year	JUNE Year-end Surveys and Reflection	Hold Community Building circles throughout the year, whenever possible, to send the message that relationships come first!

PEACEMAKING ROOM

Establish a physical peacemaking space on campus. This is a space you can send students and teachers when a conflict arises or when "cooling-off" is needed, it is largely a comfortable, student-friendly space where dialogue, community-building, collaborative learning, and other proactive activities take place. Ideally youth will co-design the space. Make sure to distinguish this from any on-campus suspension or detention space. It must be voluntary, and feel restorative.

ADVISORIES

Use advisories to deepen community, teach social-emotional-learning skills, and introduce restorative conflict resolution tools.

Even the most skilled circle facilitators meet with challenges. The following section lists some common challenges we have faced along with suggested strategies to address them.

WHEN GOOD CIRCLES GO BAD

If you experience this...	Then try this...
It takes too long for students to get in a circle...	• Practice getting in and out of circle before holding an actual talking circle. • Figure out possible alternate furniture or room arrangements. • Use a timer and build in an incentive for meeting the time expectation. • Have students sit on top of desks in a circle. • Ask the students to come up with suggestions.
The circle process takes too long...	• Hold a “speed check in” circle: Ask for a one- or two-word check-in on how the weekend was or how they are feeling at the moment. • Time spent up front building relationships and coming up with shared values and guidelines will save time in the long run dealing with problem behavior.
No one is talking, or English may be a second language for my students, and they are hesitant to speak...	• Use alternative methods of expression such as drawing, freestyle poetry, journaling, movement, activities with no words, etc. • It is ok not to share as long as everyone participates by being present in circle. • Use a partner-share icebreaker or concentric circles so every student can have a chance to talk without speaking to the whole class. • Try to set a fun and community-building tone, gradually getting to more serious content over time. • Build in incentives for participation. • Ask students to brainstorm why they or others aren’t talking (could be written, anonymous, etc.) and some suggestions to encourage it. • Ask questions students are more likely to want to answer like “What is it you want adults to understand about youth?” • Lead the circle in another language.

If you experience this...

Then try this...

There are specific misbehaviors that derail the circle...

- Revisit the shared guidelines and values you created together.
- Try to determine underlying needs likely being expressed through the misbehavior, and focus on those rather than the behavior itself.
- Engage the students who are misbehaving as circle-keepers, or ask them to think of questions for the circle.
- Have 1:1 restorative conversations at another time with the students who are misbehaving to get to the root of the issue.
- Consult with colleagues for ideas.

One or a few students do all the talking...

- Have students make or bring their own talking pieces that are meaningful to them or their culture, and ask them to speak about it in circle.
- Consider giving the "natural leaders" jobs such as being a circle keeper or making a centerpiece for the circle.
- In private conversations with the quieter students, ask if there is something they need to feel safe in order to participate more fully.

Students make rude or mean facial expressions...

- Clarify unacceptable nonverbal behaviors as not following the shared guidelines.
- Acknowledge kind, respectful nonverbal behaviors.

Students talk about private family issues, abuse, suicide, drugs, or alcohol...

- When you start facilitating circle be very clear as to what types of issues you are mandated to report. Students will appreciate the clarity.
- Be sure to clearly explain the limit of confidentiality is anything related to danger to self or others.
- Consult with your Principal and mental health support staff about how to preplan for this possibility and discuss in an age-appropriate way.
- Follow up with administration, school-based mental health counselor or school nurse immediately, and make a mandated report as necessary. You may even need to personally walk the student to a school mental health professional.

The circle just doesn't seem to go well overall...

- Consult with colleagues for ideas, suggestions, or MMT coaching.
- Observe another colleague's circle, or ask them to observe yours.
- Have a colleague cofacilitate a class circle with you.
- Ask students what they thought about the circle, and how it could be made better, verbally or through a very simple written evaluation.



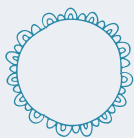
STEP 8

Implement Tier II Practices

Tier II circles are restorative alternatives for disciplinary infractions. Deep Tier II work can dramatically alter your school's detention and suspension rates. If newly trained, the coordinator or administrator will need MMT coaching from more experienced district staff or others qualified to implement Tier II interventions.

Tier II practices often involve parents. Consider offering introductory RJ training to family members. It makes an enormous difference in the school culture when youth and families are using RJ Circles to talk through instead of fight through their differences both at home and at school.

- Make sure the RP Facilitator is trained to facilitate Tier II interventions.
- Revise the school discipline manual and use the Universal Referral Form in a way that supports restorative practices.
- Use the district RJ data collection tool to document RJ processes.
- Formalize Restorative Discipline Protocols.
- Offer Community Conferencing as an Alternative to Suspensions.
- Offer Harm Circles as an Alternative to Suspensions.
- Introduce Peer RJ Mediation and peer circle process.



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

Restorative practices may or may not be appropriate in bullying situations. Please do careful prep to rule out re-traumatizing the target. Consult with behavioral and mental health support as needed. Individualized circles of support for the aggressor and target may be more effective.

PHASE ONE: ATTEND TO YOUR OWN SELF-CARE



To be a great circle keeper for others, take good care of yourself. Take a moment to check in with YOU.

BEFORE THE CIRCLE

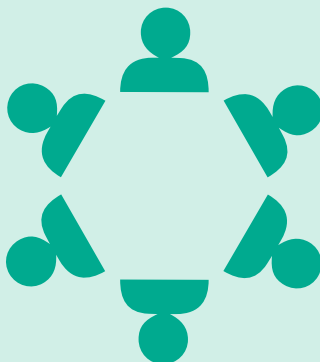
Check in with yourself and notice how you are doing.

- Are you tired, hungry, sleepy?
- Do you have personal emotions about the conflict you are going to facilitate?

tip Sleep and eat as well as possible before you go into circle. Take some time to ground yourself and get into a good space. Remember, your feelings will enter the circle with you and impact participants.

DURING THE CIRCLE

You may find yourself bothered by something someone else says about a person or issue. Or, you may recognize that how you are feeling is negatively impacting what you are thinking or what you want to say or do next.



tip Breathe deeply, and invite circle participants to breathe with you as well.. Remember, the circle is not about YOU and you are not alone. Circle is about US as a community. Think about what you can do or say to keep everyone in the circle together.

AFTER THE CIRCLE

At times, you may feel energized from joy and pride in doing your job well. Other times, you may feel tired, drained, or have a heavy heart.

tip Whatever the feelings, it is most important that you are nonjudgmentally aware of your emotions. Take a moment to figure out what you need to come back into balance. Make sure to follow through with the self-care needed.

PHASE TWO: CONTACT ALL PARTIES INVOLVED

Contact the central parties of the conflict or harm individually. This step can be done by phone or in person. Choose the approach that is most accessible and quick acting.

INVITE

Explain the opportunity for circle process, and invite participants to consider choosing this option.

why? The ability to choose how to address a personal harm or conflict is empowering and educational. Whatever choice is made, the participants are more likely to take the process seriously and to honor the agreed upon plan if they have made an informed choice about participation.

SUPPORT

With each participant, determine who needs to be present so that all people feel supported. Common examples of supporters include family members, friends, and community members. Clarify if there are others who have been impacted by harm who should also be present.

Create a list and obtain contact information for each person. Repeat the invitation step above for each new participant.

SCHEDULE

Set a date, time, and location to meet with each party, their respective supporters, and others impacted. This will result in multiple small-group sessions to prepare participants for the larger circle.





PHASE THREE: PREP MEETINGS

Effective prep is crucial to successful conflict circles. Hold a separate prep session with each party and their respective supporters. Ideally, your prep will take place using a community-building circle format. This will begin to acclimate the parties to the process while allowing you to start the all-important process of trust and relationship building. While prep by phone is possible, it is not recommended—do so only if absolutely necessary.

**1. EXPLAIN THE CIRCLE PURPOSE AND PROCESS.
ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS THAT ARISE.**

**2. LISTEN TO THE PARTIES' STORIES. IDENTIFY HARM,
IMPACT, NEEDS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

KEEP IT SECRET, KEEP IT SAFE	INTERESTS AND NEEDS	KEY QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES
Inform the participants that the conversation is confidential. Explain any limit to confidentiality that exists, e.g., you are a mandated reporter.	Listen to the participant's interests, needs, and story to assess circle suitability and safety.	• What happened? • What are your thoughts or feelings about the situation? • Who has been impacted and how? • What needs to happen to make things right? • How do you think the situation should be handled? • Who should be involved in the process? • How can I be most supportive to you?	• Establishing trust • Building relationship • Processing the situation • Practicing roles • Designing the process • Writing responses or letters

3. IF PARTIES ARE NOT READY TO PROCEED, CONTINUE COACHING, TRUST BUILDING, AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING.

danger! Sometimes it is dangerous to bring people together to talk. For example, one person may want to physically or emotionally hurt the other person. Or, the other person may not be ready to be honest and real about their actions. Bringing the participants together at this point may actually cause more harm. Instead, it may be necessary to provide other supports until all people are ready to participate safely.



Ideas

COACH: The problem may be that the participant needs to talk more. Work with the participant and try new questions.

TRUSTING YOU: If you sense that the participant's trust in you may be an obstacle, consider bringing friends, family, or other supporters.

TRUSTING THE PROCESS: Sometimes people don't want to move forward due to fear for their safety or fear of an unknown process. If this is the case, invite each participant to hold a talking circle with a group of peers, as a gentle way to experience the process.

4. IF PARTIES ARE READY, SET A DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION TO HOLD THE CIRCLE.

YOU NEED A YES TO PROGRESS!

- Is participation by choice?
- Do all participants feel safe and supported?
- Are all participants accountable for their part?

PHASE FOUR: DESIGN YOUR CIRCLE



1. WELCOME AND OPENING

How will you open the circle? Consider a quote or short reading, a breathing exercise or meditation, music, movement, or similar activity. This unites and grounds everyone, marking the space and time together as special. How will you welcome everyone and share the purpose?

2. TALKING PIECE AND CENTERPIECE

What is your talking piece? Can you find one that positively relates to the issue at hand or is otherwise significant? The centerpiece reminds us of our interrelatedness: There are no sides, only one central focus on healing harm. During prep ask participants what special items they would like to use for the talking piece or centerpiece.

3. CHECK IN AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

How will you ask participants to introduce themselves (or check in if they already know one another)? Be creative while mindful of safety. Introduction activities may include interactive games, icebreakers, storytelling prompted by thoughtful questions, or a mixture of all of the above. In designing these trust-building activities, bear in mind the issue at hand.

4. GUIDELINES AND VALUES

Guidelines remind us of expectations for behavior while in circle in order to create a safe and open space for everyone. Circle participants may generate and adopt them by consensus. Or, if time is a factor and a shorter process is needed, you may suggest guidelines that you ask the group to adopt by group consensus. How will you handle this? At the foundation of circles are values that nurture good relationships with others. Establishing shared values allows us to bring our “best selves” forward. This creates a container strong enough to hold conflict, pain, joy, and other intense emotions. How will you ask participants to identify and adopt shared values in your circle?

5. DISCUSSION

Remember, conflict circles share the same four-part structure as community-building circles: (1) Opening, (2) Relationship Building/Values, (3) Discussion/Plans, and (4) Closing. The two main differences are you will do *extensive prep* and you will guide discussion using the *restorative questions as prompts for each round*. If the person harmed is prepared and willing, hand over the talking piece to him or her to begin answering the questions. Don't forget that conflict circles require the group to develop and adopt an action plan and follow up. Consider suspending the talking piece during planning rounds. Throughout, remember to encourage and model sharing from the heart.

6. REFLECTION AND CLOSING

How will you acknowledge circle participants for the good work done and give them the opportunity to share reflections and appreciations? Closing activities allow participants to reflect on the circle, offer appreciations if desired, and help them to transition from circle space back to outside life. Activities may include a quote, reading, a breathing exercise, movement, music, or similar activity.

Questions compiled by Kay Pranis

The following questions can be used to both design and facilitate your circle. These questions are grouped by category. Choose questions based on your participants' needs—you can choose three to five from one section, or one question from each section.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

- What is a value you bring to this space?
- What value can you bring that would help us work through this conflict successfully?
- When you are at your best, what value defines you?
- What is something you value about...?
- What is a value you hope to share with others in your life?
- Share your name and something about your name.
- What do you appreciate about...?
- What is your passion?
- What touches your heart?
- What gives you hope?
- What are you thankful for today?

GUIDELINES

- What agreements would you like for our circle to make you feel that you can speak honestly and respectfully?

COMMUNITY BUILDING

- What did you dream about when you were younger? What do you dream about now?
- What is a goal you have for yourself? How will you celebrate yourself when you accomplish it?
- What is one obstacle that gets in the way of you reaching your goals? What is your plan to overcome this obstacle?
- What are you honestly looking for in your life right now?
- What are you really trying to learn at this point in your life?
- When you are hurting, how do you heal?
- What is your cultural heritage, and what role does it play in your life?
- If you could talk to someone from your family who is no longer alive, who would it be and why?
- What is the best thing that happened to you this week?
- What is the most important lesson in life you have ever learned? What made it so important?
- What do you think other people see as a quality that you need to work on?
- What change would you like to see in your community? What can you do to promote that change?
- What is something you value about your school and why?
- What is your favorite place to go at school and why?
- Share something that you like and something that you do not like about your neighborhood and why.
- If you could change or overhaul two things in our community, what would they be and why?
- What is the most important quality to you in a relationship with someone else? How and why is it important to you?
- Talk about a relationship between people you know that you admire or look up to.
- Who is someone in your life that has helped you to grow? How have you grown? How did they help you to do so?
- Who was a teacher who influenced you in positive ways? In what way did they influence you?
- In what social situation have you felt the least powerful? What was it that caused you to feel that way?
- What person or people know you the best, and how well do you feel they really know you?
- What do others want from you? What do you want from others?
- What do you most appreciate about someone who is important to you in your life?

PHASE FOUR: DESIGN YOUR CIRCLE, CONTINUED

STORYTELLING

- A time when you had to let go of control.
- A time when you were outside your comfort zone.
- An experience of letting go of anger or resentment.
- A time in your life when you experienced justice.
- An experience of feeling that you did not belong.
- A time when you were in conflict.
- An experience when someone harmed you. An experience when you harmed someone.
- Something that makes you angry. How do you deal with anger?
- A time that was one of your most difficult challenges. How did you deal with challenges?
- When was the last time you said "yes" and would have liked to say "no"? Why did you say, "Yes"?
- A life experience when you "made lemonade out of lemons."
- An experience of causing harm to someone and then dealing with it in a way you felt good about.
- A time when you acted on your values even though others were not.
- An experience where you discovered that someone was very different from the negative assumptions you first made about that person.
- An experience of transformation when, out of a crisis or difficulty, you discovered a gift in your life.
- A time when you had to hear something very difficult from someone and afterward were grateful it happened.
- An embarrassing moment that you can laugh at now.

EXPLORING CONFLICT & HARM

- What happened, and what were you thinking at the time of the incident?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what happened and how?
- What has been the hardest part for you?
- What do you think needs to be done to make things as right as possible?

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

- What are three things you did to make the situation worse? What are three things you can do to make the situation better?
- What do you need to clear up with someone else in the circle?
- What is unspoken in the circle that is blocking progress?
- What needs to be done to repair the harm and make sure it doesn't happen again?

BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS

- How will you know if things are better?
- In your experience what supports healing?
- What change would you like to see in this group? What can you do to promote that change?
- What can be done now to create a healthy community?
- What do you expect to do differently as a result of this circle?
- What do you expect to be different after this circle?
- What will you do to make sure these agreements are followed?

REFLECTION

- What would you like to leave behind?
- What are you taking from this circle that supports you?
- What have you learned?
- How will these insights help you in the next two weeks?
- What wisdom did you learn from others?
- Finish the sentence, "Today, I am reminded..."
- What do you appreciate about each person in the circle?
- Name one thing about yourself you would like to improve upon.



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

Remember that in your role as a mandated reporter, you must inform the students you are in circle with limits to confidentiality. These include disclosures of harm to self or others and physical and sexual abuse.



PHASE FIVE: MAKE AGREEMENTS

In conflict and harm circles, you will create a plan with realistic agreements to address the needs and responsibilities that surfaced in the circle in order to heal. Agreements are important when there is a conflict that requires next steps or a harm that requires specific actions to repair the harm. The job of the circle keeper is to make sure that the agreements are realistic and will be monitored by participants of the circle. The process of making agreements is collaborative and should be agreed upon by all participants in consensus.

CONSENSUS means that all participants of a group support and accept the agreements made, even when the agreements are not the exact desire of each individual. In other words, each individual may not get exactly what was requested, however, they accept the solutions put forth.

SPECIFIC

Agreements must be SPECIFIC and focus on tangible actions that can be measured.

Pay attention to words that are vague or words that could mean different things to different people. Remember, **it is nice to be NICE**, but what does that really mean? Consider the word **"RESPECT"**—an important value to everyone and yet many people have different ways of showing respect. What specific actions can you think of that show respect?

TAKE ACTION

Agreements focus on what people should **do now, start doing, or do differently** to repair the harm.

In general, if an agreement uses the word **"NOT,"** it is NOT realistic because the agreement is probably talking about what needs to stop happening. When stopping or changing behaviors is the desired outcome of an agreement, the agreement itself needs to outline what a person will DO. *For example: What behaviors are desired to repair the harm and to prevent further harm? Describe in concrete terms.*

PHASE FIVE: MAKE AGREEMENTS

AGREEMENT FORMULA

The formula for an effective agreement is **WHO will do WHAT by WHEN**.

- The "WHO" is a specific person in the circle.
- The "WHAT" is a clearly explained action.
- The "WHEN" is a specific date or period of time to mark when the action must be complete.

WHO...

WILL DO WHAT

...BY WHEN

SIGNATURES OF CONSENSUS

PHASE SIX: FOLLOW-UP

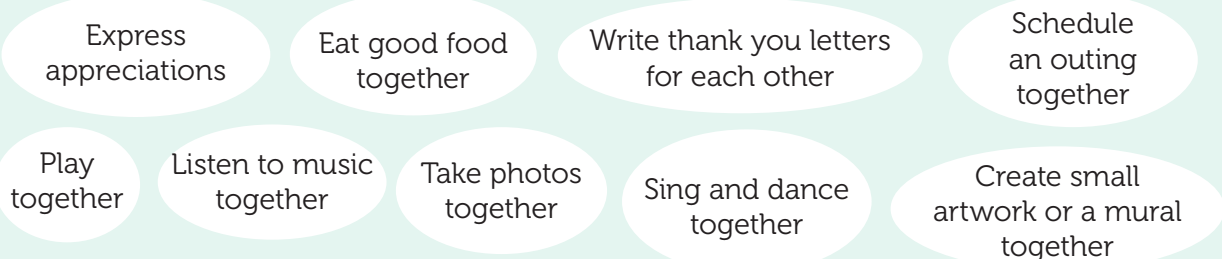
ONGOING SUPPORT

As part of the agreements, you may have a particular ongoing role as the facilitator. For example: to facilitate a mediation or community-building circle, or to update a particular outside party. To offer follow up support, set a time to talk with participants individually to check-in on progress. This can be done by phone or in person. You can also choose to meet with each support group separately or as a whole circle for this step.

CELEBRATION

WHEN AGREEMENTS ARE UPHELD, then it is appropriate to organize a celebration circle and to congratulate the success of the participants. Listen to what your group says about how they want to celebrate.

This is a momentous occasion. Hours were spent on challenging work to bring people together to heal relationships and truly facilitate justice. People cared enough about each other to follow through and uphold agreements. If there were a time to celebrate, it is now.



WHEN AGREEMENTS ARE NOT UPHELD

A full follow-up circle should be organized. Begin the Tier II process in this guide over again, this time with focus on the theme of addressing unmet agreements and what can be done to support the group in moving forward. Reflect on what worked and did not work. The key is being persistent in achieving success and consistent in the process.



STEP 9

Implement Tier III

The RP Facilitator will also begin to keep reentry circles for students returning from an absence due to truancy, incarceration, suspension, or expulsion.

WELCOME CIRCLES FOR REENTRY AND CIRCLES OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Prepare the Space:

- What is the space/environment the Welcome Circle or COSA will be held in? What can you do to make the space feel welcoming and reflect your values and intentions?

Invite Participants:

- Who should come to this meeting?

Motivate Participants:

- How will you invite participants to this meeting so they feel appreciated, valued, open and prepared?
- What will motivate them to attend, and participate with an open heart?

SAMPLE EMAIL TO ANNOUNCE THE PROCESS:

On March 3, 2015, we are looking forward to welcoming back Marcus Rodriguez to our school community. In a conversation I had with Marcus last week he reflected that he "feels awful about how I left the school, and hope to make amends." We want to support Marcus as a school community to be successful upon his return. We will hold a Welcome Circle in room 3 to invite him back and support his transition. You are important to Marcus's on-going success here! You hold a significant relationship with him, and he needs to know you are on his side. He is also open to hearing how his choices and absence impacted you. Please come to this meeting with an open heart and an open mind. At this meeting we will determine who will be a part of the COSA that will support Marcus and meet on a regular basis for the rest of this school year.

TIER III WELCOME CIRCLE/REENTRY PROTOCOL FOR OUSD STUDENTS

TIER III OUTCOMES

- Students returning from incarceration or other sustained absence receive a supported transition to their assigned school.
- Students needing individualized support receive circles of support and accountability (COSA)
- Student and family receive needed supports to enable student to be successful in school.
- A plan is created which clarifies each participant's role and responsibilities in supporting student.
- Student is supported and held accountable to fulfill their plan.

PRIOR TO REENTRY

(FOR STUDENTS RETURNING FROM INCARCERATION)

1. Upon release from Juvenile Hall, Camp Sweeney, or DJJ Supervision, OUSD student will receive school placement. Transition Center staff will send an email to the Site Administrator and in some cases the RJ Coordinator. The email will contain the name of the student, the Oakland Unite Case Manager, and the Probation Officer if one is assigned.
2. A Welcome Circle will be scheduled by the RJ Coordinator or designee at assigned school. All participants will be notified by phone and/or email of Welcome Circle date and time.
3. Participants will include Site Administrator, Student, Parent/Guardian, Facilitator, Probation Officer, Oakland Unite Case Manager, school-based MH counselor, and others as appropriate.
4. Special attention should be given to the family of the child. The Welcome Circle process should be explained to the student and his/her family at the time of release from the JJC, and questions they have should be addressed. The family should be aware of possible attendees.

WELCOME CIRCLE

AT SCHOOL SITE

1. The circle begins and ends on time in a room that has sufficient seating for all participants. If possible, chairs should be arranged in a circle without a table.
2. Drinking water should be provided.
3. A sign-in sheet should be distributed that collects names and contact information including cell phone numbers and email.
4. **OPENING:** The Circle Keeper will open the circle with a welcome followed by a brief explanation of the process to follow and the desired outcomes.
5. **TALKING PIECE:** The facilitator introduces the talking piece and how it will be used to ensure all participants equal opportunity to speak and be heard.
6. **CHECK-IN:** Using the talking piece, the facilitator invites a brief check-in by all participants.
7. **AGREEMENTS:** Participants are asked to identify and agree upon 3–5 guidelines for the circle. *An example of a guideline is "Listen with respect" or "speak with respect."* The circle keeper may identify core guidelines for the circle and ask if anyone has any additional guidelines to share.
8. **STORYTELLING ROUND:** If there is time, you may want to ask a question that allows everyone to tell a story about themselves that is related to the larger conversation. *Examples of storytelling questions:*
 - Name a time you made a mistake.
 - Discuss a time you were given a second chance.
 - Talk about a time you felt supported by a community.



TIER III WELCOME CIRCLE/REENTRY PROTOCOL FOR OUSD STUDENTS, CONTINUED

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The majority of the circle time is used to address questions that are framed in a positive manner with the intention of identifying needs and generating a plan for supporting the student.

Examples of guiding questions:

- What are your hopes for this student at this school?
- What would success look like for this student here?
- What resources are available to help this student achieve success?
- Who will be the “go to” person at this school when the student has questions or needs support? Make sure the student has this person’s contact information.

Time should be allowed for questions or other necessary discussion. The talking piece may be suspended for this conversation if the circle keeper deems it appropriate.

CREATING A WRITTEN PLAN

The outcome of the circle is a plan for support. The group will identify one participant who will have the role of monitoring the plan. The decision-making process used shall be consensus. The plan should be written down on an Action Plan form and signed by all parties. Copies shall be distributed to all participants.

FOLLOW-UP

The team should schedule a follow-up circle prior to closing this meeting. The next circle of support should be 2–4 weeks from the date of the first Welcome Circle.

CLOSING

The facilitator will close the circle with a summary of the plan and a round of appreciations.

FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS

- The circle format above should be followed again. The agreements from the original circle should be reviewed and updated as needed.
- **FORMAT:** All follow-up meetings should involve a check in, a review of the written plan, and celebration of progress to date followed by an assessment of needs and revisions to plan as needed.
- Special attention should be given to the student and family. The student and family should be encouraged to discuss supports received, how they are working, and any unmet needs.
- **ONGOING SUPPORT:** The facilitator should schedule another meeting 4-6 weeks prior to the conclusion of the meeting.

PROMPTING QUESTIONS

THAT MAY BE HELPFUL TO ASK THE STUDENT

- What do you feel you need to be successful and feel supported?
- What are your triggers? What space do you need when you feel triggered?
- What are your challenges away from school?
- What did you learn from what happened?
- Is there anything in your life that we should be aware of?
- What is new, has changed, or been different?
- Disarming Question: What don’t you like about probation?
- Describe the best day you had at school.
- Name a time you were successful.



STEP 10

Involve Students

OUSD'S PEER RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAM

To succeed in fostering a cultural shift at your school, active student involvement and empowerment in your site's restorative justice initiative is invaluable. OUSD's Peer Restorative Justice Program (PRJP) is an intentional resource designed to help you promote student involvement at your site. The purpose of the district's Peer Restorative Justice Program is to provide a site-based youth facilitator team that builds community and resolves conflict among students and supports OUSD's strategic goals of reducing racially disproportionate discipline, promoting social/emotional learning, and increasing academic outcomes through the development of restorative leaders and a restorative school culture.

The PRJP provides a school community with resources and support to build a youth team capable of facilitating restorative practices. Students are trained to promote and facilitate circles. They are empowered to create safe and respectful spaces to talk through instead of fight through differences.

Through district training resources, your school can offer trainings to develop adult capacity to share power with youth and recognize the opportunities where youth can work in authentic partnership with adult allies to improve the effectiveness of the school and district's restorative justice initiative.

The Peer Restorative Justice Program Guide is an excellent hands-on resource for schools developing a peer restorative justice program. For a PDF of our Peer RJ Manual please visit: <https://sites.google.com/a/ousd.k12.ca.us/ousd-rj-resources/documents>



STEP 11

Evaluate, Reflect On, and Refine Your Efforts

To make sure you're on track, review and analyze data quarterly. Compare past and present data on office referrals, physical altercations, suspension rates and incidents, racial disparities in school discipline, standardized test scores, and truancy. Survey teachers, students, and administrators regarding how they feel about their school:

ASK THESE QUESTIONS RELATED TO...

...YOUR ACTIVITIES, STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES:

- Have students, staff, and leadership been trained in Restorative Justice Practices?
- How many staff members and leadership team members report using Tier II and Tier III strategies?
- What percentage of teachers and staff have been trained in Restorative Justice practices?
- How many of the trained teachers and staff report learning Tier I strategies they can apply to their classes and advisories?
- Do students report that they were treated with respect in their experience of Tier I and Tier II strategies?
- Are trainings inclusive of teacher and support staff?
- Has there been an increase in the number of referrals to support services that serve the whole child?
- Has there been an increase in the number of students reentering the school community feeling welcomed and having a plan to reintegrate into the school community?
- What percentage of students involved in disciplinary action were invited to a process using a restorative approach over a more punitive approach? How does that percentage compare to previous years?

...THE EFFECTS AND RESULTS OF YOUR SHIFT IN CULTURE AND ACTIVITIES:

- Do teachers and students practice speaking to each other in respectful tones and manner?
- How does the percentage of students reporting building skills to address harm and/or conflict compare to previous years? Does staff notice a change in the culture of the school?
- Do students report making intentional choices about how to deal with conflict?
- Do you notice a shift in staff retention rates over time as staff chooses to remain at the school site?
- Have you noticed a reduction in the number of incidents where community members use harmful language as opposed to engaging in healthy conversations?
- Do students and adults feel a greater sense of safety?
- Do students and adults report improved relationships among students and between students and adults?
- Are relationships better between the school, parents, and community?
- Do students, staff, and visitors report that the school environment is a friendly and caring place for student learning?

For pre-existing surveys you can download, please visit <https://sites.google.com/a/ousd.k12.ca.us/ousd-rj-resources/documents>

BONUS

STEP 12

Build a Restorative Practices Facilitator Work Plan

To make sure you're on track, review and analyze data quarterly. Compare past and present data on office referrals, physical altercations, suspension rates and incidents, racial disparities in school discipline, standardized test scores, and truancy. Survey teachers, students, and administrators regarding how they feel about their school:

1. Now that you have an idea of the focus areas for your school, it is time to build your RJ Coordinator Work Plan. The Key Champions will look to you, the Restorative Practices Facilitator, to support the school as it makes this transformation.
2. Review the sample work plans provided for ideas.
3. Use the following checklist to develop the RJ Coordinator Work Plan.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES FACILITATOR WORK PLAN

Year: School Name:

1. RUN CIRCLES & CONDUCT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH STAFF

ACTIVITY	TIMING	RESOURCES NEEDED
☒ CHECK OFF THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT/VITAL TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.		
☐ Introduce all staff to RJ principles.		
☐ Use RJ principles to facilitate staff communication.		
☐ Help incorporate new teachers into school community.		
☐ Collect assessments/evaluation to reflect on the progress and process with the Implementation Team.		
☐ Other		

2. SUPPORT THE ROLLOUT OF RJ CIRCLES IN CLASSROOMS

ACTIVITY		TIMING	RESOURCES NEEDED
☒ CHECK OFF THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT/VITAL TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.			
☐	Identify 5-6 teachers who want to do circles in their classrooms.		
☐	Make sure pilot teachers attend Tier I training.		
☐	Provide ongoing support with RJ resources, templates, and guidance in putting together circles and other RJ processes using the materials from the RJ Implementation Guide and the Supporting Documents website.		
☐	Support each teacher using the Model-Mentor-Transfer process.		
☐	In second semester, consider expanding cohort of teachers doing RJ.		
☐	Other		

3. GENERAL WHOLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVITY		TIMING	RESOURCES NEEDED
☒ CHECK OFF THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT/VITAL TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.			
☐	Provide RJ perspective as a positive school climate plan is developed for all.		
☐	Connect and align with other whole school initiatives, e.g., PBIS, SEL, AAMA.		
☐	Continue building positive relationships with students, families, staff, and administrators.		
☐	Encourage and alert school community to participate in district wide RJ trainings.		
☐	Intentionally involve all of school community in RJ efforts, when appropriate.		
☐	Provide process for inclusive decision making.		
☐	Evaluate process/plan for harm circles, adding teachers to RJ classroom rollout and peer RJ program to make RJ roll-out plan for second semester.		
☐	Beginning in Jan/Feb, begin to plan for the next school year in collaboration with appropriate committees.		

	Establish next set of goals/indicators drawing from your school assessment.		
	Plan for a summer retreat.		
	Expand RJ circles to additional teachers.		
	Other		

4. RJ COORDINATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVITY	TIMING	RESOURCES NEEDED
☒ CHECK OFF THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT/VITAL TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.		
Attend weekly meetings with District RJ Staff.		
Attend monthly practitioner network meetings of larger OUSD RJ community.		
Continue to develop professionally—timing will be determined as opportunities arise and in conjunction with Principal and district RJ staff. Schedule should include at least three days of PD.		
Other		

5. DATA COLLECTION

ACTIVITY	TIMING	RESOURCES NEEDED
☒ CHECK OFF THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT/VITAL TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.		
Enter data of RJ activity at the school site into district RJ database.		
Participate in district-wide RJ evaluation, when necessary.		
Continue fine-tuning implementation of school-wide program with school community and district RJ staff.		
Collaborate with culture and climate survey designers to ensure that there are questions that will measure RJ's impact.		
Other		

6. HARM/CONFLICT CIRCLES WITH SCHOOL STAFF & STUDENTS

ACTIVITY	TIMING	RESOURCES NEEDED
☒ CHECK OFF THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT/VITAL TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.		
Work with assistant principals to identify a few situations to pilot use of RJ harm circles. After facilitating several harm circles, work with the admin team to:		
Develop system for referrals, feedback, and monitoring of harm/conflict circle referrals.		
Create a restorative discipline matrix.		
Train staff on referral system and expectations.		
Facilitate circles.		
Develop training for school community on harm circles.		
Introduce staff and students to restorative practices, and model how issues can be resolved using restorative principles and practices.		
Other		

7. ESTABLISH A STUDENT-RUN PEER RJ GROUP

ACTIVITY	TIMING	RESOURCES NEEDED
☒ CHECK OFF THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT/VITAL TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.		
Identify students who will become peer RJ leaders.		
Select students who will become Peer RJ leaders in the second semester.		
Train Peer RJ leaders.		
Develop criteria for a referral system.		
Discuss w/ principal protocols on including student RJ leaders in circles.		
Document peer RJ actions and outcomes in RJ Database.		
Support Peer RJ leaders to run circles.		
Other		

8. INCORPORATE WELCOME CIRCLES INTO SCHOOL CULTURE

ACTIVITY	TIMING	RESOURCES NEEDED
☒ CHECK OFF THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT/VITAL TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.		
In collaboration with RJ Team develop protocols for use of Welcome Circles.		
Determine who will hold, schedule, and make arrangements for Welcome Circles.		
Collaborate with Coordination of Services Team (COST) on their participation and support of Welcome Circle.		
With COST and others determine services offered for the student and family.		
Provide follow-up on agreements made during Welcome Circle.		
Other		

Now build your work plan! Use the guiding points above to tailor a work plan for your school.

SAMPLE RJ COORDINATOR WORK PLANS

HIGH SCHOOL

SCHOOL INFO:

- Comprehensive high school
- 1700 students, _____ teachers
- At least 15 students entering from middle school have strong Peer RJ experience and leadership.
- Few teachers and staff have attended RJ training—most are open, while a few are actively resistant and skeptical.
- Principal acknowledges current discipline system isn't working and became highly open and curious about RJ after attending a training session. Others on admin team "know" what RJ is but haven't attended a training session.
- One to three teachers have been to RJ training.
- A teacher who had a theft in her class last year requested and had an RJ process, which she greatly appreciated. She felt the circles helped build community in her classroom and began this school year doing circles and continues to have monthly circles in her classes and when needed.
- Four CBO staff members who work with the health clinic full time at the school are enthusiastic about RJ and have recently attended training in all three tiers.
- All school SSO's have attended a training session by the district's Behavioral Health Unit that focused on: trauma, vicarious-trauma, adolescent brain development, de-escalation and co-regulation skills, as well as self-care, and a one-hour intro to RJ.
- This is the current principal's third year, and staff turnover is slowing down. Ten or less teachers are new this year, and all admin have returned. Most programming will continue as it was last year, except block scheduling will be put in place.
- Principal will be main contact.

1ST SEMESTER

	GOAL/ OUTCOME	TASKS	RESOURCES	TIME FRAME/ DUE DATE
1	Get to know school and let school get to know me.	Gather basic school docs. Create binder/Google file w/school info: staff list, bell schedule, calendar (including proms, spirit week, special events, etc.).	Principal, office staff	Week 1
		Map the school community. Individuals, departments, and other aspects of school community. COST, SEL, PBIS, PROJECT PREVENT, etc.	Staff, students, district staff, parents, District RJ Staff, parent guide	Week 1-3 basics finished—add as year goes
		Listen, learn, share. Find occasion to talk to students and teachers—visit classes, hang out in staff room, go to staff and school events, talk to office staff and SSO's, learn about CBO's and what they do. What special programs, opportunities are available? What are the school traditions, sports, etc.?	District RJ Staff, principal, supporters, students, school map, your imagination	Ongoing

	GOAL/ OUTCOME	TASKS	RESOURCES	TIME FRAME/ DUE DATE
2	Increase number of staff who have taken RJ Trainings	# to recruit Collaborate with principal to determine goal # of staff to attend training.	RJ Team, Principal	Set goal for year (within the first marking period)
		Who to recruit Determine w/principal and RJ Team who to recruit (i.e., all 9th grade teachers, all English teachers, only the enthusiasts, etc.).	Principal	
		Copy of Training Schedule Make sure you have digital copy of training schedule from RJ Specialist that can be shared w/staff.		
3	Develop RJ Team	With principal determine who will be on the team and meeting schedule : • 2 CBO enthusiasts • 2 trained teachers • 1 teacher doing circles • SSO	Staff, CBO, parents, students	1st meeting by 4th week of school
		Meet 2X month Recruit members Develop agenda/circle for 1st meeting	District RJ Staff	Complete by 3rd week
4	Hold 1-hour community building PD's monthly for staff, including initial PD to introduce staff to RJ	Develop & hold 1-2 hour introduction to RJ for school community	RJ Team District RJ Staff Principal	Per discussion w/ principal-in first 6 weeks
		Develop 1-hour PD's for staff —to be delivered monthly	District RJ Staff	At least 2 developed by 4th week
5	Develop Peer RJ Program	Contact middle school RJ leaders		By 3rd week of school
		Develop plan for student recruitment	RJ Team	By 5th week of school
		Develop protocols for student participation interventions—types of cases and how students will be released, permission slips	Principal	By 8th week of school
		Using Peer RJ Guide schedule tasks including recruitment and training and implementation	District RJ Staff Peer RJ Guide	Students have cases by mid-November

MIDDLE SCHOOL

SCHOOL INFO:

- Comprehensive Middle School
- 750 students, 25 teachers
- Three teachers have been doing circles for 6th graders regularly over the past three years. There are an additional three teachers spread across the other two grades who regularly use circles in their classes and are also RJ enthusiasts. Fifty percent of 6th graders regularly participate in circles, and about a third of 7th and 8th graders experience circles monthly.
- School is getting a new principal this year who has had no RJ training but is moderately open. RJ is coming to the school because the district has received funding for RJ coordinators for all middle schools. AP & TSA are RJ supporters although have not attended training.
- All school SSO's have attended a training session by the district's Behavioral Health Unit that focused on: trauma, vicarious-trauma, adolescent brain development, de-escalation and co-regulation skills, as well as self-care and a one-hour intro to RJ.
- The school's SSO enjoyed the training she received and is interested in learning more about RJ.
- COST and PBIS are in place, working well and supported by the majority of the school's community. COST & PBIS leaders support RJ.
- There is strong parent support at the school. In spite of the school's racially diverse student population, parent participation is predominately white.
- Although there is quite a bit of Tier 1 activity for the students (not the staff), there is little or no Tier 2 activity. RJ enthusiasts would like to have Tier 3 (Welcome and Reset Circles) for students.

1ST SEMESTER

	GOAL/ OUTCOME	TASKS	RESOURCES	TIME FRAME/ DUE DATE
1	Get to know school and let school get to know me.	Gather basic school docs. Create binder/Google file w/school info: staff list, bell schedule, calendar (including proms, spirit week, special events, etc.).	Principal, office staff	Week 1
		Map the school community. Individuals, departments, and other aspects of school community. COST, SEL, PBIS, PROJECT PREVENT, etc.	Staff, students, district staff, parents, District RJ Staff, parent guide	Week 1-3 basics finished—add as year goes
		Listen, learn, share. Find occasion to talk to students and teachers—visit classes, hang out in staff room, go to staff and school events, talk to office staff and SSO's, learn about CBO's and what they do. What special programs, opportunities are available? What are the school traditions, sports, etc?	District RJ Staff, principal, supporters, students, school map, your imagination	Ongoing

	GOAL/ OUTCOME	TASKS	RESOURCES	TIME FRAME/ DUE DATE
2	Support teachers doing circles and increase their numbers.	Touch bases with teachers doing circles and ask how to best support them. Discuss ways they can support other teachers. # to recruit Collaborate with principal to determine goal # of staff to attend training. Who to recruit Determine w/principal principal and others who to recruit (all 9th grade teachers, all English teachers) Copy of Training Schedule Make sure you have digital copy of training schedule from RJ Specialist that can be shared w/staff.	RJ Enthusiasts Principal District RJ Staff Google Drive w/ Circle templates "Circle Forward" by Kay Pranis	First 3 weeks of school—touch base w/all teacher enthusiasts
3	Work to formalize RJ practices in the school	Develop strong relationship w/ principal and other admin. With principal/RJ enthusiasts determine best way to formalize RJ knowledge and enthusiasm at the school: • RJ Team • Monthly/Quarterly meetings of RJ enthusiasts • Develop climate and culture team w/strong RJ influence	Teachers, students, CBO, District RJ Staff	Schedule meeting to formalize in first meeting w/ principal- within 1st month of school
4	Hold 1-hour community building PD's monthly for staff, including initial PD to introduce staff to RJ	Develop & hold 1-2 hour introduction to RJ for school community. Include teachers and students who have been involved in circles at the school to share experiences with school community. Develop 1-hour PD's for staff—to be delivered monthly.	RJ Team District RJ Staff Principal District RJ Staff	Per discussion w/ principal-in first 6 weeks At least 2 developed by 4th week

	GOAL/ OUTCOME	TASKS	RESOURCES	TIME FRAME/ DUE DATE
5	Develop Tier II practices	Encourage staff and CBO's to attend Tier III trainings after they have completed Tier I.	District RJ Staff	Immediately and ongoing
		With principal and other RJ enthusiasts: • Develop and prioritize list of students needing Tier 3 reset circles. • Determine other staff to participate with eye on those who can also be trained. • Determine if there are students to participate. • Determine best way to support outcomes of Reset circles and best way to provide follow-up, including overlap of COST and Reset circles.	RJ enthusiasts in school	By 4th week of school
		With principal and others develop protocols and procedures to welcome new students • Develop and support others in leading welcome circles- teachers, students, CBO's using MMT model.	Video of Welcome Circle on OUSD website	Begin holding reset circles by end of September

Appendix

What's Going On At Our School Cards

TIER I

Administration has attended district RJ Training.	School grounds are inviting and communicate "who" is important in this community.
Administration has allocated time for school to build positive climate and culture.	Teachers have space for discussing issues at the school and feel their ideas are welcome.
School community understands and has had a chance to comment on overall school goals.	Negative, harmful language is addressed when it occurs and not allowed to persist even when seen as joking.
Teachers have a method to welcome the whole student into the classroom e.g. check-in check out circles, regular checking in w/ students and provide referrals or services as needed.	All are greeted when they enter the school and asked if they need help.
Services are available to support the whole child and family and staff know how to direct students to these services.	Efforts have been made to align school initiatives.



The school has a functioning culture and climate team.	There are avenues for the community to have discussions on difficult race, gender, LGBTQ issues.
Teachers are given support to effectively and non-punitively manage their classroom.	There is acknowledgement that race, gender, and sexual orientation inequities of the larger society impact our students' academic and life outcomes.
There is an awareness of where racial/ethnic/cultural disparities are present in the school community and efforts are made to acknowledge and redress them.	We celebrate and embrace the diversity of our school community as well as recognize the gifts each race, ethnicity, and culture brings to us.
Members of community who are marginalized due to race, gender, or sexual orientation inequities feel they have a place to bring and have their issues effectively addressed.	All members of the school community have access to RJ practices and avenues to participate in circles.



What's Going On At Our School Cards, continued

TIER II

There is a designated space for students to process conflict and/ or for families to de-escalate in an effective manner.	There is a restorative reflection process available to interrupt unwanted classroom behaviors.
There is a conflict resolution/harm circle process available to students, staff, and families.	Staff, students, and families are aware of the discipline process on campus.
All staff on site are aware of the conflict resolution/harm circle process.	Data is used to inform conflict/harm circle interventions.
Students have time and space to de-escalate without punitive consequences.	All staff, students, and families are aware of the COST (Coordination of Services Team) referral process.
There are at least 3 trained adults designated to address conflict/harm on campus.	All site initiatives are aligned to effectively address conflict/harm in every area of the campus.



Historical harms are acknowledged when appropriate.

Tier II data is reviewed for racial impacts. Disparities are acknowledged and addressed.

Suspension and other discipline data are monitored to determine if racial disparities exist. If so, the RJ process is used to discuss and create methods to address any disparities.



What's Going On At Our School Cards, continued

TIER III

The school has resources and/or a protocol in place for integrating students into the community after a period of absence due to incarceration, suspension.	(For high school students) When a student enters the school who has been involuntarily transferred, there is an intentional choice to connect them to programs on campus real-world learning opportunities such as pathways to career, internships, etc.
There is a dedicated person that can arrange, facilitate, and follow up with students after a period of absence due to incarceration, suspension.	There is a space that is conducive to holding welcome circles after a period of absence due to incarceration, suspension, or expulsion.
There is a person that communicates with the OUSD Juvenile Justice Center transition team and DHP office to ensure students with JJ involvement are supported when they return to the school setting.	The school provides adequate and practical time allowances for students, teachers, admin and others to attend a session to welcome back a student after an extended absences, when necessary.
The school has mental health and SEL Tier III resources in place.	There are a group of caring adults who meet with a new/struggling student for a fixed amount of time (i.e. 2-6 months) to ensure they are successful.
The school has direct connections with local CBOs and government agencies that aid in the de-escalation and prevention of suspensions/incarcerations, e.g.. Oakland Unite Case Mgr, Probation, Mentors).	The school has a process to welcome students back to the school after an extended absence (due to illness, travel, juvenile justice involvement, etc.)



The school has dedicated personnel who organizes the process to welcome students back to the school after an extended absence (due to illness, travel, juvenile justice involvement, etc.)

The school has an effective Student Success Team (SST) process.



RACE & GENDER EQUITY CIRCLE

AGENDA TEMPLATES

CIRCLE 1. EXPLORING OUR FEELINGS ABOUT RACE CIRCLE GUIDING QUESTIONS

INSTRUCT: Think about a time when race had an impact on your life. Remember that experience for a moment. Now sit silently for a one more minute or so, eyes closed or gazing downward. Who was involved? Friends, family, or strangers? Was this a public or private event? Notice what's going on inside you. In your body, mind, heart, spirit.

JOURNAL: Journal about what you notice—words, phrases, images to reflect the feelings you notice.

QUESTION ROUNDS

FIRST ROUND:

- Tell us about the experience. How do you feel when you remember that experience: How do your mind, body, heart, and spirit feel? If you'd like, share what you've written.
- What is the hardest thing about talking about race?

SECOND ROUND:

- Do you have conversations about race at your work or school site, and if so, describe; if not, explain.
- What wisdom about race would you want the people at your site to understand? (students, parents, staff)

THIRD ROUND:

- Anything else?

REFLECTION/CLOSE: What are you taking away from this conversation about race? What support do you need at your school or work site to have or deepen conversations/Circles about race?

CIRCLE 2. EXPLORING OUR FEELINGS ABOUT STRAIGHT OR HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGE

INSTRUCT: Think of a time when gender/sexual orientation had an impact on your life. Remember that experience for a moment. Now sit silently for one more minute, eyes closed or gazing downward. Who was involved? Friends, family, or strangers? Was this a public or private event? Notice what's going on inside you. In your body, mind, heart, spirit.

JOURNAL: Journal about what you notice—words, phrases, images to reflect the feelings you notice.

QUESTION ROUNDS:

FIRST ROUND:

- Tell us about the experience. How do you feel when you remember that experience: How do your mind, body, heart, and spirit feel?
- What is the hardest thing about talking about gender and sexual orientation?

SECOND ROUND:

- What wisdom about LGBTQI would you want the people at your site to understand? (students, parents, staff)

THIRD ROUND:

- Anything else?

REFLECTION/CLOSE: What are you taking away from this Circle about straight privilege? What support do you need at your school or work site to have or deepen these conversations/Circles?

CIRCLE 3: EXPLORING WHITE PRIVILEGE

FIRST SHARING ROUND

- What does the term “white privilege” mean to you?
- Do you see white privilege in the world around you?
- If so, describe it.

Search online for the article “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh. Distribute a copy to each participant. Read out loud. Allow a minute or two of silence for participants to digest or reread.

