

GARE

Communications Guide

May, 2018



“Achieving a truly inclusive democracy means that government must proactively take on structural racism. Today we have the opportunity to change how local government works so that racial equity is a priority in both policy and practice.”



“How we talk about race matters. Historically, racial inequities were intentionally created — we must now be even more intentional as we dismantle racial inequity, using a common shared understanding of institutional and structural racism. Fortunately, we have tools like this guide to help us become the people and country to which we aspire, with liberty and justice for all.”

Update: May 18th, 2018



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WELCOME

This guide is meant to serve as your toolkit for informal and formal communications about your jurisdiction's work toward racial equity.

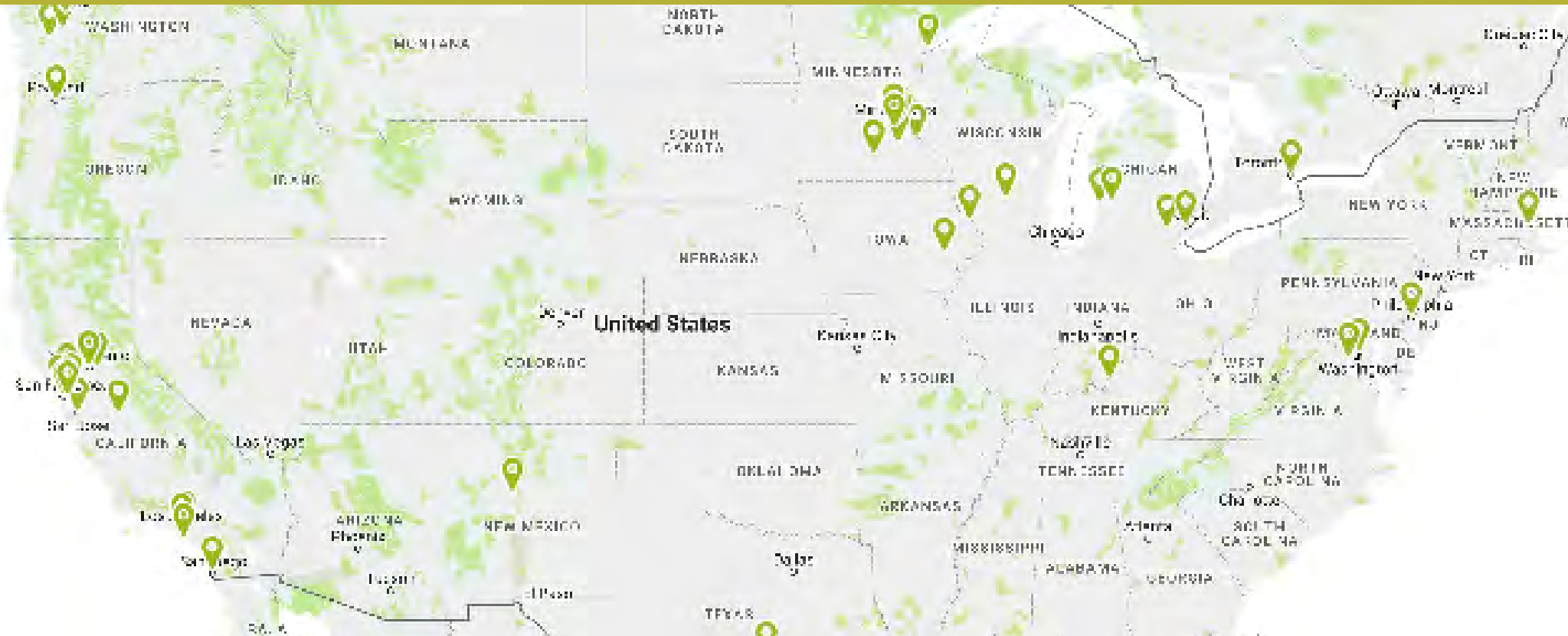
Communicating about race and structural racial inequities can feel like a challenge, but it doesn't have to be. We've learned and developed many best practices over the last 15 years as our team has supported more than 150 local jurisdictions to advance racial equity and improve outcomes for all.

This guide was developed by the team at the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#), in partnership with GARE jurisdictions all over the country, the Racial Equity Here cohort cities (Albuquerque, Austin, Grand Rapids, Louisville and Philadelphia), staff at the [Center for Social Inclusion](#), (which united with [Race Forward](#) in 2018) [Living Cities](#), the [Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society](#) at the University of California, Berkeley and [Provoc](#), a communications firm.

Throughout, we reference existing materials and research developed by these organizations and others — we've provided links for you to dig deeper in every section.

OUR VISION

Across the country, cities work in partnership with communities to dismantle structural racism and accelerate a more equitable future for all.



The Government Alliance on Race & Equity is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

GARE is a joint project of the Center for Social Inclusion (now a part of Race Forward) and the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of California, Berkeley.

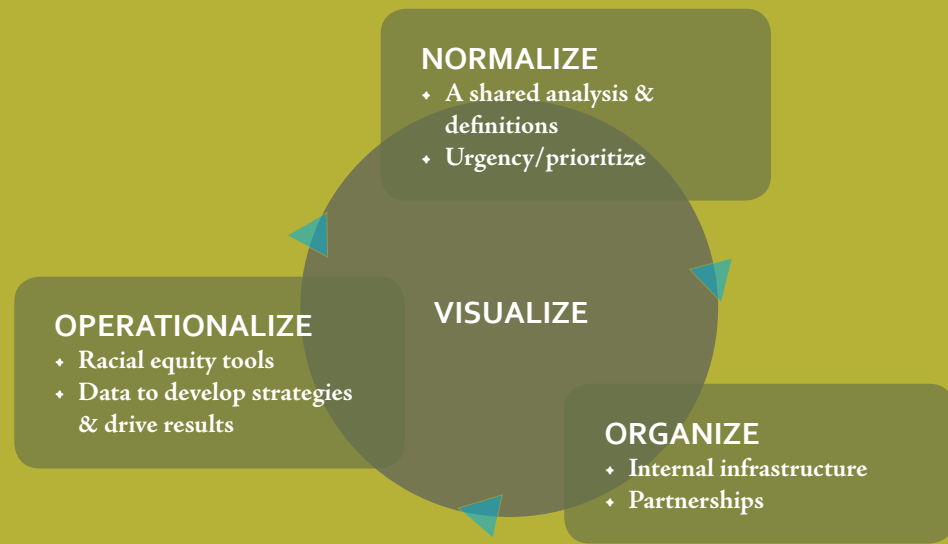


LOCAL AND REGIONAL
GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON
RACE & EQUITY

RacialEquityAlliance.org

ABOUT GARE

GARE is working to advance racial equity in over 150 local jurisdictions in 30 states.



Our Approach

NORMALIZE

USE A RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK

Jurisdictions need to use a racial equity framework that clearly names the history of government in creating and maintaining racial inequities; envisions and operationalizes a new role; and utilizes clear and easily understood definitions of racial equity and inequity.

COMMUNICATE & ACT WITH URGENCY

Despite the belief that change is hard and takes time, we have seen repeatedly that when racial equity is an urgently felt priority, change can be embraced and take place quickly. Building in institutional accountability mechanisms via a clear plan of action will allow accountability. Collectively, we must create greater urgency and public will to achieve racial equity.

ORGANIZE

BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Jurisdictions need to be committed to the breadth and depth of institutional transformation. While the leadership of elected members and top officials is critical, changes take place on the ground, and infrastructure that creates racial equity experts and teams throughout local and regional government is necessary.

PARTNER WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS & COMMUNITIES

To achieve racial equity, local and regional government must work with a network of partners: institutions, business, education, philanthropy, among others, and center the work on impacted communities.

OPERATIONALIZE

IMPLEMENT RACIAL EQUITY TOOLS

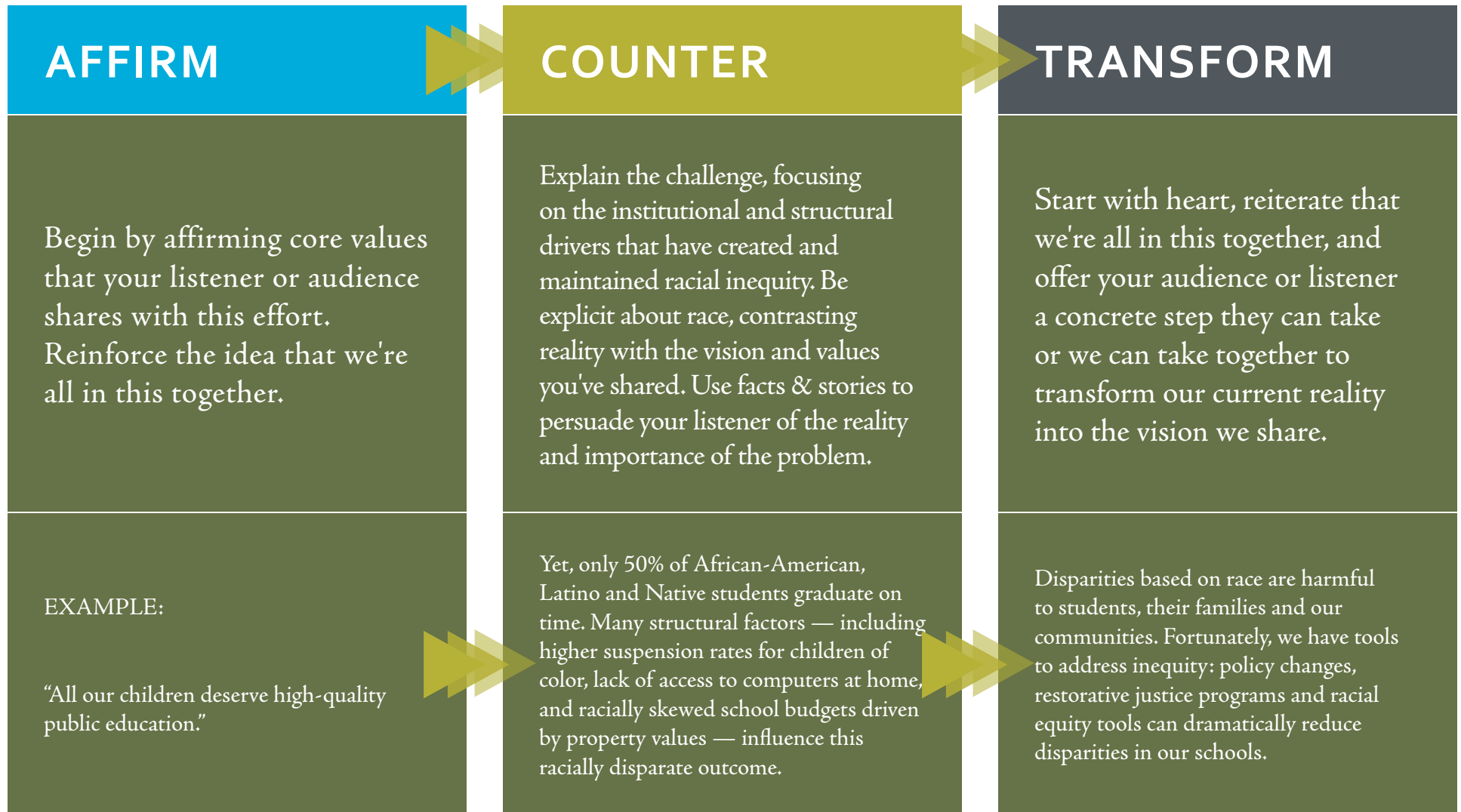
Racial inequities are not random—they have been created and sustained over time. Inequities will not disappear on their own. Tools must be used to change the policies, programs, and practices that are perpetuating inequities, as well as used in the development of new policies and programs.

BE DATA-DRIVEN

Measurement must take place at two levels — first, to measure the success of specific programmatic and policy changes, and second, to develop baselines, set goals, and measure progress towards community goals.

ACT: AFFIRM, COUNTER, TRANSFORM

Affirm, Counter, Transform (ACT) is an easy-to-remember acronym with many of our communications best practices baked in. Throughout the guide, we'll note ways to adapt it for various purposes. For the research behind these insights, see the Center for Social Inclusion's [Talking About Race Toolkit](#)



OUR CORE VALUES

JUSTICE

We are clear-eyed about the past and rigorously committed to a new way of governing, one that intentionally creates just, equitable outcomes for people of color.

Government played a primary role in the historical creation of racial inequities, and, despite milestone civil rights laws, has continued to maintain racial inequities. Local governments are uniquely situated to examine and transform policies and practices toward racial equity.

COMMUNITY

The principle “nothing about us without us” is a core tenet of our approach. We partner with and support the leadership of those most impacted by our history of inequities, communities of color, to guide and shape efforts toward racial equity.

The history of progress in the United States has been driven by community organizing. While we are working to build the skills of leaders and workers within government to advance racial equity, we recognize we can only achieve success when we center and collaborate with communities of color.

MOMENTUM

Our work to advance racial equity is urgent, but we know that lasting change can't happen overnight. We balance progress with pragmatism, seeking not perfection but meaningful steps forward every day.

We build solutions, constantly evolving, learning and adapting to accelerate the pace of our collective progress.

GARE CORE BELIEFS

RACE MATTERS

Although tensions or anxiety can sometimes be a part of conversations about race, we know it is necessary for us to name race head-on, both in the details of our work and how we work with each other.

INCLUSION MATTERS

People impacted by a decision should be engaged in the decision-making process.

HISTORY MATTERS

While the institution of racism was created well before our time, we are dealing with both the historical legacy and current reality. Racism and racial inequities have resulted in trauma, both to individuals and to communities. A trauma-informed approach to our work is necessary for our collective humanity.

LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Transforming our systems towards greater racial equity requires consistent and courageous leadership. We recognize the importance of formal and informal leadership. We support formal leadership working to advance racial equity, as well as the development of emerging leadership.

UNDERSTANDING MATTERS

Our institutions, systems and structures are complex. To transform our institutions and organizational cultures, it is critical that we develop a more nuanced understanding of that complexity. This includes moving beyond only quantitative approaches and incorporating qualitative and experiential ways of knowing.

MOVEMENT MATTERS

Racial inequities have been intentionally created and maintained over an extended period of time. They will not disappear on their own. To advance racial equity, we must be organizing within our own institutions and across institutions, always putting community at the center. We believe that a racial equity movement must build and expand the engagement of governmental jurisdictions (and others) across the country.

POWER MATTERS

Because power has so often been used to perpetuate inequities, we recognize that we can sometimes have an awkward relationship with power. We believe in intentionally examining, considering, negotiating and claiming power that advances racial equity.