SECOND ROUND

- Is anything in this piece surprising or compelling to you? If so, tell us what and why.
- What is the most important idea in the piece?
- What wisdom about white privilege would you want the teachers and others at your site to understand?

THIRD ROUND

- Anything else?

REFLECTION/CLOSE: What are you taking away from this Circle about straight privilege? What support do you need at your school or work site to have or deepen these conversations/Circles?

GLOSSARY

Structural Racism: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead, it has been a feature of the social, economic, and political systems in which we all exist.

Institutional Racism. Institutional racism refers to the policies and practices within and across institutions that, intentionally or not, produce outcomes that chronically favor or put a racial group at a disadvantage. Poignant examples of institutional racism can be found in school disciplinary policies in which students of color are punished at much higher rates than their white counterparts, in the criminal justice system, and within many employment sectors in which day-to-day operations, as well as hiring and firing practices, can significantly disadvantage workers of color.

Individual Racism. Individual racism can include face-to-face or covert actions toward a person that intentionally express prejudice, hate, or bias based on race.

From Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling Structural Racism/Promoting Racial Equity Analysis
<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ARTICLES & BOOKS

"Racial Bias, Even When We Have Good Intentions"
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/upshot/the-measuring-sticks-of-racial-bias-.html?_r=0

State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2014
<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/2014-implicit-bias.pdf>

"White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack", P. McIntosh <http://amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html>

Heterosexual Privilege (Based on Peggy McIntosh's article on White Privilege) http://www.sap.mit.edu/content/pdf/heterosexual_privilege.pdf

Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling Structural Racism/Promoting Racial Equity Analysis, <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf>

Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community, Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Living Justice Press (2015).

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander (2010)

VIDEOS

How the School to Prison Pipeline is Ruining Lives Before They Start <https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=brave+new+films+school+to+prison+pipeline>

Racism is Real (Implicit Bias)
<https://www.facebook.com/bravenewfilms/videos/10152730546222016/>

Cracking the Codes: Elena Featherston on Privilege
<http://blog.world-trust.org/blog/addressing-unconscious-bias-tip-3-creating-new-stories>

Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequality, <http://crackingthecodes.org/>

RESEARCH

Studies on increase in suspensions and on racial disparities <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-data-us-department-education-highlights-educational-inequities-around-teache>

US Dept of Ed 2012 study <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/discipline-policies>

IMPLICIT BIAS TEST, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Paying Attention to White Culture and Privilege: A Missing Link to Advancing Racial Equity

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Keywords: Racial equity, white culture, white privilege, capacity building, organizational change

Introduction

Against the backdrop of persistent racial inequities in every region of the country and across nearly every aspect of U.S. life, few foundations can escape reflecting on race and how it relates to their grantmaking priorities, internal operations, and community leadership. While many foundations have chosen to focus on diversity and inclusion, a small but growing number have engaged more deeply with the cumulative impact and current reality of structural racism¹ – the ways that history, culture, public policy, institutional practices, and personal beliefs interact to maintain a racial hierarchy.

These foundations have developed and invested in compelling strategies to address the root causes of systemic racism. Some are asking their grantees to show the impact of their efforts to close racial gaps and reflect the concerns of those most affected and marginalized. Others have reviewed their grantmaking portfolio to examine the impact of their investments in communities of color, while some have increased their grants for community organizing, advocacy, or other policy change interventions to address racial inequities. And some have turned the lens inward to examine barriers that may exist to staff and board members of color, taken on recruitment and retention strategies, and assessed vendors and other policies to overcome access and inclusion issues.

Key Points

- Racial disparities are driven and maintained by public- and private-sector policies that not only disadvantage communities of color but also over-advantage whites. Foundation processes aimed at racial equity change often overlook the privileged side of inequity.
- Through our experience as racial equity practitioners, we have encountered at least three challenges to engaging foundations in exploring white privilege and white culture in their internal and external racial equity work.
- For foundations to work toward racial equity through their philanthropic investments and leadership, they must shine a light on white privilege and white culture both internally and externally.
- This article discusses tools for tackling those challenges: creating a container with intentional group norms, exploring accumulated racial advantages and disadvantages, reflecting on white culture, and caucusing by racial identity.

All of these efforts are important and necessary. But we believe they will prove insufficient to addressing structural racism or fulfilling the promise of racial justice because they ignore or obscure the other half of the problem.

The racial disparities driven and maintained by public- and private-sector policies that many foundations seek to address not only disad-

¹ To learn more about structural racism, see <http://racialequitytools.org/fundamentals/core-concepts#FUN05>

For foundations to work toward racial equity through their philanthropic investments and leadership, they must shine a light on white privilege and white culture both internally and externally.

vantage communities of color but also over-advantage whites. But processes aimed at racial equity change can overlook the privileged side of inequity. For foundations to work toward racial equity through their philanthropic investments and leadership, they must shine a light on white privilege and white culture both internally and externally. This means engaging in dialogue, reflection, and action on racial equity, not only to target their grantmaking and leadership activities to effect equity in the fields they fund, but also to examine and change their staffing, operations, and organizational culture to more closely align with their equity goals and values.

For more than a decade individually, and over the past five years in partnership, the authors – a woman of color and a white woman – have consulted on and supported the racial equity efforts of foundations and other social change organizations. Through our experience as racial equity practitioners, we have encountered at least three challenges to engaging foundations in exploring white privilege and white culture in their internal and external work toward racial equity:

1. Foundation structures often embody dominant (white) culture and white privilege. By definition, this is normalized and difficult to see, prompting resistance and defensiveness about dissecting core ways of doing business.
2. Accustomed to identifying social inequities that focus on the community, it can be chal-

lenging to turn the mirror inward, particularly on sensitive topics like race and privilege. Few organizations are prepared for the emotional responses and conflict that naturally emerge from this work.

3. This change process itself can privilege white people by centralizing and accommodating their learning curve, which is sometimes steep and often lags behind people of color – who might appreciate the change process while also at times feeling marginalized within it due to the priority given to supporting the needs of whites.

This article offers our reflections on these challenges, as well as the following tools for tackling them:

- Create a container with intentional group norms.
- Explore accumulated racial advantages and disadvantages.
- Reflect on white culture.
- Caucus by racial identity.

To be sure, as institutions dedicated to advancing the well-being of human kind and as part of a field whose existence is intertwined with the civil rights movement, many foundations steadfastly commit to racial equity as a value and goal. Leadership institutions, those that seek to address root causes and effect systemic change and leave a lasting legacy of justice, understand that this requires direct reflection on and deconstruction of white privilege and culture.

Throughout this article we will be sharing our observations of patterns of behavior by whites and people of color as we have experienced them in our racial equity capacity building work. We do not aim to oversimplify the human experience. While there is no monolithic response or behavior of all white people or all people of color, and people will demonstrate their own unique behaviors at any given moment, we have observed some patterns that reflect both the existence of and responses to white culture and privilege. We believe these patterns can be instructive, and we

offer them in the spirit of shared learning and reflection with colleagues who are doing this challenging and important work.

Challenge No. 1: White Culture Operates All Around Us, Yet Remains Invisible

By “white culture,” we mean the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. Because it is so normalized it can be hard to see, which only adds to its powerful hold. In many ways, it is indistinguishable from what we might call U.S. culture or norms – a focus on individuals over groups, for example, or an emphasis on the written word as a form of professional communication. But it operates in even more subtle ways, by actually defining what “normal” is – and likewise, what “professional,” “effective,” or even “good” is. In turn, white culture also defines what is not good, “at risk,” or “unsustainable.” White culture values some ways – ways that are more familiar and come more naturally to those from a white, western tradition – of thinking, behaving, deciding, and knowing, while devaluing or rendering invisible other ways. And it does this without ever having to explicitly say so.²

Most foundations, like other institutions, did not have a team meeting to debate and decide to adopt “white culture” as the mode of operating. And yet, there it is – manifesting in every policy and practice and interaction. One can understand the resistance a group of people might have to examining something they don’t consciously know exists. But when it is given a name and examples are pointed out, its presence is undeniable.

2 The following are some resources about white culture: White Culture, by J. Katz, n.d., retrieved from http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/district-leadership/White_Culture_Judith_Katz.pdf; Lifting the White Veil, by J. Hitchcock, 2002, Roselle, NJ: Crandall, Dostie, & Douglass Books; The Emperor Has No Clothes: Teaching About Race and Racism to People Who Don’t Want to Know, by T. Okun, 2010, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, www.dismantlingracismworks.org; Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible [DVD], 2006, by S. Butler, producer, <http://world-trust.org/mirrors-of-privilege-making-whiteness-visible/>; and Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building, by M. Potapchuk, S. Leiderman, D. Bivens, and B. Major, 2005, <http://www.mpassociates.us/pdf/FlippingtheScriptmostupdated.pdf>

By “white culture,” we mean the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States.

Thus begins the journey to see, deconstruct, and potentially transform white culture. In our experience it also can be the place of greatest resistance, for three primary reasons. The first is that the process can feel overwhelming. Culture lurks in every nook and cranny of organizational life, which now must be intentionally examined, considered, and negotiated. Further, an honest look at white privilege might lead to hard truths about the foundation itself, as wealth accumulation and favorable tax policy are primary manifestations of over-advantaging of whites (Kivel, 2006). The time and effort required for this scope of self-examination may exceed what the foundation team envisioned or allocated when it decided to do racial equity work. And yet, not doing this examination means that any equity conversations and work will continue to take place in a larger container that is shaped by the very dynamics that the group aims to change.

The second reason this work can spur resistance – especially to internal racial equity work – is that predominately white team members, and perhaps even some people of color, are attached to the current ways of working and do not want change to take place so close to home. Especially a foundation that sees itself as high-performing and successful can be skeptical about the degree of change needed. But racial equity is a change process; leaving out a look at white culture and privilege limits the potential for sustainable change.

The third reason is that because white culture and privilege are, by definition, ubiquitous, even if the

Our clients report that their newfound awareness can end up challenging their sense of integrity, as they must make strategic choices about sharing this new consciousness and assessing how to interact with community partners and other philanthropic organizations that don't hold the same conceptual frameworks or language about white culture and privilege.

foundation makes progress toward its own transformation it surely will continue to interact with funding partners, community decision-makers, and grantees who have not done their own examination. Our clients report that their newfound awareness can end up challenging their sense of integrity, as they must make strategic choices about sharing this new consciousness and assessing how to interact with community partners and other philanthropic organizations that do not hold the same conceptual frameworks or language about white culture and privilege.

Challenge No. 2: Conflict and Emotion Challenge the 'White' Way of Operating

Since real-life personal experiences about race and racism come packed with emotions including anger, frustration, hurt, and fear, it is hard to keep them in check when a foundation explores racial equity. Often, one goal of racial equity work is to improve relationships across race, perhaps with an implicit desire to reduce or avoid racial conflict. But an authentic process likely will increase conflict, at least in the short term, as issues of

concern become more visible, people of all races gain language and tools for talking about them, and the process itself invites more open communication.

So, intense emotions and conflict are predictable companions to racial equity work. And yet, white culture and privilege can obscure this reality, making them difficult to engage directly. Because these feelings do not always feel good, foundation leadership can mistakenly view them as “failures” of the process and reasons to abandon or restrict it, rather than accepting them as necessary and indicative of real change.

One aspect of white culture is the unspoken definition of acceptable emotions to share within the workplace, sometimes described as “professionalism.” What is meant by this, however, typically does not get discussed explicitly and transparently within the organization; it is simply assumed that all will know what this means and abide by it. It becomes a topic of conversation only when the unspoken boundary is violated – for example, when anything requiring personal reflection and disclosure gets framed as “too ‘touchy feely’.” This is bound to happen in any frank discussion of structural racism, white culture, and privilege. And the people of color and white people who violate the boundary may face consequences for taking the risk.

The hiddenness of these norms is problematic. But so is the narrowness, which can limit the range of expressions that naturally will arise in racial equity work. Once again, white culture, left unexamined, can hinder the full potential of racial equity work. And by defaulting to white culture norms, explicitly or implicitly, the organization is choosing the perceived comfort of whites over people of color.

We have observed whites shutting down because of discomfort with the rawness of emotions, fear of disclosing personal experiences that may suggest they have bias or racist thoughts, or the assumption that talking about white privilege means they are “bad” individuals instead of seeing privilege in the context of the system of racism in

which we all participate. White people's response to emotions is not a fault, but rather a manifestation of how the system is set up for people who are privileged in it. The default setting is for the structure to be invisible. For some whites, this is the first time they are realizing they have a white identity, learning about a system of racism rather than seeing racism as individual acts of hate, or even having an intense conversation on race. It may be the first time they are considering how the system is set up and may have furthered their career, performance appraisals, and quality of life. As a result of all this newness, plus discomfort with the emotions arising from their colleagues and even within themselves, whites often will advocate for even more strict boundaries around personal sharing and emotion when it gets too heated for their comfort.

On the other hand, many people of color talk about their anticipation of having an opportunity to share one's truth in a facilitated space and the potential that these discussions may result in institutional changes. In our observation, people of color are typically taking the lead in sharing personal experiences since they are more fluent in the impact of racism. They also might feel hesitation, since people of color are typically looked to for sharing their personal stories and lessons yet are covertly or overtly asked to keep their emotions in check. Some people of color have expressed fear that they will face harsh consequences for speaking truth – further marginalization, loss of credibility, or something worse.

This is a critical juncture for an organization. A foundation committing to racial equity work for the long haul must be open and receptive and make space for conflict and emotion. Without this, the process could unintentionally repeat the experience many people of color have throughout their lives – that is, efforts are made to address racial inequity, but when the conversation gets heated or uncomfortable for whites the group retreats, often blaming people of color for causing the discomfort. Business as usual returns with added anxiety for people of color, who may be unlikely to risk participating in such a process again.

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Challenge No. 3: Focusing on White Culture and Privilege Privileges Whiteness

Racial equity work depends, in part, on people of color gaining access, voice, and leadership to advocate for change within their institutions. And they can be great supporters of the wide-angle-lens approach to this work, one that looks at the structural over-advantaging of whites as well as the under-advantaging of people of color. At the same time, they can experience discomfort with this approach and can become its most vocal critics.

Racial equity practitioners have made a valuable contribution to the field by putting forth an analytical method and innovative tools for understanding and deconstructing the accumulated impact of structural racism as the cause of racially inequitable outcomes and, in turn, developing strategies to improve outcomes and transform systems. We use this approach because we believe it is imperative to understand our history, how the

People of color, who often have to accommodate, adapt, and assimilate in countless ways in order to gain entry and advance in white culture institutions, understandably might grow weary of bearing witness to white people discovering and grappling with their white privilege. Like the stages of grief, this process can include everything from denial to angry pushback from white people, jockeying to position oneself as the exception to the rule, or paralyzing white guilt and shame.

system was constructed and continues to operate, and the statistical impact of structural racism in our daily lives. In our experience, this can be useful to people of all races.

But strictly focusing on analysis and evidence can unintentionally, though not unpredictably, reify the marginalization experienced by people of color because it tends to more closely match the learning and emotional needs of white participants. We have observed this happening in at least three ways.

The first is when it is primarily a cognitive approach and does not include attention to affective or experiential needs and ways of knowing. For people of color, their lived experience of racism often hits them at a gut level as well as the cogni-

tive level, in a way that is less familiar to whites. In our racial equity capacity building sessions we typically include, for example, an overview of statistics showing racial disparities in different sectors. While these might validate the experience of people of color, they also can leave them feeling detached from their personal pain and suffering at the hands of racial oppression. Imagine the experience of crime survivors being asked to take in “data” about their victimization – their lived experience is far more powerful data than a PowerPoint© presentation ever could be. And yet, this approach is also what can make it easier for white people to take in – and finally believe – that structural racism exists. In this way, this method can privilege the convincing of white people over the comforting of people of color.

The second is when it emphasizes structural outcomes to the exclusion of personal bias or individual racism. Again, this can be helpful in engaging white people and helping participants of all races understand the systemic nature of racism. And it is an important counternarrative to the focus on the individual in U.S. culture. But it also can leave both white people and people of color detached from the structure, viewing it more like an intellectual exercise than an urgent, personal imperative. For many white people, this can be the perfect match for their learning style and sense of self, and it complies with white culture. But it can leave people of color feeling that no one is taking responsibility for the persistent pain and consistently inequitable outcomes and experience being generated by structural racism – including in everyday interactions with their white colleagues. In this way, the organization as a whole may make progress in its understanding of structural racism and its commitment to racial equity, at the same time that people of color may feel more isolated in their daily experience of racism within the organization.

The third way this analytical approach can privilege white participants while remarginalizing people of color is that the necessary focus on white culture and privilege, which we maintain is critical for racial equity work to be effective, means that the white experience takes center stage in the

change process, even as the purpose of the work is to dismantle the centrality of and privilege inherent to whiteness. People of color, who often have to accommodate, adapt, and assimilate in countless ways in order to gain entry and advance in white culture institutions, understandably might grow weary of bearing witness to white people discovering and grappling with their white privilege. Like the stages of grief, this process can include everything from denial to angry pushback from white people, jockeying to position oneself as the exception to the rule, or paralyzing white guilt and shame. Meanwhile, people of color are asked to be patient and graciously share their stories, as this is part of the necessary process of white people becoming allies in the struggle for racial justice. We can understand why people of color may lose patience or check out of this process. Like the crime victim in the example above, remediating perpetrators is important and necessary to reduce future crime, but asking survivors to witness or perhaps even participate in that remediation might feel like adding insult to injury.

Tools to Address the Challenges

Our own understanding of our racial identity and our life experiences in the context of the daily impact of structural racism is critical to being thoughtful, effective, and courageous leaders working toward racial justice. Organizations doing this work must balance the need for both conceptual frameworks and storytelling, for unpacking the personal and organizational impact of structural racism, and for developing an institutional culture that reflects racial equity principles.

So, putting white culture and privilege on the table is critical to include in racial equity work – and it is fraught with challenges due to the complex manifestations of structural racism. In our experience, there is no way to avoid these challenges; the best leaders can do is anticipate them and become equipped with tools to mitigate them. We offer four tools.³

³ In addition to these four tools, several others developed by different organizations can be found at <http://www.racialequitytools.org>; a good section to start at is under the tab, “Act.”

Tool No. 1: Create a Container With Intentional Group Norms

Some people, often whites, will say that they cannot have a conversation about difficult topics like racism and privilege without building trust and having a strong relationship with their colleagues of color. At the same time others, often people of color, will say they cannot possibly build trust or

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have authentic relationships with white colleagues who are unable to have candid conversation about racism and privilege. Rather than privileging one need over the other or handicapping the process by building only one capacity when both are needed, a thoughtful process begins with attention to creating a “container” to hold the process and enable participants of all racial identities to be challenged but not traumatized.

It is important to note that we build the container not to avoid conflict and hard emotions or create some false sense of “safe space.” Rather, we build it precisely because we know conflict and emotions will arise and that “safety” can be elusive and subjective. The container helps the group support

We offer and engage groups with these norms: (1) Speak your truth. (2) Lean into discomfort and lean into each other. (3) Commit to nonclosure. (4) Embrace paradox. (5) Seek intentional learning, not perfection (OpenSource Leadership Strategies, n.d.).

one another rather than marginalize individuals, be better able to recover from challenges, and remain intact even as differences are emphasized. It also encourages community members to bring their best and full selves, be respectful in their own words and actions and of others, and create a shared sense of accountability to one another and the process.

What goes into and creates the container is important. It includes the common language and framework that is being used to understand structural racism and racial equity. We have learned that it also must include intentional group norms that enable everyone in the process to bring their cognitive, affective, and experiential wisdom into the group.

Every group has norms – standards of behavior, communication, and getting the work done. As discussed earlier, often norms arise unintentionally, reflecting the dominant white culture, and are not negotiated intentionally in a way that takes full advantage of a group's cultural diversity. The sheer act of articulating norms for the racial equity process can expose the unintentionality of current group norms while also creating a space to complement and support the change effort.

In our work, we have made the choice to offer a set of group norms for the group to “try on,” rather than generate a list from the group. Arising from our experience with a diverse range of groups, our list helps to balance power in the group from the start and offers a tool and shared frame of reference to begin using right away. If time allows, a process could include the group generating its own norms. Care should be taken, however, to balance power in the group so everyone can contribute freely to the process, make sure these norms are truly negotiated and not simply brainstormed and added to the flip chart like a grocery list, and ensure they do not simply default to dominant white culture.

We offer and engage groups with these norms: (1) Speak your truth. (2) Lean into discomfort and lean into each other. (3) Commit to nonclosure. (4) Embrace paradox. (5) Seek intentional learning, not perfection (OpenSource Leadership Strategies, n.d.).⁴

Embedded in these norms are others, like maintaining confidentiality and stepping up or back in order to balance participation across personalities, behavioral styles, and racial identities. These norms intentionally reflect different cultural perspectives. “Speak your truth” – with the emphasis on the individual “you” – surely reflects the American/western ethos of individuality. When it comes to talking about things like white privilege, however, many white Americans suddenly default to the universal “we” or the detached “you” rather than taking ownership of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. There can be great power and value in speaking from the “I,” for both the speaker and the group. This is an example where we think a “white” norm can be useful and we are intentional about claiming it as part of the container.

Conversely, paradox is more valued in eastern schools of thought. While critical thinking skills are important to racial equity work, we find the

⁴ This original document has evolved over a decade of work with social justice groups and has been informed by many teachers and colleagues, including Angela Bryant and Visions; Claudia Horwitz and stone circles; George Lakey and Training for Change; Tema Okun and dismantlingRacismworks; and Leah Wing and Social Justice Mediation Institute.

white culture norm of “either/or” logic to be limiting. Instead, we encourage “both/and” paradoxical thinking. Similarly, the focus on nonclosure and learning is a direct challenge to the white-culture norm of perfectionism that dominates foundations and other elite U.S. institutions. So in these cases, we are intentionally challenging dominant white norms and preferencing counter-culture norms.

The norm “leaning into discomfort and each other” most directly attempts to challenge white culture norms around avoiding conflict and emotions that cause discomfort. It also attempts to bridge the seemingly disparate needs within the group to both build trust and engage in an honest conversation. This norm is not about romanticizing pain; it is about recognizing that growing pains are a normal and necessary part of the process, and that we can rely on one another to be allies as we engage the messiness that comes with learning, taking risks, and staying present.

Collectively, these norms are designed to stretch everyone – in different ways, at different times. They were intentionally created and they require intentional practice. We deliberately chose not to call them rules; few people take kindly to imposed rules, and we do not want to take on the role of policing them anyway. Instead they are norms that the group is free to take on or not, but that at the very least challenge the unspoken norms of white culture that allot privilege and deter true progress toward racial equity. We have heard from our clients that these norms have been useful beyond the specific racial equity engagement; in this way, racial equity work and specifically work on white culture and privilege can have far-reaching use for organizational development.

Tool No. 2: Explore Accumulated Advantage and Disadvantage

Understanding how racism relates to the issues a foundation funds – education or health, for example – typically would include looking at the history of the issue as well as various public and institutional policies that created and help maintain racial disparities. We have found these exercises to be most powerful when they reveal the persistent

We have been fortunate to work with some courageous organizations who have turned the lens inward to see how those accumulated privileges and disadvantages have determined who holds leadership positions in the organization, how decisions get made, what constitutes success, what and who gets rewarded, and whose voice has the most influence.

and often intentional disadvantaging of people of color through, for example, enslavement or denial of rights or barriers to participation, as well as the advantaging of white people through, for example, the explicit granting of rights. This helps reveal how privilege develops and how racial gaps grow from both ends. In turn, this means that any remedies must address structural over-advantaging of whites as well under-advantaging of people of color.

Further, seeing that these gaps have grown over time through the confluence and cumulative impact of myriad over-advantages and under-advantages also helps to lay bare that privilege exists, has been constructed, and will need to be intentionally and strategically dismantled systematically in order for racial equity to emerge.

A final step in the process is, perhaps ironically, personalizing the structural. It is not enough for foundation team members to talk in detached, intellectualized ways about how privilege has evolved in the world. We have been fortunate to work with some courageous organizations who have turned the lens inward to see how those

Are all aspects of white culture “bad?” Not necessarily. But as the default, they are unnegotiated. Our assessment process focuses on how white culture dominates within an organization and, specifically, how it discredits, marginalizes, or oppresses other ways of behaving, thinking, and doing.

accumulated privileges and disadvantages have determined who holds leadership positions in the organization, how decisions get made, what constitutes success, what and who gets rewarded, and whose voice has the most influence. This exploration can catalyze deeper reckoning with the relationship between accumulated advantages and the existence of the foundation itself, perhaps leading to radically new grantmaking priorities and processes.

Examining white culture can be difficult in any context, but examining it “out in the world” at least brings the comfort of distance. Turning the lens inward can be more risky, but also bear great rewards. George Penick (2008), the white former executive director of the Foundation for the Mid South, shares – based on personal experience – the critical importance of challenging the current ways of knowing and doing the work:

Foundations may think that they are being bold with their money when applying it toward issues affecting those outside of their walls, and yet they usually do not understand how those same issues manifest themselves within their own foundation. ... And most of all, foundation leaders who are afraid to open the issues of racial and social equity for a full discussion by board and staff alike – of what this means to their governance, their grant practices, and

their hiring, recruitment, and outreach – will find themselves isolated and clueless. (p. 12)

Privilege very much operates in here, especially when it comes to foundations. Conducting this analysis in a thorough and honest way can help put privilege on the table explicitly, where it finally can be interrogated and transformed.

Tool No. 3: Reflect on White Culture

Identifying how white culture is present within an organization’s internal and external practices and grantmaking is a critical dimension of racial equity work. The dominant white culture is ever-present in most organizations, and it can be especially invisible to members of a dominant group. We believe there are helpful steps to reveal white culture:

- Understand the concept of white culture and its different components – for example, using the White Culture worksheet (Potapchuk, 2013).
- Increase skills to identify white culture in an organizational setting – for example, through case studies.
- Assess how white culture is present within the organization and set goals for transforming it – for example, using the Transforming Organizational Culture Assessment tool.⁵

Are all aspects of white culture “bad?” Not necessarily. But as the default, they are unnegotiated. Our assessment process focuses on how white culture dominates within an organization and, specifically, how it discredits, marginalizes, or oppresses other ways of behaving, thinking, and doing. Here are some questions that guide our facilitated assessment process, looking at both internal and external dynamics of a foundation:⁶

⁵ This tool has been developed by Maggie Potapchuk as part of the Transforming White Privilege project with Sally Leiderman of the Center for Assessment and Policy Development and Shakti Butler of World Trust Educational Services, with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

⁶ Among the sources for these questions: Consulting With Racial Equity Lens Tool by M. Potapchuk, 2011, at <http://www.mpassociates.us/documents/ConsultingwRacialEquity-LensPotapchuk.pdf>; How Can We Lay Out Assumptions to Understand Our Theory of Change? from MP Associates and the Center for Assessment and Policy Development, 2013, at http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles%20How_Can_We_Lay_Out_Assumptions_To_Understand_Our_

- What kind of information is considered credible, and from whom?
- How is success being defined? Who is defining it? What are the consequences if the outcomes are not reached? What is the foundation's responsibility and accountability to those outcomes? Are there reparations for the community based on negative impacts from a foundation-led initiative?
- How is time for an initiative being defined? Who is defining it? How are different variables – politics, organizational issues, other priorities – being factored in? What is the time and monetary contingency plan?
- How is leadership being defined? By title? By characteristics? By individuals in the community? Who are the formal and informal leaders?
- What leadership behaviors are being rewarded? What are the consequences for those who do not embody specific leadership characteristics? Do they still have access to resources and decision-making?
- What is the decision-making process? Who is included? Is the process transparent? Are there opportunities for feedback and flexibility to make changes to the process? Who decides?
- When and how is conflict addressed? What are the responses when an individual or a group raises a difficult issue, especially one involving race, inequities, power, or privilege? Are there different patterns of response by staff groups? By race/ethnic identity groups?
- What are the consequences if the decision-making structure and process are not followed? Are there different consequences based on roles within the organization or racial/ethnic identities?
- Do the strategies and possible policy changes anticipate and address the different impacts of a practice on distinct racial groups? Do they take into consideration accumulated advantages for whites and accumulated disadvantages for people of color?

Theory_Of_Change.pdf; and Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building, by M. Potapchuk, S. Leiderman, D. Bivens, and B. Major, 2005, at <http://www.mpassociates.us/pdf/FlippingtheScriptmostupdated.pdf>.

One tool we have found to be very helpful, especially in acknowledging and supporting some of the emotions that naturally occur in racial equity work, is racial identity caucusing. The value of caucusing is so both white people and people of color have intentional space and time to focus on their respective work to dismantle racism and advance racial equity.

Understanding, analyzing, and intervening on how white culture manifests within a foundation is critical for working toward racial equity, and it is especially essential for establishing credibility within a community.

Tool No. 4: Caucus by Racial Identity

One tool we have found to be very helpful, especially in acknowledging and supporting some of the emotions that naturally occur in racial equity work, is racial identity caucusing.⁷ The value of caucusing is so both white people and people of color have intentional space and time to focus on their respective work to dismantle racism and advance racial equity. Caucusing does not happen instead of integrated groups; rather, caucusing can lead to more authentic and powerful integrated groups.

Caucusing not only respects the choice of marginalized groups to be together, it also makes the dominant culture visible – an important step in making intentional changes to the culture.

⁷ For more information about caucusing as a tool, see <http://racialequitytools.org/fundamentals/core-concepts#FUN05>.

Further, working only in integrated groups puts an undue burden on people of color to be the teachers and obscures the responsibility of white people to do their own work. Both people of color and white people are needed to work collectively for racial equity. But they have different work to do, precisely because of their different experiences with and location relative to white culture and privilege.

For people of color the caucus can be a space where whiteness is not at the center or a place where one need not accommodate or assimilate to white people's responses to the emotional and conflictual nature of racial equity work.

Though there is often resistance to participating in explicit race-identified groups, these formations occur all the time – though usually without intentionality or consciousness. One common resistance to caucusing by whites is, “I don’t like to feel guilty” – though having that feeling is an opportunity to remember one’s humanity and commitment to justice. What caucus time does in part is ensure the feeling of guilt does not result in paralysis, but rather reflection and action. Caucusing can be an opportunity to transform the white space into a liberating space to build strengths, skills, and courage for white people to act purposefully toward racial equity.

A white caucus provides an opportunity for white people to:

- Unpack feelings – especially fear, anger, and sadness, all natural feelings – as well as understand how whites internalize superiority⁸ and mani-

fest it in their attitudes and interactions. It is an opportunity for people to support one another and resist marginalizing for being emotive or for honestly sharing racist beliefs.

- Continue the learning by sharing personal incidents and interactions, receive feedback from peers, and encourage responsive actions to address privilege and racism on individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels.
- Discuss current events, organizational patterns, and policies and apply a structural racism analysis to understand how white privilege and culture are present.
- Create an accountability process.⁹ Caucusing is not a time for confessionals, but rather a place to build the capacity of each person as well as the white collective to act intentionally, consistently, and effectively and not be complicit or silent.

For people of color the caucus can be a space where whiteness is not at the center or a place where one need not accommodate or assimilate to white people’s responses to the emotional and conflictual nature of racial equity work. The caucus provides an opportunity to not only speak about the impact of racism and white culture within an organization, but also about how oppression is internalized on an individual, intergroup, and institutional level. This space can build solidarity among diverse people of color while at the same time allowing that full diversity to emerge and be celebrated. This caucus can be a liberating place for people of color to heal, bring their full selves, and consider how to collectively work for racial equity.

A people of color caucus provides an opportunity for people of color to:

Racist Collective, from Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training, at <http://www.crossroadsantiracism.org/wp-content/themes/crossroads/PDFs/Racial%20Identity%20Caucusing%20Strategy.pdf>

⁹ To learn more about accountability processes, see <http://racialequitytools.org/plan/change-process#PLA26> and Accountability and White Anti-Racist Organizing: Stories of Our Work, B. Cushing, L. Cabbil, M. Freeman, J. Hitchcock, and K. Richards, eds., 2010, Roselle, NJ: Crandall, Dostie, & Douglass Books.

⁸ See Racial Identity Caucusing: A Strategy for Building Anti-

- discover patterns of white culture and privilege within the organization and how to address them on a personal and organizational level;
- provide relief and support to one another by offering space to share experiences openly and freely, without having to explain them in a way that white people can hear;
- discuss internalized manifestations of racism and how it affects each person personally and professionally;
- build solidarity and interrupt the interpersonal manifestations of racism that are imposed by the hierarchy of racial and ethnic identity; and
- discuss accountability processes and expectations of whites and the organization.

Facilitators use the caucusing tool in different ways. Typically we include a prompt question – sometimes the same for each caucus, sometimes different. Depending on the size and diversity of the group, we sometimes choose to subdivide the caucuses – for example, the people of color caucus might end up being two groups, one for African Americans and one for other people of color; the white caucus might be split by role in the organization, so that whites in leadership have their own space to contemplate their unique relationship to privilege. When we do subdivide, we create an added step to integrate each racial-identity caucus before the cross-race integration. The final step in this process is to intentionally integrate the caucuses by sharing responses to the prompt question, sometimes in a fishbowl formation. Integration does not always mean equal reporting; it is about creating common ground, respecting one another’s process, and sitting with the discomfort of the intentionally segregated groups.

Conclusion

We believe that focusing on white culture and privilege is an often overlooked but critical component of effective racial equity change processes; that this work can be challenging in some predictable ways; and that these challenges can be mitigated with some intentional tools. As Andrea Smith (2013) expresses in her blog post, *The Problem with Privilege*: “There is no simple anti-oppression formula that we can follow; we are

We believe that focusing on white culture and privilege is an often overlooked but critical component of effective racial equity change processes; that this work can be challenging in some predictable ways; and that these challenges can be mitigated with some intentional tools.

in a constant state of trial and error and radical experimentation.”

We hope the tools we have offered provide a start, though each situation requires presence, creativity, and courage. Indeed, the fact that these challenges exist should not be used as an excuse not to engage, but rather as evidence of the persistence and power of white culture and privilege – and the urgent need to take them on directly and explicitly. We encourage foundations committed to racial equity to lean into the hardest parts of the work – namely, unearthing white culture and privilege internally and externally. Anything less would fall short of their mutual accountability¹⁰ to grantees and the communities they serve, as well as their deeply held value and goal of racial equity.

¹⁰ Discussing accountability processes usually focuses on the process used with grantees to track organizational outcomes to ensure they follow the agreement on how grant monies are used. Equally important is being transparent regarding the foundation’s accountability to the grantees and communities it serves. This includes tracking responsiveness to community needs, assessing how resources are being distributed and to whom, ensuring that success is being defined by the community / grantees, conducting a structural power analysis, attending to power dynamics at all levels, and reviewing practices to assure they are not contributing to inequities or unintentionally having a racialized impact.

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Small Group Circle Conversation

Think about a time when race had an impact on your life. Remember that experience for a moment. Now sit silently for a one more minute or so, eyes closed or gazing downward. Who was involved? Friends, family, or strangers? Was this a public or private event? Notice what's going on inside you. In your body, mind, heart, spirit.

(People could make notes on index cards for this reflection and write what you notice— words, phrases, images to reflect the feelings you notice.)

QUESTION ROUND One: (pick one)

- Tell us about the experience. How do you feel when you remember that experience: How do your mind, body, heart, and spirit feel? If you'd like, share what you've written.
- What is the hardest thing about talking about race?

QUESTION ROUND Two: (pick one)

- Do you have conversations about race at your work or school site, and if so, describe; if not, explain.
- What wisdom about race would you want the people at your site to understand? (students, parents, staff)

QUESTION ROUND Three:

- Anything else?

You at Your Intersections

Ethnicity

Socio-Economic Status

Gender

Gender Identity

Sexual Orientation

National Origin

First Language

Physical, Emotional, Developmental (Dis)Ability

Age

Religious or Spiritual Affiliation

Race

In the space provided for each category, please record how you identify.

Types of Oppression

Race	
Class	
Gender	
Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation	
Ability	
Religion	
Age	
Military Service	
Immigrant Status	
Language	



FEATURE

Teaching at the Intersections

Honor and teach about your students' multiple identities.

Issue 53, Summer 2016 | By Monita K. Bell



Illustration by Jasu Hu

Web Version: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/teaching-at-the-intersections>

Nicole: An Intersectional Case Study

Ninth-grader Nicole is a mature, creative, hardworking student who gets along well with others. But she's always late for school, frequently misses her first-period class and rarely submits homework in any classes. Needless to say, her grades are suffering. Nicole's teachers know very little about her life. When they look at her, they see an African-American student who isn't doing well. They also see a typical example of the deep racial disparities that exist within absenteeism and dropout rates nationwide.

But a teacher who took the time to peel back the layers of Nicole's identity would see another characteristic—her socio-economic status—and a more nuanced understanding would emerge. Nicole isn't just a black student; she's also a girl from a low-income family who bears the responsibility of taking care of her two younger siblings. To fully and adequately support Nicole, an educator must see her situation through an *intersectional* lens: recognizing that race-, gender- and class-related circumstances are contributing to her achievement issues.

Legal scholar and law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term *intersectionality* in 1989, explains.

“We know, if we have a gender lens, that girls are more likely to have to engage in caretaking activities,” she says. “They’re the ones who often have to pick up the slack when mothers are unable to, either because of work or other circumstances. The girls are the ones who prepare the siblings for school, make sure they get to the bus on time, pick them up from school. That might make it difficult for *them* to get to school on time, contributing to their truancy and ultimately leading to them dropping out.”

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

Intersectionality refers to the social, economic and political ways in which identity-based systems of oppression and privilege connect, overlap and influence one another.

Crenshaw introduced intersectionality in her groundbreaking essay “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” In it, she examined the ways in which the legal system handled race and sex discrimination claims, observing that black women—historically lacking race, gender *and* class privilege—consistently had their discrimination claims denied. Her reflections led Crenshaw to describe intersectionality as “a framework ... to trace the impact of racism, of sexism, other modes of discrimination, where they come together and create sometimes unique circumstances, obstacles, barriers for people who are subject to all of those things.”

In Nicole’s case, the problems she faces aren’t just about her multiple identities, but stem from the multiplied oppressions that accompany *her particular* combination of identities: Her situation reflects the experiences of low-income people more than affluent people, girls more than boys and black students more than white students. Specifically, Nicole must navigate parents who work long hours outside the home *plus* the standard that, as a female, she must care for her siblings *plus* low expectations on the part of her teachers.

SOCIAL JUSTICE STANDARDS

For more on how to talk to students about intersectionality, see the grade-level outcomes for Identity anchor standard three (ID.3) of the Teaching Tolerance

Social Justice Standards: "Students will recognize that peoples' multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals." Even very young children can learn about intersectionality. For example, the K-2 outcome for ID.3 is, "I know that all my group identities are part of me—but that I am always ALL me."

Oppression, Power and Privilege in the Classroom

Although the term first entered the lexicon in a legal context, intersectionality isn't just about legal discrimination. In the classroom, educators can use an intersectional lens to better relate to and affirm all students—like Nicole—and to help young people understand the relationship between power and privilege through the curriculum.

For Christina Torres, who teaches seventh- and ninth-grade English at the University Laboratory School in Honolulu, Hawai'i, teaching with intersectionality in mind means "seeing your students as more than just the thing that stands out in the classroom, as far as race or their gender, and understanding that there's a *long* background to all those things." Understanding context is also key, Torres says. "A woman who is Latina in L.A. is going to have a very different experience from someone who's in the middle of Arkansas. The place matters, too."

Torres' ninth-grade class recently read and discussed *To Kill a Mockingbird*, providing the perfect opportunity to dig into intersections of race, gender and place. "We've done a lot of different discussions about femininity and what it means to be a woman," Torres recalls. "But to push that further, we also discussed what that means for Scout, as a little girl who is white, versus Calpurnia, who is black, and what does it mean for both of them to grow up as women in the South. Especially for Calpurnia, who would say [to Scout and Jem], 'Kids, don't do that. That's what Negroes would do.'"

Torres and her class used this passage as a jumping-off point for a discussion about power, internalized oppression and seeing value in one's culture and community. At the beginning of the year, Torres had assigned her students to consider where and how they fit into their communities and what makes them feel worthwhile there. Recalling that assignment during the *Mockingbird* conversation, Torres asked the class, "If Calpurnia talks about her own fellow African Americans like that, do you think it's easy for her to see value from her culture?" The discussion offers an opportunity to explore why Scout might think it is OK to act a certain way but Calpurnia does not.

Intersectionality 101

Need a brush-up on intersectionality? Watch—and share—our animated video!



This article contains a multimedia feature that is available at the web address above.

Navigating the Intersections

An identity-based discussion that directly focuses on layers of oppression might seem too difficult to navigate in class. But for Torres, raising these issues is a way of privileging her students' identities, experiences and stories. She hears students talking about race, gender and other identity layers outside of class, giving her the green light to bring up these topics *in* class. In fact, the arc of Torres' course begins with students examining their own identities—including instances in which they've experienced judgment and bias—and closes with the ways in which they've exhibited bias against others. By emphasizing intersectionality, she equips her students with the skills to examine why they believe what they believe, why their beliefs might differ from others' and to determine how their beliefs might be influenced by power and privilege.

Khalilah Harris, former deputy director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans, observes that “adults are responsible for helping students to have a safe space to navigate how they identify themselves and what intersections they see of themselves.” Without this safety, she says, students will struggle to embrace, express and advocate for their multiple identities.

“Not ... viewing yourself as intersectional and human limits your own growth,” Harris warns. “It certainly limits the students' capacity to make the strongest connections they can to the content.”

For Torres, helping students like Nicole navigate the world—and the way the world responds to them—is fundamental to her responsibility as an educator.

“Everything in a classroom is dictated by me,” she says. “Every day kids enter our class, there's an opportunity for them to be empowered or oppressed. When I don't consider intersectionality and what they might need, I run the risk of oppressing my kids. ... When we stop seeing our kids as whole people—as whole, nuanced people, with context to gender and race and class—we stop seeing them as real people.”

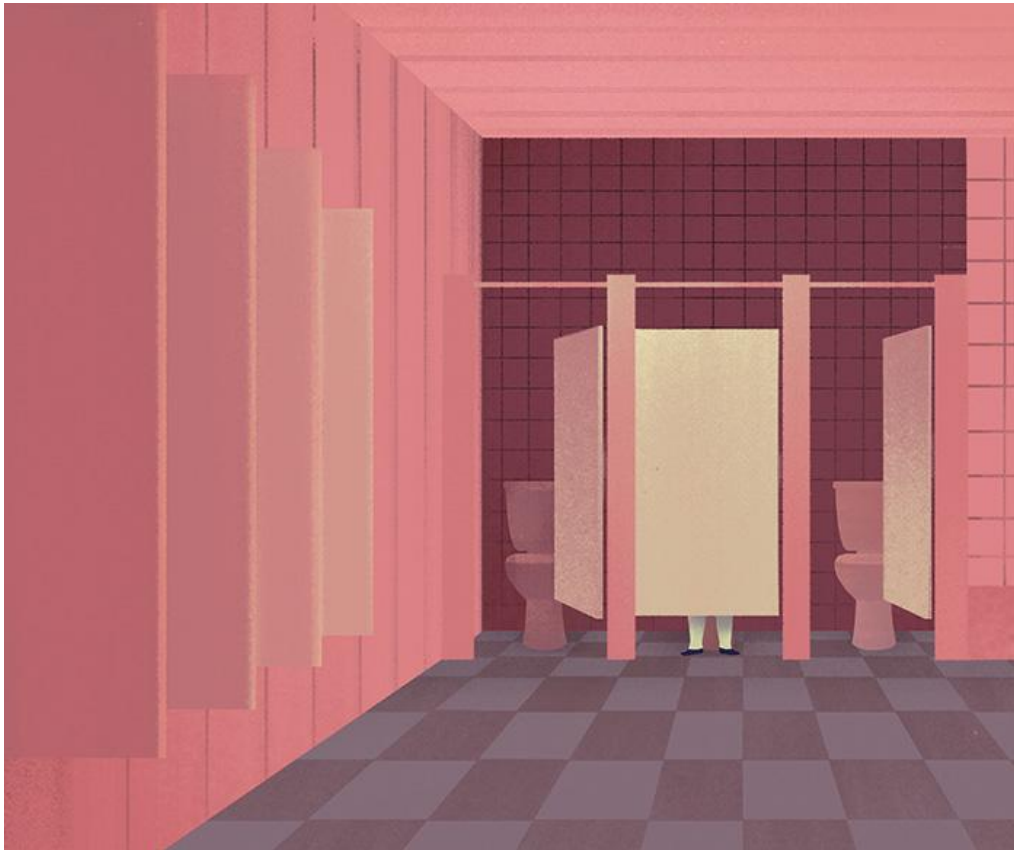
INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE COURT SYSTEM

In 1989, legal scholar and law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw applied retrospective analyses to three discrimination lawsuits, each filed by black women. Presented in “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” these cases gave rise to her thinking about intersectionality and its importance, not only in the legal realm, but also in feminist and antiracist discourse.

The first case she examines, *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* (1976), illustrates how the courts at that time interpreted existing anti-discrimination laws, previous legal decisions and plaintiffs’ claims to be members of a protected class. In *DeGraffenreid*, five black women claimed that their employer, General Motors, discriminated against black women by laying off employees on the basis of seniority during the 1970 recession. Because GM did not hire black women before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, “all of the [black] women hired after 1970 lost their jobs,” Crenshaw explains.

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri ruled in favor of the defendant, however, stating that, because the layoffs did not also affect white women, there was no legitimate sex discrimination claim; and, because the layoffs did not also affect black men, there was no legitimate race discrimination claim either. “[Black women] should not be allowed to combine statutory remedies to create a new ‘super-remedy’ which would give them relief beyond what the drafters of the relevant statutes intended,” the court stated. “Thus, this lawsuit must be examined to see if it states a cause of action for race discrimination, sex discrimination, or alternatively either, but not a combination of both.”

Crenshaw argued that the court’s failure to see the ways in which sex and race compounded the injustice against the plaintiffs indicated a systemic failure—one that isn’t limited only to black women.



Fast-forward 26 years from Crenshaw's 1989 examinations to the case of G.G., a 16-year-old transgender student in Gloucester, Virginia, whose school prohibited him from using the men's restroom. Represented by the American Civil Liberties Union, G.G. took his case to court in June 2015, arguing that his treatment violated Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which protects people from sex discrimination in schools. The U.S. Department of Justice agreed with G.G.'s intersectional argument, making this statement in a brief filed in June 2015: "Discrimination based on a person's gender identity, a person's transgender status, or a person's nonconformity to sex stereotypes constitutes discrimination based on sex. As such, prohibiting a student from accessing the restrooms that match his [or her] gender identity is prohibited sex discrimination under Title IX." The district court later dismissed G.G.'s Title IX claim and denied his injunction against the school board. But, in April 2016, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the dismissal of G.G.'s Title IX claim and ruled that the district court must reconsider G.G.'s injunction against the school board.

In this case, the school's reaction to the combination of G.G.'s sex assigned at birth, gender identity and gender expression—important elements that make G.G. who he is—directly contributed to the discomfort and stigma he experienced at school when it came to using the restroom.

Honor and teach about your students' multiple identities with this toolkit.
Click [here](#) to learn how to view student data through an intersectional lens.
Watch this webinar and learn how to put intersectional strategies into action.

3 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

BEFORE ENGAGING WITH OTHERS



What is your truth?

What is your truth? How do you see the issue of race play out in our country, community and schools? What experiences have you have growing up and as an adult that have informed your view of race? Has that view shifted over time? Why? Why not?

Before we start any dialogue, it's important to check in with ourselves and understand what experiences (both positive and negative) we are bringing to the discussion. This is our lens through which we see and understand our world. When our core truth is clear to us, only then can we evaluate our understanding and begin to ask more questions.

What do you value?



What do you value? How do your beliefs about your students, your culture and/or your faith influence what you value? What results do you want to see for our nation's students and our public schools? How do these values influence your perspectives on race?

Our values form the core of how we relate to our nation's problems and opportunities. When we understand our own values and priorities we are better positioned to enter sensitive discussions with a set of shared beliefs.



What's your privilege?

What's your privilege? What are the ways that you might have advantages over other groups of people (this could be by your race, gender, socio-economic status, immigration status, etc.)