LEARNING MATTERS

Creating environments of learning within and between our organizations will help to replicate success, expand learning from each other's experiences and leverage change. Our network and this movement will benefit from continuous, intentional learning and feedback. In the spirit of continuous learning, we will refine these statements on a routine basis.

OUR BEST PRACTICES

BE EXPLICIT

Perhaps the most important strategy in communicating about race and racial equity — we have to learn to be explicit about race in a culture of hiding racial inequities behind other words.

In this movement, we are explicit about the history of racial inequity, our vision for a more equitable future, and the barriers we must turn into bridges to get there.

BE DATA & STORY DRIVEN

Structural racial inequities can and must be relentlessly exposed, measured, and disrupted. We need to use data, history and stories to explain the systems and structures that created racial inequities.

We leverage data whenever possible, but not at the expense of stories. In the end, it is people's real lives that we hope will change for the better as we undo systems that created our historical and current inequities — stories tell us about the tangible impacts of these inequities and possible paths toward a more equitable future.

EMBRACE A LEARNING CULTURE

Pervasive racial inequities are rooted in the very foundation of our country. While we operate from a perspective of urgency, we also recognize that racial inequities weren't created overnight and we must develop short- and long-term strategies.

We work urgently *and* we believe in a growth mindset — accepting that moving in a new direction requires us to navigate new terrain. Perfection isn't possible in the short-term, but progress is ours to accelerate.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE & OTHER TOOLS

Use this guide & other toolkits...



...to leverage starter content, data and templates...



...to communicate effectively in various formats to advance racial equity.

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

This guide is the primary document for communications about GARE & REH

COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

A PowerPoint template with a checklist of action items for your team to establish a regular practice and culture of effective communications about racial equity

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

This PowerPoint contains tips and templates to plan for effective community engagement on your racial equity work

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

All the research, baseline data & impact data your team will amass over time

PHOTO LIBRARY

Ready-to-go photos for ongoing use in internal and public communications

ONE-PAGERS & PPTS

Easily customizable starter content to use and adapt for internal and partner use

CONTENT & MATERIALS

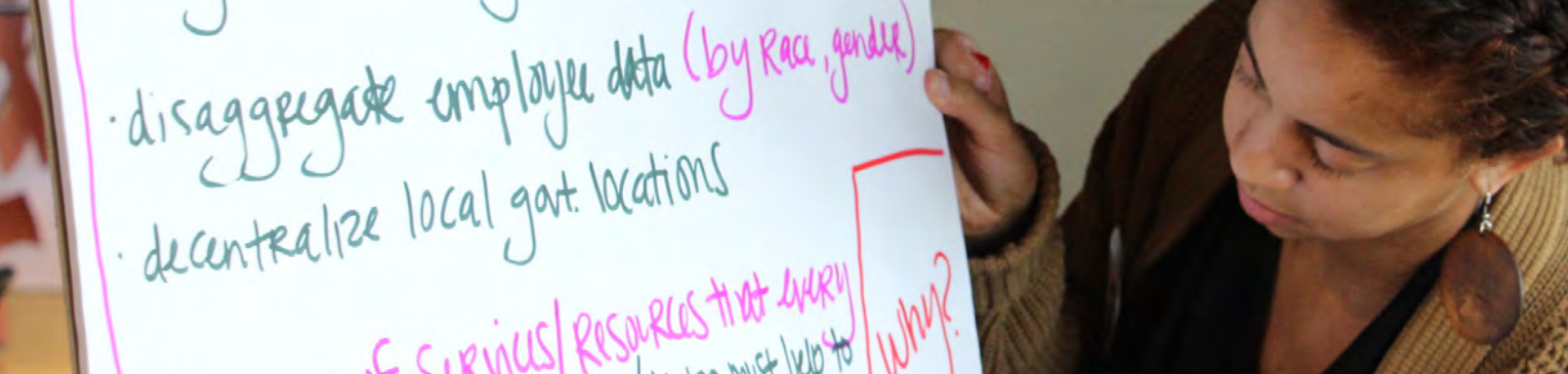
Starter content, graphics and other materials for ongoing communications use.





As Chief Equity Officer I'll be committed to facilitating dialogue and organizational practices that support the development and adoption of equity as a shared value. I serve as the technical expert in addressing equity as it is applied to city-wide policies, programs, practices and budget decisions with an overall vision to make Austin the most livable city for ALL.

— Brion Oaks, Chief Equity Officer, City of Austin



INTRO TO RACIAL EQUITY

This chapter provides resources about the history of race, racism and structural racial inequity. This is meant as background reading or source material for anyone implementing or using this guide.

"I believe that we will never have racial equality without economic equality. We can never stand together as equals unless we equally and equitably benefit in the incredible economic opportunities that Austin has to offer, and that is something I intend to do something about."

— Steve Adler, Mayor, Austin



VALUES & REALITIES

"All men are created equal..."

...was revolutionary at the time, but when Jefferson spoke these words, they applied to White male property owners.

"With liberty and justice for all..."

Millions of schoolchildren recite the pledge of allegiance at the start of every school day. "With liberty and justice" for all is a direct attempt to inculcate a core value with young people: that freedom and justice apply to all citizens. And yet, we need only take a look at the disparities in sentencing in our criminal justice system to see that this is clearly not true.

"Government of the people, by the people, for the people..."

...is a statement about who is served by government – and a promise about who should benefit, yet it is a far cry from the disparate outcomes we experience in education, health care access, life expectancy, infant mortality, employment and family wealth accumulation.

Racial inequity is not natural and it is not random — it is the result of creating barriers to resources and full participation in American life, prosperity and civic society.

GOVERNMENT & RACE

As a country, our government's relationship to race has evolved from the earliest days of colonial displacement through slavery, widespread immigration from Europe and then the entire world, through the 20th century and today.



The earliest European settlers may not have used the term "race," but used early pseudo-scientific ideals of European identity to justify displacing the hundreds of unique native cultures who lived in North America prior to the 1400s.