Each of us (yes, even the most disenfranchised) has an identity that benefits from the exploitation of another group, so understanding our own privilege is essential to dismantling oppression. Having privilege also doesn't mean that you haven't experienced oppression in other ways. But without awareness of the ways we have structural advantages in our lives, we cannot understand all of the ways privilege and oppression intersect through issues like Institutional Racism.



Get more information at:
Race Matters: How to Talk About Race,
Annie E. Casey Foundation.

3 TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH OTHERS

ON INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

1 Lead with your values



Lead with your values. It is easier to find common ground on values statements than on prescriptive solutions. Don't try to persuade people that their beliefs are wrong. Instead, find a value focus that is equally dear and compelling to them. The one value that research shows as promising is "opportunity." This allows us to discuss the policies, programs, and practices where access to opportunities are lodged. Additionally this mutes either-or debate about whether personal responsibility or systems are to blame, since opportunity goes hand in hand with personal responsibility. Since this debate is off the table, the focus can be on barriers to opportunity, and the evidence can highlight how similarly situated individuals encounter very different circumstances in terms of opportunities. (E.g., white children with college-eligible academic performance enter college at higher rates than African American and Latino children with college-eligible academic performance.)

Keep it Results Focused



Keep it Results Focused. Keep the conversation focused on the results people want to achieve (e.g., all children graduate from high school) rather than who's to blame for present inequities. Of course, figuring out how to get the desired results will require a focus on what's to blame; that discussion can be directed to policies, programs, and practices that need to be changed.



Narrative before Numbers

Narrative before Numbers. If people see numbers that don't fit the model they use in thinking about race, they'll reject the numbers. For example, suppose you present statistics about disparities in juvenile detention that show that even when youth of different racial groups behave the same way, African American, Latino, and Native American youth are disproportionately detained compared to their white counterparts. People wed to the dominant model of the self-making person will still attribute the explanation for those numbers to some unspecified fault of the youth of color themselves. Their dominant narrative trumped your well-researched numbers.



Get more information at:
Race Matters: How to Talk About Race,
Annie E. Casey Foundation.

I AM A PERSON
WHO WILL

TEACHING TOLERANCE
POCKET GUIDE
RESPOND
TO EVERYDAY
STEREOTYPES
AND BIAS
SPEAK
UP AT
SCHOOL
TOLERANCE.ORG



TEACHING
TOLERANCE
A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER
TOLERANCE.ORG

SPEAK UP
AGAINST BIAS

INTERRUPT

QUESTION

EDUCATE

ECHO

ECHO

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IS OFFENSIVE AND WE

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If someone else speaks up against

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population.

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expression. Hate isn't behind

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Explain why a term or phrase

EDUCATE

QUESTION

Ask simple questions in

response to hateful remarks to

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TRY ASKING

"WHY DO YOU SAY

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YOU MEAN?" OR

"TELL ME MORE."

EDUCATE

Explain why a term or phrase

is offensive. Encourage the

person to choose a different

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TRY SAYING

"DO YOU KNOW

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how you can best address the

the offensive comment and

find out why the speaker made

response to hateful remarks to

Ask simple questions in

QUESTION

ECHO

If someone else speaks up against hate, thank her and reiterate her anti-bias message. One person's voice is a powerful start. Many voices together create change.

TRY SAYING

"THANKS FOR

SPEAKING UP, ALLISON.

I AGREE THAT WORD

IS OFFENSIVE AND WE

SHOULDN'T USE IT."

PHRASE IS HURTFUL."

"THAT

"I DON'T LIKE WORDS

TRY SAYING

prepared to act instantly.

say ahead of time so you're

Think about what you'll

moment, without exception.

remark—every time, in the

Speak up against every biased

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Think about what you'll

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LIKE THAT." OR "THAT

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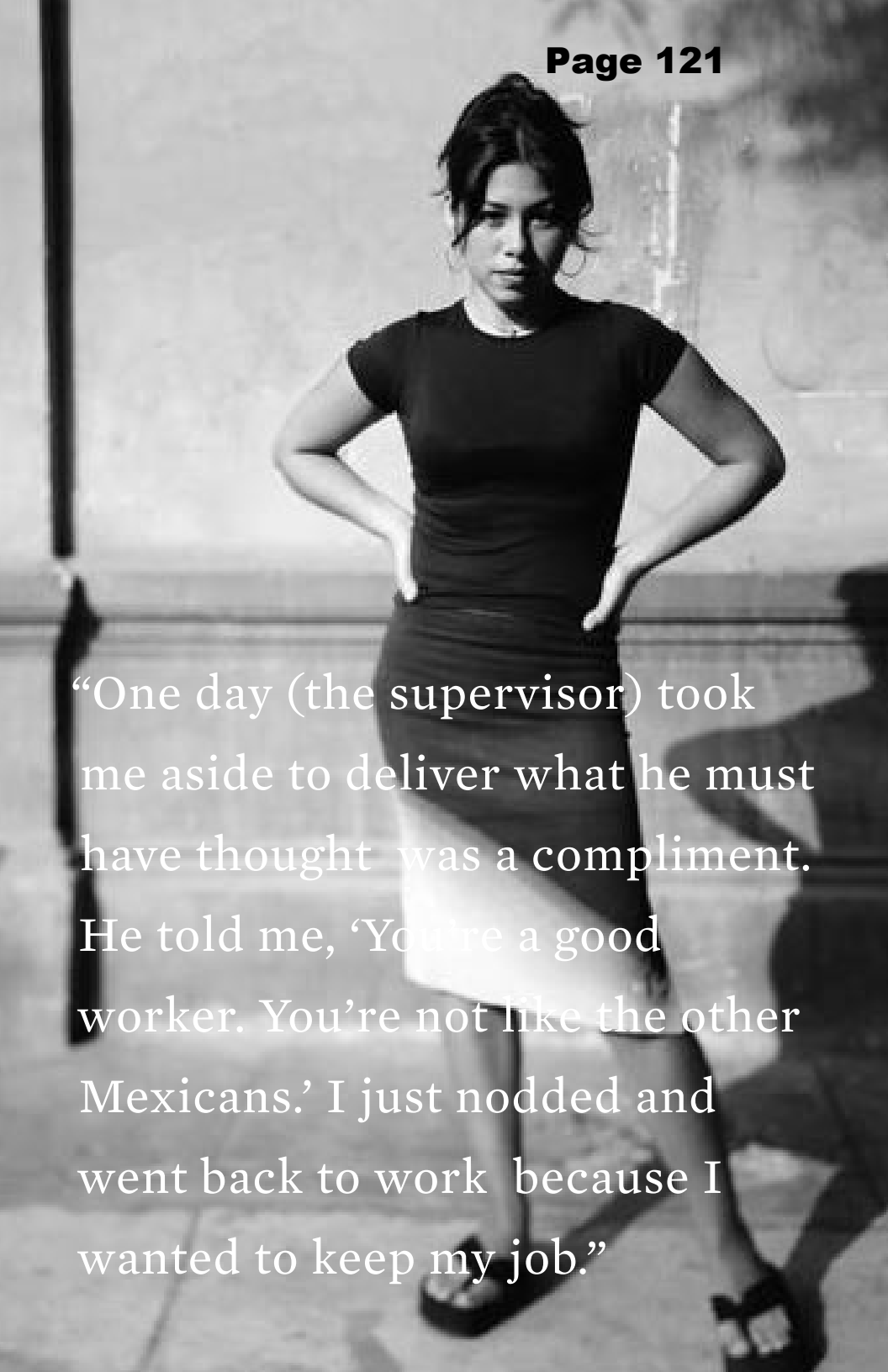
WHAT CAN I DO AT WORK?



THE WORKPLACE IS, FOR SOME, THE ONLY PLACE THEY EXPERIENCE DIVERSITY. For those who live in segregated neighborhoods, attend segregated houses of worship or take part in segregated hobbies or activities, work becomes the only place they interact with people of varied and diverse backgrounds. It often is, for these people, a testing ground.

The workplace often offers built-in grievance procedures, tied to policies or laws, which can be used to respond to some forms of everyday bigotry. You need not file a lawsuit to have such a policy be effective; many roundtable participants spoke of invoking such policies when speaking up, saying the mere mention carries weight.

Power, too, comes into play at the workplace. The dynamic of an employee speaking to a supervisor is very different than a supervisor speaking to an employee. Likewise, an executive's tacit acceptance of bigoted remarks can create an atmosphere where bias thrives — just as one powerfully placed comment from that executive can curb everyday bigotry in significant ways. Who sets the tone at your office? And what leverage do you have with that person? If you lack leverage, who has it? And might that person be an ally?



“One day (the supervisor) took me aside to deliver what he must have thought was a compliment. He told me, ‘You’re a good worker. You’re not like the other Mexicans.’ I just nodded and went back to work because I wanted to keep my job.”



WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT CASUAL COMMENTS?

‘HAVE YOU HAD DICTION LESSONS’

- × An African American businesswoman in the South writes: “I was speaking with a white co-worker when, midway through the conversation, she smiled and said, ‘You speak so clearly. Have you had diction lessons?’ — like for an African American to speak clearly, we’d have to have diction lessons.”
- × A manager writes: “One of my employees constantly makes ‘jokes’ about people being ‘bipolar’ or ‘going postal’ or being ‘off their meds.’ I happen to know that one of our other employees — within earshot of these comments — is on medication for depression. How can I stop the bad behavior without revealing proprietary information?”
- × One co-worker asks another if she wants to go out for lunch. “We’re going to get Ping-Pong chicken,” she says, faking a vaguely Asian accent.

× An Italian American woman’s co-worker makes daily comments about her heritage. “Are you in the mafia?” “Are you related to the Godfather?” There are only six colleagues in the office, and the Italian American woman doesn’t know how — or if — to respond.

SPEAKING UP

Core-value statements and other policies sitting on dusty shelves don’t establish an office’s culture; casual interactions do. Whether you’re a staffer, a manager or an executive, there’s a role for you to play in setting a respectful and unbiased tone in the office. Consider these actions:

Interrupt early. Workplace culture largely is determined by what is or isn’t allowed to occur. If people are lax in responding to bigotry, then bigotry prevails. Speak up early and often in order to build a more inclusive environment.

Use — or establish — policies. Call upon existing — too often forgotten or ignored — policies to address bigoted language or behavior. Work with your personnel director or human resources department to create new policies and procedures, as needed. Also ask your company to provide anti-bias training.

Go up the ladder. If behavior persists, take your complaints up the management ladder. Find allies in upper management, and call on them to help create and maintain an office environment free of bias and bigotry.

Band together. Like-minded colleagues also may form an alliance and then ask the colleague or supervisor to change his or her tone or behavior.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT WORKPLACE HUMOR?

‘PLEASE DON’T TELL IT’

A man mentions to a colleague that he is originally from West Virginia. The colleague laughs and says she knows some “jokes” about people from West Virginia.

She begins to tell one, and it’s clear that the “joke” will have an offensive punch line.

The man holds up his hand and says, “Don’t tell it. Please don’t tell it.”

She laughs, perhaps thinking he’s joking himself, and tells not one but three “jokes,” each with an increasingly bigoted punch line.

The man, at a loss for words, simply sits down when she is done.

SPEAKING UP

Humor can enliven the workplace, provide relief from routine tasks and help foster team spirit. When humor goes sour, however, the work culture suffers, and collegiality can be harmed or damaged. When faced with bigoted “jokes” in the office, try this:

Don’t laugh. Meet a bigoted “joke” with silence, and maybe a raised eyebrow. Use body language to communicate your distaste for bigoted “humor.”

Interrupt the laughter. “Why does everyone think that’s funny?” Tell your co-workers why the “joke” offends you, that it feels demeaning and prejudicial. And don’t hesitate to interrupt a “joke” with as many additional “no” messages as needed.

Set a “not in my workspace” rule. Prohibit bigotry in your cubicle, your office or whatever other boundaries define your workspace. Be firm, and get others to join in. Allies can be invaluable in helping to curb bigoted remarks and behavior at the workplace.

Provide alternate humor. Learn and share jokes that don’t rely on bias, bigotry or stereotypes as the root of their humor.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT SEXIST REMARKS?

‘BUSINESS AS USUAL’

- ✕ A female manager routinely is referred to as the “office mom.” No male manager is ever referred to as the office “dad,” and male managers expect the female manager to handle office birthdays and other non-job-related tasks. “That kind of sexism happens all the time,” she says.
- ✕ A female employee reports, “One of my male coworkers always comments on the physical appearance of our female colleagues. ‘She’s such a pretty girl,’ or ‘She’s a lovely woman.’ I find these comments inappropriate and have commented to him about them, but his behavior doesn’t change.”
- ✕ A male employee bakes cookies and brings them to the office. A female employee, arriving later, asks who brought them. She thanks the man, then asks, “Did your wife bake them?” Another man wrote of a co-worker telling him his knowledge of gardening makes him seem “like a woman.”



SPEAKING UP

In our professional lives, we hope to be judged and perceived based on the quality of our contributions. Sometimes, however, traditional gender roles distort the ways in which colleagues perceive us. When faced with sexist assumptions or comments, consider the following approaches:

Be direct. Respond to the speaker in a way that makes sexist assumptions clear. “I’m not the office mom; I’m the office manager.” Or, “No, I’m the baker in our household, not my wife.”

Identify the pattern. Tell your supervisor, “In our weekly manager meetings, I’ve noticed that people expect me to take notes. I’m wondering if we could rotate that responsibility, so it’s evenly distributed between male and female managers.”

Start a brown-bag discussion group. If sexism is a persistent problem in your workplace, start an informal dialogue group to discuss the issue during your lunch breaks. Provide support for one another, and create an action plan.

Use incidents to teach tolerance. Advocate for staff training about sexism in the office; provide trainers with real-life examples from your office.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MEETING MISSTEPS?

‘STEREOTYPING IS STEREOTYPING’

× Two co-workers, one of whom is deaf, are asked to meet with an executive from another firm. They go to the other man’s office, and a sign-language interpreter accompanies them. The executive chooses to face the interpreter, speaking to him, not looking at or acknowledging the employee who is deaf.

× An African American woman, in a staff meeting about budget issues, hears a white co-worker suggest cost-cutting measures for landscaping: “Why don’t we just get the Mexicans to do it?”

× A woman writes, “A good-hearted liberal co-worker makes comments at staff meetings like, ‘All Republicans are stupid,’ or, ‘All Republicans are this,’ or ‘All Republicans are that.’ I’m a Democrat who agrees with her politics, but I think those comments are as offensive as someone saying ‘All immigrants are lazy’ or ‘All Irish people are drunks.’ Stereotyping is stereotyping. Short of saying, ‘Some of my best friends are Republicans,’ what can I do?”

SPEAKING UP

Meetings often involve people from different parts of a company or with different roles within a company. When those differences dissolve into bigoted exchanges, both the work and workplace relations suffer. Try these responses:

Seize the moment. With the interpreter, the colleague said, “I hate to interrupt, but just as a matter of practice, you should look at the person you’re talking to, not the interpreter.” In the meeting, an observer might say, “What do you mean by that? What are you saying about Mexicans?”

Address the issue privately. Take the coworker aside and gently explain what you find offensive: “You know, you’re giving Democrats a bad name when you make sweeping generalizations about Republicans.”

Check in with the meeting leader. If you are uncomfortable dealing with the speaker directly, consider speaking with the person who called the meeting. Set expectations or ground rules prior to the next meeting.





WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT **THE BOSS BIAS?**

‘YOU’RE NOT LIKE THE OTHER MEXICANS’

✕ From an Arizona man: “I’m a Mexican American, and I worked for a time, a long time ago, in construction. One day (the supervisor) took me aside to deliver what he must have thought was a compliment. He told me, ‘You’re a good worker. You’re not like the other Mexicans.’ I just nodded and went back to work because I wanted to keep my job. But I wish I would have said something to him, set him straight that stuff like that isn’t a compliment.”

✕ A woman works at a company where a male co-worker comes in one day with a newly pierced ear. Their manager sees the earring and laughingly calls him a “faggot.”

SPEAKING UP

When bias comes from the boss, it’s easy to assume nothing can be done. The boss has all the power, right? Regardless of a company’s size, nothing gets done without the workers; your power rests in this simple fact. Try these response techniques:

Focus on the company’s people. “A lot of different kinds of people work for you, and for this company. We come to work every day and give you our best. What you just said, does it really honor me and the other people here?”

Tie tolerance to the bottom line. Remind your supervisor that when people feel valued and respected, a healthy and productive work environment emerges. “Is ‘faggot’ really a word we should be throwing around? We don’t know who’s gay and who’s straight, who has gay relatives and who doesn’t. I think that comment could really upset some people — and distract them from their work.”

Go up the ladder. Consider your options, based on your supervisor’s temperament and the office environment. If you’re uncomfortable confronting the boss directly, consult your company’s human resources department to find out what harassment policies are in place and whether they apply.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT **MY OWN BIAS?**

‘I SAID NOTHING’

A Southern white woman is an event coordinator working with an African American minister. They end up talking about a mutual acquaintance who is known to be persistent and driven.

“Without thinking,” the woman writes, “I uttered a phrase I grew up hearing — ‘Yeah, he’s a real slave driver.’ As soon as it was out of my mouth, I realized for the first time the source and meaning of the word. I was ashamed and bewildered and wanted to apologize.”

But before she can say anything, the minister, looking her in the eye, quickly replies, “Yes, he’s a real taskmaster.”

She agrees and later thanks him for “his kindness and subtle but important education.”

The result: “I haven’t used the term ‘slave driver’ since.”

SPEAKING UP

When a colleague tells you that you've said or done something that offends or hurts them, try not to be defensive, even if the statement's impact was unintentional. Consider these approaches:

Be open to feedback. Ask clarifying questions, if need be. "Please help me understand. How have I offended you?" Be gracious, and consider the moment a learning opportunity. Thank the person for pointing it out, and ask for continued feedback.

Focus on the work relationship. Strive to reconnect and ensure that the moment doesn't sidetrack your ongoing ability to work together. "I know this has been awkward for both of us. Is there anything I should do, or that we should do, as a next step? I really want us to keep working well together."

Change your behavior. Don't wait for someone to be offended by what you say. Listen closely to the phrases and terms you use; are some of them "acceptable" only because the targeted group is not present? Bigotry is bigotry no matter who hears it; strive to model respect and tolerance wherever you are.



Tool: Interrupting Microaggressions

MICROAGGRESSION EXAMPLE AND THEME	THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION EXAMPLE	COMMUNICATION APPROACH
Alien in One's Own Land To a Latino American: "Where are you from?" Ascription of Intelligence To an Asian person, "You're all good in math, can you help me with this problem?" Color Blindness "I don't believe in race."	"I'm just curious. What makes you ask that?" "I heard you say that all Asians are good in math. What makes you believe that?" "So, what do you believe in? Can you elaborate?"	INQUIRE Ask the speaker to elaborate. This will give you more information about where s/he is coming from, and may also help the speaker to become aware of what s/he is saying. KEY PHRASES: "Say more about that." "Can you elaborate on your point?" "It sounds like you have a strong opinion about this. Tell me why." "What is it about this that concerns you the most?"
Myth of Meritocracy "Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough." Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles Asking a Black person: "Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Just calm down."	"So you feel that everyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough. Can you give me some examples?" "It appears you were uncomfortable when ____ said that. I'm thinking that there are many styles to express ourselves. How we can honor all styles of expression—can we talk about that?"	PARAPHRASE/REFLECT Reflecting in one's own words the essence of what the speaker has said. Paraphrasing demonstrates understanding and reduces defensiveness of both you and the speaker. Restate briefly in your own words, rather than simply parroting the speaker. Reflect both content and feeling whenever possible. KEY PHRASES: "So, it sounds like you think..." "You're saying... You believe..."
Second-Class Citizen You notice that your female colleague is being frequently interrupted during a committee meeting. Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles To a woman of color: "I would have never guessed that you were a scientist."	Responder addressing the group: "____ brings up a good point. I didn't get a chance to hear all of it. Can ____ repeat it?" "I'm wondering what message this is sending her. Do you think you would have said this to a white male?"	REFRAME Create a different way to look at a situation. KEY PHRASES: "What would happen if..." "Could there be another way to look at this..." "Let's reframe this..." "How would you feel if this happened to your ____..."
Second-Class Citizen Saying "You people...." Use of Heterosexist Language Saying "That's so gay."	"I was so upset by that remark that I shut down and couldn't hear anything else." "When I hear that remark, I'm offended too, because I feel that it marginalizes an entire group of people that I work with."	USE IMPACT AND "I" STATEMENTS A clear, nonthreatening way to directly address these issues is to focus on oneself rather than on the person. It communicates the impact of a situation while avoiding blaming or accusing the other and reduces defensiveness. KEY PHRASES: "I felt ____ (feelings) when you said or did ____ (comment or behavior), and it ____ (describe the impact on you)."
Second-Class Citizen A woman who is talked over. Making a racist, sexist or homophobic joke.	She responds: "I would like to participate, but I need you to let me finish my thought." "I didn't think this was funny. I would like you to stop."	USE PREFERENCE STATEMENTS Clearly communicating one's preferences rather than stating them as demands or having others guess what is needed. KEY PHRASES: "What I'd like is..." "It would be helpful to me if..."

Adapted from Kenney, G. (2014). *Interrupting Microaggressions*, College of the Holy Cross, Diversity Leadership & Education. Accessed on-line, October 2014. Kraybill, R. (2008). "Cooperation Skills," in Armster, M. and Amstutz, L., (Eds.), *Conflict Transformation and Restorative Justice Manual*, 5th Edition, pp. 116-117. LeBaron, M. (2008). "The Open Question," in Armster, M. and Amstutz, L., (Eds.), *Conflict Transformation and Restorative Justice Manual*, 5th Edition, pp. 123-124. Peavey, F. (2003). "Strategic Questions as a Tool for Rebellion," in Brady, M., (Ed.), *The Wisdom of Listening*, Boston: Wisdom Publ., pp. 168-189.

Tool: Interrupting Microaggressions

MICROAGGRESSION EXAMPLE AND THEME	THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION EXAMPLE	COMMUNICATION APPROACH
Color Blindness “When I look at you, I don’t see color.” Myth of Meritocracy “Of course he’ll get tenure, even though he hasn’t published much—he’s Black!”	“So you don’t see color. Tell me more about your perspective. I’d also like to invite others to weigh in.” “So you believe that _____ will get tenure just because of his race. Let’s open this up to see what others think.”	RE-DIRECT Shift the focus to a different person or topic. (Particularly helpful when someone is asked to speak for his/her entire race, cultural group, etc.) KEY PHRASES: “Let’s shift the conversation...” “Let’s open up this question to others....”
Myth of Meritocracy In a committee meeting: “Gender plays no part in who we hire.” “Of course she’ll get tenure, even though she hasn’t published much—she’s Native American!” Second-Class Citizen In class, an instructor tends to call on male students more frequently than female ones.	“How might we examine our implicit bias to ensure that gender plays no part in this and we have a fair process? What do we need to be aware of?” “How does what you just said honor our colleague?” “What impact do you think this has on the class dynamics? What would you need to approach this situation differently next time?”	USE STRATEGIC QUESTIONS It is the skill of asking questions that will make a difference. A strategic question creates motion and options, avoids “why” and “yes or no” answers, is empowering to the receiver, and allows for difficult questions to be considered. Because of these qualities, a strategic question can lead to transformation. Useful in problem-solving, difficult situations, and change efforts. KEY PHRASES: “What would allow you...” “What could you do differently....” “What would happen if you considered the impact on...”
Traditional Gender Role Prejudicing and Stereotyping In the lab, an adviser asks a female student if she is planning to have children while in postdoctoral training.	To the adviser: “I wanted to go back to a question you asked _____ yesterday about her plans for a family. I’m wondering what made you ask that question and what message it might have sent to her.” To the student: “I heard what your advisor said to you yesterday. I thought it was inappropriate and I just wanted to check in with you.”	REVISIT Even if the moment of a microaggression has passed, go back and address it. Research indicates that an unaddressed microaggression can leave just as much of a negative impact as the microaggression itself. KEY PHRASES: “I want to go back to something that was brought up in our conversation/meeting/class” “Let’s rewind ____ minutes...”

CONSIDERATIONS:

- The communication approaches are most effective when used in combination with one another, e.g., using impact and preference statements, using inquiry and paraphrasing together, etc.
- Separate the person from the action or behavior. Instead of saying “you’re racist”, try saying “that could be perceived as a racist remark.” Being called a racist puts someone on the defensive and can be considered “fighting words.”
- Avoid starting questions with “Why”—it puts people on the defensive. Instead try “how” “what made you”
- When addressing a microaggression, try to avoid using the pronoun “you” too often—it can leave people feeling defensive and blamed. Use “I” statements describing the impact on you instead or refer to the action indirectly, e.g., “when _____ was said...” or “when _____ happened...”
- How you say it is as critical as what you say, e.g., tone of voice, body language, etc. The message has to be conveyed with respect for the other person, even if one is having a strong negative reaction to what’s been said. So it is helpful to think about your intention when interrupting a microaggression—e.g., do you want that person to understand the impact of his/her action, or stop his/her behavior, or make the person feel guilty, etc. Your intention and the manner in which you execute your intention make a difference.
- Sometimes humor can defuse a tense situation.

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Why we must act

To realize our mission and vision to achieve racial justice for all students, NEA will advance an anti-racist education position and agenda. We must change the institutions that are driving inequity and unfair treatment in public schools through awareness, education, and activism. This will include difficult and honest conversations that will inspire and facilitate action at all levels of the organization. In addition, we will engage internal and external actions that support and empower educators to challenge institutional racism in our classrooms and schools. We must also confront and challenge individuals and organizations that promote patterns of inequity and stand as barriers to racial justice for all students.

Guidance for having Authentic Conversations about Race*

Conversations about race, racial justice, and institutional racism are difficult. Typically we can find ourselves attempting to navigate a waterfall of emotions including anger, fear, grief, frustration and confusion. We can also find ourselves grappling with feeling misunderstood or judged.

Achieving the goal of race equity, of truly removing the fortified racial barriers our society has built over time, requires dedicated people using effective tools at every stage of their work for social change. Advancing race equity is critical to achieving our organization's overall mission and is everyone's responsibility.

Candid conversations about race are not easy. But authentic conversations about race are crucial. They allow perspectives to be exchanged, insights to be shared and beliefs and assumptions to be addressed in positive ways. Authentic conversations create understanding, growth and empathy. Most important, they are the first step in generating ideas and solutions for ending the unfairness that is denying opportunities to the children, families and communities at the heart of our work.

Authentic conversations require the following agreed upon "Community Norms":

Awareness and Self-Knowledge

This requires self-knowledge and self-awareness. Self-knowledge allows you to see what causes you pain and conflict and enables you to embrace your contradictions and inconsistencies. It allows the space to work on things about yourself that you are not happy with. In turn, self-knowledge helps to prevent you from projecting your negative aspects onto other people. Bringing your best self also requires that you have a positive attitude, are willing to deeply explore your perspectives and remain open to the perspectives and experiences of others.

Listening for Understanding

Be an active listener. Active listening involves paying full and careful attention to the other person, looking him or her in the eye, avoiding interruptions, reflecting your understanding, clarifying information, summarizing the other person's perspectives and sharing your own. Remember that most people need time to open up and might not be willing to immediately share their personal stories, hopes, fears and/or concerns.

Being Gracious

Being kind is a vital way of bringing meaning to our own lives, as well as the lives of others. Kindness is about caring genuinely for others around you, wanting the best for them and recognizing in them the same wants,

needs, aspirations and even fears that you may have. Being kind and generous allows us to communicate better with others, to be more self-compassionate and to be a positive force in other people's lives.

Stay Engaged

Staying engaged requires you to be morally, emotionally, intellectually and socially involved in the conversation. Staying engaged means that you are listening with curiosity and willing to deepen your understanding. Staying engaged might also require you to sustain the conversation even when it gets uncomfortable or diverted.

Be Open and Suspend Judgment

Listening with an open mind includes being receptive to the influence of others. You can suspend judgment by becoming aware of preconceived notions and listening to everything someone has to say before jumping to conclusions. Most importantly, suspending judgment also means listening to what the speaker has to say for understanding, not just to determine whether the speaker is right or wrong.

Say "I"- tell your truth

Speaking your truth in authentic and courageous conversations about race requires a willingness to take risks. It means that you will be absolutely honest and candid about your own thoughts, feelings, experiences and opinions and not just saying what you perceive others want to hear. Speaking your truth will require you to speak from the "first person" and use "I" statements.

Seek Discomfort

Leaning in to discomfort will require you to let go of racial understandings and stereotypes that you may be holding onto in order to move forward. Leaning in means that you will avoid judgment, assume positive intent and be open to the kernel of wisdom in each individual's experiences. Leaning in to discomfort will require you to sit through moments of embarrassment, confusion, anxiety and/or fear.

Reaching Empathy

Empathy and compassion allow you to understand the other person's point of view. When you are empathetic, you are more understanding, patient and kind. Expanding your capacity to feel empathy will also allow others to enter your circle of human concern.

Resolution and Closure

Expect and accept that there may not be closure. It is not likely that you will resolve your personal understanding about race or another person's racial experience in a single conversation. The more you talk about race with another person, the more you learn and the more they will learn. Authentic and productive conversations about race are continuous and always evolving.

**Adapted from "Embracing equity and inclusion", Annie E. Casey Foundation*

Questions you can ask to facilitate a deeper dialogue:**Foundational**

- Why do you believe NEA is engaging in Racial Justice in Education work?
- What hopes and fears do you have as a result of NEA's position to engage in this work?
- How do you see this work impacting public education and our students?

Understanding & Awareness

- What is Institutional racism? What does it mean to you?
- What does racial justice in education look like to you?
- What is white supremacy?
- What role does white supremacy play in institutional racism?
- What is white privilege?
- What role does white privilege play in institutional racism?
- How does racism manifest itself in non-visible societal structures and functions?
- How have you observed institutional racism in schools?
- In what ways do we have an ethical and professional responsibility to approach our work with the goal of diminishing institutional racism?
- What structures/policies/practices in our districts perpetuate inequality?
- What would happen if we didn't do anything about institutional racism?
- What will we do about institutional racism?
- How has institutional racism affected our society?

Individual

- What role have you played in addressing institutional racism?
- What biases do you hold and how do those biases impact you in your role(s)?
- How has institutional racism affected you as an individual?
- What does the perpetuation of the effects of institutional racism do to you as a moral person?
- How can an individual make a difference?
- How can you find your own voice to talk about these issues?
- How will you respond when you observe racism in action?
- What role can you play in ending institutional racism and advancing racial justice in education?

Students

- What does institutional racism do to you in your role as an educator and/or leader?
- How does institutional racism affect our schools and students?
- How do biases impact young people in our schools?
- How have you practiced biases in our schools?
- How do your biases affect students' ability to achieve their dreams?
- What are you doing to meet the needs of children of color?
- In what ways are you dealing with issues of racism in your schools? Communities? Networks?
- Why do we believe all students can learn/excel?
- What does it say about us, our educational system allowing some groups of students to regularly fail?
 - Who have we lost? Why did that happen? What are we going to do about it?
- If your child's neighborhood or assigned school was identified as "high needs", would you seek alternatives? If so, why? What would need to change for the school to be acceptable for your child?

Future Systems Thinking

- In what way are you introducing a new world to the next generation of society? (Changing the system)
- What might you do to change the system for the next generation?
- What can you do to prevent our differences in privilege from becoming barriers to opportunity?
- What kind of education system are you passing on?
- How do we create systems free of bias that support students?

LET'S TALK!

DISCUSSING RACE, RACISM AND OTHER
DIFFICULT TOPICS WITH STUDENTS



TEACHING TOLERANCE
A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

PREPARE YOURSELF

ASSESS YOUR COMFORT LEVEL

Many educators avoid talking about race and racism. It's uncomfortable, may lead to conflict, and calls for skills few of us possess. Often, this avoidance comes down to a fear of misspeaking, sounding racist or unintentionally doing harm.

Part of getting students ready to talk about race and racism is to first deal with our own fears. Before initiating a classroom discussion, do a simple self-assessment.

Consider the following statements and select the one that best describes how you feel.

I would rather not talk about race/racism.

I am uncomfortable on how I will be received, having these conversations.

I am very uncomfortable talking about race/racism.

I am usually uncomfortable talking about race/racism. I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about race/racism.

I am usually comfortable talking about race/racism.

I am very comfortable talking about race/racism.

Then use a sentence-stem activity to self-reflect.

The hard part of talking about race/racism is ...

The beneficial part of talking about race/racism is ...

After reflecting on your own comfort level, think about how you will stay engaged when the topic of race arises.

- Do you feel ill-prepared to talk about race and racism? If so, commit to learning more about the issues by studying history, following current events and brushing up on anti-racism work.
- Do you reroute classroom discussions when you sense discomfort in the room? If so, commit to riding out the discussion next time.
- Do you feel isolated in your teaching about race and racism? If so, commit to identifying a colleague with whom you can co-teach, plan or debrief.

- Do you worry about your ability to answer students' questions about race and racism? If so, commit to accepting that you don't have all the answers and embracing the opportunity to learn with your students.

FIND COMFORT IN DISCOMFORT

Teaching about structural inequality such as racism requires courage—from you and from your students. It's normal to feel discomfort as you reflect on your own experiences with racial inequality and deepen your understanding of racism. But the more you practice facilitating difficult conversations, the more you'll be able to manage the discomfort. The conversations may not necessarily get easier, but your ability to press toward more meaningful dialogue will expand. Stay engaged; the journey is worth the effort.

Being uncomfortable should not mean being unsafe, if it can be avoided. As a class, establish classroom norms that include a list of specific words and phrases that students commit to not using. The list might include calling people's opinions "stupid" or "lame," saying, "That's so gay!" or using the n-word or the r-word.

Students can create and sign a contract of norms and behaviors that define the classroom community as a socially and emotionally safe place. The contract might include such statements as "Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment" or "Put-downs of any kind are never OK." If the conversation becomes very personal, you may want to establish structures for allowing students to share experiences—uninterrupted—without response from other students. (See our resource on Serial Testimony for more information: tolerance.org/meaningful-discussions.)

Pre-established norms or a contract can help students support a healthy classroom environment and reduce the likelihood that you will have to intervene.

BE VULNERABLE

Avoiding conversations about race and racism can arise from our own fears of being vulnerable. As you prepare to engage students in difficult conversations, consider this question: What will a discussion about race and racism potentially expose about me?

Use the graphic organizer *Difficult Conversations: A Self-Assessment* (found on page 18) to list three vulnerabilities that you worry could limit your effectiveness. Next, identify three strengths that you

believe will help you lead open and honest dialogues. Finally, list specific needs that, if met, would improve your ability to facilitate difficult conversations.

ADDRESS STRONG EMOTIONS

Students' reactions to talking about race and racism will vary. They may react passively, show sorrow, express anger or respond unpredictably. Some students may become visibly upset; others may push back against discussing these topics in class. Many of these reactions stem from feelings such as pain, anger, confusion, guilt, shame and the urge to blame others.

Seeing members of the class respond emotionally may elicit reactions from you or other students. Guilt and shame can lead to crying that may immobilize conversation. Anger might lead to interruptions, loud talking, sarcasm or explicit confrontations—all of which can impede important dialogue. Your role is to remain calm and assess the situation. If the tension in the room appears to be prompting dialogue and learning, continue to monitor, but let the conversation play out. If the tension boils over in confrontation that jeopardizes student safety (emotional or otherwise), take steps to diffuse the situation.

Refer back to *Difficult Conversations: A Self-Assessment*. How can the strengths you listed calm students and diffuse tension, yet avoid shutting down the conversation? Spend some time thinking ahead about how you will react to strong emotions.

Use the strategies in [Responding to Strong Emotions](#) (found on page 19) to develop a plan. You know your students; consider the emotional responses likely to emerge. Add others you think might emerge, and list potential response strategies.

Planning ahead and establishing a safe space within your classroom should diminish students' discomfort. It's important to note, however, that for some students—particularly members of marginalized, nondominant or targeted identity groups—you may not be able to provide complete safety. It's also true that overemphasizing identity safety runs the risk of minimizing the diverse realities of our students' lived experiences both in and outside school. In addition to providing safety for your students, build their resilience and strength so they will be more willing to take the risks involved with feeling uncomfortable.

PLAN FOR STUDENTS

To facilitate difficult conversations with your students, equip them with strategies they can use to persevere during difficult conversations. Here are some pedagogical approaches to help students learn to sit with their discomfort and to moderate it over time. The approaches outlined here are for students in grades 6–12. Suggested adaptations to each strategy for grades K–5 are listed separately.

STRATEGY ONE: REITERATE→CONTEMPLATE→RESPIRE→COMMUNICATE

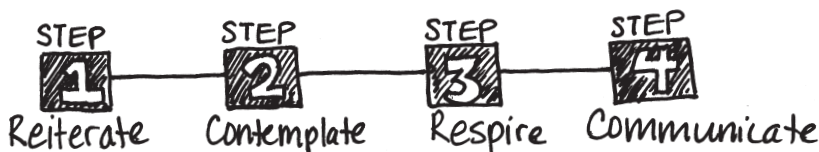
Explain these steps as a way to communicate while feeling difficult emotions. These steps won't prevent or change the emotions students may feel, but they can help them self-regulate.

Step 1: Reiterate. Restate what you heard. This step enables students to reflect on what they have heard as opposed to what they think they may have heard. Repeating what they have heard limits miscommunication and misinformation.

Step 2: Contemplate. Count to 10 before responding. Students can think about their responses and use the time to compose what they want to say. Taking time to think about their responses helps move students away from immediate emotional responses that can potentially derail the conversation.

Step 3: Respire. Take a breath to check in with yourself. Suggesting students take a few breaths before responding may help them settle their thoughts and emotions during difficult conversations.

Step 4: Communicate. Speak with compassion and thoughtfulness. Students should do their best to speak as they want to be spoken to, assuming good intentions and seeking understanding. Explain that when they disagree with something someone has said, they should focus on challenging the statement rather than the person who said it.



STRATEGY TWO: CHECK IN WITH STUDENTS

Staying on top of the emotional temperature in the classroom and checking in with students about how they are feeling helps you know when to stop and address strong emotions. Checking in nonverbally to gauge students' comfort levels allows all students to participate without being singled out or put on the spot. Try these ideas.

Fist-to-Five. You can quickly gauge a number of things—readiness, mood, comprehension—by asking students to give you a “fist-to-five” signal with their hands.



Fist = I am very uncomfortable and cannot move on.



1 Finger = I am uncomfortable and need some help before I can move on.



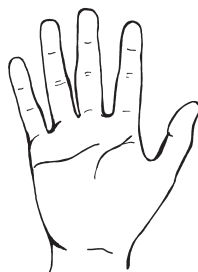
2 Fingers = I am a little uncomfortable, but I want to try to move on.



3 Fingers = I am not sure how I am feeling.



4 Fingers = I am comfortable enough to move on.



5 Fingers = I am ready to move on full steam ahead!

Stoplight. Use the colors of a traffic light to signal student readiness and comfort. Throughout the discussion, you can ask students if they are green, yellow or red. Students can also use the “red light” to request a break or a stop when they are feeling strong emotions or have been uncomfortably triggered.



Green = I am ready to go on.



Yellow = I can go on, but I feel hesitant about moving forward.



Red = I do not want to go on right now.

STRATEGY THREE: ALLOW TIME AND SPACE TO DEBRIEF

Everyone engaged in an emotionally charged conversation needs to allow for the safe “discharge” of emotions before leaving the classroom. Provide the opportunity for students to debrief what they are learning *and* their experience of learning it. Depending on your group, you may want to devote a portion of each lesson—half a class period or an entire class—to debrief and reflect. Try these ideas.

Talking Circles. Gather in a circle and create, or review, the norms that will help build trust. Select a significant object as a talking piece that allows participants to engage equally in the discussion. Whoever holds the talking piece can speak, while the rest of the circle listens supportively. Pose a question or statement to begin. It can be as simple as “How do you feel about today’s lesson?” As the facilitator or circle keeper, you will participate as an equal member of the group. As students become familiar with the process, consider inviting them to be circle keepers.*

* Amy Vayne Bintliff, “Talking Circles for Restorative Justice and Beyond”
tolerance.org/blog/talking-circles-restorative-justice-and-beyond

Journaling. Personal reflection through writing can be extremely effective for debriefing after difficult conversations. Journaling helps students process their emotions on their own terms and at their own pace. Decide whether journals will be kept private or serve as a space for you to dialogue with students by writing back and forth.

K-5 ADAPTATIONS

Try these modifications and adaptations to the strategies for grades K-5.

K-5 STRATEGY ONE: REITERATE→CONTEMPLATE→RESPIRE→COMMUNICATE

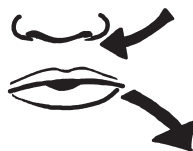
Explain the steps in age-appropriate language: *repeat, think, breathe* and *feel*. Use symbols and words to help students visualize and demonstrate the communication expectations. Practice and model expectations several times before engaging students.



Step 1: Repeat
Say it again.



Step 2: Think
Count 1, 2, 3,
4, 5.



Step 3: Breathe
In through
the nose;
out through
the mouth.



Step 4: Feel
Put yourself in
their shoes.

K-5 STRATEGY TWO: CHECK IN WITH STUDENTS

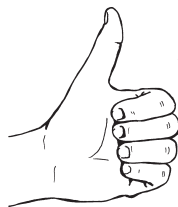
Fist-to-Five works well with many K–5 students; however, consider using the simpler **Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down** when first introducing the strategy.



Thumbs Down =
Whoa! That doesn't
feel good.



**Thumbs to the
Side =** Huh? I need
some help.



Thumbs Up = I am
ready! Let's go!

Similar to **Stoplight**, the **Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down** strategy gives students a manipulative to safely interrupt difficult conversations when they might not have the courage to do so verbally.

K-5 STRATEGY THREE: ALLOW TIME AND SPACE TO DEBRIEF

Role-playing with puppets. Puppets allow students to communicate playfully and safely. Create a space for students to talk using puppets or other play objects. Children can ask questions through the puppets and may be less likely to feel uncomfortable disclosing uncertainties. Students can engage in puppet play alone, with a partner or in small groups.

Drawing. Like journaling for older students, drawing can provide young students a valuable opportunity for personal reflection and emotional processing. Drawings can be shared or kept private.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Facilitating difficult conversations can be emotionally draining or even painful for teachers. Make time to process, reflect and recharge in positive ways. Find colleagues or friends who can listen while you debrief conversations about race and racism. Take advantage of professional learning communities where you can discuss the dynamics in your classroom. Keep a professional journal and use writing to process and reflect.

These PD and activity suggestions from Teaching Tolerance offer authentic opportunities to connect difficult topics like oppression and inequality to a variety of subjects. Browse, share and let us know how you use them!

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Avoiding conversations about race and racism can arise from our own fears of being vulnerable. As you prepare to engage students in difficult conversations, consider this question: What will a discussion about race and racism potentially expose about me?

Use *Difficult Conversations: A Self-Assessment* to list three vulnerabilities you worry could limit your effectiveness and three strengths you believe will help you to lead open and honest dialogues. Finally, list specific needs that, if met, would improve your ability to facilitate difficult conversations.

Use *Responding to Strong Emotions* to think ahead about how you can create emotional safety in your classroom. The suggested strategies are general; use your knowledge of yourself, your students and your classroom culture to create a specific and personalized plan.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: A SELF-ASSESSMENT

VULNERABILITIES	STRENGTHS	NEEDS
EXAMPLE: "My children are multiracial. Can I be objective?" "I don't know enough about the issues described here. Am I 'allowed' to lead a discussion while I also learn?"	EXAMPLE: "I have good rapport with my students." "I use community resources to support learning."	EXAMPLE: "I need to learn more information about sex, gender and gender expression." "I need clearer ground rules for class discussions."

RESPONDING TO STRONG EMOTIONS

EMOTION	STRATEGIES TO USE IN THE MOMENT	YOUR PLAN
Pain/ Suffering/ Anger	Check in with the students. Model the tone of voice you expect from students. If crying or angry students want to share what they are feeling, allow them to do so. If they are unable to contribute to the class discussion, respectfully acknowledge their emotions and continue with the lesson.	
Blame	Remind students that racism is like smog. We all breathe it in and are harmed by it. They did not create the system, but they can contribute to its end.	
Guilt	Have students specify what they feel responsible for. Make sure that students are realistic in accepting responsibility primarily for their own actions and future efforts, even while considering the broader past actions of their identity groups.	
Shame	Encourage students to share what is humiliating or dishonorable. Ask questions that offer students an opportunity to provide a solution to the action, thought or behavior perpetuating their belief.	
Confusion or Denial	When students appear to be operating from a place of misinformation or ignorance about a particular group of people, ask questions anchored in class content or introduce accurate and objective facts for consideration.	

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TEACHING TOLERANCE

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Fact Sheet: *The 35 Percent Corporate Tax Myth*

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy has released the latest in a series of reports, spanning the last three decades, that examine Fortune 500 firms' corporate tax filings. The new report examines eight years of data from 2008 to 2015. For a variety of reasons, it is possible for a corporation to pay different effective tax rates from one year to the next, so this eight-year study provides a more helpful view of long-term trends in corporate taxes. Importantly, the report only includes corporations that were consistently profitable over the eight-year period. In other words, if a firm had a loss in even one year, it is excluded from this report. By leaving out corporations that had losses (which means they wouldn't owe any income tax), this report provides a clear picture of the average effective tax rates paid by our nation's biggest, and consistently profitable companies. This study includes 258 Fortune 500 firms that were profitable every year between 2008 and 2015. Below are key findings.

TAX RATES

Profitable Fortune 500 firms collectively pay far less than the statutory 35 percent federal corporate tax rate. 258 profitable Fortune 500 corporations paid an average effective tax rate of 21.2 percent on their U.S. profits over the eight years between 2008 and 2015.

Many profitable corporations are finding ways to zero out their corporate taxes.

Of the 258 profitable Fortune 500 companies in our sample:

- 18 paid ZERO in taxes over the full eight-year period.
- 100 paid zero—or less—in at least one profitable year during the eight-year period, 58 of those companies had multiple zero-tax years.
- 24 companies zeroed out their taxes in at least four of the eight years.
- 48 companies paid a rate between 0 and 10 percent over eight years.

Utility and oil, gas and pipeline companies pay low tax rates. Utilities (e.g. electricity providers) paid an eight-year tax rate averaging just 3 percent. Oil, gas and pipeline companies paid an average 11.2 percent rate. Telecommunications companies paid 11.5 percent, and Internet services companies paid an eight-year average of 15.6 percent.

Retail and health care companies are more likely to pay close to the statutory 35 percent rate. About a quarter of the companies in the study sample paid a tax rate averaging 30 percent or more. Almost 60 percent of these companies were in just two economic sectors: retail trade and health care.

Of the profitable companies in the retail and health care sectors, more than half paid eight-year tax rates exceeding 30 percent. Among all other economic sectors, just 15 percent—less than one out of six—paid an eight-year rate exceeding 30 percent.

TAX BREAKS

Collectively, the 258 corporations enjoyed \$526 billion in tax breaks over the last eight years. More than half of those tax breaks, \$286 billion, went to just 25 of the most profitable corporations. The five biggest beneficiaries of tax breaks during the eight-year period were AT&T (\$38 billion), Wells Fargo (\$31 billion), J.P. Morgan (\$22 billion), Verizon (\$21 billion), and IBM (\$17.8 billion).

Tax breaks for executive stock options continued to play an important role in reducing taxes, especially for the tech sector. Companies reduced their taxes by \$51.8 billion during the eight-year period using the “excess stock option” tax breaks. Ten percent of these tax breaks went to Facebook alone, and 25 companies collectively reaped more than half the tax savings from the stock option break.

TAXES AT HOME AND ABROAD

Many multinational companies face higher corporate tax rates abroad than in the United States. Of 107 companies in our report that engaged in substantial international activities (constituting more than 10 percent of their worldwide income), 62 paid higher foreign tax rates on their foreign income than the tax rate they paid to the U.S. treasury on their domestic income. For these 62 companies, the average foreign tax rate was 25.8 and the average federal tax rate was 18.3.

REPORT METHODOLOGY

ITEP’s new report builds on the findings of our last similar study, released in February 2014. The 2014 report examined corporate tax payments by U.S.-based Fortune 500 corporations that were consistently profitable, *in the United States*, over the five-year period between 2008 and 2012. The new report extends this time period to include three new years, 2013 through 2015. Now our sample consists of Fortune 500 corporations that were consistently profitable in the United States during the eight-year period between 2008 and 2015.

25 Companies with the Largest TOTAL Tax Subsidies, 2008-15 (\$ - millions)

Company	2008-15 Tax breaks
AT&T	38,068
Wells Fargo	31,428
J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.	22,213
Verizon Communications	21,130
International Business Machines	17,806
General Electric	15,389
Exxon Mobil	12,942
Boeing	11,863
PNC Financial Services Group	8,809
Procter & Gamble	8,515
NextEra Energy	7,844
Twenty-First Century Fox	7,630
Duke Energy	7,341
Devon Energy	7,224
Comcast	7,172
Time Warner	6,720
Southern	6,569
American Electric Power	6,473
Union Pacific	6,333
United Technologies	6,001
Qualcomm	5,934
Exelon	5,898
Time Warner Cable	5,692
Intel	5,521
Goldman Sachs Group	5,455
Total these 25 companies	\$ 285,969
Other 233 companies	240,791
All companies	\$ 526,760

Activity 11: What's Been Done in the Past?

- Trainer's Goals:*
- Elicit a few significant examples in U.S. history when workers, low-income people and others acted collectively to address the consequences and causes of economic inequality.
 - Foster a sense of empowerment in participants by showing that past social movements brought about changes in economic rules and policies that ultimately resulted in a more equitable distribution of wealth and income.

This activity demonstrates that we have a rich history of struggle in the face of growing inequality and all the negative consequences it brings to our society, communities, and families. The activity is a departure from the previous sections of the workshop that described conditions and offered an analysis. It aims to move participants out of moods of despair, hopelessness, and frustration by demonstrating that there are actions — some very successful — that folks took in response to extreme economic inequality. In fact, there are numerous examples that can inspire, educate, and challenge us to act. It is also important to point out that all the popular movements we cite were complex, with features that we can emulate and others that should be rejected.

- Instruction:*
- That ends the despair portion of our program. Let's see what we can learn from history. In pairs, name any examples of some of the organized responses of Americans when economic inequality became extreme — when those benefitting from the concentration of wealth and power “have gone too far” and masses of people rose up in struggle for a more equitable economy. We will hear a sample.

[See the Talking Points on the next page for some examples of economic justice movements as well as some of the criticisms of these movements.]

Question: What do the following have in common?

- the weekend
- the 8-hour work-day
- the 40-hour work-week
- the minimum wage
- laws prohibiting child labor
- laws extending the right to vote for women and minorities
- Social Security
- Medicare

Response: They are all the direct result of people organizing to establish rules and policies that address economic inequality and maintain fairness; and they are things we sometimes take for granted.

2. How would you describe some of the shortcomings of these movements? What do you suggest be done to avoid these errors.

Talking Points

- ◆ The struggle to abolish slavery was a long one and, at the time of the Civil War, resulted in tremendously significant rules changes — the 13th amendment to the Constitution ended legal slavery; the 14th Amendment established the right of African Americans in the South to vote, hold office, and own property; and freed slaves were granted 40 acres and a mule enabling them to “get on the asset train.” The period of reaction and terror that followed Reconstruction, however, put in place Jim Crow laws that disenfranchised African Americans and were not overthrown until the Black Freedom Movement in the 1950s and ’60s.
- ◆ The Populists were unique in the ways in which they united rural farmers and urban workers. In the 1880s, the Populists began a campaign for the first income taxes. However, some Populists succumbed to racial and anti-Semitic views that contributed to their demise. But we do have a lot to learn about their commitment to creating real economic democracy.
- ◆ In the 1930s, the Share Our Wealth movement campaigned for a cap on excessive wealth & income, a 30-hour work week, and a universal retirement pension. New Deal legislation, and other laws and policies passed as a result of mass movements for economic justice, benefited working people across the board. Unfortunately, employers often found ways to circumvent the rules, discriminating against women and people of color, and driving wedges between natural allies.
- ◆ Although some unions and labor organizing efforts maintained overt racist and sexist practices, the more progressive unions fought for the inclusion of people of color and women in their ranks and fought for rule changes that would benefit all.

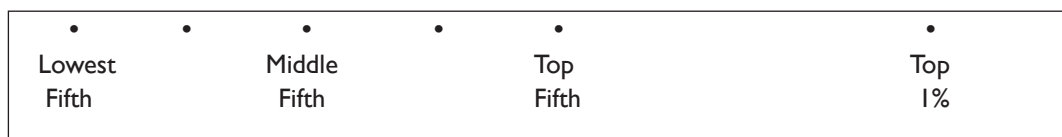


Activity 12: Changing the Rules

- Trainers' Goals:*
- Identify a wide range of policy ideas to close the income and wealth gap.
 - Explore the consequences for the various quintiles that the different policy ideas have on the income and wealth gap.

This activity is similar to the Income Quintiles activity (page 27). Six volunteers, representing income quintiles and the top one percent, will move closer to or further apart from each other as participants suggest policy remedies to close the income and wealth gap. After each suggested policy change, the trainer should check in with the group to make sure everyone understands the rule or policy suggestion. Treat this activity as a laboratory in which to test out ideas. Do not get too stuck on knowing exactly what the impact of each suggestion will be. Let the dialogue flow.

- Instructions:*
- In small groups, brainstorm policy and/or rule changes that would close the income and wealth gap. [To save time, this task can be done by the whole group.]
 - Let's have six volunteers — five representing population quintiles, and a sixth representing the top one percent — line up in the order that corresponds to the existing income spread. Let's hear ideas to close the income gap. What impact do you expect each suggestion will have on the quintiles? [For instance, a suggestion to "raise the minimum wage" would likely lift the lowest quintile — but also raise the living standards of the bottom three fifths.] Let's have the quintile volunteers move according to the impact of the suggested policy and rule changes.



Suggested Policy Remedies for Closing the Income and Wealth Gap

- Raising the minimum wage → bumps up the bottom three quintiles
- Promoting unionization → bumps up the bottom four quintiles
- Expanding college loans → lifts the second and third quintiles
- Progressive taxation → moves the top 1% closer to group
- Eliminating special tax loopholes → moves the top 1% down
- Raising the "no tax threshold" → raises the bottom two quintiles (if threshold raised to \$20,000)
- Wealth taxation → moves the top quintile down
- Reparations (for slavery) → benefits African-Americans the largest percentage of whom are in the bottom quintile
- Amnesty for immigrants → lifts the bottom quintile, maybe the second quintile as well
- Increased spending on education, health care, etc. → lifts the bottom three quintiles, maybe the fourth quintile as well
- Maximum wage: linking the top tax rate to ratio minimum wage → lifts the bottom three quintiles and reduces top quintile
- Expand the earned income tax credit → lifts bottom two quintiles

Actions and Policies that Worsen Inequality

- Welfare reform and reducing benefits - pulls down the bottom three quintiles
- Prison labor - pulls down the bottom three quintiles
- Cutting capital gains tax - pushes the top 1% up, the top quintile too
- Cutting corporate taxes - pushes the top 1% up

- Look at the policies and rule changes that we've proposed [see Talking Points, next page] that shrink the income and wealth gap. Group them according to the following framework:
 - Policies that lift the floor.
 - Policies that address the concentration of wealth and power.
 - Policies that level the playing field.
- What type of policies do you think might give the top 1% – 3% a self-interest in seeing the living standards of other Americans rise? What actions would you suggest can be taken to increase equality that don't require using government intervention?

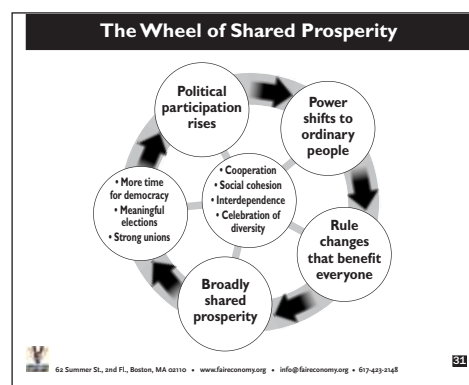


Chart #31: Wheel of Shared Prosperity

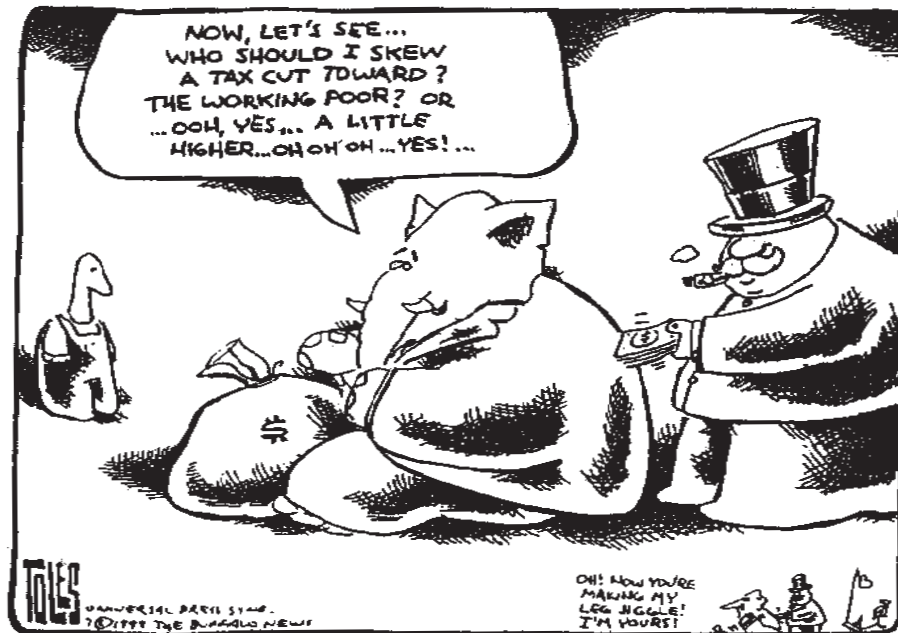


Talking Points

- ◆ **Lifting the floor:** These are strategies that seek to bring people at the bottom up to at least a level where they have the ability to make use of their talents and pursue their dreams.
 - *Increase the Minimum Wage to at least a Living Wage.* A living wage would keep families above the poverty threshold. The level that would bring a family of three above the poverty line is \$8.20 per hour. Many cities, including New York, Chicago, L.A., Minneapolis-St. Paul, Baltimore, and Boston, have approved living wage ordinances, and many local and statewide campaigns are underway. It's simply an embarrassment that we have a system where people who work 40 hours a week cannot live above the poverty line.
 - *Support Family Self-Sufficiency projects (FESS).* FESS is a measure of the real cost of living, working, raising a family and paying taxes. In contrast to the outmoded federal poverty guidelines, the FESS Standard presents an accurate picture of the real costs of living for families in today's marketplace. There are 8 states participating in the State Organizing Project for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency, a national and state-level collaboration organized by Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) and its national partner organizations.
 - *Help moderate and low-income families build assets.* The key to long term economic security for most families is assets, even more than income. Since 1976, we have seen a great concentration of assets in the hands of the top 1%. The government should be doing everything it can to help families purchase homes and build their savings, as was done with the Federal Home Mortgage Assistance Program following World War II.
 - *Shorter work week.* We have seen the advent of many labor-saving devices over the past few decades, yet we all seem to be working longer and longer. With a shorter work week people could spend more time with their families and communities. The Shorter Work Time Project, based in Somerville, MA has chapters around the country working on this issue.
 - *Institute National Health Care for All.* Plain and simple: health care should not be rationed out based on the ability to pay.
- ◆ **Addressing the concentration of wealth and power:** These are strategies that seek to level the playing field by bringing people from the top down. Some examples:
 - *Wealth tax.* Many European countries have a wealth tax. See *Top Heavy*, by Edward Wolff, for details.
 - *Progressive tax rates.* This would raise the top tax rate and lower taxes on low- moderate-income workers. Remember, the top tax rate applies only to the top one to two percent of the country.
 - *A maximum wage that is tied to the minimum wage* establishes some relationship between the two and insures that we as a nation grow together.
 - *Cut corporate subsidies, particularly when the recipients do not add jobs but pad their executives' compensation.*
 - *Increase taxes on inheritances.*
 - *Tax investments at the same level as earned income.*
- ◆ Cutting handouts to corporations and the rich will raise available revenue which could be used to:
 1. Reduce the national debt.
 2. Reduce taxes on everyone else putting buying and saving power into the pockets of ordinary people and fueling the economy.
 3. Invest in jobs and a more productive and sustainable economy.
 4. Invest in people through education, job training, and help for those in need.

Some Current Proposals Will Worsen Inequality

- ◆ You would think the “trickle down” policies of deregulation and tax cuts for the wealthy would be discredited by the bursting of the housing bubble and the onset of The Great Recession, but they persist. Advocates for the corporate power elite in Congress continue to press for rules that would further concentrate wealth and income at the top while lowering living standards for the middle class and low-income households:
 - maintaining income tax cuts for the top two percent
 - trimming capital gains taxes by half
 - permanently repealing the Estate Tax
 - privatizing Social Security
 - trimming the deficit by cutting spending on what remains of the social safety net
 - proposing a Flat Tax and a National Sales Tax.



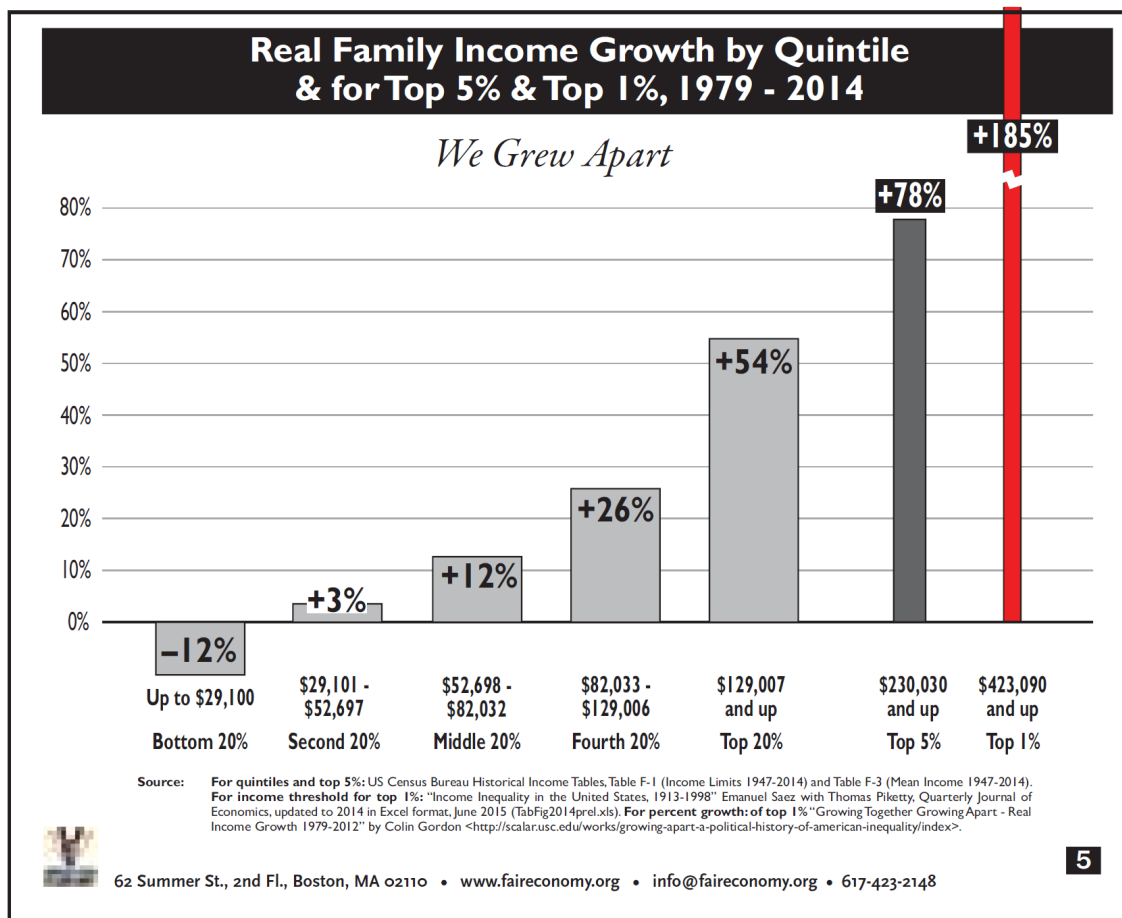
Reflections, Connections and Notes to Remember

Thinking About Systems of Injustice

Economic System
Who are the powerholders?
What are the unjust policies and systems being used?
Who is being oppressed?
What is the overall impact on society?
Housing System
Who are the powerholders?
What are the unjust policies and systems being used?
Who is being oppressed?
What is the overall impact on society?
How are these injustices linked to the work of your Union?

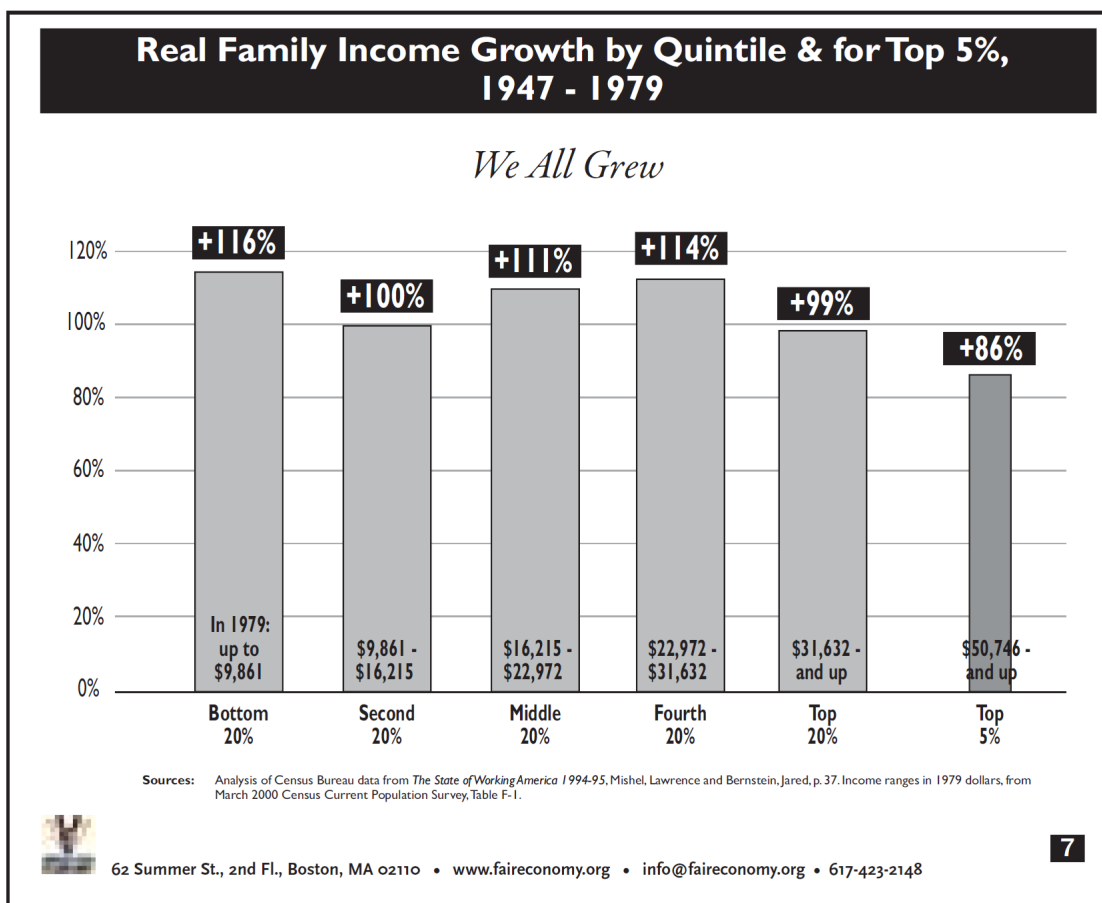
Economic System

Thinking about money...	
What is wealth?	What is income?
Are you in control over your income and your wealth? In other words, can you increase them?	



Questions for Reflection:

Which of the quintiles are my members in? What about my ESP members? Other thoughts....

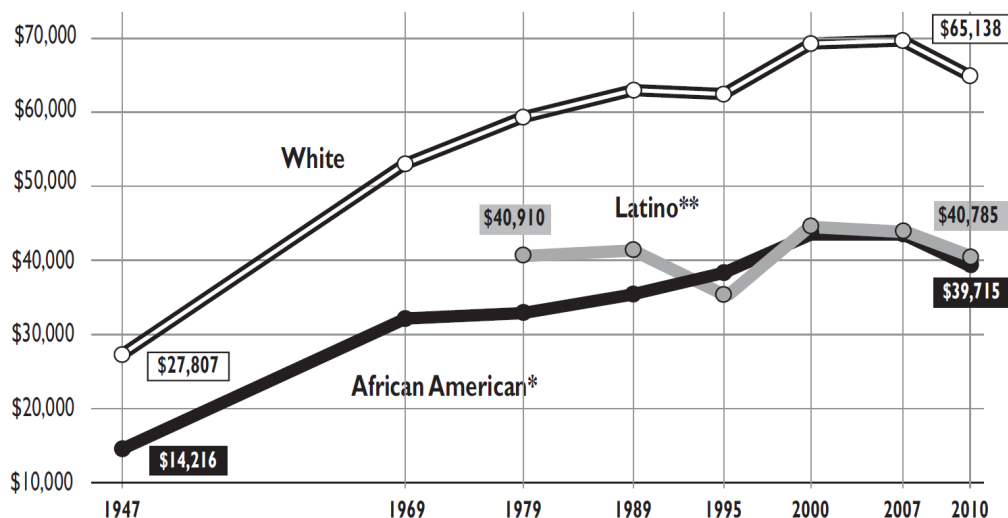


Questions for reflection:

What was the difference in politics and policies between the first time period and this one?

Median Family Income by Race, 1947-2010

Racial Income Inequality Persists



Source: Analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement *Historical Income Tables* (Table F-5) in *The State of Working America* <<http://stateofworkingamerica.org/chart/swa-income-table-2-5-median-family-income/>> Economic Policy Institute. All income in 2011 dollars.
 * Prior to 1967, data for African Americans included all "non-whites." **The Census Bureau uses the term "Hispanic." We prefer "Latino." Persons of "Latino" origin may be of any race.



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8

Reflections and Connections:

What are the expressions of racism apparent in the economic system?

The House We Live In Worksheet

Home Equity	
FHA - Federal Housing Authority	
Redlining	
Segregation	
Generational Wealth	
Suburbs	
Public Policy	

How 1800s racism birthed Chinatown, Japantown and other ethnic enclaves

https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/how-1800s-racism-birthed-chinatown-japantown-other-ethnic-enclaves-n997296?fbclid=IwAR1D_xcMpzNNJYEhdjkz0_8Abf5U3nD6wuSTpwS5qSCshpgchvjvgXJ80WU



The origins of San Francisco's Chinatown — like other Chinatowns across the U.S. — were rooted in the widespread anti-Chinese racism of the late 1800s. Jeff Chiu / AP file

May 13, 2019, 8:40 AM EDT

By Caitlin Yoshiko Kandil

Scroll through any travel guide of San Francisco, and Chinatown, one of the oldest and largest Asian neighborhoods in the U.S., is usually listed near the top.

Today, visitors can shop for trinkets, step inside the country's oldest Chinese temple, stop by the Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Company, view the Chinatown Gate and taste a variety of Chinese treats. But the origins of San Francisco's Chinatown — like other Chinatowns — were rooted in the widespread anti-Chinese racism of the late 1800s.

“The Chinatowns we know today — in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles — are really the consequence of the exclusion laws, which created the conditions, between

racism and the law itself, for segregated, isolated Chinatowns,” said [John Kuo Wei Tchen](#), chair of public history and humanities at Rutgers University and co-founder of the Museum of Chinese in America in New York.

The first Chinese to arrive in the U.S. came through New York in the early 1800s as tea and porcelain merchants, Tchen said, but it wasn’t until the California Gold Rush of the mid-1800s that Chinese — mostly from Guangdong Province — started entering the country in large numbers to work as miners. Later, many of them took jobs as laborers in agriculture and in building the first transcontinental railroad.

In 1850, fewer than 1,000 Chinese had arrived in California, Ronald Takaki, an Asian American studies professor at the University of California, Berkeley, wrote in “Strangers From a Different Shore,” but by 1870, 63,000 were living in the U.S. While the majority resided in California — where they made up one-quarter of the workforce — Chinese immigrants were also a significant part of the population in other Western states, including 29 percent in Idaho and 10 percent in Montana.

Chinese settlements and businesses developed to meet the needs of this new population across the American West, in large cities such as San Francisco as well as in rural towns such as Locke and Marysville, California; Butte, Montana; and Rock Springs, Wyoming. But as the anti-Chinese movement emerged in the 1870s — which included massacres, riots, evictions and legal restrictions on where Chinese immigrants could live and work — rural Chinatowns were destroyed, forcing many Chinese immigrants into urban areas.



People wait for a bus in Chinatown in San Francisco in 2012. Justin Sullivan / Getty Images file

Yong Chen, professor of history at the University of California, Irvine, said that about 200 Chinatowns were burned down or otherwise destroyed by the 1880s.

The anti-Chinese movement also affected urban Chinatowns.

“In San Francisco, for example, there were Chinese settlements and stores scattered throughout the city,” Tchen said. “But as anti-Chinese racism began to increase, these settlements became increasingly segregated and concentrated. It became an enclave.”

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred Chinese laborers from entering the U.S., but because merchants were exempted, Chinatowns became full of shops and restaurants. One reason for the proliferation of Chinese restaurants in the U.S. today, Tchen said, is that they once offered a way for Chinese to legally enter the country and do business.

In addition to commerce, social service organizations were also created, often under the umbrella of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, to assist the community.

“They would try to take care of the Chinese because they felt the city government wasn’t taking care of them,” said K. Scott Wong, professor of history at Williams College.

Chinatowns also served other Asian communities. Yen Le Espiritu, professor of ethnic studies at the University of California, San Diego, said that in the early 1900s, many Filipinos came to the U.S. as itinerant laborers who moved around depending on the crop season. As a result, they didn’t establish their own enclaves — except in places like San Francisco and Stockton, California, and Seattle — and instead relied on Chinese businesses.

The Chinese Exclusion Act also had another, unexpected impact on Chinatowns, said Chen, the Irvine professor. The law helped transform the neighborhoods into tourist destinations.

“The ‘problem’ of Chinese immigration, which was seen as a huge threat to this country, racially, economically, culturally, that threat was contained,” he said. “People felt safe and more comfortable to go to Chinatown as an exotic place to experience the foreign culture and to witness the Orient. Going there satisfied people’s curiosity about exotic cultures in the Orient, but also gave them a sense of cultural and moral superiority.”



Japanese businesses line Buchanan Street in San Francisco's Japantown circa 1966. Joe Rosenthal / San Francisco Chronicle via AP file

Meanwhile, Japanese enclaves — known as Nihonmachi — also emerged in the American West during this time, due to similar forces of racism and exclusion.

According to “Strangers From a Different Shore,” in 1890, there were only about 2,000 Japanese on the U.S. mainland, but by 1910, they outnumbered Chinese, and by 1930, their numbers nearly doubled to more than 138,000. Urban Japanese businesses also boomed, from 90 to 545 in San Francisco and from 56 to 473 in Los Angeles from 1900 to 1909. And in rural areas, many Japanese field laborers became farmers.

But in 1913, California passed the Alien Land Law, which prohibited “aliens ineligible for citizenship” — including first-generation Japanese as well as other Asian immigrants — from owning or holding long-term leases on land. Later versions of the law were even more restrictive. In 1924, the U.S. passed a law barring the immigration of “aliens ineligible for citizenship” as a way, similar to the Chinese Exclusion Act before it, to halt Japanese immigration.

“It was an economic strategy to keep Japanese Americans from owning, for example, farm land,” said Karen Ishizuka, chief curator of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. “Not being able to own land really disabled them from providing an economic stability that they otherwise would have had.”



Post Street in Japantown in San Francisco, in 2006. Jeff Chiu / AP file

At the same time, Nihonmachis — the most prominent of which were in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland and Seattle — provided critical services to Japanese,

said Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, professor emeritus at UCLA. These neighborhoods connected Japanese to jobs and housing, and helped them adapt to a new country.

As a result of exclusion, Nihonmachis — which often developed adjacent to Chinatowns and Little Manilas — also became important social hubs for Japanese immigrants. In addition to traditional Japanese organizations, such as Buddhist temples and judo clubs, larger enclaves also developed institutions parallel to those found in mainstream American society, such as Nisei Boy Scout troops and Christian churches, Hirabayashi said.

“Under such conditions, a unique and specific Japanese American identity began to evolve, and many fascinating transformations occurred,” Hirabayashi said.



Toshi Sushi, on First Street in the Japantown section of downtown Los Angeles. Jay L. Clendenin / LA Times via Getty Images file

But with the forced removal and incarceration of people of Japanese descent during World War II, and later post-war resettlement, which dispersed Japanese Americans throughout the country, Nihonmachis declined or disappeared. Since Japanese couldn't own property, their rentals were quickly leased to new tenants. In Los Angeles, Ishizuka said, Little Tokyo's 30,000 residents were replaced by 80,000 new tenants, mostly African Americans from the South, and the neighborhood became known as Bronzeville. By 1950, Hirabayashi said, Little Tokyo was reduced to one-third its former size.

Ishizuka said there were an estimated 40 distinct Japanese American communities before World War II. Today, there are just three — in San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles.

Despite the decline of Nihonmachis, Ishizuka said these neighborhoods, in particular Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, continue to be vibrant centers for Japanese American life. So even though most Japanese Americans in Southern California no longer live in Little Tokyo, she said the community increasingly understands that it's worth saving.

“People realized that it continues to be the cultural as well as historical heart of the community,” she said.

The Great Land Robbery

The shameful story of how 1 million black families have been ripped from their farms

VANN R. NEWKIRK II SEPTEMBER 2019 ISSUE THE ATLANTIC

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/09/this-land-was-our-land/594742/?fbclid=IwAR17FA08ACk0UNm3i2KD6Wpw-mtQyiKffwjYxs00qlAVPxYjrjJ8ap4WqU>



I. Wiped Out

“YOU EVER CHOP BEFORE?” Willena Scott-White was testing me. I sat with her in the cab of a Chevy Silverado pickup truck, swatting at the squadrons of giant, fluttering mosquitoes that had invaded the interior the last time she opened a window. I was spending the day with her family as they worked their fields just outside Ruleville, in Mississippi’s Leflore County. With her weathered brown hands, Scott-White gave me a pork sandwich wrapped in a grease-stained paper towel. I slapped my leg. Mosquitoes can bite through denim, it turns out.

Cotton sowed with planters must be chopped—thinned and weeded manually with hoes—to produce orderly rows of fluffy bolls. The work is backbreaking, and the people who do it maintain that no other job on Earth is quite as demanding. I had labored long hours over other crops, but had to admit to Scott-White, a 60-something grandmother who’d grown up chopping, that I’d never done it.

“Then you ain’t never worked,” she replied.

The fields alongside us as we drove were monotonous. With row crops, monotony is good. But as we toured 1,000 acres of land in Leflore and Bolivar Counties, straddling Route 61, Scott-White pointed out the demarcations between plots. A trio of steel silos here. A post there. A patch of scruffy wilderness in the distance. Each landmark was a reminder of the Scott legacy that she had fought to keep—or to regain—and she noted this with pride. Each one was also a reminder of an inheritance that had once been stolen.

Drive Route 61 through the Mississippi Delta and you'll find much of the scenery exactly as it was 50 or 75 years ago. Imposing plantations and ramshackle shotgun houses still populate the countryside from Memphis to Vicksburg. Fields stretch to the horizon. The hands that dig into black Delta dirt belong to people like Willena Scott-White, African Americans who bear faces and names passed down from men and women who were owned here, who were kept here, and who chose to stay here, tending the same fields their forebears tended.

But some things have changed. Back in the day, snow-white bolls of King Cotton reigned. Now much of the land is green with soybeans. The farms and plantations are much larger—industrial operations with bioengineered plants, laser-guided tractors, and crop-dusting drones. Fewer and fewer farms are still owned by actual farmers. Investors in boardrooms throughout the country have bought hundreds of thousands of acres of premium Delta land. If you're one of the millions of people who have a retirement account with the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association, for instance, you might even own a little bit yourself.

A war waged by deed of title has dispossessed 98 percent of black agricultural landowners in America.

TIAA is one of the largest pension firms in the United States. Together with its subsidiaries and associated funds, it has a portfolio of more than 80,000 acres in Mississippi alone, most of them in the Delta. If the fertile crescent of Arkansas is included, TIAA holds more than 130,000 acres in a strip of counties along the Mississippi River. And TIAA is not the only big corporate landlord in the region. Hancock Agricultural Investment Group manages more than 65,000 acres in what it calls the "Delta states." The real-estate trust Farmland Partners has 30,000 acres in and around the Delta. AgriVest, a subsidiary of the Swiss bank UBS, owned 22,000 acres as of 2011. (AgriVest did not respond to a request for more recent information.)

Unlike their counterparts even two or three generations ago, black people living and working in the Delta today have been almost completely uprooted from the soil—as property owners, if not as laborers. In Washington County, Mississippi, where last February TIAA reportedly bought 50,000 acres for more than \$200 million, black people make up 72 percent of the population but own only 11 percent of the farmland, in part or in full. In Tunica County, where TIAA has acquired plantations from some of the oldest farm-owning white families in the state, black people make up 77 percent of the population but own only 6 percent of the farmland. In Holmes County, the third-blackest county in the nation, black people make up about 80 percent of the population but own only 19 percent of the farmland. TIAA owns plantations there, too. In just a few years, a single company has accumulated a portfolio in the Delta almost equal to the

remaining holdings of the African Americans who have lived on and shaped this land for centuries.

This is not a story about TIAA—at least not primarily. The company’s newfound dominance in the region is merely the topsoil covering a history of loss and legally sanctioned theft in which TIAA played no part. But TIAA’s position is instrumental in understanding both how the crimes of Jim Crow have been laundered by time and how the legacy of ill-gotten gains has become a structural part of American life. The land was wrested first from Native Americans, by force. It was then cleared, watered, and made productive for intensive agriculture by the labor of enslaved Africans, who after Emancipation would come to own a portion of it. Later, through a variety of means—sometimes legal, often coercive, in many cases legal *and* coercive, occasionally violent—farmland owned by black people came into the hands of white people. It was aggregated into larger holdings, then aggregated again, eventually attracting the interest of Wall Street.

Owners of small farms everywhere, black and white alike, have long been buffeted by larger economic forces. But what happened to black landowners in the South, and particularly in the Delta, is distinct, and was propelled not only by economic change but also by white racism and local white power. A war waged by deed of title has dispossessed 98 percent of black agricultural landowners in America. They have lost 12 million acres over the past century. But even that statement falsely consigns the losses to long-ago history. In fact, the losses mostly occurred within living memory, from the 1950s onward. Today, except for a handful of farmers like the Scotts who have been able to keep or get back some land, black people in this most productive corner of the Deep South own almost nothing of the bounty under their feet.

II. “Land Hunger”

LAND HAS ALWAYS BEEN the main battleground of racial conflict in Mississippi. During Reconstruction, fierce resistance from the planters who had dominated antebellum society effectively killed any promise of land or protection from the Freedmen’s Bureau, forcing masses of black laborers back into de facto bondage. But the sheer size of the black population—black people were a majority in Mississippi until the 1930s—meant that thousands were able to secure tenuous footholds as landowners between Emancipation and the Great Depression.

Driven by what W. E. B. Du Bois called “land hunger” among freedmen during Reconstruction, two generations of black workers squirreled away money and went after every available and affordable plot they could, no matter how marginal or hopeless. Some found sympathetic white landowners who would sell to them. Some squatted on unused land or acquired the few homesteads available to black people. Some followed visionary leaders to all-black utopian agrarian experiments, such as Mound Bayou, in Bolivar County.

It was never much, and it was never close to just, but by the early 20th century, black people had something to hold on to. In 1900, according to the historian James C. Cobb, black landowners in Tunica County outnumbered white ones three to one. According to the U.S.

Department of Agriculture, there were 25,000 black farm operators in 1910, an increase of almost 20 percent from 1900. Black farmland in Mississippi totaled 2.2 million acres in 1910—some 14 percent of all black-owned agricultural land in the country, and the most of any state.

The foothold was never secure. From the beginning, even the most enterprising black landowners found themselves fighting a war of attrition, often fraught with legal obstacles that made passing title to future generations difficult. Bohlen Lucas, one of the few black Democratic politicians in the Delta during Reconstruction (most black politicians at the time were Republicans), was born enslaved and managed to buy a 200-acre farm from his former overseer. But, like many farmers, who often have to borrow against expected harvests to pay for equipment, supplies, and the rent or mortgage on their land, Lucas depended on credit extended by powerful lenders. In his case, credit depended specifically on white patronage, given in exchange for his help voting out the Reconstruction government—after which his patrons abandoned him. He was left with 20 acres.

In Humphreys County, Lewis Spearman avoided the pitfalls of white patronage by buying less valuable wooded tracts and grazing cattle there as he moved into cotton. But when cotton crashed in the 1880s, Spearman, over his head in debt, crashed with it.

Around the turn of the century, in Leflore County, a black farm organizer and proponent of self-sufficiency—referred to as a “notoriously bad Negro” in the local newspapers—led a black populist awakening, marching defiantly and by some accounts bringing boycotts against white merchants. White farmers responded with a posse that may have killed as many as 100 black farmers and sharecroppers along with women and children. The fate of the “bad Negro” in question, named Oliver Cromwell, is uncertain. Some sources say he escaped to Jackson, and into anonymity.

Like so many of his forebears, Ed Scott Sr., Willena Scott-White’s grandfather, acquired his land through not much more than force of will. As recorded in the thick binders of family history that Willena had brought along in the truck, and that we flipped through between stretches of work in the fields, his life had attained the gloss of folklore. He was born in 1886 in western Alabama, a generation removed from bondage. Spurred by that same land hunger, Scott took his young family to the Delta, seeking opportunities to farm his own property. He sharecropped and rented, and managed large farms for white planters, who valued his ability to run their sprawling estates. One of these men was Palmer H. Brooks, who owned a 7,000-acre plantation in Mississippi’s Leflore and Sunflower Counties. Brooks was uncommonly progressive, encouraging entrepreneurship among the black laborers on his plantation, building schools and churches for them, and providing loans. Scott was ready when Brooks decided to sell plots to black laborers, and he bought his first 100 acres.

Unlike Bohlen Lucas, Scott largely avoided politics. Unlike Lewis Spearman, he paid his debts and kept some close white allies—a necessity, since he usually rejected government assistance. And unlike Oliver Cromwell, he led his community under the rules already in place, appearing content with what he’d earned for his family in an environment of total segregation. He

leveraged technical skills and a talent for management to impress sympathetic white people and disarm hostile ones. “Granddaddy always had nice vehicles,” Scott-White told me. They were a trapping of pride in a life of toil. As was true in most rural areas at the time, a new truck was not just a flashy sign of prosperity but also a sort of credit score. Wearing starched dress shirts served the same purpose, elevating Scott in certain respects—always within limits—even above some white farmers who drove into town in dirty overalls. The trucks got shinier as his holdings grew. By the time Scott died, in 1957, he had amassed more than 1,000 acres of farmland.

Scott-White guided me right up to the Quiver River, where the legend of her family began. It was a choked, green-brown gurgle of a thing, the kind of lazy waterway that one imagines to be brimming with fat, yawning catfish and snakes. “Mr. Brooks sold all of the land on the east side of this river to black folks,” Scott-White told me. She swept her arm to encompass the endless acres. “All of these were once owned by black families.”

Members of the extended Scott family. *From the right:* Isaac Daniel Scott Sr. and his wife, Lucy Chatman-Scott; Willena Scott-White; and Willena’s son Joseph White, with his daughter, Jade Marie White. (Zora J. Murff)

III. The Great Dispossession

THAT ERA OF BLACK OWNERSHIP, in the Delta and throughout the country, was already fading by the time Scott died. As the historian Pete Daniel recounts, half a million black-owned farms across the country failed in the 25 years after 1950. Joe Brooks, the former president of the Emergency Land Fund, a group founded in 1972 to fight the problem of dispossession, has estimated that something on the order of 6 million acres was lost by black farmers from 1950 to 1969. That’s an average of 820 acres a day—an area the size of New York’s Central Park erased with each sunset. Black-owned cotton farms in the South almost completely disappeared, diminishing from 87,000 to just over 3,000 in the 1960s alone. According to the Census of Agriculture, the racial disparity in farm acreage increased in Mississippi from 1950 to 1964, when black farmers lost almost 800,000 acres of land. An analysis for *The Atlantic* by a research team that included Dania Francis, at the University of Massachusetts, and Darrick Hamilton, at Ohio State, translates this land loss into a financial loss—including both property and income—of \$3.7 billion to \$6.6 billion in today’s dollars.

This was a silent and devastating catastrophe, one created and maintained by federal policy. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal life raft for agriculture helped start the trend in 1937 with the establishment of the Farm Security Administration, an agency within the Department of Agriculture. Although the FSA ostensibly existed to help the country’s small farmers, as happened with much of the rest of the New Deal, white administrators often ignored or targeted poor black people—denying them loans and giving sharecropping work to white people. After Roosevelt’s death, in 1945, conservatives in Congress replaced the FSA with the Farmers Home Administration, or FmHA. The FmHA quickly transformed the FSA’s

programs for small farmers, establishing the sinews of the loan-and-subsidy structure that undergirds American agriculture today. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy's administration created the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, or ASCS, a complementary program to the FmHA that also provided loans to farmers. The ASCS was a federal effort—also within the Department of Agriculture—but, crucially, the members of committees doling out money and credit were elected locally, during a time when black people were prohibited from voting.

Through these programs, and through massive crop and surplus purchasing, the USDA became the safety net, price-setter, chief investor, and sole regulator for most of the farm economy in places like the Delta. The department could offer better loan terms to risky farmers than banks and other lenders, and mostly outcompeted private credit. In his book *Dispossession*, Daniel calls the setup “agrigoovernment.” Land-grant universities pumped out both farm operators and the USDA agents who connected those operators to federal money. Large plantations ballooned into even larger industrial crop factories as small farms collapsed. The mega-farms held sway over agricultural policy, resulting in more money, at better interest rates, for the plantations themselves. At every level of agrigoovernment, the leaders were white.

Major audits and investigations of the USDA have found that illegal pressures levied through its loan programs created massive transfers of wealth from black to white farmers, especially in the period just after the 1950s. In 1965, the United States Commission on Civil Rights uncovered blatant and dramatic racial differences in the level of federal investment in farmers. The commission found that in a sample of counties across the South, the FmHA provided much larger loans for small and medium-size white-owned farms, relative to net worth, than it did for similarly sized black-owned farms—evidence that racial discrimination “has served to accelerate the displacement and impoverishment of the Negro farmer.”

In Sunflower County, a man named Ted Keenan told investigators that in 1956, local banks had denied him loans after a bad crop because of his position with the NAACP, where he openly advocated for voting rights. The FmHA had denied him loans as well. Keenan described how Eugene Fisackerly, the leader of the White Citizens' Council in Sunflower County, together with representatives of Senator James Eastland, a notorious white supremacist who maintained a large plantation there, had intimidated him into renouncing his affiliation with the NAACP and agreeing not to vote. Only then did Eastland's man call the local FmHA agent, prompting him to reconsider Keenan's loan.

A landmark 2001 investigation by the Associated Press into extortion, exploitation, and theft directed against black farmers uncovered more than 100 cases like Keenan's. In the 1950s and '60s, Norman Weathersby, a Holmes County Chevrolet dealer who enjoyed a local monopoly on trucks and heavy farm equipment, required black farmers to put up land as collateral for loans on equipment. A close friend of his, William Strider, was the local FmHA agent. Black farmers in the area claimed that the two ran a racket: Strider would slow-walk them on FmHA loans, which meant they would then default on Weathersby's loans and lose their land to him. Strider

and Weathersby were reportedly free to run this racket because black farmers were shut out by local banks.

Thousands of individual decisions by white people, enabled or motivated by greed, racism, existing laws, and market forces, all pushed in a single direction.

Analyzing the history of federal programs, the Emergency Land Fund emphasizes a key distinction. While most of the black land loss appears on its face to have been through *legal* mechanisms—“the tax sale; the partition sale; and the foreclosure”—it mainly stemmed from *illegal* pressures, including discrimination in federal and state programs, swindles by lawyers and speculators, unlawful denials of private loans, and even outright acts of violence or intimidation. Discriminatory loan servicing and loan denial by white-controlled FmHA and ASCS committees forced black farmers into foreclosure, after which their property could be purchased by wealthy landowners, almost all of whom were white. Discrimination by private lenders had the same result. Many black farmers who escaped foreclosure were defrauded by white tax assessors who set assessments too high, leading to unaffordable tax obligations. The inevitable result: tax sales, where, again, the land was purchased by wealthy white people. Black people’s lack of access to legal services complicated inheritances and put family claims to title in jeopardy. Lynchings, police brutality, and other forms of intimidation were sometimes used to dispossess black farmers, and even when land wasn’t a motivation for such actions, much of the violence left land without an owner.

In interviews with researchers from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in 1985, Henry Woodard Sr., an African American who had bought land in the 1950s in Tunica County, said he had managed to keep up for years through a combination of his own industry, small loans from the FmHA and white banks, and the rental of additional land from other hard-pressed black landowners. Then, in 1966, the activist James Meredith—whose 1962 fight to integrate Ole Miss sparked deadly riots and a wave of white backlash—embarked on the famous [March Against Fear](#). The next planting season, Woodard recalled, his white lenders ignored him. “I sensed that it was because of this march,” he said. “And it was a lady told me—I was at the post office and she told me, she said, ‘Henry, you Negroes, y’all want to live like white folks. Y’all don’t know how white folks live. But y’all are gonna have to be on your own now.’ ”

Woodard’s story would have been familiar to countless farmers in the Delta. In Holmes County, a crucible of the voting-rights movement, a black effort to integrate the local ASCS committees was so successful that it was subject to surveillance and sabotage by the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, an official agency created by Governor J. P. Coleman in 1956 to resist integration. Black landowners involved in running for the committees or organizing for votes faced fierce retaliation. In 1965, *The New Republic* reported that in Issaquena County, just north of Vicksburg, the “insurance of Negroes active in the ASCS elections had been canceled, loans were denied to Negroes on all crops but cotton, and ballots were not mailed to Negro wives who were co-owners of land.” Even in the decades after the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, formal and informal complaints against the USDA poured out of the Delta.

These cases of dispossession can only be called theft. While the civil-rights era is remembered as a time of victories against disenfranchisement and segregation, many realities never changed. The engine of white wealth built on kleptocracy—which powered both Jim Crow and its slave-state precursor—continued to run. The black population in Mississippi declined by almost one-fifth from 1950 to 1970, as the white population increased by the exact same percentage. Farmers slipped away one by one into the night, appearing later as laborers in Chicago and Detroit. By the time black people truly gained the ballot in Mississippi, they were a clear minority, held in thrall to a white conservative supermajority.

[*Nikole Hannah-Jones: Freedom Summer, 1964: Did it really change Mississippi?*](#)

Mass dispossession did not require a central organizing force or a grand conspiracy. Thousands of individual decisions by white people, enabled or motivated by greed, racism, existing laws, and market forces, all pushed in a single direction. But some white people undeniably would have organized it this way if they could have. The civil-rights leader Bayard Rustin reported in 1956 that documents taken from the office of Robert Patterson, one of the founding fathers of the White Citizens' Councils, proposed a "master plan" to force hundreds of thousands of black people from Mississippi in order to reduce their potential voting power. Patterson envisioned, in Rustin's words, "the decline of the small independent farmer" and ample doses of "economic pressure."

An upheaval of this scale and speed—the destruction of black farming, an occupation that had defined the African American experience—might in any other context be described as a revolution, or seen as a historical fulcrum. But it came and went with little remark.