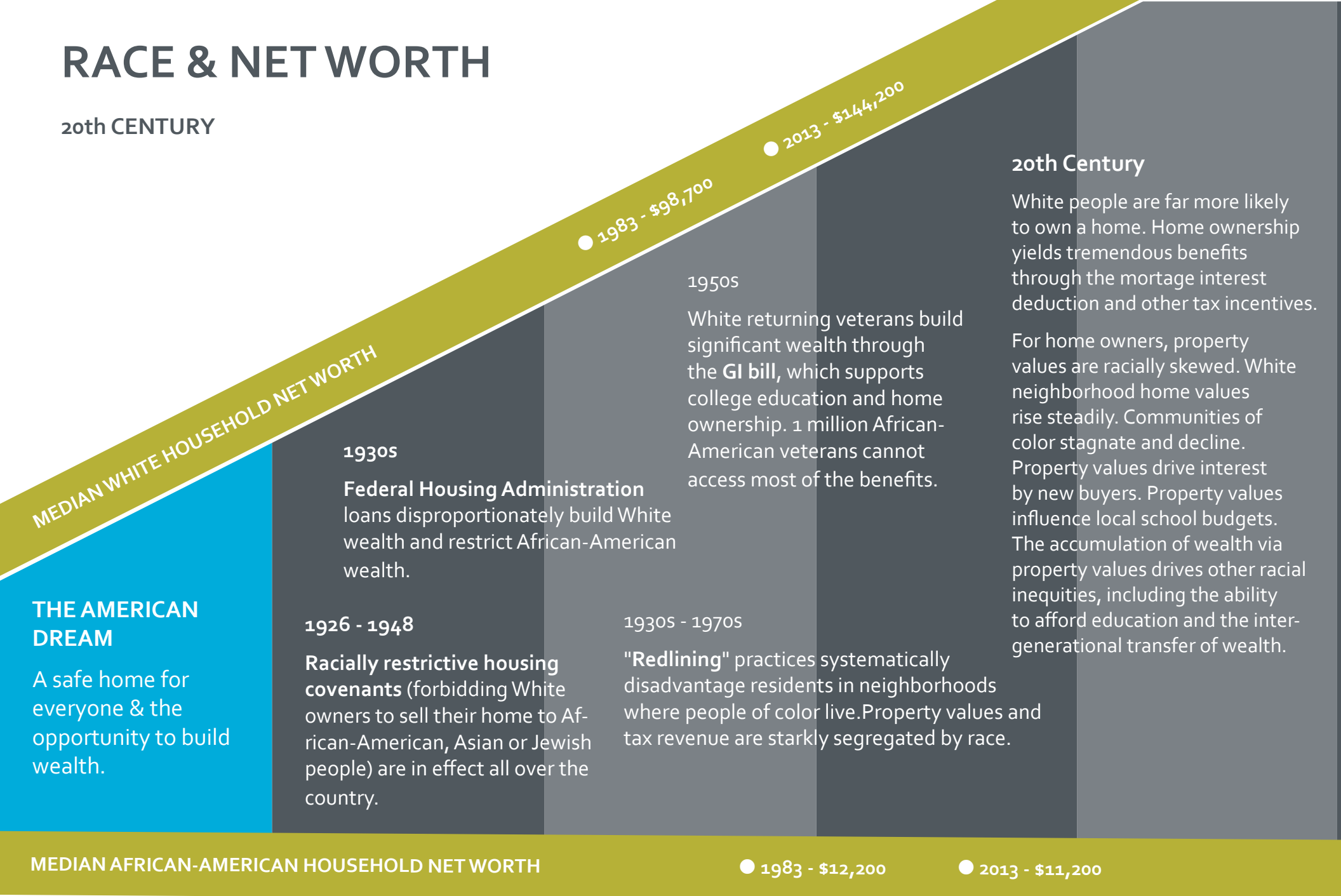
As slavery was formalized, explicit structural racism crystallized in the form of laws, policies and practices that restricted people of color from many of the rights of the new colonists. By the "Jim Crow" era there were hundreds of explicitly racist laws and policies in active use governing who could vote, marry, own property, be property, receive military benefits, be a citizen, and many other rights.

Based on the successful organizing efforts led by people of color (beginning in the late 1800s with abolitionists), many explicit laws and practices were overturned. Some were replaced by powerful new laws, policies and practices like the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments and the Civil Rights Act, but "race-neutral" laws — many of which continue to drive disparate outcomes for people of color — became the norm.

Today, GARE jurisdictions are leading the country into a new era where government leaders and staff recognize that we must acknowledge the government's role in creating and maintaining racial inequity and actively insert racial equity into our policies and practice to drive widespread improvements.

RACE & NET WORTH

20th CENTURY



Net worth is just one of the many outcome gaps driven by explicit and implicit government policy and practice. For more on the drivers of net worth, watch ["Race: The Power of an Illusion, Part 3: The House We Live In"](#). For more data on race-based wealth, income and poverty gaps, see [Pew Social Trends data](#).

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RACE & RACISM

MYTH: Race is biological.

FACT: Race is a social construct.

SAMPLE A.C.T. RESPONSE:

Affirm: You're right that a person's race is often identified or assumed based on ancestry and physical features.

Counter: Those choices — how to categorize people, based on physical traits and other factors — were created by people with a vested interest in a racial system that justified enslavement and colonialism. There has never been such a thing as "real" biological races. Although race is a social construct, as opposed to biology, it is still a reality.

Transform: Race can be a powerful part of identity, creating solidarity and community. We talk about race explicitly so that these historical wrongs can be addressed and righted — but it's important to understand that while race is and has been a real, meaningful part in individual peoples' lives and in history, it is a construct.

LEARN MORE:

- <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/race-is-a-social-construct-scientists-argue/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity/race-and-racial-identity-are-social-constructs>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/without-prejudice/201612/race-social-construction>
- <https://www.livescience.com/26505-human-genome-milestones.html>
- http://www.understandingrace.org/history/timeline_movie.html
- [YouTube: Race, the Power of an Illusion](#)

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RACE & RACISM

MYTH: Racism used to be a problem, but the past is the past.

FACT: *While many explicitly racist laws have now been overturned in the United States, their effects have cascaded into current outcome. Structural racism is still a pervasive force, driving profound outcome gaps and harming entire communities.*

SAMPLE A.C.T. RESPONSE:

Affirm: Yes, racism used to be widespread, official policy of the US government. In many ways our country has made incredible progress in the last 75 years, as state and federal laws have been amended. In addition to the formal ways that racism drove our culture, economy and communities, explicit racism was also an unquestioned norm for most of our history.

Counter: While many explicitly racist laws have been overturned, the impact of those explicit laws and policies is profound. Consider the wealth and power lost over generations because of slavery and displacement of Native Americans. Consider how different U.S. democracy might look today if people of color had always had voting rights. And, once some of those explicit laws were overturned, new policies were put into place that still drove racialized outcomes — even those that claimed to be race-neutral. This implicit structural racism continues to this day and has multiplied the effects of the earlier, more explicit policies.

Transform: While we may wish that ending racism were as simple as changing explicitly racist laws, that's not nearly enough. It's our job as government leaders and workers to ensure that laws, policies and practices explicitly advance racial equity — that they intentionally drive equal outcomes for people of color and finally begin to repair our long history of structural racism.

LEARN MORE:

- <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-average-black-family-would-need-228-years-to-build-the-wealth-of-a-white-family-today/>
- <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/color-wealth-nations-capital>
- https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/hendren/files/mobility_geo.pdf

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RACE & RACISM

MYTH: Racism will end when individual people stop being racist.

FACT: *Structural racism drives inequities in our communities despite the good intentions of individual people. We can have entire organizations made up of well-intentioned people who are operating within an institution and system that is perpetuating racial inequities. We must dismantle structural racism to achieve equitable outcomes.*

SAMPLE A.C.T. RESPONSE:

Affirm: The personal is political, and identifying our own actions and inactions as individuals is critically important in racial equity work.

Counter: While individual acts of racism are destructive, fixing them will never be enough — structural change drives individual change much more quickly than the other way around.

Transform: As individuals, we all need to step up and be accountable for our own roles in ongoing issues of race. But our effort will yield the best results if we focus our interventions on institutional and structural change.

LEARN MORE:

- ✦ <https://www.salon.com/2016/10/07/scathing-u-n-report-structural-racism-endures-in-u-s-and-the-government-has-failed-to-protect-african-americans-rights/>
- ✦ [YouTube “Book TV at Duke University: Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, “Racism without Racists”](#)

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RACE & RACISM

MYTH: Good life outcomes are based on hard work and good values.

FACT: *Hard work and individual success are common values in American culture, but hard work isn't nearly enough to overcome historical and current structural racism.*

SAMPLE A.C.T. RESPONSE:

Affirm: Yes, hard work can help individuals affected by racial inequities to make some gains, and yes, European immigrants had many challenges in their journeys to becoming successful citizens. They have worked hard.

Counter: Research shows that people of color actually have to work harder to attain the same — or often worse — outcomes than White people. This expectation is unfair and places the burden of effort on those who have already been most burdened and disadvantaged by current systems. Even more importantly — hard work isn't nearly enough to overcome the many, layered structural disadvantages faced by people of color. Believing that hard work is all it takes strengthens myths that White people enjoy better outcomes because of their hard work alone, rather than acknowledging that White wealth, power and resources have come at the expense of wealth, power and resources of people of color — both intentionally and unintentionally.

Transform: Rather than an "either-or," it is important to acknowledge the importance of individual hard work, and to recognize that the playing field has never been level. In government, we have a unique responsibility to recognize institutional and structural drivers of inequity — and we have the responsibility and ability to transform them.

LEARN MORE:

- <https://psmag.com/why-studying-and-working-hard-isn-t-enough-for-black-americans-42c957e9b3b>
- [NCBI: The Myth of Meritocracy and African American Health](#)
- https://www.salon.com/2015/08/09/meritocracy_is_a_massive_lie_race_inheritance_and_the_the_truth_about_the_rigged_american_dream/
- <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Harold-Wechslerthe-Myth/239311>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Meritocracy-Myth-Stephen-J-McNamee/dp/0742561682>

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RACE & RACISM

MYTH: It's about class, not race.

FACT: While financial wealth is a critical factor driving outcomes for all people — particularly people of color, who have been systematically denied access to wealth — research shows that race, not wealth or economic "class," is the stronger predictor of outcomes.

SAMPLE A.C.T. RESPONSE:

Affirm: Yes, financial resources are incredibly important — and deeply interwoven with issues of race. Having access to secure financial wealth and other social capital is a critical factor in whether individuals struggle or thrive in our nation.

Counter: Sometimes people hope that simply focusing on the enormous economic disparities we see in this country will also fix the racial issues. This approach feels promising to some because it sidesteps the issues of race altogether and, in theory, could create better outcomes for all those struggling financially while improving outcomes for people of color. Unfortunately, looking only at economic justice is like attempting to look at these larger structural forces through a colorblind lens. Financial wealth disparities have never been race-neutral. The structural drivers — laws, policies, practices — that built our country's economy were, for hundreds of years, built intentionally to benefit White people and disadvantage people of color. From enslavement to Native American treaties to redlining to mortgage policy in the 21st century, racial injustices and economic injustices have always gone hand in hand. Attempting to ignore race when talking about wealth ignores history, and attempts to focus only on economic justice often inadvertently harm people of color.

Transform: Class issues, wealth disparities and economic justice are inherently a part of the creation of racial disparities, and they must be part of our solutions.

LEARN MORE:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/19/upshot/race-class-white-and-black-men.html>
- http://www.ilpovertyreport.org/sites/default/files/uploads/PR16_Report.pdf
- <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/war-poverty-vs-racism>

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RACE & RACISM

MYTH: "I don't see color."

FACT: *Although colorblindness might be well-intentioned, it is not possible, and attempting it is harmful, not helpful.*

SAMPLE A.C.T. RESPONSE:

Affirm: It is tempting to believe that if we believe in equality for all people and racial justice, we become "post-racial" or colorblind.

Counter: While we are working diligently toward a future where racial identity no longer predict outcomes, attempting to ignore race often does more harm than good. It can create feelings of invisibility for people of color, willful ignorance of ongoing racial inequities, and an inappropriate shift of focus to issues of economic justice or other social factors. Equally importantly, it's not possible for any of us to be colorblind — race and racism are powerful factors in shaping each of our identities and our country.

Transform: Being explicit about race is one of the most important skills we need to advance racial equity.

LEARN MORE:

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/culturally-speaking/201112/colorblind-ideology-is-form-racism>
- <https://www.betterworldbooks.com/product/detail/Colormute--Race-Talk-Dilemmas-in-an-American-School-9780691123950>

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RACE & RACISM

MYTH: Hierarchies are natural: some group has to be at the top or the bottom

FACT: Inequities are the result of intentional, long-term efforts to disadvantage people of color. In a country with as much wealth as ours, stark outcome gaps need not exist.

SAMPLE A.C.T. RESPONSE:

Affirm: We do see plenty of examples of hierarchy when we look at the natural world.

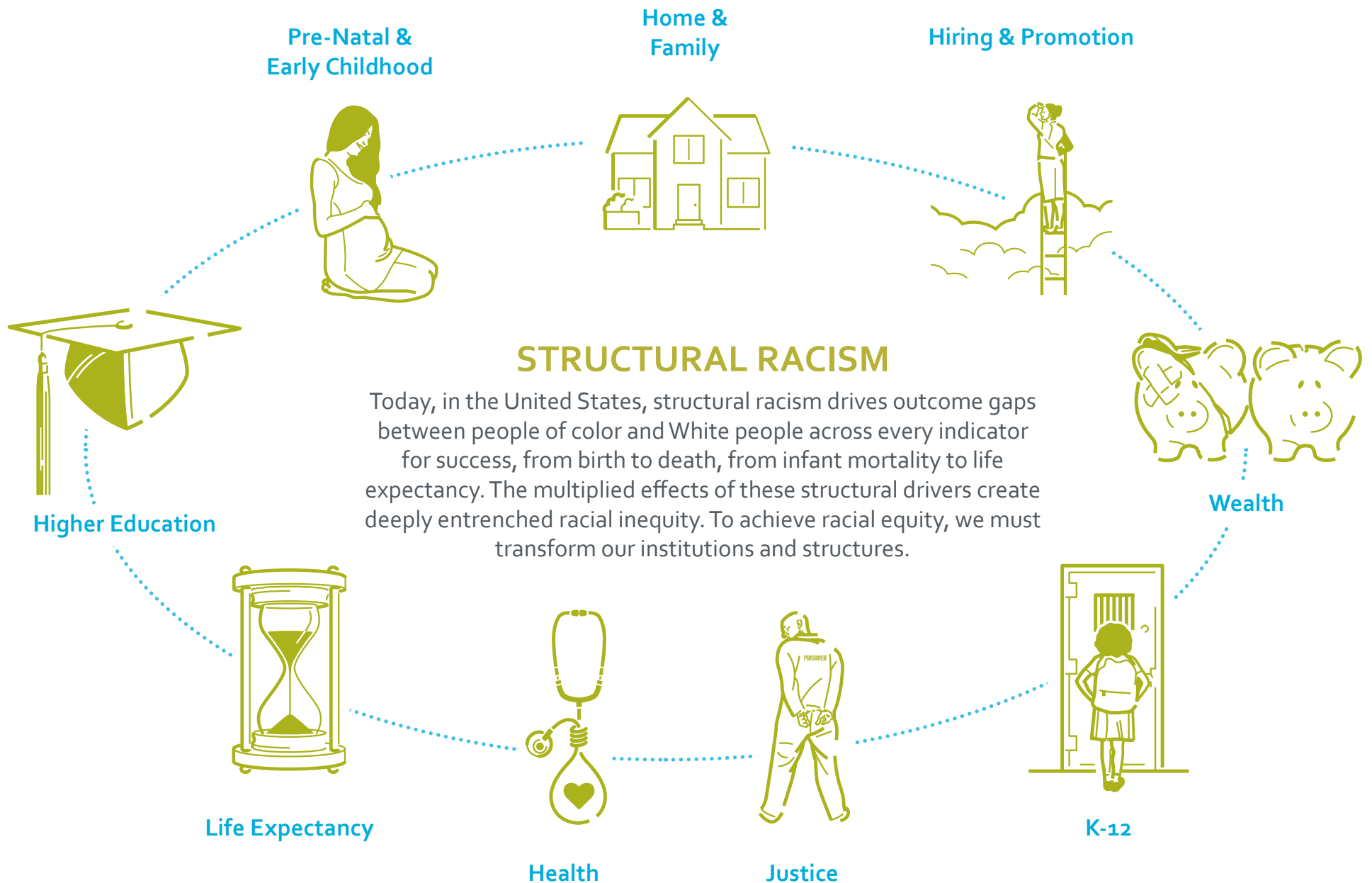
Counter: There is no scientific basis for racial hierarchy — racial hierarchy in our species is a very recent invention. There is no modern scientific validity to any assertions that racial hierarchy is natural in our species, and in a country with as much wealth as the United States, racial inequities should be intolerable. The fact that race so clearly predicts who will be most burdened by resource and outcome disparities is unacceptable.