IV. The Catfish Boom

WORLD WAR II transformed America in many ways. It certainly transformed a generation of southern black men. That generation included Medgar Evers, a future civil-rights martyr, assassinated while leading the Mississippi NAACP; he served in a segregated transportation company in Europe during the war. It included Willena's father, Ed Scott Jr., who also served in a segregated transportation company. These men were less patient, more defiant, and in many ways more reckless than their fathers and grandfathers had been. They chafed under a system that forced them to relearn how to bow and scrape, as if the war had never happened. In the younger Scott's case, wartime service sharpened his inherited land hunger, pushing him to seek more land and greater financial independence, both for himself and for his community. One of his siblings told his biographer, Julian Rankin, that the family's deepest conviction was that "a million years from now ... this land will still be Scotts' land."

Upon his return to the Delta, Scott continued down his father's hard path, avoiding any interface with the FmHA and the public portions of the agrigovernment system, which by that time had spread its tendrils throughout Sunflower and Leflore Counties. He leaned on the friendships he and his father had made with local business owners and farmers, and secured credit for growing his holdings from friendly white bankers. Influenced by the civil-rights

movement and its emphasis on community solidarity and activism, Scott borrowed from Oliver Cromwell's self-sufficiency playbook too. He used his status to provide opportunities for other black farmers and laborers. "Daddy said that everyone who worked for us would always be able to eat," Willena Scott-White told me. He made sure of more than that. Scott sent relatives' and tenants' children to school, paid for books, helped people open bank accounts and buy their own land. When civil-rights activists made their way down for Mississippi's Freedom Summer, in 1964, he packed up meals and brought them to rallies.

When Scott-White thinks of her father, who died in 2015, she seems to become a young girl again. With allowances for nostalgia, she recalls a certain kind of country poorness-but-not-poverty, whereby children ran barefoot and worked from the moment they could walk, but ate well, lived in houses with solid floors and tight roofs, and went to high school and college if they showed skill. "We lived in something like a utopia," Scott-White told me. But things changed at the tail end of the 1970s. Plummeting commodity prices forced highly leveraged farmers to seek loans wherever they could find them. Combined with the accelerating inflation of that decade, the beginnings of the farm-credit crisis made farming at scale without federal assistance impossible. Yet federal help—even then, two decades after the Civil Rights Act—was not available for most black farmers. According to a 2005 article in *The Nation*, "In 1984 and 1985, at the height of the farm crisis, the USDA lent a total of \$1.3 billion to nearly 16,000 farmers to help them maintain their land. Only 209 of those farmers were black."

As Rankin tells it in his biography, *Catfish Dream*, Scott made his first visit to an FmHA office in 1978. With the assistance of Vance Nimrod, a white man who worked with the black-owned Delta Foundation, a nonprofit promoting economic advancement for black Mississippians, Scott secured an operating loan for a season of soybeans and rice from the FmHA agent Delbert Edwards. The first time was easy—although, crucially, Nimrod accompanied him to the Leflore County office, in Greenwood. When Scott returned the next year without Nimrod, driving a shiny new truck the way his father used to, Edwards asked where Nimrod was. According to Rankin, Scott told the agent that Nimrod had only come to help secure that first loan; he wasn't a business partner. When Edwards saw Scott's vehicle, he seemed perplexed. "Who told you to buy a new truck?" he asked. Edwards ended up denying the requested loan amount.

At the same time, Edwards and the FmHA were moving to help local white farmers weather the storm, often by advising them to get into raising catfish. Commercial catfish farming was a relatively new industry, and it had found a home in the Delta as prices for row crops crashed and new legislation gave the USDA power and incentive to build up domestic fish farming. FmHA agents pushed white farmers to convert wide fields on the floodplain into giant catfish ponds, many of which would become contract-growing hubs for Delta Pride Catfish, a cooperative that quickly evolved into a local monopoly. The federal government poured millions of dollars into the catfish boom by way of FmHA loans, many of which were seized on by the largest white landowners, and kept those white landowners solvent. Mississippi became the catfish capital of the world in the 1970s. But the FmHA did not reach out to Scott, nor is there evidence that it supported the ambitions of any black farmers who might have wanted to get into catfish.

Scott decided to get into catfish anyway, digging eight ponds in fields where rice had grown the season before. He found his own catfish stocks and learned the ins and outs of the industry pretty much on his own. Scott finished digging his ponds in 1981, at which point, according to Rankin, Edwards of the FmHA visited the property and told him point-blank: “Don’t think I’m giving you any damn money for that dirt you’re moving.” The Mississippi FmHA would eventually compel Edwards to provide loans for Scott’s catfish operation for 1981 and 1982. But as court records show, the amount approved was far less than what white catfish farmers usually got—white farmers sometimes received double or triple the amount per acre that Scott did—and enough to stock only four of the eight ponds. (Edwards could not be reached for comment on any of the episodes recounted here.)

The official opening of the processing plant for Scott’s Fresh Catfish, February 1983. *Seated, far left:* Ed Scott Jr., founder and owner. *Next to Scott:* Jim Buck Ross, Mississippi’s longtime commissioner of agriculture and commerce. (Courtesy of Willena Scott-White)

Scott’s Fresh Catfish opened in 1983. As a marker outside the old processing shed now indicates, it was the first catfish plant in the country owned by an African American. But discrimination doomed the enterprise before it really began. Without enough capital, Scott was never able to raise fish at the volume he needed. He claimed in court and later to Rankin that he had also been denied a chance to purchase stock in Delta Pride—a requirement to become a contract grower—because he was black. Without access to a cooperative, he had to do the processing and packaging himself, adding to the cost of his product. In 2006, Delta Pride and Country Select Catfish were combined into a new business entity, Consolidated Catfish Producers. When reached for comment, a spokesperson for Consolidated Catfish said that no employee at the new company could “definitively answer” questions about Scott or alleged discrimination against him.

Scott was in his 60s by the time his plant got off the ground. The effort took a toll. He slowly went blind. Arthritis claimed his joints. His heart began to fail. The plant limped quietly through the ’80s and then shut down. Lenders began the process of foreclosing on some of Scott’s cropland as early as 1983. In 1995, the FmHA approved a request from Scott to lease most of his remaining acres. The USDA itself had claimed most of his land by the late 1980s.

The downfall of the Scott catfish enterprise was proof of the strength and endurance of what the federal government would later state could be seen as a federally funded “conspiracy to force minority and disadvantaged farmers off their land through discriminatory loan practices.” The Scotts were not small-timers. They had the kind of work ethic and country savvy that are usually respected around the Delta. When the powers that be finally prevailed over Ed Scott Jr., they had completed something decisive, something that even today feels as if it cannot be undone.

V. Farmers in Suits

BUT LAND IS NEVER REALLY LOST, not in America. Twelve million acres of farmland in a country that has become a global breadbasket carries immense value, and the dispossessed land in the Delta is some of the most productive in America. The soil on the alluvial plain is rich. The region is warm and wet. Much of the land is perfect for industrialized agriculture.

Some white landowners, like Norman Weathersby, themselves the beneficiaries of government-funded dispossession, left land to their children. Some sold off to their peers, and others saw their land gobbled up by even larger white-owned farms. Nowadays, as fewer and fewer of the children of aging white landowners want to continue farming, more land has wound up in the hands of trusts and investors. Over the past 20 years, the real power brokers in the Delta are less likely to be good ol' boys and more likely to be suited venture capitalists, hedge-fund managers, and agribusiness consultants who run farms with the cold precision of giant circuit boards.

One new addition to the mix is pension funds. Previously, farmland had never been a choice asset class for large-scale investing. In 1981, what was then called the General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office) released a report exploring a proposal by a firm seeking pension-investment opportunities in farmland. The report essentially laughed off the prospect. The authors found that only about one dollar of every \$4,429 in retirement funds was invested in farmland.

Grain bins on Scott-family land, in Drew, once used for rice and now for soybeans. The Scott family's farms reflect a larger economic pattern in the Mississippi Delta: the shift away from cotton, once predominant, toward other crops. (Zora J. Murff)

But commodity prices increased, and land values rose. In 2008, a weakened dollar forced major funds to broaden their search for hedges against inflation. "The market in agricultural land in the U.S. is currently experiencing a boom," an industry analyst, Tom Vulcan, wrote that year. He took note of the recent entry of TIAA-CREF, which had "spent some \$340 million on farmland across seven states." TIAA, as the company is now called, would soon become the biggest pension-fund player in the agricultural real-estate game across the globe. In 2010, TIAA bought a controlling interest in Westchester Group, a major agricultural-asset manager. In 2014, it bought Nuveen, another large asset-management firm. In 2015, with Nuveen directing its overall investment strategy and Westchester and other smaller subsidiaries operating as purchasers and managers, TIAA raised \$3 billion for a new global farmland-investment partnership. By the close of 2016, Nuveen's management portfolio included nearly 2 million acres of farmland, worth close to \$6 billion.

Investment in farmland has proved troublesome for TIAA in Mississippi and elsewhere. TIAA is a pension company originally set up for teachers and professors and people in the nonprofit world. It has cultivated a reputation for social responsibility: promoting environmental sustainability and respecting land rights, labor rights, and resource rights. TIAA has endorsed the United Nations-affiliated Principles for Responsible Investment, which include special

provisions for investment in farmland, including specific guidelines with regard to sustainability, leasing practices, and establishing the provenance of tracts of land.

Each black farmer who left the region represented a tiny withdrawal from one side of a cosmic balance sheet and a deposit on the other side.

The company has faced pushback for its move into agriculture. In 2015, the international nonprofit [Grain](#), which advocates for local control of farmland by small farmers, [released the results of an investigation accusing TIAA's farmland-investment arm of skirting laws](#) limiting foreign land acquisition in its purchase of more than half a million acres in Brazil. The report found that TIAA had violated multiple UN guidelines in creating a joint venture with a Brazilian firm to invest in farmland without transparency. The Grain report alleges that when Brazil tightened laws designed to restrict foreign investment, TIAA purchased 49 percent of a Brazilian company that then acted as its proxy. [According to The New York Times](#), TIAA and its subsidiaries also appear to have acquired land titles from Euclides de Carli, a businessman often described in Brazil as a big-time *grileiro*—a member of a class of landlords and land grabbers who use a mix of legitimate means, fraud, and violence to force small farmers off their land. In response to criticism of TIAA's Brazil portfolio, [Jose Minaya, then the head of private-markets asset management at TIAA, told WNYC's The Takeaway](#): "We believe and know that we are in compliance with the law, and we are transparent about what we do in Brazil. From a title perspective, our standards are very focused around not displacing individuals or indigenous people, respecting land rights as well as human rights ... In every property that we have acquired, we don't just do due diligence on that property. We do due diligence on the sellers, whether it's an individual or whether it's an entity."

TIAA's land dealings have faced scrutiny in the United States as well. In 2012, [the National Family Farm Coalition found](#) that the entry into agriculture of deep-pocketed institutional investors—TIAA being an example—had made it pretty much impossible for smaller farmers to compete. Institutional investment has removed millions of acres from farmers' hands, more or less permanently. "Pension funds not only have the power to outbid smaller, local farmers, they also have the long-term goal of retaining farmland for generations," the report noted.

Asked about TIAA's record, a spokesperson for Nuveen maintained that the company has built its Delta portfolio following [ethical-investment guidelines](#): "We have a long history of investing responsibly in farmland, in keeping with our corporate values and the UN-backed Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI). As a long-term owner, we bring capital, professional expertise, and sustainable farming practices to each farm we own, and we are always looking to partner with expansion-minded tenants who will embrace that approach and act as good stewards of the land." The company did not comment on the history of any individual tract in its Delta portfolio.

But even assuming that every acre under management by big corporate interests in the Delta has been acquired by way of ethical-investment principles, the nature of the mid-century dispossession and its multiple layers of legitimation raise the question of whether responsible

investment in farmland there is even possible. As a people and a class, black farmers were plainly targets, but the deed histories of tax sales and foreclosures don't reveal whether individual debtors were moved off the land because of discrimination and its legal tools.

In addition, land records are spotty in rural areas, especially records from the 1950s and '60s, and in some cases it's unclear exactly which records the investors used to meet internal requirements. According to Tristan Quinn-Thibodeau, a campaigner and organizer at ActionAid, an anti-poverty and food-justice nonprofit, "It's been a struggle to get this information." The organization has tried to follow the trails of deeds and has asked TIAA—which manages ActionAid's own pension plan—for an analysis of the provenance of its Delta portfolio. Such an analysis has not been provided.

What we do know is that, whatever the specific lineage of each acre, Wall Street investors have found a lucrative new asset class whose origins lie in part in mass dispossession. We know that the vast majority of black farmland in the country is no longer in black hands, and that black farmers have suffered far more hardships than white farmers have. The historian Debra A. Reid points out that "between 1920 and 1997, the number of African Americans who farmed decreased by 98 percent, while white Americans who farmed declined by 66 percent." Referring to the cases studied in their 2001 investigation, Dolores Barclay and Todd Lewan of the Associated Press observed that virtually all of the property lost by black farmers "is owned by whites or corporations." The foundation of these portfolios was a system of plantations whose owners created the agrigovernment system and absorbed thousands of small black-owned farms into ever larger white-owned farms. America has its own *grileiros*, and they stand on land that was once someone else's.

VI. A Deeper Excavation

AS WE DROVE THROUGH the patchwork remnants of the Scotts' land, Willena Scott-White took me to the site of Scott's Fresh Catfish. Gleaming steel silos had turned into rusting hulks. The ponds were thick with weeds and debris. The exterior walls of the plant itself had collapsed. Rusted beams lay atop ruined machinery. Fire ants and kudzu had begun nature's reclamation.

Late in Ed Scott Jr.'s life, as he slipped into Alzheimer's, Willena and his lawyer, Phil Fraas, fought to keep his original hopes alive. In the *Pigford v. Glickman* lawsuit of 1997, thousands of black farmers and their families won settlements against the USDA for discrimination that had occurred between 1981 and the end of 1996; the outlays ultimately reached a total of \$2 billion. The Scotts were one of those families, and after a long battle to prove their case—with the assistance of Scott-White's meticulous notes and family history—in 2012 the family was awarded more than \$6 million in economic damages, plus almost \$400,000 in other damages and debt forgiveness. The court also helped the Scotts reclaim land possessed by the department. In a 1999 ruling, Judge Paul L. Friedman of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia acknowledged that forcing the federal government to compensate black farmers would "not undo all that has been done" in centuries of government-sponsored racism. But for the Scotts, it was a start.

“The telling factor, looking at it from the long view, is that at the time of World War I there were 1 million black farmers, and in 1992 there were 18,000,” Fraas told me. The settlements stemming from *Pigford* cover only specific recent claims of discrimination, and none stretching back to the period of the civil-rights era, when the great bulk of black-owned farms disappeared. Most people have not pushed for any kind of deeper excavation.

Any such excavation would quickly make plain the consequences of what occurred. During my drive with Scott-White, we traveled through parts of Leflore, Sunflower, and Washington Counties, three of the counties singled out by Opportunity Insights, a Harvard University research group, as among the worst in the country in terms of a child’s prospects for upward mobility. Ten counties in the Delta are among the poorest 50 in America. According to new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on all 74,000 U.S. census tracts, four tracts in the Delta are among the lowest 100 when it comes to average life expectancy. More than 30 tracts in the Delta have an average life expectancy below 70. (The national average is 79.) In some Delta counties, the infant mortality rate is more than double the nationwide rate. As if to add gratuitous insult to injury, a new analysis from ProPublica finds that, as a result of the Internal Revenue Service’s intense scrutiny of low-income taxpayers, [the Delta is audited by the IRS more heavily than any other place in the country](#). In sum, the areas of deepest poverty and under the darkest shadow of death are the ones where dispossession was the most far-reaching.

The consequences of dispossession had long been predicted. Fannie Lou Hamer, a Sunflower County activist whose [1964 speech to a Democratic National Convention committee](#) galvanized support for the Voting Rights Act, spoke often of the need for land reform as a precondition for true freedom. Hamer’s utopian Freedom Farm experiment stressed cooperative landownership, and she said the concentration of land in the hands of a few landowners was “at the base of our struggle for survival.” In her analysis, mass dispossession should be seen as mass extraction. Even as the U.S. government invested billions in white farmers, it continued to extract wealth from black farmers in the Delta. Each black farmer who left the region, from Reconstruction onward, represented a tiny withdrawal from one side of a cosmic balance sheet and a deposit on the other side. This dynamic would only continue, in other ways and other places, as the Great Migration brought black families to northern cities.

This cosmic balance sheet underpins the national conversation—ever more robust—about reparations for black Americans. In that conversation, given momentum in part by the publication of [Ta-Nehisi Coates’s “The Case for Reparations”](#) in this magazine in 2014, I hear echoes of Mississippi. I hear echoes of Hamer, the Scotts, Henry Woodard Sr., and others who petitioned the federal government to hold itself accountable for a history of extraction that has extended well beyond enslavement. But that conversation too easily becomes technical. How do we quantify discrimination? How do we define who was discriminated against? How do we repay those people according to what has been defined and quantified? The idea of reparations sometimes seems like a problem of economic rightsizing—something for the quants and wonks to work out.

Economics is, of course, a major consideration. According to the researchers Francis and Hamilton, "The dispossession of black agricultural land resulted in the loss of hundreds of billions of dollars of black wealth. We must emphasize this estimate is conservative ... Depending on multiplier effects, rates of returns, and other factors, it could reach into the trillions." The large wealth gap between white and black families today exists in part because of this historic loss.

But money does not define every dimension of land theft. Were it not for dispossession, Mississippi today might well be a majority-black state, with a radically different political destiny. Imagine the difference in our national politics if the center of gravity of black electoral strength had remained in the South after the Voting Rights Act was passed.

Politics aside, how can reparations truly address the lives ruined, the family histories lost, the connection to the land severed? In America, land has always had a significance that exceeds its economic value. For a people who were once chattel themselves, real property has carried an almost mystical import. There's a reason the fabled promise that spread among freedmen after the Civil War was not a check, a job, or a refundable tax credit, but 40 acres of farmland to call home. The history of the Delta suggests that any conversation about reparations might need to be *more* qualitative and intangible than it is. And it must consider the land.

Land hunger is ineffable, an indescribable yearning, and yet it is something that Americans, perhaps uniquely, feel and understand. That yearning tugged at me hardest as Willena Scott-White rounded out her tour of the fields, the afternoon slipping away. Out among the Scotts' fields is a clearing with a lone, tall tree. In the clearing is a small cemetery. A handful of crooked, weathered tombstones stand sentinel. This is where Ed Scott Jr. is buried, and where some of Willena's older siblings now rest. Willena posed for a picture beside her parents' grave. She told me that this is where her own bones will rest after her work on Earth is done.

"This is *our* land," she said.

March 2017

Fact Sheet: *The 35 Percent Corporate Tax Myth*

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy has released the latest in a series of reports, spanning the last three decades, that examine Fortune 500 firms' corporate tax filings. The new report examines eight years of data from 2008 to 2015. For a variety of reasons, it is possible for a corporation to pay different effective tax rates from one year to the next, so this eight-year study provides a more helpful view of long-term trends in corporate taxes. Importantly, the report only includes corporations that were consistently profitable over the eight-year period. In other words, if a firm had a loss in even one year, it is excluded from this report. By leaving out corporations that had losses (which means they wouldn't owe any income tax), this report provides a clear picture of the average effective tax rates paid by our nation's biggest, and consistently profitable companies. This study includes 258 Fortune 500 firms that were profitable every year between 2008 and 2015. Below are key findings.

TAX RATES

Profitable Fortune 500 firms collectively pay far less than the statutory 35 percent federal corporate tax rate. 258 profitable Fortune 500 corporations paid an average effective tax rate of 21.2 percent on their U.S. profits over the eight years between 2008 and 2015.

Many profitable corporations are finding ways to zero out their corporate taxes.

Of the 258 profitable Fortune 500 companies in our sample:

- 18 paid ZERO in taxes over the full eight-year period.
- 100 paid zero—or less—in at least one profitable year during the eight-year period, 58 of those companies had multiple zero-tax years.
- 24 companies zeroed out their taxes in at least four of the eight years.
- 48 companies paid a rate between 0 and 10 percent over eight years.

Utility and oil, gas and pipeline companies pay low tax rates. Utilities (e.g. electricity providers) paid an eight-year tax rate averaging just 3 percent. Oil, gas and pipeline companies paid an average 11.2 percent rate. Telecommunications companies paid 11.5 percent, and Internet services companies paid an eight-year average of 15.6 percent.

Retail and health care companies are more likely to pay close to the statutory 35 percent rate. About a quarter of the companies in the study sample paid a tax rate averaging 30 percent or more. Almost 60 percent of these companies were in just two economic sectors: retail trade and health care.

Of the profitable companies in the retail and health care sectors, more than half paid eight-year tax rates exceeding 30 percent. Among all other economic sectors, just 15 percent—less than one out of six—paid an eight-year rate exceeding 30 percent.

TAX BREAKS

Collectively, the 258 corporations enjoyed \$526 billion in tax breaks over the last eight years. More than half of those tax breaks, \$286 billion, went to just 25 of the most profitable corporations. The five biggest beneficiaries of tax breaks during the eight-year period were AT&T (\$38 billion), Wells Fargo (\$31 billion), J.P. Morgan (\$22 billion), Verizon (\$21 billion), and IBM (\$17.8 billion).

Tax breaks for executive stock options continued to play an important role in reducing taxes, especially for the tech sector. Companies reduced their taxes by \$51.8 billion during the eight-year period using the “excess stock option” tax breaks. Ten percent of these tax breaks went to Facebook alone, and 25 companies collectively reaped more than half the tax savings from the stock option break.

TAXES AT HOME AND ABROAD

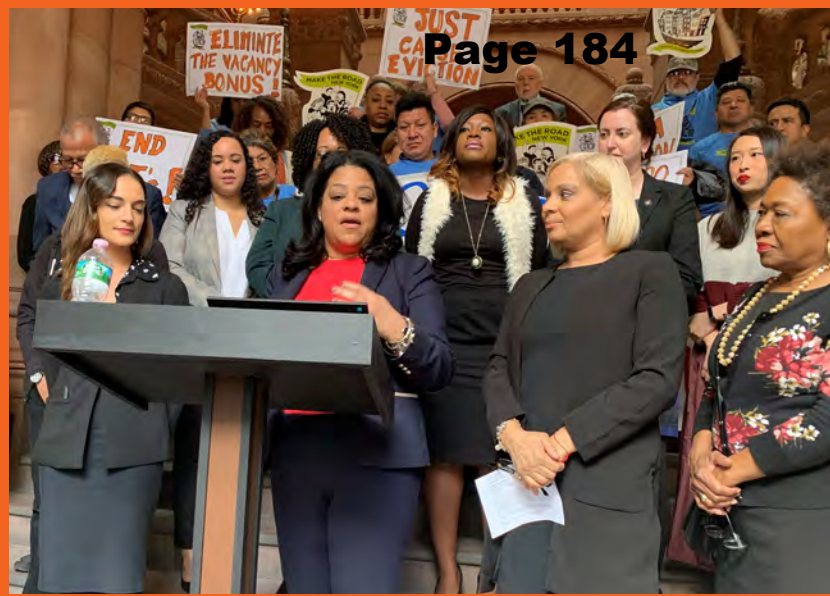
Many multinational companies face higher corporate tax rates abroad than in the United States. Of 107 companies in our report that engaged in substantial international activities (constituting more than 10 percent of their worldwide income), 62 paid higher foreign tax rates on their foreign income than the tax rate they paid to the U.S. treasury on their domestic income. For these 62 companies, the average foreign tax rate was 25.8 and the average federal tax rate was 18.3.

REPORT METHODOLOGY

ITEP’s new report builds on the findings of our last similar study, released in February 2014. The 2014 report examined corporate tax payments by U.S.-based Fortune 500 corporations that were consistently profitable, *in the United States*, over the five-year period between 2008 and 2012. The new report extends this time period to include three new years, 2013 through 2015. Now our sample consists of Fortune 500 corporations that were consistently profitable in the United States during the eight-year period between 2008 and 2015.

25 Companies with the Largest TOTAL Tax Subsidies, 2008-15 (\$ - millions)

Company	2008-15 Tax breaks
AT&T	38,068
Wells Fargo	31,428
J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.	22,213
Verizon Communications	21,130
International Business Machines	17,806
General Electric	15,389
Exxon Mobil	12,942
Boeing	11,863
PNC Financial Services Group	8,809
Procter & Gamble	8,515
NextEra Energy	7,844
Twenty-First Century Fox	7,630
Duke Energy	7,341
Devon Energy	7,224
Comcast	7,172
Time Warner	6,720
Southern	6,569
American Electric Power	6,473
Union Pacific	6,333
United Technologies	6,001
Qualcomm	5,934
Exelon	5,898
Time Warner Cable	5,692
Intel	5,521
Goldman Sachs Group	5,455
Total these 25 companies	\$ 285,969
Other 233 companies	240,791
All companies	\$ 526,760



OUR HOMES, OUR FUTURE

HOW RENT CONTROL CAN BUILD STABLE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



PolicyLink



AMEE CHEW & SARAH TREUHAFT | FEBRUARY 2019

About This Report

This report was produced by a collaboration between PolicyLink, the Center for Popular Democracy, and the Right To The City Alliance.

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works®. We work to ensure that all people in America are economically secure, live in healthy communities of opportunity, and benefit from a just society.

policylink.org

Center for Popular Democracy works to create equity, opportunity and a dynamic democracy in partnership with high-impact base-building organizations, organizing alliances, and progressive unions. CPD strengthens our collective capacity to envision and win an innovative pro-worker, pro-immigrant, racial and economic justice agenda.

populardemocracy.org

The **Right To The City Alliance** (RTTC) seeks to 1) halt the displacement of low-income people, people of color, LGBTQ communities, and youth of color, and 2) protect and expand affordable housing in tandem with a broader movement to build democratic, just, and sustainable cities. RTTC and our flagship Homes For All campaign have been at the forefront of building grassroots tenant-led organizing power to win historic policy changes including rent control and community control of land & housing.

righttothecity.org

Learn more at: www.ourhomesourfuture.org.

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DESIGN BY DESIGN ACTION COLLECTIVE

SUMMARY

Amid the worst renter crisis in a generation, it is time for policymakers to respond to the call for rent control to protect tenants from skyrocketing rents and displacement. Leveraging this powerful yet underutilized tool would have tremendous payoff: if the rent control and tenant protection policies being debated right now in states and localities become reality, 12.7 million renter households will be stabilized. If adopted by states nationwide, 42 million households could be stabilized.



Housing Justice for All, June 2018 New York State March for Universal Rent Control. Photo Credit: Ethan Fox

Rent control protects tenants from excessive rent increases by creating a schedule for reasonable and gradual rent increases, while ensuring that landlords receive a fair return on their investment. It is a smart, proven policy that can immediately stabilize prices, halt rent gouging, and reduce the risk of displacement and homelessness, while increasing housing security and affordability over the long term.

Why should policymakers and community leaders act now to implement rent control?

- **Rent control works—it increases housing stability and affordability for current tenants.** Tenants living in rent-controlled units move less frequently, are less likely to experience destabilizing forced moves, and pay substantially less than tenants in non-regulated units of similar size and quality.

- **Rent control is unrivaled in speed and scale.** Rent control is the only policy tool that can immediately provide relief to renters facing unaffordable rent increases. Because rent control covers private rental housing where the vast majority of renters live, it outperforms all other affordable housing tools in terms of scale of impact. In cities with rent control, it is often the largest source of affordable housing.
- **Rent control is cost-effective.** While rent control requires a government apparatus to implement, the costs for operating rent control programs can be covered by modest fees and can even be cost-neutral.

• **Rent control protects low-income households.**

Like all consumer protections, rent control applies to renters of all incomes. But rent control disproportionately benefits low-income tenants, seniors, people of color, women-headed households, persons living with disability and chronic illness, families with children, and others who have the least choice in the rental market and are most susceptible to rent gouging, harassment, eviction, and displacement.

The stability and affordability provided by rent control would have cascading benefits for communities and our broader society. Renters would be more financially secure, with more disposable income to spend on other household needs and in the local economy. They would be healthier, since housing stability and affordability contribute to mental and physical health. Children would do better in school, since frequent moves disrupt

education. And our democracy would be fortified, since stability increases civic and political participation.

While no one policy can solve the renter crisis, rent control offers meaningful, immediate, and widespread relief for tenants facing unsustainable—and sometimes unconscionable—rent increases. This is why it is a cornerstone of the housing justice and tenant rights movement and an essential element of a comprehensive approach to address our affordability challenge.

Policymakers and community leaders should take swift action to bring rent control to many more tenants and communities by strengthening rent control in the states where it exists, establishing rent control in more states, and supporting tenant organizing in every community. With renting up nationwide, action is all the more urgent. Renters need stability to thrive, and when renters thrive, communities thrive.

“WE NEED STRONGER RENT CONTROL TO LIVE OUR BEST LIVES.”

“The only reason I’ve been able to provide for myself, honestly, is because of the fact that I’ve been able to hold down an apartment that is rent-controlled,” says Jacqueline Luther, a former foster care youth who lives in Los Angeles.¹ “Living in this unit, I’ve been able to successfully complete my undergraduate degree. To find full-time work at two different nonprofits, that I can still easily access with public transportation. To finish my master’s degree in therapy, working full-time and attending school full-time. And it’s all because I have security, to know my rent won’t be raised beyond a certain amount each year. It frees me up mentally, to be able to focus on what I want to focus on in my life, and take it to the next level.”

Luther had few financial resources when she aged out of transitional housing during college. She found her rent-stabilized unit by fluke. It gave her an affordable option at a public transit hub, where market-rate rents are high, allowing her to take a bus to her job across town. Without access to transit, as a non-traditional student,

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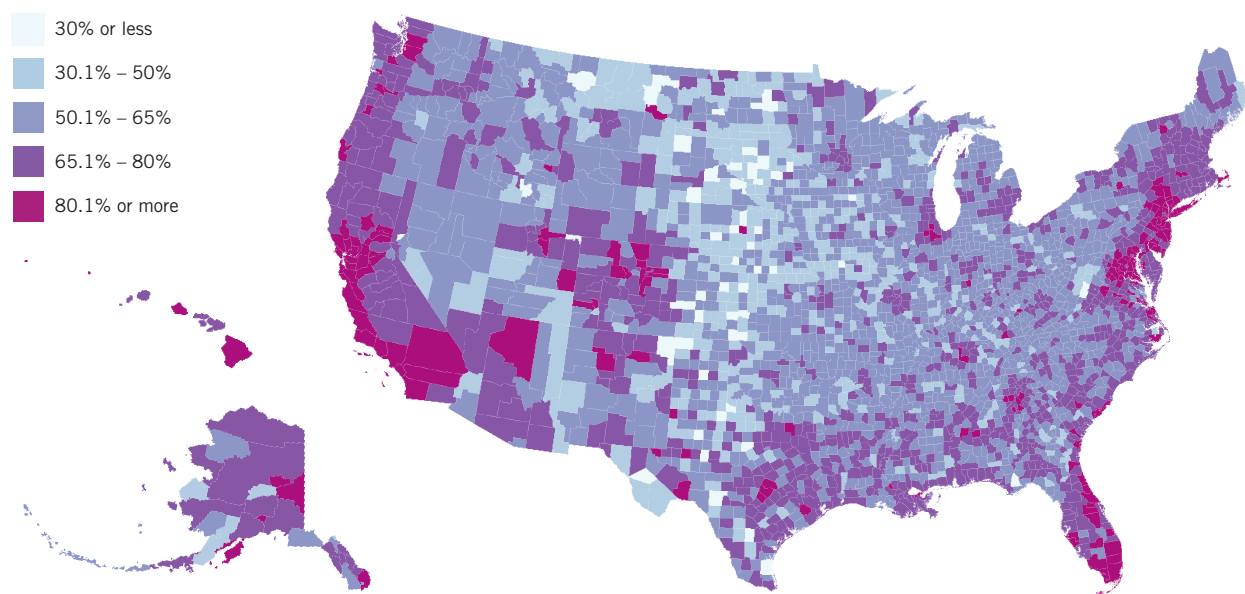
Causa Justa :: Just Cause and Homes for All members march in Oakland, CA. Photo Credit: Rose Arrieta

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high-cost areas with rising rents.²⁷ The pain has spread further up the income spectrum as well, with moderate-income renters increasingly burdened.

How did we get here? The private rental market has never met the needs of low-income renters and government subsidies have always been insufficient, but a confluence of factors has widened the gap. Over decades, rents have been rising as wages have stagnated. Since 2001, the market has increasingly produced luxury apartments rather than affordable rentals, while federal subsidies for affordable housing have shrunk and the stock of existing affordable homes continues to decline. All of this has led to a serious affordability crisis for low-income renters: today there are only 35 affordable rentals available for every 100 extremely low-income renter households.²⁸ In addition, changes in our economy and financial system have increased speculative activity in the rental market, fueling rent increases, evictions, and displacement.

A Nationwide Rental Affordability and Stability Crisis



Share of renter households earning <\$50,000/year that are rent-burdened (paying more than 30% of income on housing costs).

Source: 2017 5-year American Community Survey.

Throughout the country—across, cities, suburbs, and rural areas—renters are being squeezed by rising rents and stagnant or declining incomes. Nearly twenty million renter households pay too much for housing and about 10 million pay more than half their income on rent. The vast majority of renters paying unaffordable rent are low-income (78 percent).*

- **Low-income renters:** Among low-income renter households, eight of every 10 are rent-burdened, and half are severely burdened (paying more than half their income on housing costs). The plurality of low-income, cost-burdened renters are White (47 percent), while 23 percent are Black, 23 percent are Latinx, 4 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 1 percent are Native American, and 2 percent are multiracial.
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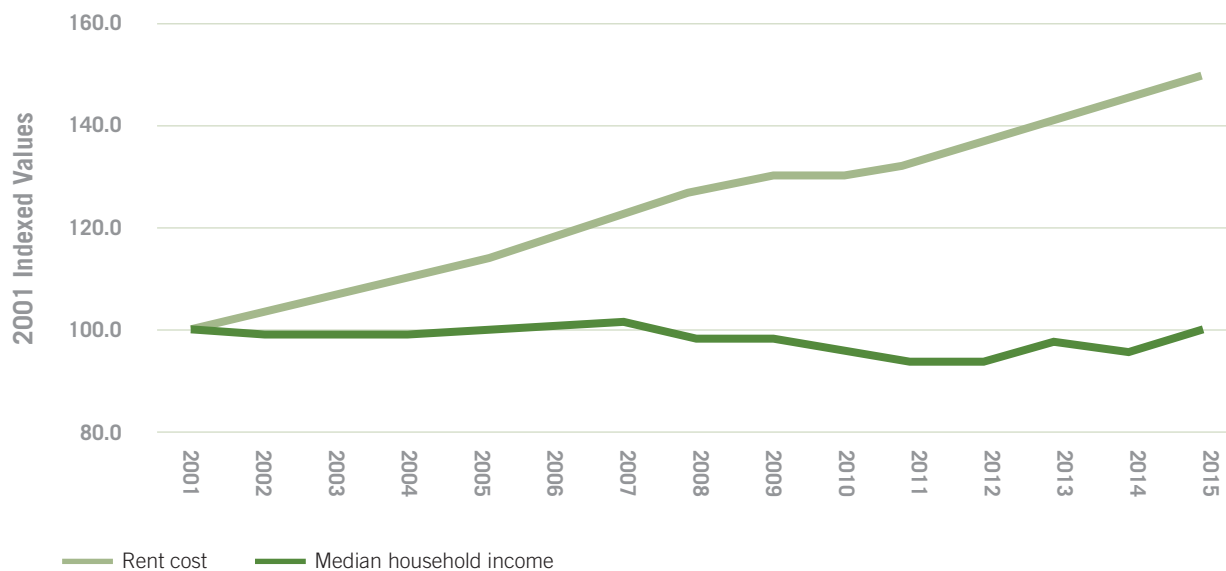
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Lift the Ban Coalition Rally in Chicago. Photo Credit: Diego Morales

Rent Increases Outpaced Income Growth Since 2001: Changes in Rent and Household Income, 2001–15



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Some of the key trends driving the crisis include:

Rent increases have far outpaced income growth.

Between 2001 and 2015, median rents increased 50 percent, yet incomes have remained flat—and have declined for lower income renters. In places where minimum wages have increased, rents have outpaced wage growth. For the lowest-income renters, the amount of money left over for other expenses after paying for rent and utilities decreased 19 percent between 2001 and 2016.³² Renters also have little savings to fall back on in the case of emergencies: the median savings for cost-burdened renters is just \$10.³³

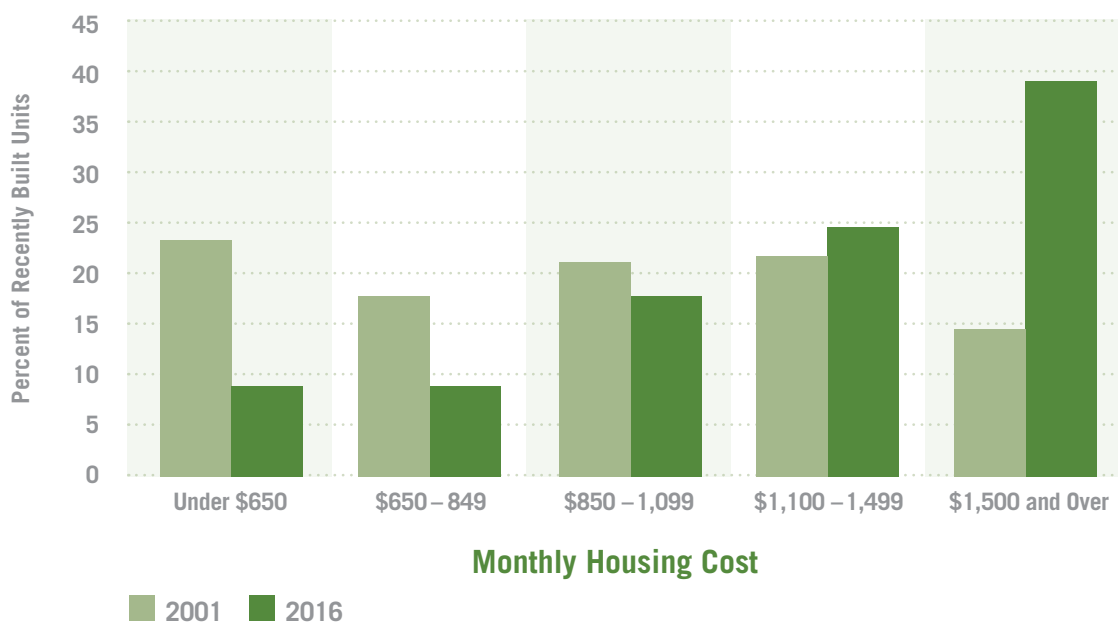
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units rented for \$1,500 or more.³⁴ In theory, market-rate construction will “trickle down” to become affordable to moderate and low-income renters over time. But that takes decades for that process (what housing scholars call “filtering”) to occur, if ever.³⁵ In the short term, new luxury developments in low-income neighborhoods often cause rents to *rise*.³⁶ And, as a vivid illustration of how badly the market is broken, many luxury units are sitting vacant despite record low vacancy rates for affordable apartments.³⁷

Declining federal support for low-income renters.

The private market does not produce housing that is affordable for very low-income renters—government subsidies are required to fill this gap. Yet our federal government spends four times the amount of subsidies on homeowners (predominantly for wealthy and upper middle-class households) as it does on renters, and the share of renters who do receive support is decreasing.³⁸ Today, only one in five of the

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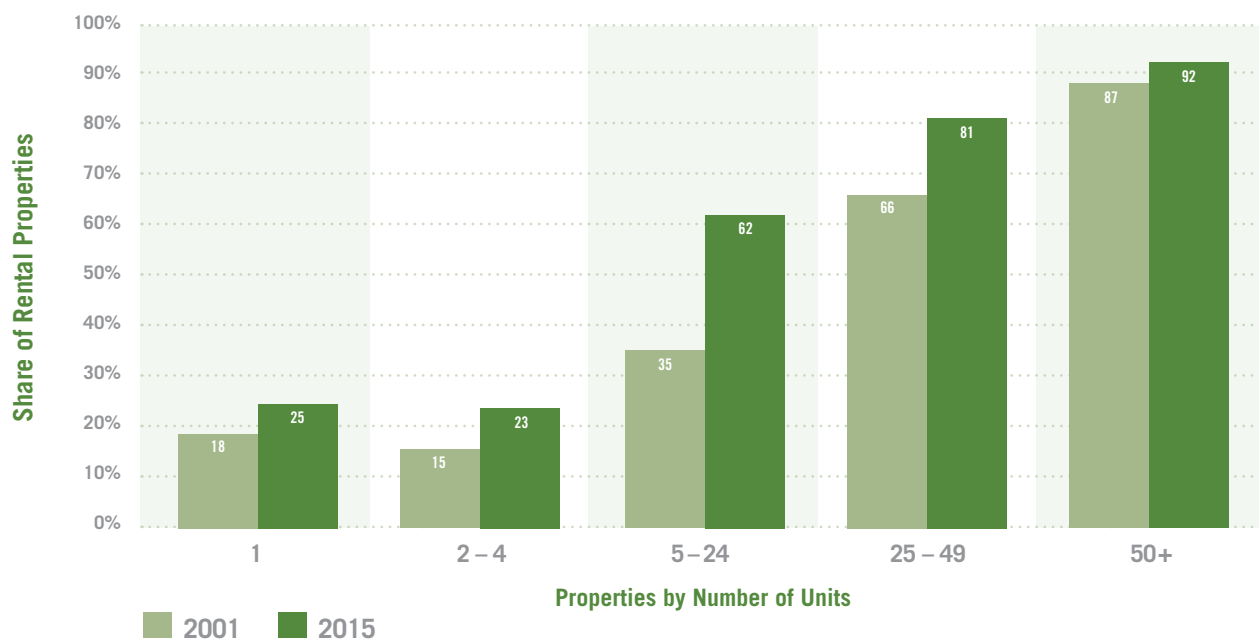
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All of these factors have driven us into the current crisis. Today's rapid rent increases, eviction, and displacement fueled by speculation in the rental market, along with historically low availability of affordable rentals in many communities, signal a

housing emergency. While increasing affordable housing production is necessary, it is insufficient. Tenants need protection now—and they are asking for the policy solution that can provide immediate protection from these devastating forces: rent control.

Increased Speculation in Housing Market: Institutional Investor Share of Rental Properties



Source: Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies analysis of housing finance data from the U.S. Census Bureau.



Rally at Oregon State Capitol in April 2017. Photo Credit: Taro Bagnon

CONCLUSION

Across the nation, renters are rising up and calling for rent control as an urgent solution to alleviate the housing crisis—and it is time for policymakers to heed their call to action.



Lift the Ban Coalition demonstration at the offices of Pangea Properties in Chicago. Photo Credit: Diego Morales

For decades, policymakers have invested in the stability and prosperity of homeowners while leaving the vast majority of renters on their own. But our collective future depends on the health, wealth, and well-being of renters too. As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote in a Supreme Court decision, “Housing is a necessary of life. All the elements of a public interest justifying some degree of public control are present.”

Implementing rent control on a widespread basis is not a panacea, but it is a critical and meaningful step forward. Rent regulations will curb the growing power

imbalance between landlords and tenants that is causing harm and immediately halt the pain, stabilize renters, and set us on a new path toward greater housing security and housing justice.

The stakes are enormous, and so is the upside: right now, 12.7 million renter households stand to benefit if policymakers say “yes” to rent control in the places where new policies are being debated. Rent control is the right choice in the face of our renter emergency. And it is the smart choice: when renters thrive, their families, communities, and local economies thrive.



OUR HOMES, OUR FUTURE

HOW RENT CONTROL CAN BUILD STABLE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



PolicyLink



AMEE CHEW & SARAH TREUHAFT | FEBRUARY 2019

About This Report

This report was produced by a collaboration between PolicyLink, the Center for Popular Democracy, and the Right To The City Alliance.

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works®. We work to ensure that all people in America are economically secure, live in healthy communities of opportunity, and benefit from a just society.

policylink.org

Center for Popular Democracy works to create equity, opportunity and a dynamic democracy in partnership with high-impact base-building organizations, organizing alliances, and progressive unions. CPD strengthens our collective capacity to envision and win an innovative pro-worker, pro-immigrant, racial and economic justice agenda.

populardemocracy.org

The **Right To The City Alliance** (RTTC) seeks to 1) halt the displacement of low-income people, people of color, LGBTQ communities, and youth of color, and 2) protect and expand affordable housing in tandem with a broader movement to build democratic, just, and sustainable cities. RTTC and our flagship Homes For All campaign have been at the forefront of building grassroots tenant-led organizing power to win historic policy changes including rent control and community control of land & housing.

righttothecity.org

Learn more at: www.ourhomesourfuture.org.

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DESIGN BY DESIGN ACTION COLLECTIVE

SUMMARY

Amid the worst renter crisis in a generation, it is time for policymakers to respond to the call for rent control to protect tenants from skyrocketing rents and displacement. Leveraging this powerful yet underutilized tool would have tremendous payoff: if the rent control and tenant protection policies being debated right now in states and localities become reality, 12.7 million renter households will be stabilized. If adopted by states nationwide, 42 million households could be stabilized.



Housing Justice for All, June 2018 New York State March for Universal Rent Control. Photo Credit: Ethan Fox

Rent control protects tenants from excessive rent increases by creating a schedule for reasonable and gradual rent increases, while ensuring that landlords receive a fair return on their investment. It is a smart, proven policy that can immediately stabilize prices, halt rent gouging, and reduce the risk of displacement and homelessness, while increasing housing security and affordability over the long term.

Why should policymakers and community leaders act now to implement rent control?

- **Rent control works—it increases housing stability and affordability for current tenants.** Tenants living in rent-controlled units move less frequently, are less likely to experience destabilizing forced moves, and pay substantially less than tenants in non-regulated units of similar size and quality.

- **Rent control is unrivaled in speed and scale.**

Rent control is the only policy tool that can immediately provide relief to renters facing unaffordable rent increases. Because rent control covers private rental housing where the vast majority of renters live, it outperforms all other affordable housing tools in terms of scale of impact. In cities with rent control, it is often the largest source of affordable housing.

- **Rent control is cost-effective.** While rent control requires a government apparatus to implement, the costs for operating rent control programs can be covered by modest fees and can even be cost-neutral.

• **Rent control protects low-income households.**

Like all consumer protections, rent control applies to renters of all incomes. But rent control disproportionately benefits low-income tenants, seniors, people of color, women-headed households, persons living with disability and chronic illness, families with children, and others who have the least choice in the rental market and are most susceptible to rent gouging, harassment, eviction, and displacement.

The stability and affordability provided by rent control would have cascading benefits for communities and our broader society. Renters would be more financially secure, with more disposable income to spend on other household needs and in the local economy. They would be healthier, since housing stability and affordability contribute to mental and physical health. Children would do better in school, since frequent moves disrupt

education. And our democracy would be fortified, since stability increases civic and political participation.

While no one policy can solve the renter crisis, rent control offers meaningful, immediate, and widespread relief for tenants facing unsustainable—and sometimes unconscionable—rent increases. This is why it is a cornerstone of the housing justice and tenant rights movement and an essential element of a comprehensive approach to address our affordability challenge.

Policymakers and community leaders should take swift action to bring rent control to many more tenants and communities by strengthening rent control in the states where it exists, establishing rent control in more states, and supporting tenant organizing in every community. With renting up nationwide, action is all the more urgent. Renters need stability to thrive, and when renters thrive, communities thrive.

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“The only reason I’ve been able to provide for myself, honestly, is because of the fact that I’ve been able to hold down an apartment that is rent-controlled,” says Jacqueline Luther, a former foster care youth who lives in Los Angeles.¹ “Living in this unit, I’ve been able to successfully complete my undergraduate degree. To find full-time work at two different nonprofits, that I can still easily access with public transportation. To finish my master’s degree in therapy, working full-time and attending school full-time. And it’s all because I have security, to know my rent won’t be raised beyond a certain amount each year. It frees me up mentally, to be able to focus on what I want to focus on in my life, and take it to the next level.”