Transform: Our current social and economic realities were created by those who benefited from the distribution of resources. Everyone should have access to resources, power, and opportunity and when we center our efforts on those most burdened — people of color — everyone benefits.

LEARN MORE:

- ✦ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/nov/27/enough-of-aid-lets-talk-reparations>
- ✦ <https://www.amazon.com/Ecology-Freedom-Emergence-Dissolution-Hierarchy/dp/1904859267>
- ✦ <https://www.amazon.com/How-Capitalism-Underdeveloped-Black-America/dp/0896085791>
- ✦ <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/226705>

PROFOUND OUTCOME GAPS



PROFOUND OUTCOME GAPS

Profound racial inequity can be seen across every measure of wellbeing and life outcomes. Often, these gaps are explained away by blaming individual people — promoting "hard work" as the way to get ahead. Hard work can help, but because underlying systems are the force driving inequities, we focus on structural transformation.



FINANCIAL WEALTH

People of color have less financial wealth than White people — due to many long-term structural factors like exclusion from borrowing, higher mortgage rates, disproportionate distribution of benefits to WWII veterans, racially biased foreclosure practices, and many other factors.

NATIONAL STATS

Striking racial differences are evident when looking at total household wealth. In addition to national net worth gaps increasing, American cities reveal even starker divides. In Boston, White households have a median wealth of \$247,500, while African-American households have a median wealth of close to zero. Racial and ethnic differences in net worth demonstrate the extreme financial vulnerability faced by communities of color. Possessing only a fraction of the wealth of White households, people of color are less likely to have the financial resources to draw upon in times of financial stress. In addition, they have fewer resources to invest in their own future and those of their children.

Sources: [The Color of Wealth in Boston](#) | [Pew Social Trends](#)

2013 NATIONAL average
net worth

\$144,200 WHITE

\$14,000 LATINO

\$11,200 AFRICAN-

AMERICAN

Profound racial inequity can be seen across every measure of wellbeing and life outcomes. Often, these gaps are explained away by blaming individual people —promoting "hard work" as the way to get ahead. Hard work can help, but because underlying systems are the force driving inequities, we focus on structural transformation.



PRE-NATAL & EARLY CARE

Outcomes for pregnant mothers, infants and toddlers vary widely — by race — in terms of access to pre-natal information and vitamins, affordable, nutritious food, high-quality childcare and high-quality early education.

NATIONAL STATS

“Nationally, 92 percent of babies are born at healthy birth weight, and most racial groups have similar rates. However, African-American babies are the least likely to be born at healthy birthweight (87 percent), putting them at higher risk of developmental delays and death within the first year of life. The percentage of participation in childcare, preschool or kindergarten is lower for people of color, however, this indicator does not measure the quality of the child’s early educational experiences, which research has shown can significantly influence outcomes for young children. Researchers have suggested that boosting both the participation in and the quality of early childhood educational experiences could increase school readiness, especially for African-American and Latino children.

Source: [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)

AFRICAN-AMERICAN
BABIES are the least
likely to be born at

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DEATH

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HOME & FAMILY

Family income can be a major predictor of outcomes for children, affecting everything from their safety to their access to extracurricular activities. Stark differences in income can be seen across racial groups: 69% of White children live in families with incomes at or above 200% of poverty, compared to 35% of African-American children. For lower-income parents, financial instability can limit their child's access to a safe environment and enrichment activities. For example, higher-income parents are nearly twice as likely as lower-income parents to rate their neighborhood as an "excellent" or "very good" place to raise kids (78% vs. 42%). Lower-income parents are more likely to express concerns about their children being victims of violence. At least half of parents with family incomes less than \$30,000 say they worry that their child or children might get beaten up or attacked (55%), 15 percentage points higher than among parents with incomes above \$75,000. And about half (47%) of these lower-income parents worry that their children might be shot at some point, more than double the share among higher-income parents.

Sources: [Pew Social Trends](#) | [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)

69% of **WHITE CHILDREN** live in **FAMILIES WITH INCOMES** at or above **200%** OF **POVERTY** compared to **35%** of **AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN**

Profound racial inequity can be seen across every measure of wellbeing and life outcomes. Often, these gaps are explained away by blaming individual people —promoting "hard work" as the way to get ahead. Hard work can help, but because underlying systems are the force driving inequities, we focus on structural transformation.



K-12

Access to excellent teachers, well-funded schools and high-quality materials vary profoundly by race of student. African-American and Latino students are more likely to be suspended or punished for the same infractions as White children, one of many factors contributing to the "school-to-prison-pipeline."

In America, schools with a lot of minority students are chronically underfunded. And research suggests that poverty alone does not explain the underfunding. At any given poverty level, districts that have a higher proportion of white students get substantially higher funding than districts that have more minority students. That means that no matter how rich or poor the district in question, funding gaps exist solely in correlation with the racial composition of the school. "White flight" has left low-income students of color in failing urban public schools. The compounding issue of low-income neighborhoods and scarce (or biased) funding leaves such schools with little money or resources to educate their students, and thus little hope of breaking the poverty cycle.

Sources: [National Equity Atlas](#) | [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) | [Mosenkis Research on Pennsylvania](#)

44% of **WHITE EIGHTH GRADERS** scored or above **PROFICIENT IN MATH**
compared to **14%** of **AFRICAN-AMERICAN EIGHTH GRADERS**

Profound racial inequity can be seen across every measure of wellbeing and life outcomes. Often, these gaps are explained away by blaming individual people —promoting "hard work" as the way to get ahead. Hard work can help, but because underlying systems are the force driving inequities, we focus on structural transformation.



POLICE INTERACTIONS, INCARCERATION & JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Some of the most harmful outcomes for people of color occur within the “justice” system — from policies like “stop and frisk” to the “war on drugs,” lack of legal representation, far higher rates of incarceration, denial of parole, punishment while incarcerated, and death penalty rates — people of color, particularly African-American men, experience harm, violence and murder through the police, courts and prison systems.