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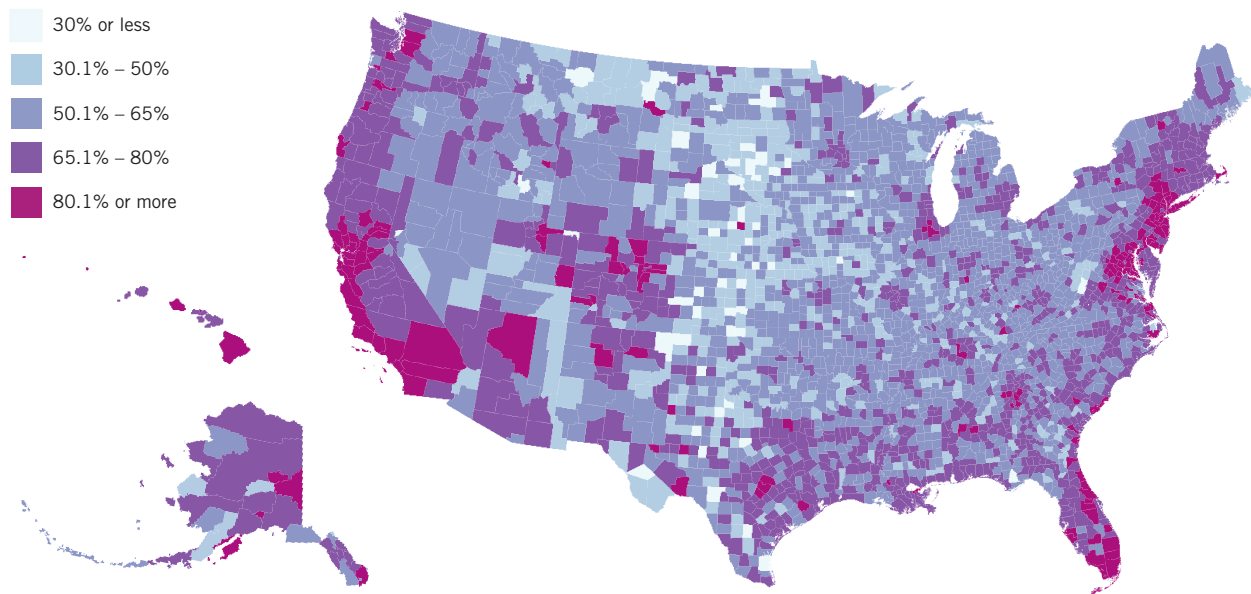
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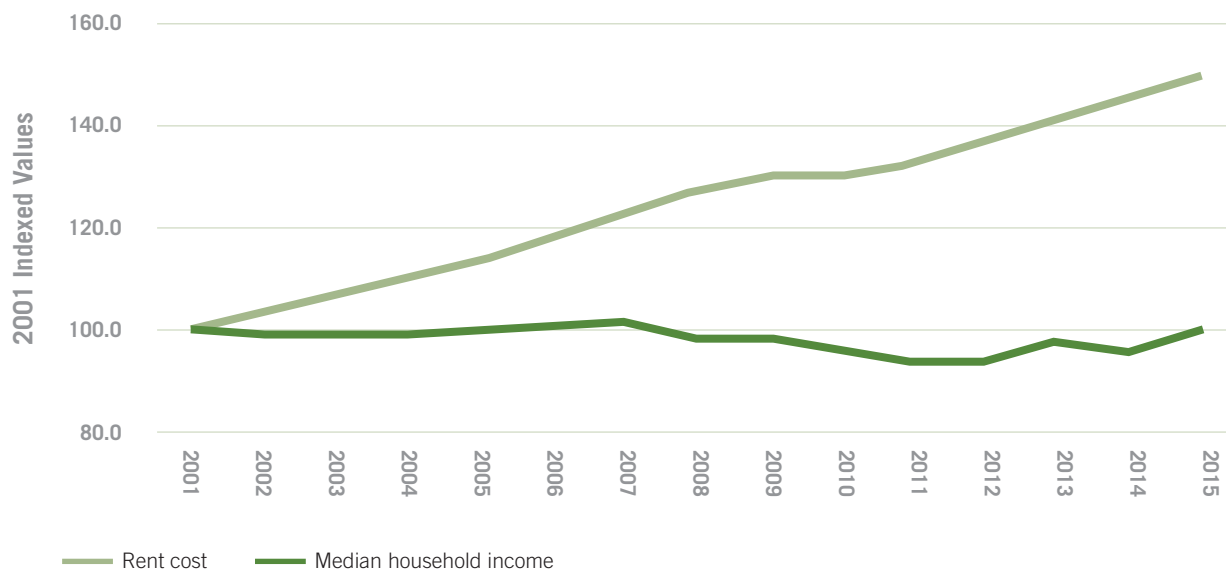
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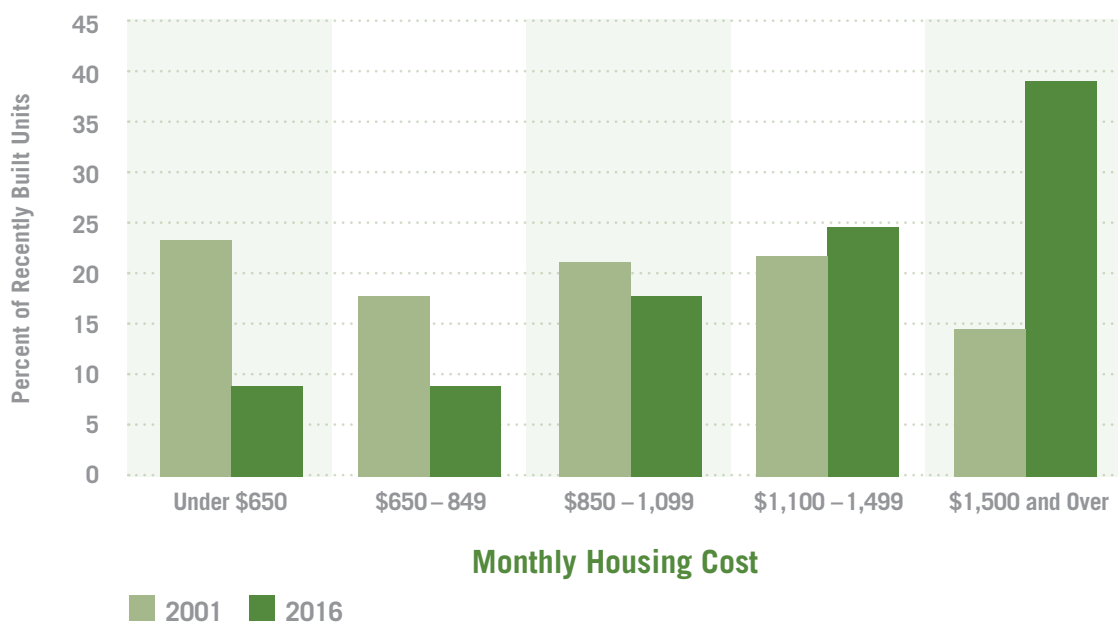
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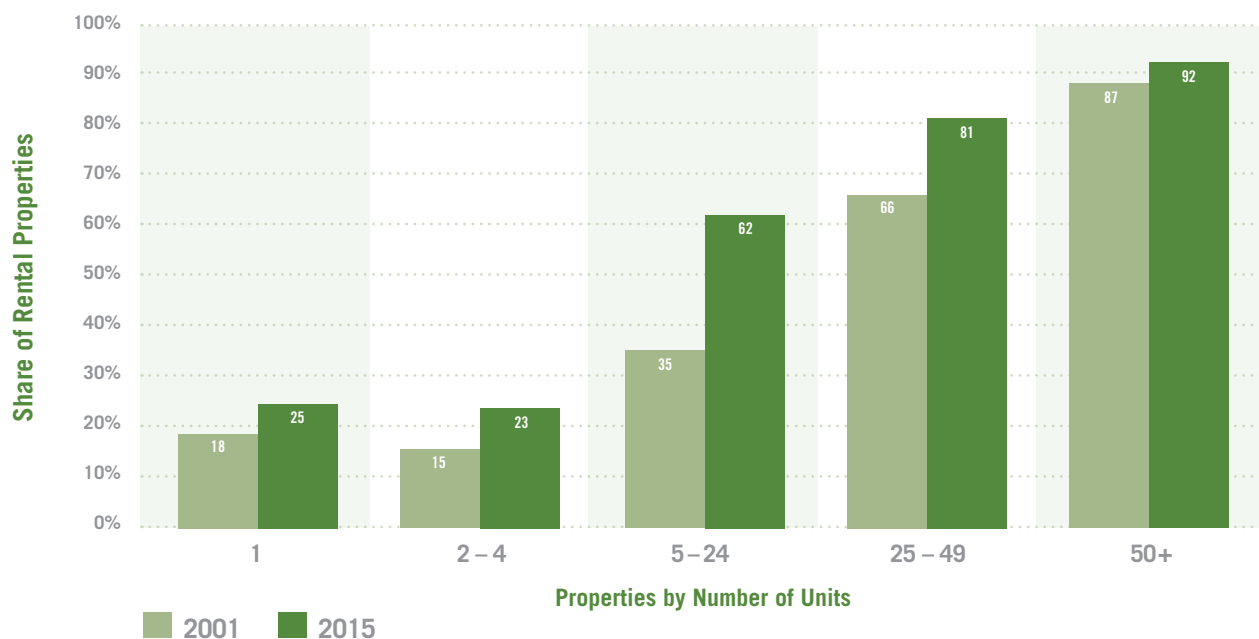
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Lift the Ban Coalition demonstration at the offices of Pangea Properties in Chicago. Photo Credit: Diego Morales

For decades, policymakers have invested in the stability and prosperity of homeowners while leaving the vast majority of renters on their own. But our collective future depends on the health, wealth, and well-being of renters too. As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote in a Supreme Court decision, “Housing is a necessary of life. All the elements of a public interest justifying some degree of public control are present.”

Implementing rent control on a widespread basis is not a panacea, but it is a critical and meaningful step forward. Rent regulations will curb the growing power

imbalance between landlords and tenants that is causing harm and immediately halt the pain, stabilize renters, and set us on a new path toward greater housing security and housing justice.

The stakes are enormous, and so is the upside: right now, 12.7 million renter households stand to benefit if policymakers say “yes” to rent control in the places where new policies are being debated. Rent control is the right choice in the face of our renter emergency. And it is the smart choice: when renters thrive, their families, communities, and local economies thrive.

<https://prospect.org/article/why-unions-must-bargain-affordable-housing-and-how>



Why Unions Must Bargain for Affordable Housing—and How

With housing costs gobbling up wage increases for union members and almost everyone else, labor must prioritize housing affordability.

Stephen Lerner & Christina Livingston February 19, 2019

For many millions of Americans, winning decent, safe, and affordable housing is an urgent necessity.

Housing costs are putting the squeeze on working families in urban and suburban settings alike, especially in communities of color that have long been targeted by predatory housing schemes. Since the financial crisis, housing affordability has grown even worse for workers, as gentrification, rising rents, and the corporatization of rental properties—both multifamily and single-family homes—displace communities of color and increase homelessness.

It's time for the American union movement to put the issue of affordable housing at the center of its quest to better the lives of American workers. In much of the country, the wage gains that its members may win in their contracts lag far behind the increasing costs they confront when they rent or try to purchase a home. By expanding the scope of the issues they bargain for, by making common cause with the many community organizations demanding more affordable housing, unions can play a crucial role in creating more such housing for their members and the broader public, in the process establishing new connections with a working class badly in need of unions.

IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING the 2008 recession, developers and private-equity landlords such as Blackstone and Cerberus seized the opportunity to buy up recently foreclosed homes in key markets heavily populated by working-class and poor people of color. Residents in these communities have seen landlords raise rents to unreasonable levels, while systematically neglecting building maintenance to force out working-class tenants and gentrify their neighborhoods. These problems are markedly worse in communities hammered by hurricanes, rising oceans, wildfires, and other climate change-induced weather. After each climate-related disaster, profiteers have moved in, looking for ways to build luxury properties to replace the affordable housing destroyed by storms. Communities in Puerto Rico, Houston, North Carolina, Florida, the New Jersey Shore, and New York's Rockaways have all witnessed this pattern.

Despite the acute shortage of affordable housing, national and local real-estate lobbies still advocate trickle-down housing solutions that mirror the failed theory of trickle-down economics. Finance and

real-estate companies, often in partnership with so-called “nonprofit housing champions,” have won bipartisan political support for the idea that we can “build our way out” by removing “red tape” and giving tax breaks and incentives for developers to create “market rate” housing (which most people can’t afford) and luxury housing with minimal affordable housing requirements.

These forces have also used their wealth and political power to beat back progressive efforts like California’s 2018 Proposition 10, a citizen-led initiative that would have allowed local governments to expand rent control to cover more tenants. Adding insult to injury, developers and private-equity firms have tapped the capital of public-employee pension funds and college endowments—using workers’ retirement savings to oppose progressive legislation, buy up housing, and price workers out of the cities where they work.

Unions have an undeniable interest in confronting the housing crisis.

Unions have an undeniable interest in confronting the housing crisis. Raises won through collective bargaining aren’t keeping up with ballooning housing costs. All too often workers whose wages have stagnated are forced out of their communities and into sometimes hours-long commutes to work, leading to increased transportation costs, declines in mental and physical health, worsened traffic congestion, deteriorating roads, and greater air pollution. Nor can unions help their members borrow their way into better housing: Many are already saddled with crushing student debt that leaves them little disposable income to apply to a mortgage.

Yet while racial justice, housing, and community groups have been leading the fight for affordable housing in recent years, unions have been slow to join the struggle. We argue that labor should prioritize housing justice, partner with groups that are fighting for it, and build a broader housing movement that addresses inequality and racial injustice. Not only will reducing the cost of housing prevent landlords, lenders, and developers from pocketing the lion’s share of collectively bargained raises from union members, but it will also weaken the political power of those groups—a necessity if unions hope to build meaningful power of their own.

IN RECENT YEARS, coalitions across the country have been using an innovative tool we can apply to the housing issue: Bargaining for the Common Good (BCG). Built around the idea that unions, in partnership with community allies, need to expand collective bargaining demands to include issues that go beyond wages and benefits to confront the structural forces that are driving inequality and worker disempowerment, BCG first emerged among public-sector unions in the aftermath of the financial crisis. BCG campaigns have seen unions bring community partners into the bargaining process to help define

the goals of bargaining and raise demands that confront structural inequalities and target the powerful financial interests that are invested in perpetuating them.



Recent months have witnessed an upsurge in strikes that include common-good demands, from the teacher walkouts of 2018, to AFSCME Local 3299's work stoppage at the University of California, and most recently, the teachers strike in Los Angeles.

Here, striking teachers rally in downtown LA. AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes

Recent months have witnessed an upsurge in strikes that include common-good demands, from the teacher walkouts of 2018, to AFSCME Local 3299's work stoppage at the University of California, and most recently, the teachers strike in Los Angeles. These and other struggles have helped shape BCG demands on issues from creating community centers and green spaces in inner cities, to ending the school-to-prison pipeline, to hiring from disadvantaged communities and ending predatory banking relationships. The BCG approach is now expanding into the private sector as the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the CWA-backed Committee for Better Banks organize around the idea that workers can play a central role in stopping banks from engaging in predatory lending practices.

Organizing and bargaining for common good on housing can build on and expand the work of developing broad labor-community alignments, and add a new dimension to the housing fight.

Why should community and tenant organizing groups and housing advocates include BCG campaigning in their housing justice fights?

- To win massive increases in affordable housing, they have to expand the base of housing advocates, and BCG campaigns bring in unions at a critical moment.
- BCG campaigns open up another arena in which to battle for affordable housing—the collective-bargaining table. Public-sector employers, universities, hospitals, and major corporations have not been confronted in contract negotiations or organizing campaigns with housing demands.
- The audacity of a well-run BCG fight, like the recent LA teachers strike, makes wins possible at a larger scale than we have been able to win through more-established housing campaign strategies.

Why should unions prioritize the housing issue? In addition to their obvious interest in preserving the value of the wage increases they win and ensuring their members can find affordable housing in the communities where they work, five reasons stand out:

- Fighting for affordable housing offers public-sector unions the opportunity to recruit and retain members in this post-*Janus* environment by addressing an issue vital to public workers' lives.
- The same entities with which unions negotiate collective-bargaining agreements play a role in making housing unaffordable. The private-equity giant Blackstone, for example, employs 500,000 workers and is also the nation's biggest landlord. Universities and hospitals where unions are either organized or organizing are often drivers of gentrification and destruction of affordable housing.
- Non-union corporations like Amazon and other "new economy" firms help drive rising rents and gentrification. By holding them accountable for their impact on housing, unions lay the groundwork for making them accountable for their labor policies as well.

Public pensions are currently investing workers' capital in companies that are destroying affordable housing.

Public pensions are currently investing workers' capital in companies that are destroying affordable housing. Redirecting that capital toward affordable housing will end this self-defeating practice.

- Focusing on housing will allow unions to partner with and support the work of racial and housing justice groups, recasting bargaining as not just for those covered by the contract but the entire community—strengthening the unions' ability to win economic and other gains at the bargaining table.

WHAT WOULD A NATIONAL Bargaining for Housing Justice fight look like and what themes should inform it? Right to the City frames housing as a "human right"; People's Action calls for "guaranteed housing"; the Partnership for Working Families asserts that housing is a necessity, not a commodity, and that everyone has a right to safe, affordable housing where they choose to live. These and other groups working on housing justice seek to lift up the idea that people's access to housing shouldn't be determined solely by "market forces." This must also be one of any campaign's central themes.

The campaign should include these six elements:

- **Expanding and connecting city, state, and national work.** In addition to robust statewide campaigns in New York and California for universal rent control, a growing consortium of groups is working on affordable housing all over the country. It is essential to ground labor's efforts by supporting and expanding the ongoing work in cities like Detroit, Minneapolis, and Chicago, and other places where housing is now a priority for organizers on the ground. In these cities, the crisis gives organizers an opportunity to expand their bases and to connect to other cities fighting similar fights. Linking work in

different geographies by focusing on common landlords, investors, developers, and banks that finance them offers the potential to magnify the work nationally and increase the power of local work.

- **Organizing tenant unions to negotiate directly with corporate landlords.** Private-equity landlords like Blackstone and Cerberus operate all over the country. Blackstone is the nation's largest single-family landlord and the largest owner of housing more generally, with investments in tens of thousands of single-family homes, apartments, manufactured home communities, and mortgages. A number of private-equity companies have been buying up manufactured housing parks and then jacking up the rent on the land and inflating other charges for people unable to move their homes to new locations. Unions know how to confront corporate giants like these. Both Hilton Hotel workers and office-building janitors have successfully faced off against Blackstone before. Tenants who live in homes owned by Blackstone and similar entities have also successfully confronted these behemoths. In recent years, a number of tenant unions have pulled off successful rent strikes. MHAction, an organization of mobile-home tenants in rural and exurban areas from California to Florida to New York, has won rent victories in Humboldt County, California, and is conducting an ongoing rent strike in Akron, New York. Tenant unions can and should negotiate over rent control, needed repairs, and a grievance procedure to address ongoing disputes. Labor unions and tenant unions could partner on national campaigns demanding that private-equity companies respect the rights of unionized and non-union workers alike, and agree to bargain with newly formed tenant unions. Together, tenant unions and labor unions could pressure endowments and public-employee pension funds that invest in private equity to divest from companies that won't respect the rights of their tenants and workers.



By holding large companies like Amazon accountable for their impact on housing, unions lay the groundwork for making them accountable for their labor policies as well. Here, members of the public voice support for a measure to tax large businesses like Amazon and Starbucks to fight homelessness during a Seattle City Council meeting. AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File

- **Fighting for universal rent control and state and local rent control laws.** Rent control is critical to protecting the existing stock of affordable housing. There is growing support and political pressure to pass and expand rent control policies around the country. While California's rent control initiative—Proposition 10—was defeated in 2018, it received nearly five million votes despite the misinformation spread by the landlord lobby and the more than \$70 million raised by its corporate opponents. The Proposition 10 fight nonetheless lifted up the importance of rent control as a critical tool to save affordable housing. Other fights must follow. In New York, there is now a statewide effort to strengthen rent laws. Legislation for rent control is also being introduced in Illinois, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and Orlando.

- **Targeting corporate landlords' reliance on tax breaks and public-pension-fund capital.** Corporate landlords benefit from huge local and federal tax breaks and get much of their capital from public-employee pension funds. Both the local and national campaigns should prioritize persuading pension funds to divest from corporate landlords, invest in affordable housing, and push to change laws that subsidize luxury development at the expense of working-class communities. This effort must demonstrate the long-term economic benefit of increasing affordable housing, even if initial returns are lower than investing in predatory corporate landlords. Continued investment in predatory housing schemes threatens the long-term stability of pension funds and undermines the interests of the workers whose retirement incomes they invest.
- **Experimenting with innovative community-centered solutions.** Community organizations and policy partners over the past years have developed many strategies to reverse the housing crisis. A major part of the campaign will be expanding these efforts nationally. This includes but is not limited to strengthening the Community Reinvestment Act, developing stable community land trusts and housing trust funds, and funding and expanding public housing. In 2018, the California-based community organization Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) was able to organize against a local predatory landlord and, working with the Oakland Community Land Trust, acquire that landlord's properties for the trust—thereby making the housing permanently affordable and avoiding yet another Bay Area eviction for profit. Such efforts need to be duplicated in other settings.
- **Working for federal housing legislation.** Introducing a federal housing bill that addresses rent control and massively expands funding for public housing will help nationalize the issue, setting the stage for housing justice as a central theme in the 2020 elections. Such legislation will also help highlight the role corporations are playing in driving up rents and challenge the idea that the solution to the crisis in public housing is to privatize it or dismantle it altogether. Making housing a key issue in 2020 will be critical to building momentum and support for increased affordable housing. We do not claim to offer a silver bullet by presenting these strategies, nor suggest that one initiative alone can address the overall housing crisis. Yet knitting together the elements of local and national housing fights, and illuminating how they interconnect, is crucial to figuring out where traditional housing groups and labor can work together to build the power necessary to address this issue.

Historically, unions have played a role in the development of affordable housing in cities with significant union membership.

THIS WOULD NOT BE the first time that unions have grappled with the housing issue. Historically, unions have played a role in the development of affordable housing in cities with significant union membership. In addition, unions are involved in a variety of ongoing efforts to fund and support affordable housing.

- The Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union developed cooperative housing units for their members in New York in the late 1920s. Subsequent to this, IBEW Local 3 built upon their model in the late 1940s and 1950s, developing 38 buildings with roughly 2,500 units. In 1951, 19 unions worked alongside community organizations to create the United Housing Foundation, building tens of thousands of cooperative housing units over the ensuing two decades.
- The AFL-CIO's Housing Investment Trust (HIT) fund has put Taft-Hartley pension funds to work in developing affordable housing and elderly housing, using an exclusively union workforce. Building upon the work of its predecessor, the Mortgage Investment Trust, the HIT has focused on Boston, Chicago, New York, Minneapolis-St. Paul, St. Louis, and the Bay Area, investing in more than 70,000 affordable units—some for designated groups of workers, such as teachers, others for that sector of the public priced out of much market-rate housing.
- In Seattle, locals of AFSCME, the Laborers, the Teamsters, SEIU, UAW, and UNITE HERE have worked together with community allies (including the Low Income Housing Institute, Transit Riders Union, Sierra Club, the Church Council of Greater Seattle, and the Coalition of Immigrants, Refugees and Communities of Color) as members of the U District Alliance for Equity and Livability, a coalition focused on ensuring that existing communities stand to benefit from the substantial growth and expansion of the University of Washington. The U District Alliance has won Seattle City Council support for a UW expansion plan that includes free transit passes for over 10,000 UW workers and 450 units of affordable workforce housing.
- The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) has proposed in its upcoming contractual bargaining that the city's Board of Education support rent control efforts and ensure the city enacts a real-estate transfer tax, a corporate head tax and a millionaire's tax to fund more affordable housing.

CENTRAL TO ANY LABOR EFFORT to advance housing justice must be the development of bargaining campaigns that expose the role key employers may play in making housing unaffordable and identify ways they can contribute to creating affordable housing. In order to do this, unions must ascertain whether the employer's expansion is eliminating affordable housing, whether its pension plan or endowment is invested in institutions (banks, private-equity firms) that are driving housing unaffordability, and whether the employer's board members are involved in business activities that lead to displacement and higher rent.

Unions must also prepare their members for this kind of innovative, community-centered campaign so members are engaged and committed. Tacking on community demands that members haven't invested

in doesn't work. If these demands are to be more than mere window dressing jettisoned when bargaining gets tough, the union must go deep with members long before negotiations begin to make clear how such demands could benefit them as both union members and members of the community.

Specific bargaining demands can then be tailored to employers of different kinds. Consider these possibilities:

- Universities and hospitals often eliminate affordable housing through expansion into surrounding neighborhoods. Unions could develop bargaining demands and bargaining campaigns that call on these institutions to finance and rebuild any affordable housing lost to expansion, develop workforce housing that allows workers to live closer to their jobs, and end support for or membership in business associations (such as the Chamber of Commerce or ALEC) that oppose rent control and affordable housing initiatives.
- Public-sector unions can expand their ongoing battle against privatization to fight the selling off of public property to private developers—often with additional tax subsidies that undermine government's revenue streams. These unions could demand that public property be preserved for community land trusts and affordable housing, insist that governments secure workforce housing that allows their workers to live in the communities they serve, and use their pension funds to advance affordable housing.
- Amazon's announcement that it is canceling its HQ2 in New York in the face of community and labor protests over the \$3 billion in subsidies the company demanded shows how a community-labor alliance can flip the script. Future Amazon-targeted campaigns can link demands for better working conditions with demands that Amazon invest in affordable housing and other community benefits. This is already happening in Minneapolis and St. Paul. There, the Atwood Center has demanded that Amazon contribute millions of dollars to local initiatives determined by community groups in the Twins Cities' East African community, which provides the majority of Amazon's warehouse workers in the region.
- Banks have long played a major role in undermining affordable housing through foreclosures, redlining, and other forms of discrimination. As part of a campaign to organize bank workers, CWA and the Committee for Better Banks are exposing practices that force bank workers into selling products that aren't in their customers' best interest. Bank workers could demand the right to refrain from peddling predatory mortgages.
- As part of bargaining, unions can demand that employers stop investing in and partnering with private equity firms that destroy jobs and affordable housing.

Some might argue that it is foolhardy for unions to challenge corporations on multiple fronts beyond wages and benefits. To the contrary, we believe that an unambitious strategy condemns unions to a continued slide toward irrelevance, and that it was precisely the boldness of the teachers', hotel workers', and other campaigns over the past year that led to their successes. Only by engaging in campaigns that confront the unjust structures that increasingly dominate every part of workers' lives can unions hope to rebuild power and transform the country. Organizing and bargaining for housing justice will be central to that task.



Climate Inequality: Forgotten History



Even though you and I are in different boats, you in your boat and we in our canoe, we share the same River of Life. What befalls me, befalls you. And downstream, in this River of Life, our children will pay for our selfishness, for our greed, and for our lack of vision.

*Oren Lyons
United Nations, 1992*

Dr. Cecilia Martinez
Shalini Gupta
Reprint, 2013



Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy

Introduction

Climate change has been put forth largely as a technological problem. That is, it is the coal plants, gas-guzzling vehicles and energy-intensive buildings that are the issue. The solutions being proposed are largely technological as well: carbon capture, nuclear power, “clean” coal technology, wind turbines, solar power, and geo-engineering. While perhaps useful from a particular perspective, those proposing these technological solutions rarely address the very real political and economic roots of climate change.

Instead of a strictly techno-fix orientation toward climate change, we suggest a more honest, and ethical understanding of the problem. In fact, climate change is the symptom of a larger crisis that has been in the making for a long period of time, but was ignored for the sake of wealth creation and economic prosperity for a privileged few. The problem is that all along this historical journey to plentitude, the realities of extreme social and economic inequality — both domestically and internationally were deemed acceptable by those benefitting from the wealth creation.

A Brief History: Creating Climate Change

The wealthiest nations, according to the Human Development Report, are responsible for “about 7 out of every 10 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that have been emitted since the start of the industrial era” (1). Today, in the U.S. the average person is responsible for about 18 metric tons (1 metric ton = 1 tonne) of CO₂ per year (2). In contrast, those countries on the bottom of the U.N. Human Development Index emit less than 0.1 metric ton per year (3). This is directly attributable to the energy and economic infrastructure across societies. The human side of the climate calculus is equally stark. It is estimated that more than one-quarter of the population of developing countries, or 1.22 billion people, are living in extreme poverty making less than \$1.25 a day (4). According to the World Development Indicators (2008), 2.4 billion of the world’s population lives on less than \$2.00 per day (5). Clearly, Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain, two leading researchers/activists from India, were correct when they stated that global warming occurs in an unequal world (6).

For some, the solution to these vast inequalities is to promote globalization and market liberalization (that is, the industrialized country model), to nearly every region in the world. Translated, this means using the market to solve the economic and environmental problem. Even as the issue



of rising CO₂ is dominant on the international climate agenda, the World Bank's International Financial Corporation (IFC) increased its lending for fossil fuel projects 165 percent in FY 2008. On the whole, the World Bank Group increased its fossil-fuel lending by 60 percent in the same year (7). Yet, these solutions and the condition of extreme inequality continue to be obfuscated as many in the industrial world dare not ask the critical question: emissions for whom and for what purpose? Can we really regard greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted from subsistence farmer's livestock equivalent in nature to GHGs emitted for sports cars and 10,000 square foot single family homes? By focusing the conversation strictly on the global quantity of GHGs without regard for social realities, we reinforce inequality.

Of course, the idea that somehow, our development model ought to be transferred to the rest of the world only works if we forget history -- forget the degradation of air and water; the commodification of resources; the removal of Indigenous peoples from their homelands and appropriation of their lands; and the exploitation of people and their work.

The Forgotten History

Industrial development in the United States happened because of fossil fuels. The use of coal and petroleum was accompanied by exploitation of people and nature. On the human and environmental side, fossil fuel development went alongside the exploitation of people as slaves and low-wage labor; clearing of forests; removal of Indigenous populations; and environmental degradation resulting from heavy pollution of land, water and air. It changed the world.

As the politics of U.S. climate policy continues to unfold, the historical realities of unequal development are demonstrating that this nation is not yet ready to proverbially confront its own demons. While there is a certain proportion of the population in the United States, and among the global elite, that enjoy the fruits of highly resource-intensive energy and agricultural systems, the fact is that the social and physical infrastructures for such benefits were built on the backs of many. In nearly every sector, from housing and transportation to forestry and mining, the expansive growth in economic wealth has its dark underbelly.

It is in fact prophetic, that 150 years after the *intended* eradication of the Indigenous commons in the United States, the same philosophy underlies the elitist approach to climate change. Speaking of the primitive nature of Indigenous peoples, then Senator Henry Dawes proclaimed, "unless



some system is marked out by which there shall be a separate allotment of land to each individual [...] you will look in vain for any general casting off of savagism. Common property and civilization cannot co-exist” (8). With the transformation of nature from commons to commodity, the devastation that fell upon Native people and the ecosystem is all too clear. The expropriation of nature from Indigenous peoples was deliberate. By mid-19th century, 420 million acres of land (or 22 percent of the continental area) had been taken from Indian tribes (9). Clear cutting forests (now referred to as “carbon sinks”) for agriculture and mining of energy resources became the symbolic and material representation of modern civilization. Nature was re-constructed as natural resources, and these resources on Indigenous lands were immediately put into production. By the beginning of the 20th century, the Oklahoma territory alone produced “approximately 130 billion barrels of oil annually, and 39 corporations were extracting an average of 1.5 million tons of coal per year in the Choctaw nation” (10).

Ironically, no one is immune from the destructive tendencies of this development path. Yesterday’s beneficiaries become today’s victims. Agriculture and farming has been captured by big corporate agribusiness. Between 1940 and 1970, farmers went from 18 percent to fewer than 5 percent of the U.S. labor force. Anuradha Mittal of the Oakland Institute writes, that in “the 1930s, 25 percent of the U.S. population lived on the nation’s 6 million farms. Today America’s 2 million farms are home to less than 2 percent of the population. There are more people behind bars than behind the wheel of a tractor! Small family farms have been replaced by large commercial enterprises, with 8 percent of U.S. farms accounting for 72 percent of sales” (11). The trend continues: “between 1994 and 1996, about 25 percent of all U.S. hog farmers, 10 percent of all grain farmers, and 10 percent of dairy farmers went out of business” (12). In the globalized economy, small-holder farmers receive a miniscule portion of the international price of the commodity.

Marketing Nature

As the question of what to do in a post-Kyoto international policy arena continues to be debated, the implementation of market-based “flexibility mechanisms” remains a cornerstone of developed countries’ policy agenda. Déjà vu. For Indigenous peoples, the establishment of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) is a reminder that climate change is now the vehicle for global disenfranchisement and exploitation. The intent of REDD is to assist developing countries in reducing deforestation by creating a market of carbon credits generated



from activities that keep forests standing (13). Now proud owners of carbon credits, governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations who purchase these activities can claim the credits as reductions in their emissions inventories or trade them in an artificially created carbon market. This new market is created precisely because industrialized countries like the U.S. have denuded their landscape. Forests, on a global scale, provide for the livelihoods of 240 million people and this sector accounts for more than 8 percent of developing countries' GDP. This includes access to fishing, biomass for cooking and heat, and subsistence foods. Yet, global forest cover has dropped by at least 20 percent since the times of modern agricultural systems, with much of the historic deforestation having occurred in industrialized countries. Furthermore, while the forest area of industrial countries has increased over the past three decades it has declined by almost 10 percent in developing countries (14). This trend underlines the importance of how the global conversation around reforestation is framed and the necessity of acknowledging historic versus recent deforestation when formulating climate policy around land use. It is for these reasons that the Indigenous Environmental Network pursued eliminating REDD as an option. It is also why the Indigenous Peoples Global Summit on Climate Change produced the Anchorage Declaration, which in part states: "All initiatives under Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) must secure the recognition and implementation of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, including security of land tenure, ownership, recognition of land title according to traditional ways, uses and customary laws and the multiple benefits of forests for climate ecosystems, and Peoples before taking any action." There is no doubt that reducing the destruction of forests is a valued goal. The issue is not whether or not to save the forests. Rather, the question is whether, given historical experience, the market is the proper vehicle for their global preservation and maintenance, and for the well-being of communities who rely on forests for their livelihood.

Urban Inequality

The inequity of our social and environmental history in urban development cannot escape the equality lens either. For this, it is instructive to look at the U.S. during the decades following World War II, when the economic engine of the nation was expanding at unprecedented levels. As we are now aware, this economic boon was accompanied by an equivalent increase in the emissions of climate inducing greenhouse gases. The infrastructure of two of today's major greenhouse gas emitting sectors — the building sector and the automobile-based transportation system — were built with massive public and private investment. Through the Federal Housing Administration, more than 35 million home mortgages and 47,205 multifamily mortgages were insured since



1934 (15). A massive system of roads and highways were also constructed, and in the process created metropolitan sprawl and converted prime agricultural land into suburban development. Undoubtedly, the post-War boom demonstrated extraordinary economic capacity but the environmental consequences of this public and private investment have become all too apparent.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the building sector comprises more than 38 percent of the country's GHG emissions (16), and 28 percent (17) of its energy consumption, while the transportation sector accounts for approximately one-third of its GHG emissions and 34 percent (18) of its energy consumption. Between 1949 and 1970 energy for transportation doubled and residential consumption nearly tripled. This environmentally unsustainable infrastructure and the social investment that made it possible, was also responsible for substantial inequalities.

As the opportunities for some Americans expanded, and the Suburban house-with-a-picket fence ideal came within the grasp of the burgeoning middle class, other communities were deliberately segregated from these same opportunities. Blinded by the need for more is better, and newer is improved, public programs greatly expanded investment in new housing, diverting capital out of older cities and rural communities. Codes prohibited neighborhood “integration”(19) through racial covenants, redlining and housing regulation so that by the 1970s, less than 2 percent of publicly subsidized mortgages went to people of color (20). Redlining — where banks literally drew red lines around areas that, by their estimation, were not deserving of capital investment — further diverted much needed investment from city neighborhoods to suburban homeowners and businesses (21). The national highway system in city after city was planned and engineered directly through low-income and communities of color, not only destroying their homes and businesses, but the social networks that made them vibrant and resilient. In the end, this carbon-based transport system was also used as an effective segregation mechanism. Present today are the ramifications of policies that, in a critical way, created a high energy, carbon intense *and* class and racially segregated human settlement pattern.

What does this have to do with climate change? The issue of energy burden and vulnerability within poorer communities is a structural issue that will require structural solutions. Income plays a significant role in determining energy consumption and greenhouse gas contributions both within and across countries. In the U.S., the lowest-income households consume only a fraction of their upper income counterparts, and the energy consumption-GHG contribution gap is widening. Given these capital deprivation and historical segregationist policies, it should be of



no surprise that communities of color are now living in drafty inefficient housing that is highly energy intensive and which results in ever-increasing energy burdens.

While the suburban middle class may consume higher overall levels of energy due to the size of their homes, and therefore produce larger carbon footprints, low-income families actually pay *more* for using less. On average, about 16 percent of a low income family's income goes toward paying for energy, compared to the general population average of 5 percent (22).

Formulating a Comprehensive and Just Climate Policy Framework

At both a domestic and international level, there is extreme inequality in terms of who contributes to climate change and who benefits from the highly GHG-intensive development patterns. When we talk about climate change and equality, and issues of low-income communities and the poor, we need to replace the traditional charity model that conveniently forgets history. We must shift from viewing the government response to assist poor communities as a “handout” and subsidies to the wealthy and corporations as “development.” This requires acknowledging the historical structural policies that have created much of the disparities in development, energy use and greenhouse gas emissions we see today.

Many of the dominant climate policy proposals perpetuate the status quo. New climate solutions focus on technology-based greening. These include replacing coal with nuclear; replacing low-gas mileage SUVs with energy-efficient vehicles; and building large-scale wind and solar farms. Unfortunately, what remains is the unequal access to transportation; mining and degradation of Indigenous lands; energy intensive industrial agriculture; and new financial growth opportunities for large corporate investors. Drawing from the market-based policy regime, these responses to climate change generally rely on the mythic free trade rhetoric or the technofix approach. They also mask the true social and economic costs that belies these myths. While each American averages between 17 and 20 metric tons of CO₂ per year (depending on whether we are in a recession or not) to maintain the domestic economy, most have no knowledge of this fact. Our societal obligation has been denigrated to that of consumer, and we are largely unaware of the resource degradation, pollution, human toll and other structural ramifications of our purchases on other members of society.



If climate change is truly to be addressed, the extreme energy dirty economy that is based on wasteful and polluting activities benefiting the few, must be replaced with a green economy benefiting the many. Effective climate policy requires actions that result in real benefits at the local community level in housing, jobs, sustainable livelihoods and community infrastructure. This will require a realignment of public dollars (at all levels) towards localized initiatives and a move toward policy structures that are less market- and commodity-based and more regulatory and commons-based. Nobel Laureate economists now acknowledge, what Indigenous people have always known, that commons-based governance is more effective and successful in managing shared spaces and resources (23).

At their base, future climate proposals must acknowledge the historically unequal nature of past energy and infrastructure policies, and they must be evaluated through a justice lens. We must also remember that the two are intimately linked: the production of climate change and creation of social inequality went hand in hand; thus robust, long-lasting solutions to climate change must inherently be equitable in order to be sustainable. In current climate policy discussions, there are gaps between climate policy that incorporates social equality and climate policy that is acceptable by mainstream environmentalists. Justice advocates are often admonished not to challenge environmental policy with the phrase, “Don’t sacrifice the good for the perfect.” Unfortunately, as history has proven, those making the sacrifice within the space between our ideals of the “perfect” and the “good” are Indigenous peoples, people of color and the poor.



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How Workers Can Demand Climate Justice

TODD E. VACHON, GERRY HUDSON, JUDITH LEBLANC & SAKET SONI

SEPTEMBER 2, 2019 <https://prospect.org/article/how-workers-can-demand-climate-justice>

A Bargaining for the Common Good approach to the climate crisis



Jake May/The Flint Journal-MLive.com/AP

A crew digs out and replaces lead service lines in Flint, Michigan, 2018. Lead in public water supplies is a tremendous health hazard to residents in frontline communities from Newark to Flint to the Navajo Reservation and beyond.

As Greenland experiences a record melt, Europe recovers from record-breaking heat, California braces for another fire season, and Puerto Rico still struggles to rebuild nearly two years after Hurricane Maria, it is becoming ever clearer how profoundly the climate crisis is changing everything, and how imperative it is that we act *now* if we hope to avert an existential disaster. The latest report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finds that if greenhouse gas emissions continue at the current rate, the atmosphere will warm by as much as 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit above pre-industrial levels by 2040. This will submerge coastlines, intensify droughts and wildfires, increase the frequency and strength of extreme storms, and worsen food shortages and poverty. The report also states that these dire consequences will come to pass well within the lifetime of most readers of this article.

We no longer have time to continue the “jobs versus environment” debate that has distracted us from acting with the boldness this moment requires. Saving our deteriorating environment *is the job* of our time. The Green New Deal resolution introduced to Congress by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey has spurred a wave of activism. And while it is important to channel that energy into electing a president and Senate that will treat the crisis as a crisis, it's equally important that we fight climate change locally, from below.

Workers, people of color, Native peoples, and the poor have borne and will continue to bear the brunt of this crisis if we don't find the means to avert it. We must forge alliances that can fight for climate justice and a sustainable and resilient future. That will require working together across movements and organizations toward a common purpose.

Fortunately, we have a tool at hand that can help us build those alliances and organize those fights locally. It is called Bargaining for the Common Good.

Bargaining for the Common Good (BCG) is an innovative way of building community-labor alignments, bringing unions and allies together, that go beyond the limits to traditional collective bargaining and jointly shape bargaining campaigns that advance the mutual interests of workers and communities alike. It developed over the last decade out of the struggles of teachers in St. Paul, Chicago, and Seattle; out of the fights of public employees in San Diego and Los Angeles; and in other settings where unions partnered with their community allies to advance a common agenda through direct-action protests—including strikes—and campaigns that targeted the power structures of their communities.

The strike by members of the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) in January 2019 provides a great example of what BCG looks like in action. The union tackled issues that were central to the working-class communities the school district serves. The teachers won commitments from the district to reduce class sizes, increase investment in the schools, hire school nurses and full-time librarians, reduce standardized testing and random searches of students, provide more green spaces for students, and launch a dedicated hotline for immigrant families who need legal assistance.

These “common good” bargaining demands were crafted in collaboration with parents, students, and allied community organizations like the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) and the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), many months before the union contract expired. The union carried these demands into the streets as it took its members on strike against the austerity agenda of some members of the district board and district Superintendent Austin Beutner (a former investment banker with no prior experience in education). By striking over this list of community-generated demands and with the support of a dense network of allies, the teachers moved bargaining away from the union-versus-taxpayer framework typically used to characterize such public-worker contract disputes and into one in which the UTLA was the spearhead of a community effort to reshape L.A.'s broader priorities.

As the UTLA example reveals, BCG campaigns seek to increase investment in underserved communities and confront structural inequalities—not simply to agree on a union contract. To date, BCG campaigns have been launched around issues of education, racial justice, public services, immigration, finance, housing, and privatization. But they are in many ways perhaps best suited to taking on the overarching existential issue that intersects with and often exacerbates all of these other issues: human-caused climate change.

In a recent [article](#), Nato Green of SEIU Local 1021 called for unions to bargain over climate change. Green argued that the introduction of the Green New Deal resolution by Ocasio-Cortez and Markey opened the possibilities of constructing a common good framework through which to confront the climate catastrophe. We agree.

There are three areas in which BCG campaigns can help us link to existing climate justice work on the local level and move action agendas that are not dependent on Washington:

- *Climate change mitigation*—reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with a just transition for workers, in order to slow global warming;
- *Environmental equity*—pursuing an equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens in order to eradicate the legacy of environmental racism; and
- *Just recoveries*—putting the interests of communities and workers before private profits in the wake of climate disasters, such as extreme storms and wildfires, and economic disasters, such as mine and plant closures.

BCG campaigns in these three areas can effectively link local efforts to national campaigns and begin to make the Green New Deal happen locally, from the ground up, while we also continue to fight for the change that is needed at the federal level.

Demanding Climate Change Mitigation

In the last decade, as the movement to shift away from fossil fuel consumption has gathered momentum, many unions; networks like the Labor Network for Sustainability, Trade Unions for Energy Democracy, and the BlueGreen Alliance; and local coalitions like the Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs have pushed for climate mitigation efforts. They've demanded cuts in carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions, though at the level of the federal government, these efforts have largely been blocked by the fossil fuel corporations, Wall Street, and other powerful actors.

At the same time, however, states such as California, and cities like New York, have taken steps to address the problem, including establishing emissions reductions targets that are in line with climate science. There is ample reason to move aggressively at the state and local level in conjunction with national efforts to establish a Green New Deal. In local settings, BCG campaigns can challenge the purveyors of climate catastrophe head-on. In partnership with local environmental organizations and climate change activists, unions can develop demands and organize contract campaigns that seek reductions in emissions by their employers, which include large public and private institutions, such as universities, hospitals, and schools. Unions can demand the formation of joint labor-management committees on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction. Such committees can be tasked with assessing the employer's emissions profiles and developing climate action plans to reduce GHG emissions, including enforceable targets. When fossil fuel facilities are closed, climate and community groups can play a role in converting those jobs into jobs that repair the damage to their communities. Instead of relying on politicians who may be too fearful to establish enforceable targets, workers can persuade, or if need be, force their employers to do so.

Unions and allies can also demand divestment of pensions and endowments from fossil fuel companies and move those funds instead into socially responsible investments. Other demands might include the expansion of public-transportation options, the free provision of mass transit to students or employees, and monetary or other incentives for workers who walk, bike, or use public transportation to commute to and from work. Provisions can be made for some workers to telecommute part-time to reduce unnecessary emissions on days when work can be completed remotely.

The demands of particular unions will likely be shaped by the sector in which they operate and their geographical location. For example, transportation workers might demand the electrification of bus fleets. Teachers and public employees can demand that public buildings be made energy-efficient and have publicly owned rooftop solar installed. Private-sector workers can demand electric-vehicle charging stations be installed in employee parking lots and garages and that 401(k) retirement plans include fossil-free investment options—or that all the company's plans be fossil-free.

Unions in Canada, parts of Europe, South Africa, and Australia have already begun to make climate mitigation demands at the bargaining table. A BCG approach in the United States would start with unions and local community groups working together to develop and articulate a set of demands that serve the interests of workers and the communities where they live and work. In this way, workers can become a positive force in the struggle to reduce GHG emissions.

Demanding Environmental Equity

As we have witnessed in the aftermath of Katrina, Sandy, Maria, and other extreme storms, working-class communities are the primary victims of climate catastrophe. Among the most severely impacted are those who are already most harmed by our economic and political systems: women and people of color. The government has also been less responsive when disasters hit these communities, as we have seen in Puerto Rico, New Orleans, and elsewhere—not surprisingly, considering the well-documented history of environmental racism and disinvestment in low-income communities. BCG can help expose and target the racial bias of climate injustice.

A recent study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, which explored “pollution inequity”—the difference between the environmental health damage caused by a racial-ethnic group and the damage that group experiences—found that air pollution exposure in the United States is disproportionately caused by consumption of goods and services by the non-Hispanic white majority, but disproportionately inhaled by black and Hispanic minorities. On average, non-Hispanic whites experience a “pollution advantage” of about 17 percent less air pollution exposure than is caused by their consumption, while blacks and Hispanics on average bear a “pollution burden” of 56 percent and 63 percent excess exposure, respectively, relative to the exposure caused by their consumption. The story is similar in Indian Country, where climate profiteers continue their efforts to despoil tribal lands with such oil pipeline projects as the Dakota Access and the Keystone XL. The majority of Superfund sites caused by fossil fuel extraction are located on tribal and public lands. Indigenous peoples are the only communities who have collectively owned lands that they govern without support for remediation. Those who’ve lived downstream from the capitalist machine have suffered the ill effects of polluted land, water, and air since the earliest days of industry.