Sentences imposed on African-American males in the federal system are nearly 20 percent longer than those imposed on White males convicted of similar crimes. African-American and Latino offenders sentenced in state and federal courts face significantly greater odds of incarceration than similarly situated White offenders and receive longer sentences than their White counterparts in some jurisdictions. African-American male federal defendants receive longer sentences than White people arrested for the same offenses and with comparable criminal histories. Research has also shown that race plays a significant role in the determination of which homicide cases result in death sentences.

Sources: [Prison Policy](#) | [ACLU](#)

Comprising **64%** of the US POPULATION, WHITES represent **39%** of the PRISON POPULATION.

AFRICAN AMERICANS are **13%** of the US POPULATION, and **40%** of the PRISON POPULATION.

Profound racial inequity can be seen across every measure of wellbeing and life outcomes. Often, these gaps are explained away by blaming individual people —promoting "hard work" as the way to get ahead. Hard work can help, but because underlying systems are the force driving inequities, we focus on structural transformation.



HIGHER ED

A college education is one of the hallmarks of the American Dream and some American colleges have developed progressive policies toward racial equity. Despite progress, college and graduate school admissions, graduation and tenure rates continue to reflect and drive larger racial outcomes.

NATIONAL STATS

In 1974, 14% of White students, 5.5% of African-American students and 5.5% of Latino students had completed four years of college. In 2015, 36.2% of White students, 22.5% of African-American students and 15.5% of Latino students had completed four years of college. That's a 13.7% gap between African-American and White students, and a 20.7% gap between Latino and White students — both much higher than the earlier 8.5% figure. Although the number of individuals with degrees has increased, the gaps in terms of percentage points have increased.

Sources: [USA Today](#) | [US Census](#) | [National Center for Education Statistics](#)

36.2% of WHITE
STUDENTS

22.5% of AFRICAN-
AMERICAN STUDENTS

and

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Profound racial inequity can be seen across every measure of wellbeing and life outcomes. Often, these gaps are explained away by blaming individual people —promoting "hard work" as the way to get ahead. Hard work can help, but because underlying systems are the force driving inequities, we focus on structural transformation.



HIRING, COMPENSATION & PROMOTION

Implicit bias can play a role in every part of the job experience, from recruitment to resume review to interviews to negotiation to long-term compensation and promotion. Again, despite experimentation and pioneering practices to increase "diversity in the workplace," longitudinal studies suggest that implicit bias training alone may be ineffective or even harmful. Because implicit bias operates at the unconscious level, for training to be effective, it must be aligned with institutional actions to interrupt bias.

African-American-White wage gaps are larger today than they were in 1979, but the increase has not occurred along a straight line. During the early 1980s, rising unemployment, declining unionization, and policies such as the failure to raise the minimum wage and lax enforcement of anti-discrimination laws contributed to the growing African-American-White wage gap. Since 2000 the gap has grown again. As of 2015, relative to the average hourly wages of White men with the same education, experience, metro status, and region of residence, African-American men make 22.0 percent less, and African-American women make 34.2 percent less. African-American women earn 11.7 percent less than their white female counterparts. The widening gap has not affected everyone equally. Young African-American women (those with 0 to 10 years of experience) have been hardest hit since 2000.

Source: [National Equity Atlas](#) | [Economic Policy Institute](#) | [Harvard Business Review](#)

MEDIAN
HOURLY
WAGE
for
PEOPLE OF
COLOR
is \$17 while
\$22 for
WHITES

Profound racial inequity can be seen across every measure of wellbeing and life outcomes. Often, these gaps are explained away by blaming individual people —promoting "hard work" as the way to get ahead. Hard work can help, but because underlying systems are the force driving inequities, we focus on structural transformation.



HEALTH

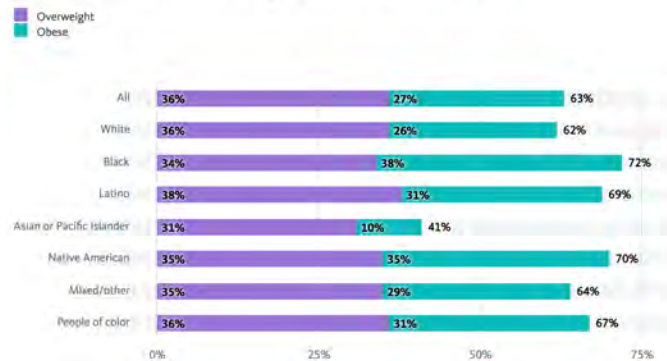
Access to nutritious food, preventative healthcare, health insurance and catastrophic coverage are all predictable by race and compounded by wealth and educational disparities. These baseline indicators of wellbeing create higher rates of illness, higher healthcare costs, and lower quality of care for many people of color.

Source: [National Equity Atlas Diabetes](#) | [National Equity Atlas Obesity](#)

Overweight and obese United States

Breakdown:

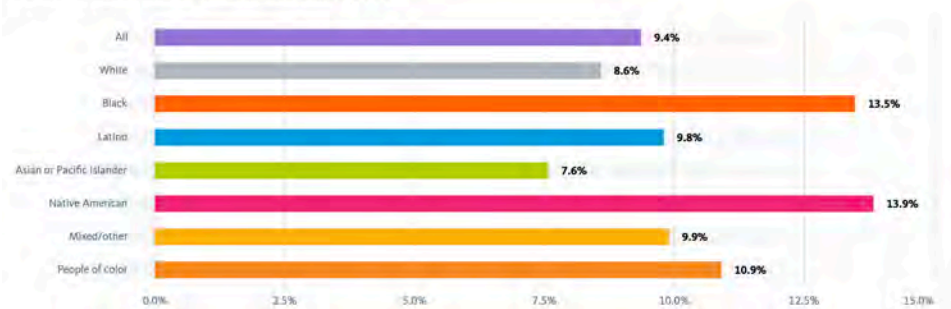
Percent of adults that are overweight and obese: United States, 2012



Diabetes United States

Breakdown:

Percent of adults with diabetes: United States, 2012



Profound racial inequity can be seen across every measure of wellbeing and life outcomes. Often, these gaps are explained away by blaming individual people —promoting "hard work" as the way to get ahead. Hard work can help, but because underlying systems are the force driving inequities, we focus on structural transformation.



AFRICAN AMERICANS are **2X** more likely to DIE from HEART DISEASE than WHITES

LIFE EXPECTANCY

While length of life doesn't imply quality of life, people of color are far more likely to die early from preventable illnesses or violence. Tragic on an individual level, these early preventable deaths also mean loss, trauma and instability for families.

NATIONAL STATS

African Americans ages 18 to 64 are at higher risk of early death than Whites. Disparities in the leading causes of death for African Americans compared with Whites are pronounced by early and middle adulthood, including homicide and chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. African Americans ages 35-64 are 50 percent more likely to have high blood pressure than Whites. African Americans ages 18-49 years, are two times more likely to die from heart disease than Whites. African Americans have the highest death rate for all cancers combined compared with Whites.

Source: [The Centers for Disease Control](#)

ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

RACIAL EQUITY MEANS...

Closing the gaps so that race does not predict one's success, while also improving outcomes for all.