Unions and community partners can make environmental justice issues a centerpiece of their bargaining campaigns to secure an equitable distribution of environmental *burdens*. Lead in public water supplies is a tremendous health hazard to residents in frontline communities from Newark to Flint to the Navajo Reservation and beyond. In these communities, workers and community activists can together demand the repair or replacement of poisoned water pipelines not just in the workplace, but in the entire community. They can demand the cleanup of the groundwater and aquifers that feed those pipelines. Unions and community members near bus depots and other public-transportation hubs can demand the electrification of vehicles in order to reduce asthma-causing particulate matter pollution as well as GHG emissions. Demands over shift start and end times and parking-lot locations can be used to reduce traffic congestion and the resultant dangerous air quality so common in communities adjacent to industrial areas and highways.

Following the lead of the United Steelworkers and some local labor-environmental coalitions like the New Jersey Work Environment Council, unions in manufacturing, mining, and chemical plants can demand the right to know the names and health impacts of all chemicals used within the plant and demand that the same information be shared with the local community. Joint labor-management-community committees can be established to monitor and reduce pollution levels. When a less toxic chemical can be used in production processes, it should be mandated, regardless of cost differences.

Unions and community partners can also demand an equitable distribution of environmental *benefits*. For example, workers can demand more green spaces in urban communities or the construction of bike paths or walking trails. To ensure the economic benefits of the traditionally pollution-heavy energy and manufacturing sectors are shared equitably after they are made greener, unions and community partners can demand that a percentage of the new hires be from the local community where the facilities are located. Toward this goal, a union apprenticeship program can be established to create a jobs pipeline for local residents where fossil fuel industries have closed. In Indian Country, BCG should endeavor to build broad solidarity with tribal communities to ensure the rightful role of the federal government in regulation and remediation of environmental issues.

Demanding Just Recoveries

Each year, climate disasters and industrial disasters, such as pipeline leaks, upend millions of lives, and cost billions of dollars in damage. And in 2018 alone, there were 14 separate “billion-dollar disasters” that cost communities one billion dollars or more in damage. This year, experts are already forecasting a more-than-active hurricane season. Meanwhile, California communities brace for fires, and Midwest communities for floods—all part of the “new normal.”

Hurricane Katrina taught us that disasters are not experienced equally—due in part to the way our nation’s relief efforts are designed. Disaster relief and recovery dollars, including FEMA aid, are tied to race, homeownership, and education. Wealthy and disproportionately white men make money during recoveries; poor black and brown people lose money. Under the cover of disaster, wealth is redistributed upwards.

Indeed, climate catastrophes provide opportunities to create even more inequality. After Hurricane Katrina, for example, the federal government suspended the Davis-Bacon Act and affirmative action in contracting, while New Orleans decertified the teachers union—all under the cover of disaster recovery.

But workers and communities have opportunities as well. After Katrina, and since, movements for just recovery and equitable rebuilding have emerged. After Superstorm Sandy hit New York, the New York State Nurses Association contributed labor and resources to helping neighbors. After Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, the teachers unions did the same. The impulse to provide aid and alleviate immediate suffering can be translated into long-term engagement that can lead to more-egalitarian structural change.

Communities seeking to rewrite the rules of disaster response to achieve greater resilience and equity can begin by drafting a “disaster recovery bill of rights” to inform and help move “contracts for recovery” for workers and local communities. These contracts for recovery could be drafted collaboratively by local unions in the public or private sector in partnership with community organizations and pushed for adoption in contract bargaining campaigns and at the municipal, county, or state level of government. They could include a set of protections for workers and community members, such as the right to living wages for cleanup workers and the right to return home for residents without eviction or job loss. They could establish local water or land use codes by local entities. They could also help to ensure a just transition for workers who face job loss and communities that are economically devastated by plant or factory closures. Fighting for these new rules for recovery locally through BCG campaigns could coincide with and reinforce ongoing union legislative efforts to expand the social safety net, including more public money in unemployment insurance and food stamps, new social supports such as universal health care coverage, and a public jobs program, as well as protections of tribal sovereignty—much-needed before a disaster, and all the more necessary after. These new rules—or disaster recovery rights—could also reinvent housing, transportation, education, environmental impact monitoring, and health care systems to serve working-class and tribal communities.

Building Climate Solidarity

Although there has been a decline in density, unions still bargain in several key sectors of the economy. By broadening labor’s standing demands for worker health and safety to include climate justice concerns, BCG campaigns can open an important new front for challenging the financial institutions and corporate actors that are driving the dual crisis of climate and inequality.

Bringing environmental and racial justice, tribal communities, and community partners into the union bargaining process can help labor build worker power, revitalize the U.S. labor movement, and address broader societal problems that have not been resolved through legal or governmental

processes. It will also allow for deep education and engagement with union members. By organizing locally and nationally in unions—across all sectors and industries—and using the collective bargaining process as a powerful tool, we can transform the discourse and ultimately the policy of the labor movement and generate support for important efforts such as the Green New Deal. Most important, we can flip the narrative and make workers and communities not the victims of climate catastrophe, but the protagonists in the struggle for a just, democratic, and truly sustainable world.

Reflections, Connections and Notes to Remember

36 Ways Unions Have Advanced Justice for Workers

Weekends

All Breaks at Work, including your Lunch Breaks

Paid Vacation

FMLA

Sick Leave

Social Security

Minimum Wage

Civil Rights Act/Title VII (Prohibits Employer Discrimination)

8-Hour Work Day

Overtime Pay

Child Labor Laws

Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA)

40 Hour Work Week

Worker's Compensation (Worker's Comp)

Unemployment Insurance

Pensions

Workplace Safety Standards and Regulations

Employer Health Care Insurance

Collective Bargaining Rights for Employees

Wrongful Termination Laws

Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967

Whistleblower Protection Laws

Employee Polygraph Protect Act (Prohibits Employer from using a lie detector test on an employee)

Veteran's Employment and Training Services (VETS)

Compensation increases and Evaluations (Raises)

Sexual Harassment Laws

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

Holiday Pay

Employer Dental, Life, and Vision Insurance

Privacy Rights

Pregnancy and Parental Leave

Military Leave

The Right to Strike

Public Education for Children

Equal Pay Acts of 1963 & 2011 (Requires employers pay men and women equally for the same amount of work)

Laws Ending Sweatshops in the United States

Working » September 2, 2016

Why Labor and the Movement for Racial Justice Should Work Together

BY [Maurice Weeks and Marilyn Sneiderman](#)

The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) has made tremendous strides in exposing and challenging racial injustice, and has won real policy victories. The policies, while often imperfect, are a testament to the strength of the organizing and activism of the moment. Not coincidentally, this uprising comes at a time when income and wealth inequality are at peak levels and the economy for most black people looks markedly different than the economy for their white counterparts.

Just as we are in a critical moment in the movement for racial justice, we are in a critical moment for the right to unionize. Unions, which have been a major force for economic justice for people of color in the past 50 years, have been decimated to historically low levels.

Labor should work alongside the Movement for Black Lives, a coalition with more than 50 organizations, to usher in a radically new economic and social order. The path won't be easy. But recent history has shown that one of the ways to get at this new reality is through union bargaining. Consider the example of Fix L.A.

Fix L.A. is a community-labor partnership that fought to fund city services and jobs alike, using city workers' bargaining as a flashpoint to bring common good demands to the table. The coalition started after government leaders in Los Angeles drastically cut back on public services and infrastructure maintenance during the Great Recession. The city slashed nearly 5,000 jobs, a large portion of which had been held by black and Latino workers. Not only did these cuts create infrastructure problems—like overgrown and dangerous trees and flooding—but they also cost thousands of black and Latino families their livelihoods.

Fix L.A. asked why the city was spending more on bank fees than on street services, and demanded that it renegotiate those fees and invest the savings in underserved communities.

What was the result of this groundbreaking campaign?

The creation of 5,000 jobs, with a commitment to increase access to those jobs for black and Latino

workers, the defeat of proposed concessions for city workers and a commitment from the city to review why it was prioritizing payment of bank fees over funding for critical services in the first place!

Bargaining for the common good

Fix L.A. may seem novel, but the context is no different from many places. We have seen massive disinvestment from public services in a way that disproportionately affects black people. This structurally-racist disinvestment is often driven by the corporate interests that bankroll elected officials' campaigns and by Wall Street actors that use their influence over public finance to push an austerity agenda. Everywhere you look, public officials are making a choice between paying fees and providing critical services.

Chicago Public Schools paid \$502 million to banks in toxic swap fees at the same time that it was slashing special education programs and laying off teachers to close a budget deficit. Detroit raised its water rates and paid \$537 million in Wall Street penalties, setting the stage for mass water shutoffs when tens of thousands of poor residents of the overwhelmingly black city could not afford the higher water bills.

Wall Street and other corporations don't hesitate to profit off of and perpetuate disinvestment in communities of color, and too often we forget to look up the food chain to see that at the other end of community crises there are rich bankers and billionaires lining their pockets. Campaigns, like Fix L.A., that involve direct actions targeting banks, hedge funds, corporations and billionaires are effective.

This sort of organizing can be hard. In order to isolate workers from their broader communities, the other side has done a terrific job of narrowly defining the scope of bargaining as wages and benefits. In many states, labor laws prohibit public sector workers from bargaining over issues that concern the welfare of the broader community or the quality of the services they provide.

The theory of "bargaining for the common good" seeks to challenge this status quo. As articulated by Joseph McCartin of Georgetown University's Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, bargaining for the common good has three main tenets: 1) transcending the bargaining frameworks written in law and rejecting them as tools for the corporate elite to remain in power; 2) crafting demands between local community groups and unions at the same time and in close coordination with each other from the very beginning; and 3) embracing collective direct action as key to the success of organizing campaigns.

These may seem like simple ideas, but they stand in complete opposition to the way the power elite expects union bargaining to be done. Therein lies their power.

Therein also lies the opportunity for unions to partner with the Movement for Black Lives. For all of

their complicated racial histories, unions are some of the largest organizations of black people in the country. About 2.2 million black Americans are union members—some 14 percent of the employed black workforce.

That's a huge number of black people who are already members of organizations with the capacity to organize and mobilize. And these black workers, like all black people in America, face real challenges of structural economic racism in almost all aspects of their lives. Their communities have been underfunded; their schools are being dismantled; they face massive poverty and are under economic assault; and they regularly encounter police violence.

Stronger together

Widening the scope of bargaining in Los Angeles led to real wins for the city's black and Latino communities. The rest of the labor movement should take note. Imagine the power that could be added to the Movement for Black Lives if unions, recognizing the trauma that systematic racism wreaks on their membership, brought solutions that have been elevated by the Movement for Black Lives to the bargaining table in negotiations with employers ranging from the City of Baltimore to private equity giant Blackstone.

But unions cannot do this unilaterally and expect unconditional support from the black community.

Unions must make the effort on the front end to build a real relationship with Movement for Black Lives groups and members, and partner with them in developing common good bargaining demands that start to go on the offense against Wall Street and the structurally-racist economic power structure. There are groups of people organizing for racial justice under the banner of the Movement for Black Lives near every union local in the country. The onus is on labor leaders and rank-and-file union members to reach out to those groups and start to build a strong relationship where one does not exist. This process will not be easy, especially because of the history of racism that plagues unions, especially police unions. But the truth remains that there is a real opportunity to leverage the power of both movements to win real gains for black people and other people of color through a strong partnership.

It is exciting to imagine potential bargaining demands major unions could undertake alongside racial justice organizations. For example, they could demand that their employers make a commitment to job training programs to strengthen the pipeline for black workers; city and state workers could demand progressive taxation measures that raise funds from corporate actors to fund schools and services in black communities; teachers could demand school districts enact restorative justice policies to stem the school-to-prison pipeline; hospital workers could bargain for targeted health care access programs in communities of color; retail workers could demand that their employers "ban the box" and let the formerly incarcerated work. The list is almost infinite.

Bargaining for racial justice is a radical idea and will not be easily won. It will require concerted direct

action targeting the real decision makers in both the public and private sectors that have a vested interest in keeping racial inequities in place. The Movement for Black Lives has proven that it can execute effective and creative direct actions backed by solid demands. They are also innovating creative tactics that move beyond traditional marches and picket lines to new types of disruptive actions that make power holders directly confront those they are harming. By combining the vision and militant tactics of the Movement for Black Lives with the membership and resources of the labor movement, we can usher in a more just and equitable society.

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Where do you stand?

Read the descriptions for Actor, Ally and Accomplice in each of the following categories. Circle the description that best matches where you currently stand.

	Actor	Ally	Accomplice
 Protesting	Attend marches, vigils that are “comfortable” and perhaps even fun. Includes most events led by White people.	Organize protests that interrupt “business as usual” and force other white people to confront / recognize the comfort we live with. If these actions are not forcing other White people to experience some discomfort, they are comparable to those in the Actor category. The exception could be getting other White people who normally don’t attend such events to show up for anything.	Engage in or support civil disobedience organized by Black People and People of Color. One of the most important things that can be done as an Ally and Accomplice is be cautious on how you take up space at direct actions and protests. Ask yourself these series of questions before and while attending such events: • Am I following what the leadership is asking of me? • Am I directing media to designated Black, Brown or Indigenous People? • Am I being cautious not to control or criticize the actions of Black, Brown, or Indigenous Peoples? • Am I checking other White People for not being good accomplices?
 Your Money	Donate to political candidates or organizations that don’t have an explicit racial justice mission or that are not led by directly impacted individuals	Donate money explicitly to organizations with an explicit racial justice mission, led by directly impacted individuals. Also donate to bail funds for Black, Brown and Indigenous activists. Use your economic capital to support businesses owned by people of Color. Boycott companies owned by or working with Trump and other White supremacists. Be public (ex. on social media) about your actions to encourage other White people to join you to amplify your impact Educate yourself on issues such as reparations, returning stolen land, and Black, Brown and Indigenous Labor and their relationship to capitalism. Use this as a lens to help guide your actions involving money.	Raise funds and bundle money for organizations with an explicit racial justice mission, led by directly impacted individuals. Raise money publicly, but donate more silently, as this is not for boosting your ego. Find ways of using your privilege and access to capital and funnel that to Black, Brown, and Indigenous grassroots organizations and peoples.

	Actor	Ally	Accomplice
 Your White Communities	Reach out to other White people in your life (family members, old friends, distant social media connections) to engage them in conversations about racism, Whiteness, etc. Bonus points for seeking out and engaging (White) Trump voters in your personal networks.	Organize and engage White friends, family members, neighbors to take group / collective action (actions that are in the Ally or Accomplice category) to amplify your impact. Participate in organizations that engage White people in the struggle to advance racial justice (like SURJ - Showing Up for Racial Justice)	Coordinate (and pay for) organizations that conduct anti-racism trainings to facilitate their workshops within your school, church/synagogue, neighborhood, workplace. Purposefully disrupt White spaces, meaning, create discomfort in places where other White people and <i>Whiteness</i> would otherwise exist in comfort. White community is a support pillar of White supremacy.
 Your Advocacy	Make phone calls and send emails (at the city/state level, with school districts, etc.) advocating on behalf of policies being put forth by racial justice organizations.	Attend meetings, hearings, and other public events to advocate in person on behalf of policies being put forth by racial justice organizations.	Diversify your social media. Follow radical/progressive Black, Brown, Indigenous figureheads and leaders in the movement. Then do your best to share and amplify their voice with your white social circles. This is a great way to culture shift ideas, art, and media. In quoting Amanda Gelender: <i>"Amplifying voices of color to your network is an important part of solidarity work. We are not the experts on race, but we have an opportunity to learn from so many experts and boost their influence."</i>
 Your Job	Any job that doesn't somehow challenge institutionalized racism.	A job that is service-oriented towards helping people from marginalized backgrounds. Be extremely cautious of these jobs, because they can easily have very negative impacts on the communities they espouse to serve. Too many organizations slip into a dominant role, and only end up enabling/ harming disenfranchised communities instead of alleviating the oppressive conditions that prevent the community from empowering themselves. Use your job position to help Black, Brown, and Indigenous People. Ex: purposefully seek out Black and Brown people to interview for jobs, and use Black caterers, or Indigenous speakers.	A job that involves organizing internally and externally to fight against institutionalized racism and white supremacy and/or that supports these efforts. In other words, your work should focus on alleviating the oppressive conditions that prevent disenfranchised communities from empowering themselves. The reality is ANY job you already have or choose to apply for, you can use your position to become a collaborator with Black, Brown and Indigenous Peoples; and thus a traitor to White supremacy.
 Your Time / Volunteerism	Volunteer at a service-oriented organization (tutoring, meal delivery, collecting canned goods, clothing drives)	Volunteer at a local racial justice-focused organization.	Join an organization with an explicit aim of naming and disrupting racial injustice

	Actor	Ally	Accomplice
 Electoral Politics	Vote for Democrats. Exception could be voting for candidates of color in elections where a White person and a person of Color are running for the same position from the same political party.	Donate to campaigns of progressive people of Color running for political offices. Donate to campaigns of local progressive politicians in other cities/States who are trying to unseat incumbent Republicans/conservatives.	Actively fundraise for and campaign on behalf of progressive/radical politicians (especially non-White people), including those running in local elections (school boards, transportation agencies, housing authorities, city councils). Volunteer with and fundraise for organizations led by directly impacted individuals to support voter registration efforts within their communities. Don't tell Black, Brown and Indigenous People how or whom to vote for. Use your energy and resources to organize White communities to support progressive/radical politicians and policies.
 Confronting Violence, Intimidation, and Micro-Aggressions	Use proximity (stand close and watch) when you observe any form of intimidation, harassment, or violence against a person of Color by another white person or police officer.	Film any such confrontations. Shout as a way to try to stop such a confrontation. Engage White people in conversation about their actions (perhaps focusing on intent v. impact) when you observe or hear about racialized microaggressions.	Physically intervene in such confrontations.
 Your Children	Ensure that the reading material you provide for your children explicitly addresses issues of justice and equity. Expose children to books, movies, and TV that feature people of Color as protagonists and heroes. Enroll in public, district-run schools, not private or charter schools.	1) Take your young (age 0-16) children to events where adults (people of Color and other white people) are speaking about racism, violence against communities of Color, white supremacy, etc. 2) Talk with your children about these issues explicitly, including where they/you fit into these systems including the privileges they occupy. 2) Organizing and educating other people's children to develop critical consciousness (like a great teacher might do)	Take <u>your</u> children to events, or organize events, where facilitators explicitly work with kids to explore intersection between race, power, privilege, etc.
 Your Self-Education	Read, watch films, attend events, to gain greater knowledge of white privilege, white supremacy, institutionalized racism, the prison industrial complex, etc. Study and deal with your white guilt and white fragility.	Take action beyond your own learning by engaging with other White people. Start conversations and share your learning with other white people in your life, especially those you are closest to (family members, children, neighbors, colleagues). Go to workshops and trainings (see resources).	Organize other white people to study these issues together, attend events as a group, invite speakers to meet with your group.

	Actor	Ally	Accomplice
 Your Art	Consume (enjoy, purchase) art, in all forms, produced by non-white people. Could include attending performances, choosing specific movies and documentaries, etc. (See Self-Education above).	Create visual art, poetry, films, websites, social media campaigns, etc., that address what you see as the role for white people in struggles for racial justice	Organize and fund opportunities for people from directly impacted communities to share their art.
 Your Home	Put up signs in your windows, on your lawn, inside, like a Black Lives Matter poster	Make your home available to organizers who need safe, accessible, welcoming spaces to meet, plan actions, etc.	Provide free housing (do you have an extra bedroom?) to activists, organizers, or educators of Color

Actor

The actions of an Actor do not disrupt the status quo, much the same as a spectator at a game, both have only a nominal effect in shifting an overall outcome. Such systems are challenged when actors shift or couple their actions with those from Allies and/or Accomplices.

The actions of an Actor do not explicitly name or challenge the pillars of White supremacy which is necessary for meaningful progress towards racial justice.

There is an excellent quote by Lilla Watson on need for Actors to shift to Accomplices: *"If you have come here to help me, you're wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."*

Ally

Ally is typically considered a verb - one needs to act as an ally, and can not bestow this title to themselves.

The actions of an Ally have greater likelihood to challenge institutionalized racism, and White supremacy. An Ally is like a disrupter and educator in spaces dominated by Whiteness.

An Ally might find themselves at a social gathering in which something inappropriate is being talked about. Instead of allowing that space to incubate Whiteness, the Ally wisely disrupts the conversation, and takes the opportunity to educate those present.

Being an Ally is not an invitation to be in Black and Brown spaces to gain brownie points, lead, take over, or explain. Keep in mind that as White people, whether as an Actor, Ally or Accomplice, we are still part of the 'oppressor class'. This means we have to be very creative in flipping our privilege to help Black, Brown and Indigenous peoples.

Allies constantly educate themselves, and do not take breaks.

Francesca Ramsey's Video: [5 Ways of Being an Ally](#)

Accomplice

The actions of an Accomplice are meant to directly challenge institutionalized racism, colonization, and White supremacy by blocking or impeding racist people, policies, and structures.

Realizing that our freedoms and liberations are bound together, retreat or withdrawal in the face of oppressive structures is not an option.

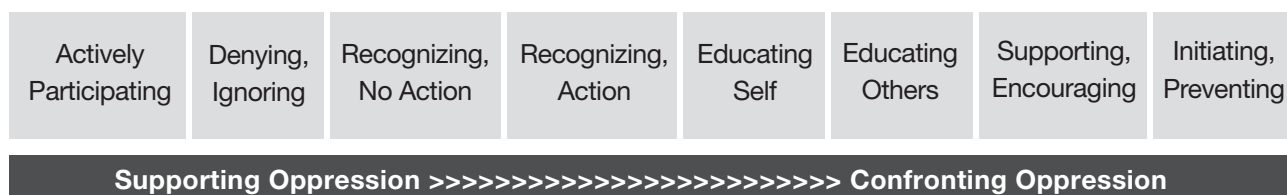
Accomplices' actions are informed by, directed and often coordinated with leaders who are Black, Brown First Nations/Indigenous Peoples, and/or People of Color.

Accomplices actively listen with respect, and understand that oppressed people are not monolithic in their tactics and beliefs.

Accomplices aren't motivated by personal guilt or shame.

Accomplices build trust through consent and being accountable - this means not acting in isolation where there is no accountability.

THE ACTION CONTINUUM



Actively Participating: Telling oppressive jokes, putting down people from target groups, intentionally avoiding target group members, discriminating against target group members, verbally or physically harassing target group members.

Denying: Enabling oppression by denying target group members are oppressed. Does not actively oppress, but by denying that oppression exists, colludes with oppression.

Recognizing, No Action: Is aware of oppressive actions by self or others and their harmful effects, but takes no action to stop this behavior. This inaction is the result of fear, lack of information, confusion about what to do. Experiences discomfort at the contradiction between awareness and action.

Recognizing, Action: Is aware of oppression, recognizes oppressive actions of self and others and takes action to stop it.

Educating Self: Taking actions to learn more about oppression and the experiences and heritage of target group members by reading, attending workshops, seminars, cultural events, participating in discussions, joining organizations or groups that oppose oppression, attending social action and change events.

Educating Others: Moving beyond only educating self to questions and dialogue with others too. Rather than only stopping oppressive comments or behaviors, also engaging people in discussion to share why you object to a comment or action.

Supporting, Encouraging: Supporting others who speak out against oppression or who are working to be more inclusive of target group members by backing up others who speak out, forming an allies group, joining a coalition group.

Initiating, Preventing: Working to change individual and institutional actions and policies that discriminate against target group members, planning educational programs or other events, working for passage of legislation that protects target group members from discrimination, being explicit about making sure target group members are full participants in organizations or groups.

Adams, M., Bell, L., & Griffin, P. (1997). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2013/11/things-allies-need-to-know/>

So You Call Yourself an Ally: 10 Things All ‘Allies’ Need to Know



November 8, 2013 by [Jamie Utt](#) Source: [Very Smart Brothas](#)

As happens every time that I read something from [Black Girl Dangerous](#), I recently found myself snapping, nodding, and yelling out “YES!” while reading a piece from Mia McKenzie. Her article “[No More ‘Allies’](#)” made me profoundly uncomfortable – *which is a good thing*. I was uncomfortable because it was a call to reflection about my own “ally” identifications and my own work. To start, read her piece. Seriously. It is awesome. Beyond that, though, it’s time for those of us who fashion

ourselves “*allies*” or as “*currently operating in solidarity with*” to have a conversation.

More and more, I am seeing precisely what McKenzie is describing – people of identity privilege who are identifying as “*allies*” almost as if it is a core part of their identity. What’s worse, I keep seeing people respond to criticism about their oppressive language or problematic humor with, “*But I’m an ally!*” For instance, I recently saw an acquaintance (*who notably identifies as Straight*) post a pretty problematic joke about Gay men on Twitter. Aside from expressing my discontent in a tweet, I reached out to her in a private message to explain why I took issue with her joke. Her response, though, was to say, “*Jamie, you know that I’m an LGBT ally! I speak out for Gay rights all the time! This was clearly just a joke.*”

And therein lies the problem.

The identification of “*ally*” was so prominent in this person’s mind that she couldn’t even hear criticism of how her actions were out of alignment with her professed desire to be an “*ally*!” So “*allies*,” let’s talk.

Credit Where Credit is Due

Before I say anything else, though, I should note something important about this article. None of what I am writing here are my ideas. They are drawn from Mia McKenzie’s piece, from conversations I’ve had with people of many different marginalized identities, from theorists, novelists, bloggers – but none of them are inherently mine. They are the ideas of the People of Color, Queer-identified people, women, differently-abled people, poor folks, Jewish people, Muslim people, Atheists, undocumented citizens, and others.

And noting this is important.

Because part of being an ally means giving credit where credit is due and never taking credit for the anti-oppressive thinking, writing, theorizing, and action of the marginalized and oppressed. Which I guess leads me to my point.

10 Things Every ‘Ally’ Needs to Remember

There are lots of ways to be a great “*ally*” – and innumerable ways to be a terrible one. But it’s not rocket science. There are simple things you can keep in mind and do in order to be a better person “*currently operating in solidarity with*” the marginalized or oppressed. And while this list is not comprehensive, it’s definitely somewhere to start.

1. Being an Ally is About Listening

As McKenzie puts it, “*Shut up and listen.*”

As someone striving to be an ally, the most important thing we can do is listen to as many voices of those we’re allying ourselves with as possible. Now, does this mean that we should assume that just because, say, one Person of Color said it that it’s the absolutely truth that we should parrot? Absolutely not. If that were the case, then [Don Lemon](#) would clearly speak for all Black people. But listening to a diversity of marginalized voices can help you understand the core of any given issue. And it also can help you understand why the opinion of your one Lesbian friend is not necessarily the best defense of your use of heterosexist language.

2. Stop Thinking of ‘Ally’ as a Noun

Being an ally isn’t a status. The moment that we decide “*I’m an ally,*” we’re in trouble.

As [Mia McKenzie](#) puts it:

“‘Currently operating in solidarity with’ is undeniably an action. It describes what a person is doing in the moment. It does not give credit for past acts of solidarity without regard for current behavior. It does not assume future acts of solidarity. It speaks only to the actions of the present.”

3. ‘Ally’ is Not a Self-Proclaimed Identity

Really, being an ally is not an identity at all, but it’s vitally important that we understand that we cannot simply *decide* we are allies. Being in solidarity is something we can strive for, but in the end, it is the choice of those we are attempting to ally ourselves to as to whether they trust us enough to call us an ally. Additionally, just because one person considers me an ally, that does not mean that every person of that marginalized identity considers me an ally or should! Trust is something earned through concerted action, not given simply because of our actions in a particular arena or context.

4. Allies Don’t Take Breaks

The thing about oppression is that it is constant. Those who are oppressed and marginalized in our society do not get to take breaks and respites. Thus, if you truly want to act in solidarity, you cannot simply retreat into your privilege when you just don't want to engage. This is one of the hardest things for me in being an ally. Sometimes I just don't have the energy to respond to my super classist uncle or to that racist comment from a Facebook friend. I don't want to get into an endless discussion about how they "*didn't mean it that way*" or how I'm "*just being too PC or sensitive*." But People of Color have no choice but to resist racism every single day of their lives. Women have no choice but to weather the shit storm of misogyny every day of their lives. Differently abled people have no choice but to deal with and respond to ableism every day of their lives. And in the end, part of the privilege of your identity is that you have a choice about whether or not to resist oppression. And falling back into your privilege, especially when you are most needed, is not being in solidarity.

5. Allies Educate Themselves Constantly

Standing in solidarity with a marginalized or oppressed person or people means that we need to know our shit. We need to educate ourselves about the issues facing those with whom we want to be allied and about the history of said oppression. One of the most important types of education is listening (see #1), but there are endless resources (*books, blogs, media outlets, speakers, YouTube videos, etc.*) to help you learn. What you *should not* do, though, is expect those with whom you want to ally yourself to teach you. That is not their responsibility. Sure, listen to them when they decide to drop some knowledge or perspective, but do not go to them and expect them to explain their oppression for you.

6. You Can't Be an Ally in Isolation

To a certain degree, it is entirely possible for someone to stand in solidarity with a group of marginalized people even if they have no relationships with said people. At a surface level, you can support the cause and advocate in your community for equal rights or speak out against oppression. But solidarity in total isolation lacks one vital thing: accountability. This is particularly important for people of privilege, but really any person who wants to act in solidarity needs to recognize that allyship cannot exist in isolation. This is not to say that your "*one Black friend*" legitimizes all of your actions and self-professed "*allyship*." In fact, some of the most important accountability comes from relationships that are *not* friendships. But without a diverse community to engage with and without other activists to hold you accountable, your understanding of "*solidarity*" can very quickly become paternalism or, worse, outright recreation of oppression.

7. Allies Don't Need to Be in the Spotlight

I can't help but acknowledge the irony of my writing this one, as my work *literally* puts me in the spotlight in some conversations about oppression, but hang with me. True solidarity means supporting the work of those you're allying yourself to, not solely creating a platform for your own voice and work. Sure, your privilege may afford you the spotlight sometimes, and there are times when you can use that spotlight to talk to people who share your identity (see #8), but whenever possible, allies turn that spotlight away from themselves and to the voices that are so often marginalized and ignored. In my own work, I work hard to ensure that my work is grounded squarely in the scholarship and lived experiences of those with whom I ally myself, and I work hard to share or abdicate the spotlight to those with whom I attempt to act in solidarity whenever possible. Perhaps I fail more than I succeed in this realm, but it is something I must continue to keep central in my praxis.

8. Allies Focus on Those Who Share Their Identity

As a person who benefits every single day from White privilege, it is not my place to engage People of Color in a discussion about what is or is not racist. That's not solidarity. However, I have a very specific responsibility in engaging conversations about racism: *talking to other White people*. Beyond listening, arguably the most important thing that I can do to act in solidarity is to engage those who share my identity. As a man, I have a specific responsibility to engage men in building a more positive masculinity and standing up to misogyny and sexism. As a White person, I have a responsibility to stand up to racism and work to bring White people into the anti-racist conversation in a way that they can hear and access. As an able-bodied person, I have a responsibility to call out examples of everyday ableism.

9. When Criticized or Called Out, Allies Listen, Apologize, Act Accountably, and Act Differently Going Forward

The single most important thing I've ever been told about being an ally came from a professor of Color who profoundly impacted my life:

"If you choose to do social justice work, you are going to screw up – a lot. Be prepared for that. And when you screw up, be prepared to listen to those who you hurt, apologize with honesty and integrity, work hard to be accountable to them, and make sure you act differently going forward."

There are few lessons more important for "allies" to understand than this one. When you screw up and damage trust and hurt and anger those you have allied yourself to, listening is important, but it's not enough. Apologizing earnestly is important, but it's not enough. Working hard to make sure you are accountable to those you've wronged is important, but it's not enough. In addition to all of these, you have a responsibility to learn from the mistakes you've made and to do better going forward.

10. Allies Never Monopolize the Emotional Energy

One of the things that I love about the [White Privilege Conference](#) is its commitment to accountable racial caucusing spaces where White folks can meet with other White people, holding them accountable as they process their feelings or learning and where People of Color can process without the intrusiveness of White privilege and oppression. In my experience, the White caucus can get pretty emotional, but the facilitators are trained and ready to hold people accountable to their privilege and process. I've also heard that the various People of Color caucuses can be pretty emotional, charged with anger and sadness and hope and community. That space is vital. Virtually every year, though, there is a White person who doesn't get the need for these spaces. A few years back, a White woman burst into one of the People of Color caucuses, throwing herself on the floor, crying, asking for forgiveness, bemoaning her Whiteness and her role in oppression.

And I honestly think this woman would have considered herself an "ally."

One of the more common and egregious mistakes supposed "allies" can make is to expect emotional energy from those to whom we ally ourselves. To once again quote McKenzie, "[T]he people who experience racism, misogyny, ableism, queerphobia, transphobia, classism, etc. are exhausted."

The last thing they need is our monopolizing of the emotional energy to only further their exhaustion. Surely allies need emotional support, but it must come from other allies. Don't expect marginalized people to do the emotional work for you or feel sorry for you or forgive you.

Solidarity is vitally important to any movement toward social justice, but it also runs the tremendous risk of recreating the very power structures of oppression that it purports to challenge. Sure, the above list is a start, but as someone striving to work in solidarity, I recognize that I should never have the final word.

So please, what would you add?

What else must we who seek to be allies remember if we hope to advance rather than hold back the struggles for justice?

Antiracist Checklist for Whites adapted from Dr. John Raible's (2009) checklist for antiracist white allies.

Part 1

- _____ I demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the issues of racism.
- _____ I continually educate myself about racism and multicultural issues.
- _____ I recognize my own limitations in doing antiracist work.
- _____ I raise issues about racism over and over, both in public and in private.
- _____ I realize "it's not about me." I avoid personalizing racial issues as they are raised in conversation.
- _____ I can identify racism as it is happening.
- _____ At meetings, I make sure antiracism is part of the discussion.
- _____ I can strategize and work in coalition with diverse others to advance antiracist work.
- _____ I attend to group dynamics to ensure the participation of people of color.
- _____ I support and validate the comments and actions of people of color and other allies (but not paternalistically)
- _____ I strive to share power, especially with people from marginalized groups.
- _____ I take a personal interest in the lives and welfare of individuals of different races.
- _____ I use my position as a white "insider" to share information with people of color that they may not have access to.
- _____ I hold high expectations for people of color and for white people.
- _____ I reach out to initiate personal contact with people of different races.
- _____ I listen carefully so that I am more likely to understand the needs of people from marginalized groups.
- _____ I understand enough about people of color's perspectives that when relevant, I can share these perspectives when people of color are not present.
- _____ I can accept leadership from people of color as well as from white people.
- _____ I work side by side with people of different races on tasks, projects, and actions.
- _____ I debrief with people of color to give and get "reality checks" and affirmations after meetings and interactions.
- _____ I readily accept—with no explanations or "proof" necessary—a person of color's position or perception.
- _____ I can be present emotionally when individuals need to express feelings about racism.
- _____ I discuss race and racism with both whites and people of color, and in these discussions I take people of color's perspectives seriously.
- _____ I take risks in relating to people across lines of difference.
- _____ I demonstrate shared values with people from various communities, for example, impatience with the pace of change, anger at injustice, etc.
- _____ I know the private lives of families and friends who are people from different backgrounds.
- _____ I can relax, socialize, and feel at ease with people of color and with whites.

Part 2

The following are some **problem areas** where individuals sometimes get stuck. These were developed specifically for white individuals. Do any of these apply to you?

- _____ I am not clear on the labels people of color prefer to use to identify themselves.
- _____ When people of color point out racism as it is happening, I feel personally attacked.
- _____ I rely on people of color for education about my own (and institutional) racism.
- _____ I use meeting time to establish my antiracist credentials (e.g., recounting stories about how I “marched in the Sixties” or about how many friends of color I have).
- _____ It is important to me to point out examples of “reverse racism” when I see them.
- _____ I have been told I act in a racist manner without knowing it.
- _____ I speak for people of color and attempt to explain their positions.
- _____ I view myself as a mediator between people of color and other whites.
- _____ I see my role as interpreting the behavior of people of color for other whites.
- _____ I prefer to spend time and energy dealing with my personal feelings and issues rather than moving the antiracist agenda forward.
- _____ I intellectualize about the struggle rather than live it daily.
- _____ I wait for people of color to raise white people’s awareness.
- _____ I know fewer than five individual peers of color intimately (i.e., adults, not children, or family members, or employees, or co-workers).

While a checklist may seem simplistic, many will find that these guidelines are very difficult to put into action and take on-going commitment and practice. We will make mistakes but cannot give up.

Dr. Raible explains his list by stating, “The main goal is to develop relationships of solidarity, mutuality, and trust, rooted in a praxis of intentional antiracist thought, action, and reflection. When I observe people consistently taking the above steps (in Part 1), I recognize that they ‘get it’ when it comes to race and racism.”

What do I say when...? What do I do then...?

Mitigative-----→Transformative

Event	Recognize	Respond/Redress	Cultivate/Sustain
An educator has a Black Lives Matter banner hanging in their classroom. A group of parents are upset and complaining to you that they do not want their children “indoctrinated” while they are at school.			
You are in the lunchroom and overhear students using homophobic slurs toward each other. The students appear to be friends and “playing”. A colleague is sitting at the table with the students and not addressing the situation with the students.			
The basketball team prays together before each game. You share your concern with the coach that this may make players feel they are obligated to pray with the team which would be an infringement on their freedom to practice or not practice the organized religion of their choosing. The coach tells you that players can opt out if they choose, so it is not a concern.			
A colleague teaches a unit that reinforces white supremacy ideology along with dominant narratives about power and privilege. When you discuss with the colleague your concerns with the overt and hidden messaging of the unit, your colleague reminds you that students need to know this content to be traditionally prepared for college. Your colleague is uninterested in making shifts to the content.			

Racial Equity Impact Assessment

What are Racial Equity Impact Assessments?

A Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) is a systematic examination of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. REIAs are used to minimize unanticipated adverse consequences in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans and budgetary decisions. The REIA can be a vital tool for preventing institutional racism and for identifying new options to remedy long-standing inequities.

Why are they needed?

REIAs are used to reduce, eliminate and prevent racial discrimination and inequities. The persistence of deep racial disparities and divisions across society is evidence of institutional racism--the routine, often invisible and unintentional, production of inequitable social opportunities and outcomes. When racial equity is not consciously addressed, racial inequality is often unconsciously replicated.

When should it be conducted?

REIAs are best conducted during the decision-making process, prior to enacting new proposals. They are used to inform decisions, much like environmental impact statements, fiscal impact reports and workplace risk assessments.

Where are they in use?

The use of REIAs in the U.S. is relatively new and still somewhat limited, but new interest and initiatives are on the rise. The United Kingdom has been using them with success for nearly a decade.

EXAMPLES OF RACIAL JUSTICE EQUITY IMPACTS

Equity and Social Justice Initiative

King County, WA

The county government is using an Equity Impact Review Tool to intentionally consider the promotion of equity in the development and implementation of key policies, programs and funding decisions.

Race and Social Justice Initiative

Seattle, WA

City Departments are using a set of Racial Equity Analysis questions as filters for policy development and budget making.

Minority Impact Statements

Iowa and Connecticut

Both states have passed legislation which requires the examination of the racial and ethnic impacts of all new sentencing laws prior to passage. Commissions have been created in Illinois and Wisconsin to consider adopting a similar review process. Related measures are being proposed in other states, based on a model developed by the Sentencing Project.

Proposed Racial Equity Impact Policy

St. Paul, MN

If approved by the city council, a Racial Equity Impact Policy would require city staff and developers to compile a "Racial Equity Impact Report" for all development projects that receive a public subsidy of \$100,000 or more.

Race Equality Impact Assessments

United Kingdom

Since 2000, all public authorities required to develop and publish race equality plans must assess proposed policies using a Race Equality Impact Assessment, a systematic process for analysis.

Racial Equity Impact Assessment **GUIDE**

Below are sample questions to use to anticipate, assess and prevent potential adverse consequences of proposed actions on different racial groups.

1. IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS

Which racial/ethnic groups may be most affected by and concerned with the issues related to this proposal?

2. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Have stakeholders from different racial/ethnic groups—especially those most adversely affected—been informed, meaningfully involved and authentically represented in the development of this proposal? Who's missing and how can they be engaged?

3. IDENTIFYING AND DOCUMENTING RACIAL INEQUITIES

Which racial/ethnic groups are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the issues this proposal seeks to address? How are they affected differently? What quantitative and qualitative evidence of inequality exists? What evidence is missing or needed?

4. EXAMINING THE CAUSES

What factors may be producing and perpetuating racial inequities associated with this issue? How did the inequities arise? Are they expanding or narrowing? Does the proposal address root causes? If not, how could it?

5. CLARIFYING THE PURPOSE

What does the proposal seek to accomplish? Will it reduce disparities or discrimination?

6. CONSIDERING ADVERSE IMPACTS

What adverse impacts or unintended consequences could result from this policy? Which racial/ethnic groups could be negatively affected? How could adverse impacts be prevented or minimized?

7. ADVANCING EQUITABLE IMPACTS

What positive impacts on equality and inclusion, if any, could result from this proposal? Which racial/ethnic groups could benefit? Are there further ways to maximize equitable opportunities and impacts?

8. EXAMINING ALTERNATIVES OR IMPROVEMENTS

Are there better ways to reduce racial disparities and advance racial equity? What provisions could be changed or added to ensure positive impacts on racial equity and inclusion?

9. ENSURING VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Is the proposal realistic, adequately funded, with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement. Are there provisions to ensure ongoing data collection, public reporting, stakeholder participation and public accountability?

10. IDENTIFYING SUCCESS INDICATORS

What are the success indicators and progress benchmarks? How will impacts be documented and evaluated? How will the level, diversity and quality of ongoing stakeholder engagement be assessed?

Racial Equity Tool for Affiliate Staff

Introduction: A Racial Equity Tool is used for making decisions with deliberate attention to racial justice, equity, and inclusion. It provides a guide and protocol for race- and equity-conscious decision-making that is thoughtful, transparent, participatory and systematic. It can be used for a variety of decisions, such as assessing existing or proposed policies, practices, plans, programs, budgets, etc.

Why use this tool? This tool can help us to align our words and actions with our values, priorities and aspirations, and to:

- Consciously, actively, and continually prioritize racial justice,
- Eliminate, reduce, and prevent harm, exclusion, inequities, and bias,
- Ensure that stakeholders, especially those most marginalized, are actively and authentically engaged in needed change efforts, and
- Build practice and organizational culture that advances racial justice, social justice, equity, and inclusion.

Who uses this tool? This tool is best used by a diverse team of people from different parts of the organization, that can also include external stakeholders and partners. For each specific use of the tool, the team will identify and engage the most relevant stakeholders, especially those most marginalized, under-represented and directly affected by the decision under consideration. When using equity tools, *who* is doing the assessment is as important as *what* you are assessing. An inclusive process will yield more inclusive results.

How do you use the tool? The tool involves a series of steps that can be followed sequentially. The process is also iterative so, with new information, you may need to jump back to a previous step to revise your findings. Each step provides questions for consideration by relevant stakeholders. Be sure to allow ample time to thoughtfully and inclusively address each step. It is not meant to be used and completed in one sitting. It often requires time to gather information and consult with various stakeholders over a series of meetings or engagements. The tool is designed to be widely applicable to many different kinds of decisions. Every question may not be relevant for every decision. Feel free to tailor add other helpful questions to inform your decision. For more significant or controversial decisions, you can address all of the steps and questions for a robust analysis. For less consequential decisions, you can select the most relevant questions and do a simpler and shorter analysis. While this tool foregrounds race as a central focus, please address other relevant or intersecting power dynamics.

Racial Equity Tool for Affiliate Staff

Step	Questions to Consider	Findings / Notes
1. Clarify Goals	• What kind of decision is under consideration (e.g. policy, program, budget, working conditions)? • What results or changes are you seeking to advance racial/social justice?	
2: Engage Stakeholders	• Who is most directly impacted, especially those most marginalized under-represented (e.g. staff of color, lowest paid workers) • How can they be meaningfully engaged, and empowered in this process?	
3. Analyze Data	• What is the relevant history and current context? • What data do we have and what do we need? Is it disaggregated by race? • Who benefits and who is most burdened? How are different racial/ethnic groups affected differently? • What are the root causes of the problem? Are there intersecting dynamics?	
4. Generate Options	• What proposed solutions can address the root causes and change systems? • How will this proposal advance racial justice, equity, and inclusion?	
5. Assess Impacts	• What are the positive & negative impacts on different racial communities? • How will communities of color benefit from each option? • How can this help counteract dominant patterns of white supremacy? • What positive values, norms, and narratives can we affirm and project? • How does this align with our values, vision, mission and priorities?	
6. Decide Solution	• What are the pros and cons of each option? • Are there ways to revise the options to prevent adverse consequences? • Which option best advances equity?	
7: Develop Implementation Plan	• What strategies, staffing, and funding are needed to ensure success? • What is the implementation plan & timetable? Who will move it forward? • How will we document & measure progress? What are success indicators? • How can we ensure ample communication, participation & accountability?	
Step 8: Operationalizing Equitable Change	• How can we operationalize equity practices to sustain success? • How do we institute these changes so they become ongoing practices, protocols, habits – a part of our organizational culture?	

Worksheet for Comparing Racial Impacts of Different Proposed Solutions

1. Use this worksheet for Steps 5 and 6 of the Racial Equity Tool. List the different proposed solution options to assess in the top shaded row.
2. For each option, list potential positive impacts and negative impacts for different racial groups. In the bottom row, list other noteworthy factors or findings, such as intersecting dynamics (e.g. gender, class), geographic or generational differences, etc.

	Solution Option 1: _____	Solution Option 2: _____	Solution Option 3: _____
Potential Positive Racial Impacts			
Potential Negative Racial Impacts			
Other Notes & Considerations			

(Adapted from Race Forward, Revised 1/31/21)

Equity Audit

This audit is not meant to be used all at once or in its entirety. Instead, schools can use more traditional data (e.g. student performance data) in order to identify specific areas to investigate among the 12 presented here.

1.0 ASSESSMENT Do school/district policies encourage the use of multiple ways of assessing student learning that are culturally sensitive and the measure complex cognitive and social skills?	
1.1	Do teachers use a range of formative and summative assessment strategies that give students opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of knowledge and skills?
1.2	Do teachers use a variety of assessment devices to ensure that students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups meet rigorous standards in the academic subjects?
1.3	Does assessment go beyond traditional measures of subject matter knowledge to include complex cognitive and social skills?
1.4	How do teachers check for understanding throughout the lesson? At the end to determine attainment of the objective?
1.5	How do classroom teachers regularly monitor student progress and adjust instruction for individual students based on results?
1.6	What percentage of the grade is assigned to homework?
1.7	How are re-teaching opportunities used to support learning?
1.8	What is the level of consistency within a course alike team? Department? Grade-level?

2.0 CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS How does the school/district meaningfully engage stakeholders in the pursuit of equitable student achievement?	
2.1	How does the staff learn about students' and families' cultural backgrounds?
2.2	What evidence is there that staff has committed to learning about students in terms of their racial, cultural, and ethnic traditions?
2.3	Are the staff familiar with the beliefs, values, cultural practices, discourse styles, and other features of students' lives that may have an impact on classroom participation and success and are they prepared to use the information when designing instruction?
2.4	Do culturally-responsive practices inform outreach to the community including parents and community partners?
2.5	Are school policies and practices examined to determine if they affirm students from different racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and social-class groups?
2.6	Are changes made to teaching practices to accommodate students from different racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and social-class groups?

3.0 CURRICULUM

Is the school/district curriculum designed to help students to understand that knowledge is socially-constructed and reflects the personal experiences and the social, political, and economic contexts in which they live?

3.1	Is the curriculum in schools with large minority and low-income populations as rigorous as the curricula in other schools in the district?
3.2	Do all students have access to a rigorous core curriculum taught by effective content teachers?
3.3	Does the curriculum help students to understand historical events from the perspectives of various racial, ethnic, and cultural groups?
3.4	Does the curriculum help students to understand the ways in which the unique experiences of peoples or groups cause them to view the same historical and social events differently?
3.5	Do the instructional materials used in our school/district describe historical, social, and political events from the perspectives of different racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups?
3.6	Are the textbooks and other instructional materials used in your school written by authors from different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups?
3.7	Are students provided with factual information in the social studies or other subjects that contradicts misconceptions about racial and ethnic groups?
3.8	When teaching about different racial and cultural groups, do teachers point out the important ways in which all human groups are similar?

4.0 DISCIPLINE

How are expectations for student behavior developed, delivered, and reinforced and do they vary by a) staff member, b) race/ethnicity of student?

4.1	What is the stated/unspoken attendance policy? How is it enforced and by whom?
4.2	What is the stated/unspoken tardy policy? How is it enforced and by whom?
4.3	What is the average daily attendance? Does it vary by student a) race/ethnicity and/or b) socioeconomic status?
4.4	Lunchroom: Who supervises? What are the procedures for coming and going? What are the stated/unspoken expectations? How does the lunchroom staff interact with students?
4.5	Hallways: Who supervises? What are the procedures for moving between locations? What are the stated/unspoken expectations? How does non-teaching staff interact with students?
4.6	Recess/Unstructured Time: Who supervises? What are the procedures for coming and going? What are the stated/unspoken expectations? How does the staff interact with students?
4.7	Is the discipline policy available in written format to all stakeholders? In a variety of languages?
4.8	What are the stated reasons why a student may be sent to the office, etc. for disciplinary reasons?
4.9	What are the referral rates disaggregated by student race/ethnicity?
4.10	What are the suspension rates disaggregated by student race/ethnicity?
4.11	Are referral data tracked by teacher? Location? Time of day? Behavior?

4.12	Are there programs in place that promote alternatives to punishment (e.g. PBIS, restorative justice/practices, daily class circles/meetings)? If so, what is there level of effectiveness?
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5.0 ENGLISH (LANGUAGE) LEARNERS

How effective are programs and structures to identify and support English Language Learners (ELLs)?

5.1	What is the percentage of English Language Learners in the school?
5.2	What is the percentage of students in the school/district whose home language is not English?
5.3	How is data from the state-level assessment of language proficiency used to program for ELLs?
5.4	What levels of ESOL are available at the school?
5.5	How are students placed in levels/classes?
5.6	How are students redesignated?
5.7	How are ELLs supported in non-ESOL/mainstream classes?
5.8	What supports are provided to students who recently or ever exited ESOL services?

6.0 GIFTED & TALENTED / HONORS / AP/ ADVANCED

How effective are programs and structures to identify and support students needing advanced coursework?

6.1	What percentage of students are enrolled in GT/Honors/AP/IB/Advanced courses in your school?
6.2	What are the a) racial/ethnic and b) socioeconomic demographics of students enrolled in GT/Honors/AP/IB/Advanced courses in your school?
6.3	What percentage of students are eligible to be enrolled in GT/Honors/AP/IB/Advanced courses in your school but are not?
6.4	What is the process for students to enroll in GT/Honors/AP/IB/Advanced courses in your school?
6.5	What is the disaggregated achievement data for students enrolled in GT/Honors/AP/IB/Advanced courses in your school?
6.6	What supports are available for students taking their first GT/Honors/AP/IB/Advanced course and are struggling?
6.7	How fluid is the process for moving students into advanced courses during the school year?

7.0 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

How effective are programs and structures to identify and support students with special needs, including best practice interventions/practices for students with IEPs and 504 Plans?

7.1	What is the percentage of students with IEPs in the school?
7.2	What are the a) racial/ethnic and b) gender demographics of students with IEPs?
7.3	What is the process for determining which general educators co-teach inclusion classes?
7.4	What are the discipline referral and suspension rates for students with IEPs?
7.5	Are there unstated procedures/systems in place to "skirt" the rules for disciplining students with IEPs (e.g. who have 9+ days of suspension, in vs. out of school suspensions)?
7.6	How are referrals made for special education screening?
7.7	Are screening, referral, and assessment practices, procedures, and tools unbiased and nondiscriminatory?
7.8	How do grade-level teams determine and follow-up on interventions for students in the screening process?
7.9	How closely does your school align to stated district/state/national guidelines for intervention and referral?
7.10	How are IEPs designed? Who participates?
7.11	How are IEP meetings conducted? What is the ratio of staff to parent talk in the meetings?
7.12	What is the parent participation in IEP meetings?
7.13	What percentage of students are mainstreamed/included for all or part of their school day?
7.14	Into what classes are students included?
7.15	How are inclusion/mainstreaming decisions made?

8.0 CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

How effective are classroom instructional practices at meeting the needs of diverse student groups?

8.1	Grouping: Do teachers structure interracial cooperative groups that enable students from different racial and ethnic groups to become acquainted as individuals?
8.2	Discourse Patterns: What is the percentage of teacher talk time versus student talk time?
8.3	Discourse Patterns: What is the common practice for calling on students?
8.4	Discourse Patterns: How long do teachers give students to think before calling on them (wait time)?
8.5	Discourse Patterns: What percentage of class time is devoted to structured student discourse?
8.6	Discourse Patterns: What are the processes for structuring student discourse?

8.7	Questioning: What are the levels of questioning in the classroom?
8.8	Questioning: What evidence is available to demonstrate the development of students' ability to think critically?
8.9	Questioning: Are questions that require higher-level thinking asked equitably of high and low-performing students? By race/ethnicity?
8.10	Feedback: Is feedback delivered equitably to all students?
8.11	Feedback: Is feedback given in relation to a common standard/expectations?
8.12	Feedback: Does feedback prompt future growth?
8.13	Feedback: Is feedback given both formally and informally?

9.0 ACADEMIC INTERVENTIONS

How effective are programs and structures to support students with academic challenges?

9.1	How are students with academic challenges identified?
9.2	Are they provided with research/evidence-based interventions?
9.3	Are the interventions culturally appropriate for students?
9.4	Are interventions implemented with fidelity?
9.5	Are the interventions multi-tiered?
9.6	How is data used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions with a) individual students, b) groups of students?
9.7	How are parents informed about the progress of their students enrolled in interventions?
9.8	Are teachers supported to implement academic and/or behavioral interventions in the general education classroom?

10.0 PARENT/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

How does the school/district meaningfully engage stakeholders in the pursuit of equitable student achievement?

10.1	What is the conversation among staff members about parent involvement? What do their statements reflect about their spoken and unspoken belief systems?
10.2	What are the rates of parent participation in the PTA by race/ethnicity?
10.3	How familiar are the administration and staff with types of parent involvement that do not always involve parents coming to school?
10.4	What percentage of parents attend Back-to-School Night and parent conferences? Do participation rates vary by race/ethnicity?
10.5	How do staff react when parents do not attend school events (e.g. conferences and Back-to-School night)?

10.6	What, if any, parent education programs are available?
10.7	Are school communication translated into home languages?
10.8	Do one or more staff members speak the home language(s) of the students?
10.9	Does the school access translation services for meetings?
10.10	What is the level of parent participation in annual surveys?
10.11	Do any of the staff members live in the school community?
10.12	What other stakeholders (e.g. business and community organizations) interact meaningfully with the school?
10.13	Are any agencies co-located with the school?

11.0 PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Do professional development (PD) programs in your school/district help teachers understand the complex characteristics of U.S. ethnic, racial, and cultural groups? Do staff engage in opportunities to deprivatize their practice and seek educational equity?

11.1	Does PD help teachers to understand the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture, language, and social class interact in complex ways to influence student behavior?
11.2	Does PD help teachers to uncover and identify their personal attitudes toward different racial, ethnic, language, and social-class groups?
11.3	Does PD help teachers to uncover and identify their behaviors related to diverse racial, ethnic, language, and social-class groups?
11.4	Does PD helps teachers acquire knowledge about the diverse perspectives on historical and current events within different ethnic, racial, language, and cultural communities?
11.5	Does PD help teachers become knowledgeable about the diverse perspectives on historical and current events within different ethnic, racial, language, and cultural communities?
11.6	Does PD help teachers develop the knowledge and skills needed to modify their instruction so that students from diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and language groups will have an equal opportunity to learn in their classrooms?
11.7	What is the level of implementation of PLCs (including course-alike, grade-level, department, and non-teaching cohorts)?
11.8	Is there a common observation protocol for informal observations?
11.9	How many teachers engage in peer observation?
11.10	What processes/structures encourage the sharing of teacher practice?
11.11	How much time do administrators spend observing classroom instruction or supporting PLCs/planning for instruction each week?
11.12	What is the level of informal teacher interaction outside of structured meetings?
11.13	What are the social networks that contribute to or prohibit teacher collaboration?

11.14	How much of the PLC's work centers around examination of beliefs and practices related to race and equity?
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12.0 What qualifies the school's/district's teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners?	
12.1	Are successful efforts being made at the district/school level to recruit a racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse administrative, teaching, and support staff?
12.2	What are the teacher demographics in terms of race, ethnicity, age range, and language?
12.3	How do the teacher demographics compare to those of the school's/district's student population?
12.4	What are the levels of teacher education and credentials (post-graduate coursework, certifications, etc.)?
12.5	What percentage of teachers are new to the building? New to teaching?
12.6	How many of the teachers are bilingual or multilingual?
12.7	Are experienced and inexperienced teachers distributed equally across grade-levels and/or content areas?
12.8	How are teaching assignments made?
12.9	What systems are put into place to support novice or underperforming teachers?

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Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization Page 266

MONOCULTURAL ==> MULTICULTURAL ==> ANTI-RACIST ==> ANTI-RACIST MULTICULTURAL

Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Deficits ==> Tolerant of Racial and Cultural Differences ==> Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Assets

Exclusive An Exclusionary Institution	2. Passive A "Club" Institution	3. Symbolic Change A Compliance Organization	4. Identity Change An Affirming Institution	5. Structural Change A Transforming Institution	6. Fully Inclusive Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization in a Transformed Society
- Intentionally and publicly excludes or segregates African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans - Intentionally and publicly enforces the racist status quo throughout institution - Institutionalization of racism includes formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels - Usually has similar intentional policies and practices toward other socially oppressed groups such as women, gays and lesbians, Third World citizens, etc. - Openly maintains the dominant group's power and privilege	- Tolerant of a limited number of "token" People of Color and members from other social identity groups allowed in with "proper" perspective and credentials. - May still secretly limit or exclude People of Color in contradiction to public policies - Continues to intentionally maintain white power and privilege through its formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels of institutional life - Often declares, "We don't have a problem." - Monocultural norms, policies and procedures of dominant culture viewed as the "right" way" business as usual" - Engages issues of diversity and social justice only on club member's terms and within their comfort zone.	- Makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity - Sees itself as "non-racist" institution with open doors to People of Color - Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting "someone of color" on committees or office staff - Expanding view of diversity includes other socially oppressed groups <i>But...</i> "Not those who make waves" - Little or no contextual change in culture, policies, and decision making - Is still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism and control - Token placements in staff positions: must assimilate into organizational culture	- Growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity - Develops analysis of systemic racism - Sponsors programs of anti-racism training - New consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege - Develops intentional identity as an "anti-racist" institution - Begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities - Increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage - Actively recruits and promotes members of groups have been historically denied access and opportunity <i>But...</i> - Institutional structures and culture that maintain white power and privilege still intact and relatively untouched	- Commits to process of intentional institutional restructuring, based upon anti-racist analysis and identity - Audits and restructures all aspects of institutional life to ensure full participation of People of Color, including their world-view, culture and lifestyles - Implements structures, policies and practices with inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing on all levels of the institutions life and work - Commits to struggle to dismantle racism in the wider community, and builds clear lines of accountability to racially oppressed communities - Anti-racist multicultural diversity becomes an institutionalized asset - Redefines and rebuilds all relationships and activities in society, based on anti-racist commitments	- Future vision of an institution and wider community that has overcome systemic racism and all other forms of oppression. - Institution's life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices - Members across all identity groups are full participants in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interest - A sense of restored community and mutual caring - Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression - Actively works in larger communities (regional, national, global) to eliminate all forms of oppression and to create multicultural organizations.

Equity Case Analysis Process

Step 1: Identify biases and inequities presented in the case

Step 2: Take stock of various perspectives, trying to remember the full variety of community members, including those who are involved directly and those who are involved at more of a distance.

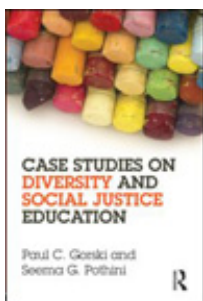
Step 3: Consider possible challenges and opportunities, paying special attention to biases and inequities and how the situation presents an opportunity for dialogue and positive change, not just for those immediately involved, but for the institution.

Step 4: Imagine equitable and just outcomes, remembering that *equity* requires a fair distribution of opportunity and access—a resolution of the bias or inequity, not just a resolution of interpersonal conflict.

Step 5: Brainstorm immediate-term responses, thinking specifically about how you might respond immediately in order to overcome challenges and maximize opportunities.

Step 6: Brainstorm longer-term policy and practice adjustments, keeping in mind that school and classroom conflict usually are symptoms of bigger structural inequities.

Step 7: Craft a plan of action, including both immediate-term and long-term components.



Designed by Paul C. Gorski (gorski@edchange.org) and Seema Pothini (sg1515@hotmail.com) for their book, ***Case Studies on Diversity and Social Justice Education*** (Routledge, 2014). Check out the book for this more than 35 school- and classroom based case studies on issues like race, class, (dis)ability, gender, sexual orientation, and religion, along with a more detailed description of the case analysis process.

Summary: The equity literacy case analysis process encourages us to reflect deeply on school and classroom scenarios by considering them within a larger context of unequal access to privilege, power, and equity.



Fighting racism, battling burnout: causes of activist burnout in US racial justice activists

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ABSTRACT

Social movement scholars have identified activist burnout – when the accumulation of stressors associated with activism become so overwhelming they compromise activists’ persistence in their activism – as a threat to movement viability. This phenomenological study on the causes of burnout among racial justice activists in the United States was designed to bolster understandings of burnout and inform strategies for sustaining racial justice movements. Thirty racial justice activists who had experienced burnout were interviewed. They described four primary burnout causes: emotional-dispositional causes, structural causes, backlash causes, and in-movement causes. Implications for activist and movement sustainability are discussed.

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KEYWORDS Burnout; activism; racism; anti-racism; racial justice; social movements

Introduction

Racial justice activists in the United States face challenges that could deteriorate their abilities to remain engaged in their activism. Some are retaliatory, like the threat or reality of state violence in response to their activism (Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong 2011). Others are internal, related to activists’ empathic tendencies (McDonald 1997) and understandings of the scope of systemic racism (Blaisdell 2016), which can render them susceptible to emotional exhaustion or hopelessness.

Although these and other challenges are not uncommon in the history of United States racial justice activism, President Trump’s association with white supremacists (Mathis-Lilley 2017), racist policy initiatives (Huber 2016), and encouragement of violence against activists (Mickey, Levitsky, and Way 2017) may have exacerbated threats to the sustainability of racial justice activists. Add efforts by corporate and government interests to criminalize racial justice activism, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s recent “crack-down” on what it called “Black Identity Extremists” (Beydoun and Hansford

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2017)), and the context of anti-racism activism in the United States becomes clearer. As racism grows more explicit and anti-racism progress recedes, activists may feel less protected than racism's perpetrators and less hopeful about the possibility of progress.

Although scholarship on the impact of these conditions for racial justice activists is thin (Szymanski 2012), a growing body of scholarship examines their impact for feminist (Bernal 2006), educational justice (Gorski and Chen 2015), and other activists. These studies suggest that over time these challenges can result in activist burnout (Plyler 2006; Cox 2011), a chronic condition in which activism-related stress becomes so overwhelming it debilitates activists' abilities to perform their activism effectively or to remain engaged in activism (Chen and Gorski 2015). The result can be devastating for activists, often forcing them out of movements to which they once dedicated their lives (Rettig 2006).

However, the impact does not end with individual activists. Social movement scholars have argued that activist burnout is among the most formidable barriers to sustaining social movements (Cox 2011; Pigni 2013). The lack of sustained leadership due to burnout can create fragmentation within movement organizations, impeding movement effectiveness (Plyler 2006). Burnout begets burnout. Pogrebin (1994) thusly characterized activist burnout as the deterioration of activists' emotional and physical health resulting in the deterioration of social movements.

Although scholars have studied activist burnout in other movements (Gomes 1992; Pines 1994; Gorski and Chen 2015), no published studies examine it among racial justice activists in the United States or elsewhere. This is a significant hole in activist burnout theory. It is hard to imagine a useful conceptualization of activist burnout in a United States context not informed by how it operates in racial justice movements. The present study, an examination of burnout among United States racial justice activists, is designed to strengthen conceptualizations of activist burnout by incorporating experiences of racial justice activists. Additionally, better understandings of activist burnout among racial justice activists can inform strategies to sustain racial justice activists and thus bolster the sustainability of racial justice movements.

In service to these purposes, thirty racial justice activists in the United States who have suffered activist burnout were interviewed. Of most interest was how they characterized the causes of their burnout. Through a phenomenological analysis of semi-structured interviews, this study explored the question: How do racial justice activists in the United States who have experienced activist burnout describe the conditions that caused their burnout?

In this study, and consistent with how scholars framed activism in previous activist burnout scholarship (Pines 1994; Chen and Gorski 2015), racial justice activists are people who identify racial justice activism as their central life

passion. Following Szymanski's (2012) research on racial justice engagement, activism refers to purposeful action to cultivate social or political change. This does not mean racial justice activism was each participant's source of employment. Some worked in activist organizations. Others worked in non-activist jobs but still identified activism as their central life commitment.

Literature review

The present study is the first to document causes of activist burnout among racial justice activists. It is rooted theoretically in activist burnout theory as it currently stands, built around studies of other movements. It is also informed by studies on activism engagement among racial justice activists. Following a synthesis of conceptualizations of activist burnout, the literature on causes of activist burnout is synthesized. Research on the experiences of racial justice activists is incorporated into this synthesis to bridge activist burnout theory with scholarship on racial justice activists that attends more implicitly to burnout.

Conceptualizing activist burnout

Freudenberger (1974) pioneered the study of vocational burnout, wherein people once passionate about their work grow exhausted, cynical, and detached from it. Scholars have modified conceptualizations of vocational burnout to document burnout among environmental (Kovan and Dirkx 2003), feminist (Bernal 2006), and social justice education activists (Gorski and Chen 2015). These scholars documented characteristics of social justice activists that distinguish causes of their burnout from vocational burnout (Rettig 2006; Bunnage 2014), leading to the theorization of what came to be called activist burnout (Cox 2011; Chen and Gorski 2015).

For example, unlike people in most vocations, social justice activists are susceptible to state violence in response to their activism (Jones 2007; Cox 2011). Also, according to Maslach and Gomes (2006), activists' emotional connections to social causes elevate their susceptibility to burnout. The nature of activism, they explained, requires activists to sustain deep awareness of structural oppressions larger society is "unable or unwilling to face" (43). Shouldering this burden over time causes many racial justice activists to put unreasonable pressure on themselves, not just to respond to individual suffering, but to create massive structural change. This can lead to chronic frustration, exhaustion, and feelings of isolation (González 2015). For example, racial justice activists carry the burden of understanding the scope and impact, not just of interpersonal bias, but also of structural racism (Eichstedt 2001). Complicating matters, many racial justice activists of colour are targets of the injustice against which they act (Steinfeldt et al. 2012). They carry the burden of

structural understanding on top of the challenge of coping with the grind of racism in their own lives, often referred to as racial battle fatigue (Smith 2004; Amos 2015). Specifically for activists of colour, research has shown their engagement in racial justice activism often is directly associated with the accumulative trauma of the racial battle fatigue they experience; those who perceive the most traumatic accumulative experiences with racism are most likely to become activists (Szymanski 2012; Talcott 2014). This makes their context unique when compared with other contexts in which burnout is heavily studied, such as in human services professionals.

Certainly, human services professionals like social workers – common subjects of vocational burnout scholarship – can experience stressful pressures to address individual or community suffering. However, research indicates their primary sources of burnout revolve not around these pressures, but around issues like job autonomy, workload, lack of organizational funding, and workplace personnel shortages (Bakker and Costa 2014; McFadden, Campbell, and Taylor 2014). No study has identified these conditions as common causes of activist burnout.

Causes of activist burnout

Causes of activist burnout have been theorized around three themes: (1) internal causes related to activists' unique characteristics, (2) external causes related to individuals' and institutions' hostility towards activists' causes, and (3) in-movement causes related to how activists treat one another. Although burnout has not been studied in racial justice activists, scholarship on racial justice activists' dispositions and motivations suggests that many conditions underlying common causes of activist burnout in other movements exist in racial justice movements. In this section, I synthesize scholarship on causes of activist burnout in other movements, but also bridge these causes with related conditions observed within racial justice movements.

Internal causes

Activists are driven by deep senses of morality and strong emotional connections to causes (Goodwin 1997; Jasper 1998). They expend emotional labour, which Taylor and Rupp (2002) characterized as "channeling, legitimating, and managing one's own and others' emotions and expression of emotions" (142). Caring deeply about a cause presses many activists into activism (Kovan and Dirkx 2003). Their intense commitment and resulting emotional labour expenditures make them uniquely susceptible to emotional exhaustion and overwork, causes of burnout (Pines 1994; Chen and Gorski 2015).

Intertwined with intense levels of passion and commitment are activists' deep understandings of structural oppression (Lowan-Trudeau 2016). As

Kovan and Dirkx (2003) explained based on their study of environmental movements, activists embrace “consciousness in an unconscious world” (107), determined to redress conditions others refuse to acknowledge. Based on their study of animal rights activists in Sweden, Jacobsson and Lindblom (2013) found that participants recognized and internalized individual instances of violence and the massive accumulation of violence against animals, hastening emotional exhaustion.

The combination of structural awareness and intense commitments leads activists to apply immense pressure on themselves to produce significant change (Rodgers 2010). As a result, they often work themselves to exhaustion (Bernal 2006). They feel guilty about taking a break or experiencing joy while others are suffering (Effler 2010; Norwood 2013). As activists become more entrenched in their activism and less attentive to individual and collective well-being, the threat of burnout intensifies (Gorski 2015).

Although these conditions in racial justice activists have not been linked empirically to burnout, they are addressed in racial justice scholarship. Racial justice activists tend to have a structural orientation to racism, understanding its scope beyond interpersonal tensions (Eichstedt 2001). On average, they have deep senses of personal responsibility to eliminate structural racism (Warren 2010; Case 2012). In fact, studies show that activists of colour who have the deepest insights about structural racism based on their own experiences of racism are most likely to become anti-racist activists (Talcott 2014; Szymanski and Lewis 2015). As González (2015) explained based on her observations of the organization, United Coalition for Racial Justice, the combination of structural understanding and responsibility leads many racial justice activists to work themselves “until their bodies cave in” (16).

External causes

Activists can become targets of violence in response to their activism. They have been subject to police violence, harassment, and character assassination (Barry and Dordević 2007; Jones 2007). An experience of violence can contribute to activist burnout; however, the continuous threat of violence also can cause the emotional and physical exhaustion that precede burnout (Cox 2011). Although studies have not attached this threat among racial justice activists to burnout, studies have documented how racial justice activists often are targets of physical violence (Jacobs and Taylor 2011; Steinfeldt et al. 2012), including police violence (Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong 2011).

Notably, these threats are not equally distributed. Marginalized-identity activists are targeted at higher rates than privileged-identity activists (Bernal 2006; Norwood 2013), a condition that has been documented within the racial justice literature. For example, based on an analysis of

15,000 protests in the United States, Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong (2011) found that police officers interpreted racial justice activists of colour as more threatening than white activists. They responded with greater levels of arrest and physical violence at majority African-American protests than majority White protests.

In-movement causes

Marginalized-identity activists often are not safe from oppression even within their movements (Vaccaro and Mena 2011; Leondar-Wright 2014). Lorde (1988) explained based on her experience as a woman of colour collaborating with white feminists, “I was accused of ‘brutalizing’ the organizers by simply asking why Black women were absent” (74). This treatment can result in burnout as Gorski and Chen (2015) found in their study of educational justice activists. Nearly every activist of colour they interviewed attributed their burnout in part to racism from white activists.

Although it has not been associated specifically with burnout, studies have shown how racial justice activists of colour are subject to racism within racial justice movements, as well. Studies of white racial justice activists have revealed that they often become mired in guilt and shame involving their whiteness, constantly re-centering their needs for validation from activists of colour, draining organizational energy and disrupting movement progress (Mallett et al. 2008; Warren 2010). White activists tend to coopt racial justice movements and usurp organizational power from activists of colour (Jonsson 2016) so that activists of colour are forced to expend energy fending off these attempts (Jacobs and Taylor 2011). This can deepen their susceptibility to burnout.

Another in-movement burnout-exacerbating condition is a culture that quiets concerns about the toll activism can take on activists. Rodgers (2010) called this “the ubiquitous discourse of selflessness” wherein “displays of personal strain, sadness, or depression ... are viewed ... as unnecessary and self-indulgent” (279). Burnout is worn like a badge of honour (Pigni 2016); it is expected, a sign of commitment (Rodgers 2010). Hargons et al. (2017) pointed to similar conditions in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Notably, much of the popular activism literature spotlights internal burnout causes. Much of the popular discourse about burnout related to racial justice activism pushes “self-care” as the remedy (see Khan 2015; Ross 2017). However, research suggests in-movement causes may be more responsible for burnout than internal or external causes (Gomes 1992; Maslach and Gomes 2006; Plyler 2006). It is worth mentioning again that these findings were not based on research on burnout in racial justice movements; no such research existed prior to the current study. Only an analysis of burnout among racial justice activists can determine whether these patterns hold in racial justice movements.

Methods

Using a phenomenological approach, semi-structured interviews of thirty United States racial justice activists were analysed to answer, How do racial justice activists in the United States who have experienced burnout describe the conditions that caused their burnout? Phenomenological research is best suited to capturing the nature of a phenomenon as experienced by people who experience it (Finlay 2009). Creswell (2013) argued phenomenology is especially useful when examinations of a phenomenon can inform effective policy and practice – an important consideration given the author's interests in strengthening activist-sustaining practices in social justice movements.

Participants

Participants were selected based on three criteria. They (1) identified racial justice activism as their primary life's work, (2) engaged in their activism in the United States, and (3) had experienced activist burnout. Attempting to clarify the third criteria, recruitment messages defined activist burnout as

facing one or more of the following symptoms because of your racial justice activist work to an extent you were forced to disengage from activist activities at least temporarily: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) physical exhaustion, or (c) cynicism or hopelessness.

Recruitment messages were emailed to the researcher's network of racial justice activists and posted on relevant social media sites. Potentially interested activists were instructed to email the researcher, who then re-inquired about the participation criteria. Eventually, thirty-eight people volunteered. Thirty were interviewed. They are summarized in [Table 1](#).

Procedure

Interviews of 60–90 minutes were audio-recorded in person or via telephone. A semi-structured interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions elicited participants' burnout stories. Items were informed by scholarship on activist burnout. Three social movement scholars provided feedback on the protocol. It was then piloted by five activists. Revisions reflected their feedback.

Following questions about the nature of participants' activism, they were asked about symptoms of their burnout (how burnout manifested in them), causes of their burnout, and their recovery from burnout. This study focused on how participants characterized causes of their burnout. Often causes and symptoms were discussed simultaneously even though the protocol included separate questions about each. All responses were considered viable data for this study. In some cases, follow-up interviews were requested to seek clarity on specific responses.

Table 1. Participant demographics.

Name	Race	Gender	Socioeconomic status	Years of activist experience	Primary focus of racial justice activism
Alejandro	Latino	Male	Middle class	13	Educational opportunity
Amy	White	Female	Middle class	25	American Indian Movement
Andrew	African-American	Male	Middle class	20	Youth justice
Anna	Latina	Female	Middle class	30	Chicanx justice
Barbara	African-American	Female	Working class	50	Foreign policy
Barry	African-American	Male	Working class	25	Community organizing in Black communities
Beverly	African-American	Female	Working class	30	Healthcare
Christopher	African-American	Male	Poor	15	Judicial system
Cristina	Latina	Female	Middle class	12	Black Lives Matter
Deborah	African-American	Female	Poor	15	Black Lives Matter
Felicia	Latina and Asian-American	Female	Middle class	31	Educational opportunity
Gerald	African-American	Male	Upper-middle class	18	Educational opportunity
Gregory	African-American	Male	Middle class	15	Police violence
Jason	White	Male	Middle class	20	Racial justice organizing in white communities
Jeff	White	Genderqueer	Middle class	51	Community education
Jonathan	African-American	Male	Middle class	16	Education
Kevin	African-American and Native-American	Male	Middle class	30	Food justice
Lila	Arab-American	Female	Poor	8	Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) access
Linda	Latina	Female	Middle class	59	Latinx educational rights
Lisa	White	Female	Middle class	16	Racial justice organizing in the Jewish community
Meredith	White	Female	Middle class	30	Racial justice in disability rights
Nicole	African-American	Female	Working class	18	Mass incarceration
Norman	Asian-American	Male	Middle class	18	Private schools
Patricia	African-American	Female	Middle class	26	Education system
Rochelle		Female	Middle class	24	Juvenile justice

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Name	Race	Gender	Socioeconomic status	Years of activist experience	Primary focus of racial justice activism
Rosa	African-American Latina	Female	Working class	15	Undocumented immigrant rights
Scott	White	Male	Working class	8	Housing
Sharon	African-American	Female	Middle class	41	Employment
Sofia	Latina and White	Female	Working class	11	Health disparities
Vince	White	Male	Working class	15	Police violence

Participants were offered the option of reading their transcripts and providing clarifications. Following this process, identifying information was wiped from the transcripts and pseudonyms were assigned.

Analysis

Following phenomenological coding practices, data were mined for what Creswell (2013) called significant statements. These included chunks of responses that illuminated causes of burnout related to participants’ racial justice activism. Significant statements were organized into big themes or clusters of meaning (Creswell 2013) such as “burnout associated with conflict within activist communities”. These clusters were reanalysed to uncover deeper intricacies in activists’ descriptions of their burnout. Data were organized into sub-clusters through several readings and reorganizations.

Findings

Participants’ burnout revolved around four cause themes: (1) emotional-dispositional, (2) backlash, (3) structural, and (4) in-movement. All participants attributed their burnout to conditions described by at least two of these categories. Most attributed it to at least three.

Emotional-dispositional causes

Of thirty participants, twenty-nine attributed their burnout to emotional-dispositional causes. They struggled with profound personal responsibility for eliminating racism, a deep emotional relationship to racial justice, and feelings of isolation.

Participants understood the scope of structural racism and felt responsible for eliminating it. Gerald (an African-American man in his forties) shared, “I

can't see myself not being involved in this work", whatever implications might come. Gregory (African-American man, forties), called his activism "a calling". Meredith (white woman, forties) explained, "There is something in me that can't let injustice live ... I was put here on this planet to do exactly what I'm doing." Their sense of responsibility led them to prioritize activism over other aspects of their lives, contributing to burnout.

Their sense of responsibility was related to intense emotional relationships with their activism. This made them susceptible to emotional exhaustion and cynicism regarding the slowness of change. It contributed to physical exhaustion from overworking. Like many participants, Barry (African-American man, forties) described how noticing conditions invisible to his peers since childhood intensified his emotional connection to anti-racism. For him these observations accumulated over time, affecting him "cognitively, physiologically" until his body shut down. Lisa (white woman, thirties) described how similar conditions affected her: "This work basically asks people to be in pain and it asks people to acknowledge the pain of others." These connections were elevated for participants of colour like Sofia (Latina and white, forties), who shared, "I grew up and lived and experienced [racism], so ... I have deep empathy for being on the other side of an oppression."

Both their sense of responsibility and emotional connections to racial justice informed participants' feelings of isolation in a society where their passion is mocked and minimized. Alejandro (Latino man, forties) attributed his burnout to "human isolation, having to be the one naming things ... carrying a lot of everybody's stuff". Participants lost friends. They watched relationships deteriorate with family members who did not understand their passion. Rochelle (African-American woman, thirties) shared, "I don't have a huge bank of people I can call on ... And even the people who love me the most, who don't want to see me suffer ... At times it is too much for them." Lila (Arab-American woman, forties) lamented, "I feel isolated. I feel like I've lost a lot of friends ... That ... physically hurts."

Participants responded by doubling down on their commitments, seeing their isolation as evidence that if they were not confronting racism, nobody would confront it. Nearly every participant linked these emotional-dispositional conditions to a tendency to drive themselves to exhaustion. Scott (white man, thirties) commented, "It doesn't matter how many things I do. There's always more that I didn't do ... And I think that in the aggregate, there is an unyielding pressure to participate in everything." Participants struggled to turn off the racial justice lens. Sofia shared,

The hardest thing for me is just to disconnect ... just going out and watching a movie with friends. I can't. I'm watching the movie and the whole time my head is going through all these things that are happening in the movie ... all these isms.

Many described similar examples of self-imposed martyrdom syndromes tied to their passion and emotional investment.

Taken together, these conditions made participants vulnerable to emotional exhaustion. They put immense pressure on themselves. They traded well-being for participation in activism, making them ripe for burnout. For participants of colour, these conditions overlapped with racial battle fatigue, the accumulative impact of experiencing racism (Smith 2004), further undermining their abilities to remain engaged and effective activists.

Backlash causes

Nineteen participants attributed their burnout to backlash from their activism. Often this backlash put their employment or bodies at risk.

Professional vulnerability was a significant stressor. Even if their job sites were not their primary activist sites, participants' commitment made it impossible to quiet their activism at work. Norman (Asian-American man, forties) shared that simply bringing up racism as a person of colour in his work place made him professionally vulnerable. Gregory described blowback from his supervisor for challenging racism at work: "I had difficult conversations with my supervisor. And then after trying to educate him, I became ... [in] his words 'an outlier, not a company man'". The inability to turn their activism off rendered many participants economically vulnerable and as a result, full of stress. Rosa (Latina woman, thirties) shared how professional vulnerability begot economic vulnerability:

I feel very vulnerable economically by choosing to do the work I do. There isn't a lot of free time. And if I'm doing [racial justice work] then I wouldn't necessarily expect to be paid to do everything that I need to do. And so I am keenly aware that if I operated in a different sector and did different work that I would do more than be able to live paycheck to paycheck.

Others carried the stress of knowing every job was "temporary" due to their outspokenness about racism.

Those whose work lives interacted more formally with their activism also felt professionally vulnerable and minimized. Alejandro, an anti-racism community educator, lamented, "When you hire somebody to fix the toilet, you trust them. But when you bring somebody to do [racial justice] work, there is no trust ... I remember being really exhausted having to talk about my credentials." Rosa shared, "The thing that causes the greatest challenge is not actually the work on the ground, but ... not hav[ing] that work be valued." Participants felt their activism was appreciated by some other activists but demonized by everyone else, contributing to emotional exhaustion and hopelessness.

Beyond professional and economic backlash, many participants felt physically vulnerable. Several attributed their burnout to physical "threats" and

“warnings” to cease their activism. Kevin (African-American and Native-American, thirties) shared,

It doesn't matter whether you're unarmed with your hands up. It doesn't matter if your back's turned. It doesn't matter if you just plain didn't hear somebody. It's their policy to execute you. So there is always that pressure ... At this next rally, at this next protest, is someone going to kill you?

Over time these stressors drove many participants to the brink of burnout.

Structural causes

“Structural causes” revolved around what participants characterized as the impossible task of creating change against unbendable white supremacy. On top of this challenge, identified by 22 participants as a cause of their burnout, participants of color attributed their burnout to everyday experiences of racism outside their activism, a condition from which white participants were protected.

Speaking to how battling unbendable racism hastened his burnout, Gregory explained his activism as:

where the unstoppable force hits an immovable object so there's just this massive neutralization that takes place. You feel like, the harder I go the harder the counter response is so ... it doesn't matter ... what you try to do, there's still going to be ... rac[ism].

Speaking to the accumulative toll of this battle, he continued, “It's a mental and emotional exercise. It gets so heavy you just want to say, ‘Today I'm not going to engage.’”

Several participants felt hopeless recognizing, in Nicole's (African-American woman, forties) words, that the “power structure” comprises people intent on protecting white supremacy. They feign interest in racial harmony, but only without racial justice, solidifying their “coalitions of power”. Sofia grew exhausted battling the dominant discourse that paints white people as victims. “That's bullshit to me”, she said. This structural resistance slows the pace of change. Participants understood the implications of this slowness. It weighed on their emotional well-being.

Equally impactful were endless interactions during their activism with white people who refused to acknowledge racism. Jonathan (African-American man, forties) described exhaustion he felt having “the same damn conversation over and over and over again” with white people who denied racism's existence. Several referred to the “All Lives Matter” movement – a response by white people intent on minimizing anti-Black racism (Carney 2016) – as an example. Andrew (African-American man, forties) shared, “Those are ... the areas that ... provide the most fatigue. Having these conversations [about Black Lives Matter] over and over again where you're justifying your perspective, and the knee-jerk resistance.”

Several participants specified a particularly disappointing cause of their burnout as “white liberals”. These were people – non-activists – participants identified as embracing a celebrating diversity orientation towards race, but who ultimately protected their privilege by balking at more serious considerations for racial justice. Vince (white man, thirties) explained, “The people who have been most difficult to deal with are [white] people who say that they’re liberal ...” Participants described “white liberals” derailing conversations about racism, lobbying activists to “soften” their anti-racism goals, and prioritizing their comfort over racial justice progress.

On top of these burnout sources, most participants of colour referred to everyday experiences with structural racism as contributing to their burnout. Unlike white participants, participants of colour coped with racial battle fatigue (Smith 2004), the accumulative impact of structural racism on their lives inside and outside activism. Although this study focused on burnout causes related to racial justice activism, participants of colour struggled to distinguish stressors created by structural racism in their everyday lives from stressors associated with their activism. They recounted many stories about this racism. Andrew shared,

I've been stopped on my street ... saving my neighbor who was choking ... The people who called the police saw me and know me ... They are literally my next-door neighbors. But they saw me giving our other next-door neighbor the Heimlich maneuver ... and they called the police.

This is an example of how white supremacy operates even in the context of racial justice activism, elevating the threat of burnout for activists of colour. Unfortunately, activist burnout theory has yet to account for this complexity.

In-movement causes

All thirty participants attributed their burnout to how activists treat one another. Many became worn down attempting to navigate activist communities in which in-fighting and ego clashes were commonplace. They entered racial justice movements to work with like-minded people, but found movements full of competition, not cooperation. Anna (Latina woman, thirties), shared,

The competition is ridiculous. And it's tiring. And it takes energy to deal with some of that. So we do have a lot of people in this town who stay away from working with community organizations for that very reason ... That has led to burnout.

Participants described competition related to who had “street cred”, who adopted the most radical language, and who withstood the most oppression. The result, according to Amy, was that “people who should be allies often-times were hurting each other ... That for me really led to this feeling of

almost being paralyzed". Lisa described the in-fighting as "devastating ... exhausting ... suffocating". Participants grew disillusioned watching fellow activists jockey for attention and undermining movement initiatives. Alejandro shared,

There was this activist who would always smile at me and undermine what I wanted to do. He was not even passive-aggressive, not even that veiled ... He had been at the [organization] for 32 years. He had a lot of power, but pretended not to have a lot of power. I was undermined by this white dude.

Barbara (African-American woman, sixties) similarly shared how her burnout resulted from activists "cutting each other off at the knees".

Particularly troubling, fourteen of twenty-two participants of colour attributed their burnout to racism they experienced from white racial justice activists. Unlike the general frustration with non-activist "white liberals", this source of burnout was related to fellow activists, white activists, many of whom also adopted a white liberal stance and impeded movement progress. Gerald shared, "I got burned from so-called white ... allies who were on board until it meant they needed to do self-reflection." In several cases, participants of colour expressed more intense exasperation describing treatment by white activists than any other source of burnout. Andrew described "being shut down consistently by ... well-intentioned, progressive, [white] people who think they are lovers of justice".

Similarly, several participants experienced sexism, heterosexism, and class bias from other activists, igniting burnout. Eight women participants described sexually harassment or assault by male activists. Felicia (Asian-American and Latina woman, thirties), described "sexual objectification" she experienced from male activists while Meredith was exhausted by "male dominance" in activist communities. Jeff (white genderqueer person, fifties) burned out working with a racial justice organization "because of their heterosexism, ableism, and sexism".

Overall, participants were drained of energy and hope knowing they were not safe from oppression and ego clashes within communities of activists. They entered movements hoping for meaningful collaboration. Once in movements, they often felt beaten down by how they were treated by other activists, leading to burnout.

Discussion

In some ways, activist burnout causes uncovered in this study supported existing understandings of burnout. Participants had emotional ties and deep commitments to racial justice (Jacobsson and Lindblom 2013; Chen and Gorski 2015), coped with in-fighting within activist communities (Barry and Dordević 2007), and they were injured by the threat or reality of retaliation

for activism (Cox 2011). As in studies of burnout among peace activists (Pines 1994), feminist activists (Bernal 2006), and educational justice activists (Gorski and Chen 2015), causes to which participants attributed their burnout could be categorized as internal, external, and in-movement causes.

In terms of big-level understandings of burnout causes, the findings complicate “external causes”. Participants attributed their burnout to emotional-dispositional causes, backlash causes, structural causes, and in-movement causes. Although “backlash causes” and “structural causes” both might be understood as external causes, participants characterized them differently. Backlash causes related more to cumulative stress as activism rendered participants physically, economically, or vocationally vulnerable. Participants associated structural causes with exhaustion and hopelessness regarding the tenuousness of racial justice movements and frustration over what they characterized as the impossibility of significant change in the face of structural racism. Their attribution of burnout to structural causes was closely connected with internal causes – what I renamed emotional-dispositional causes because it felt more descriptive – such as intense commitments to racial justice. They experienced emotional exhaustion due to these commitments and physical exhaustion when these commitments led them to work themselves to exhaustion. When that did not produce evidence of more justice, they experienced hopelessness and cynicism, completing the burnout recipe.

Furthermore, as suggested in theoretical work about activist burnout (Maslach and Gomes 2006; Plyler 2006), the findings support the often-positated but rarely empirically evidenced notion that the most impactful burnout causes revolve around how activists treat one another. Participants spoke about emotional-dispositional, backlash, and structural causes as though they were expected. They expected backlash. They recognized their propensities for working to exhaustion. These were predictable burnout sources.

On average, participants spoke most incredulously about in-movement burnout causes – in-fighting, undermining, and oppression among activists. This is not quantifiable using qualitative data, but traces of evidence can be observed in participants’ words. Gerald felt “blindsided” by how fellow activists treated him. Deborah, undermined by white activists who refused to take direction from activists of colour, shared, “Clearly there’s tons of freaking white people who don’t get it.” They expected resistance from structures of power, but their responses to fellow activists’ behaviour were more specific and personal, characterized by words like “narcissistic” and “passive-aggressive”. Participants expected – or desperately wanted – activist communities to be safe from the oppression they experienced elsewhere. They found oppression reproduced with great precision in their movements.

This finding is particularly important considering the popularity of “self-care” as a burnout remedy. Further study should examine whether this

individualistic approach to burnout might reflect the competitive, uncooperative conditions within movements to which many participants attributed their burnout. Some scholars and activists have advocated shifting from a self-care to a community-care burnout orientation. Referring to racial justice activists, González (2015) urged a shift from self-care to community-building and the cultivation of “collective strength, wisdom, and beauty” (16) among activists. It is not just a matter of activists attending to their individual needs, but rather of movement leaders attending to the activist community’s needs. It is not just about activists reflecting on their own martyr syndromes, but also about reflecting on how they and their organizations contribute to a martyr syndrome epidemic. The shift starts with examining cultures within racial justice activist spaces, attending to the threat of burnout as part of activism rather than as something activists pursue outside activism (Perry 2014), as Hargons et al. (2017) argued in relation to Black Lives Matter. Findings of this study add credence to these shifts.

The findings also add nuance to understandings about how burnout might manifest differently in marginalized-identity activists – in this case, racial justice activists of colour – than in dominant-identity activists. With few exceptions, activist burnout scholarship has been silent on this matter. Those exceptions involve studies of or commentaries on burnout among activists in which scholars briefly mentioned ways marginalized-identity activists contend with burnout-inducing conditions from which dominant-identity activists are protected (Barry and Dordević 2007; Vaccaro and Mena 2011). For example, Cox (2011) suggested that marginalized-identity activists are more likely to experience police violence and physical attacks, elevating their burnout risk. Studies confirm his assertion: racial justice activists of colour in the United States are more likely than white activists to face police violence (Steinfeldt et al. 2012).

Others are related to in-movement causes. Mirroring findings of the present study, Gorski and Chen (2015) found that education activists of colour often identified racism from white activists as among the biggest causes of their burnout. Other previous studies, although not linking it to burnout, have detailed ways white activists assert their whiteness within racial justice movements, harming activists of colour and weakening movements’ effectiveness (Jacobs and Taylor 2011; Case 2012). Future research should examine these dynamics and their relationship with burnout more centrally.

Another important finding complicating understandings of activist burnout was that many participants of colour attributed their burnout, not just to conditions related to their activism, but also to racial battle fatigue (Smith 2004; Amos 2015): the accumulative effect of racism people of colour experience in their everyday lives. Activist burnout theory, built on examinations of activists’ experiences during their activism, has not been framed to consider how activists’ lives outside their activism interact with

their activist lives, despite research showing that activist persistence is related to the extent to which activists understand their everyday lives as interrelated with their activist lives (Rettig 2006) and despite research showing a correlation between high levels of perceived experiences with racism and anti-racism engagement (Szymanski and Lewis 2015). Considering this reality, activist burnout theory must evolve to consider how burnout in racial justice activists of colour is informed more generally by racism's impact on their lives.

The present study focused on racial justice activists in the United States, so the findings are not directly applicable to activists in other regional contexts. However, the findings can inform movement leaders in other contexts about the kinds of conditions that may perpetuate burnout. It is worth noting again how fashionable it has become for bloggers and journalists to write about self-care as a cure for burnout (e.g. Adams 2013; Obear 2017) while only rarely addressing how activists treat one another or differentiating the experiences of activists of colour from white activists (e.g. Corvid 2017). In every context in which structural racism persists, movement leaders should attend to its implications within racial justice movements. Similarly, everywhere activists of colour are still subject to racism outside their activism, racial battle fatigue will impact their activism. Even if specific dynamics related to causes of activist burnout differ across regional contexts, these broader conditions will persist.

Conclusion

Although this study was the first to examine causes of activist burnout among racial justice activists, scholars who have studied burnout in other movements have described it as a formidable barrier to movement sustainability. With activist burnout theory still evolving, one purpose of this study was to complement understandings of burnout causes by examining them within racial justice activists. Findings uncovered patterns of burnout causes found in other social justice movements, but also complicated those patterns by distinguishing two types of external burnout causes: backlash causes and structural causes. Findings also advanced calls for evolving conceptualizations of activist burnout to consider ways it operates differently in activists of colour and white activists.

Some limitations should be noted. Although this study's sample size was substantial according to phenomenological research standards (Creswell 2013), it is not large enough to generalize racial justice activists' burnout. Further study could use quantitative methods to reach broader understandings of the scope of activist burnout and allow for comparisons by identity and other factors. Additionally, findings of this study should be understood as reflecting a moment in time. Although racism always is rampant in the

United States, President Trump's incitation of violence against racial justice activists may have informed some participants' characterizations of causes for their burnout.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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1. PUT YOUR NAME IN THE CENTER
2. FIND SOMEONE WHO CAN FILL IN ON THE SQUARES ON THE BINGO SHEET
3. MAKE SURE THE PERSON SIGNS THEIR FIRST AND LAST NAMES IN THE BOX
4. ONLY ONE SIGNATURE PER BOX

Who can play a musical instrument	Who supports LGBTQIA member activities	Who has a celebrity autograph	Who feels they can openly discuss race at their workplace	Who has bargained a contract with 0% In a particular FY
Who has organized against a bullying principal/supervisor	Who believes there are barriers created by prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination and bias in today's society	Who has had difficult courageous conversation with member(s)	Who has been interrupted at a meeting when making a point	Who has won an arbitration within the last
Who has been involved in school funding campaign	Who plays or has played in a band	PUT YOUR NAME HERE	Who believes in an equitable progressive tax system	Whose parents were Union members
Who was raised by low income parents	Who represents immigrant members	Who has a religious holiday in their current contract	Who has benefited from generational wealth	Who has represented members who have claims of racial discrimination
Who has lived in more than six states	Who comes from a family of seven or more	Who has partnered with community non profits on issues of racial, social and economic justice	Who has members that experience food or housing insecurity in a regular basis	Who has membership materials in more than one material