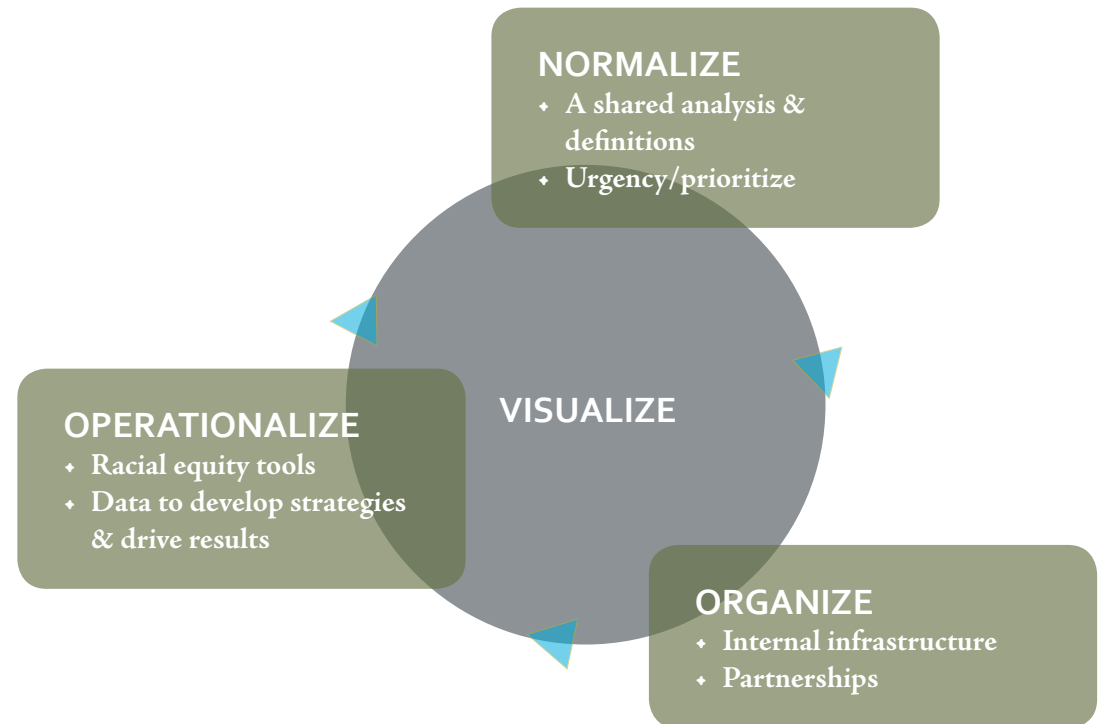
TO CLOSE THE GAPS...

we center communities of color to target improvements for those most burdened by racial inequity.

MOVING BEYOND "SERVICES"

to transform policies, institutions, and structures.

NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE



NORMALIZE

- ✦ A shared analysis and definitions
- ✦ Urgency and priority of racial equity

ORGANIZE

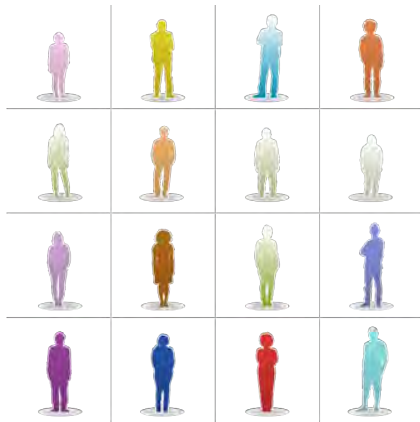
- ✦ Internal infrastructure
- ✦ Partnerships

VISUALIZE

OPERATIONALIZE

- ✦ Racial equity tools
- ✦ Data to develop strategies and drive results

DRIVING TOWARD EQUITY



DIVERSITY



INCLUSION



EQUITY

An effort to include people of color on staff (e.g. in meetings) but there is limited effort to include them proportionally or in decision-making. These efforts can lead to tokenism. Having a representative number of people of color is critical, but not enough.

People of color are included in discussion to provide input, but do not hold significant levels of decision-making power. The number and percent of people of color increases, at times leading to increased power.

Driven by a relentless focus on conditions in the community, recognizing that we must develop and implement policies and practices that eliminate racial inequities and increase success for all groups.

EQUITY vs. EQUALITY

The difference between "equity" and "equality" is core to our approach. A rich dialogue exists in the larger racial equity community about the best ways to illustrate this distinction. Here are our best practices.

EQUALITY

Treating everyone the same, no matter where they're starting or whether outcomes remain unequal.

"Equality" typically means **equal resources**.

EQUITY

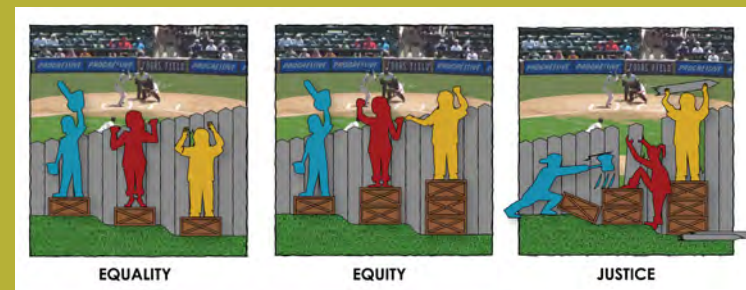
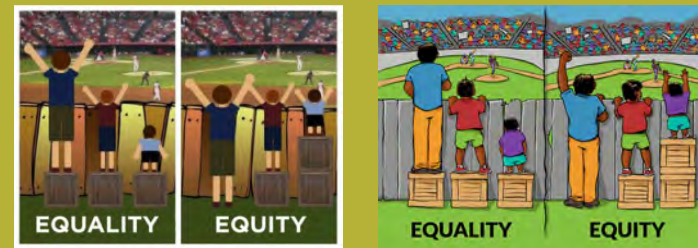
Acknowledging that different people start in different places due to racist historical context and giving everyone what they need to succeed equally.

"Equity" is about **equal outcomes**.

TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT THIS DIFFERENCE

- Use examples
- Remind people that "equality" doesn't actually work — outcomes stagnate or outcome gaps grow
- lean on shared values of justice and fairness to explain our equity approach

ONGOING DIALOGUE



<http://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/>

<http://interactioninstitute.org/using-the4thbox-play-and-political-imagination/>

KEY TERMS

Here's a basic glossary of some of the key terms of racial equity work.

RACE // A social construct that categorizes people based on physical characteristics and ancestry to justify inequitable distribution of resources and power.

ETHNICITY // A social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, history and customs.

RACIAL EQUITY // Eliminating race-based outcome gaps so that race cannot predict one's success and improving outcomes for all. This approach centers those who are worse off and moves from a service-based approach toward focusing on policies, institutions and structures.

RACIAL INEQUITY // Outcome gaps between people of different races based on historical or current factors or structures that benefit White people more than people of color.

We occasionally use "equity" or "inequity" as shorthand for "racial equity" and "racial inequity," but only when the full phrase has just been used. While it's tempting to shorten for brevity's sake, it's more important to be explicit.

BIAS // Prejudice toward one group and its members relative to another group.

EXPLICIT BIAS // Biases that people are aware of and that operate consciously. They are expressed directly.

IMPLICIT BIAS // Biases people are usually unaware of and that operate at the subconscious level. Implicit bias is usually expressed indirectly.

INDIVIDUAL RACISM // Bigotry or discrimination by an individual based on race.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM // Policies or practices that work better for White people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

STRUCTURAL RACISM // A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

GLOSSARY - VISUALIZED



INDIVIDUAL RACISM

Bigotry or discrimination by an individual based on race.



INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

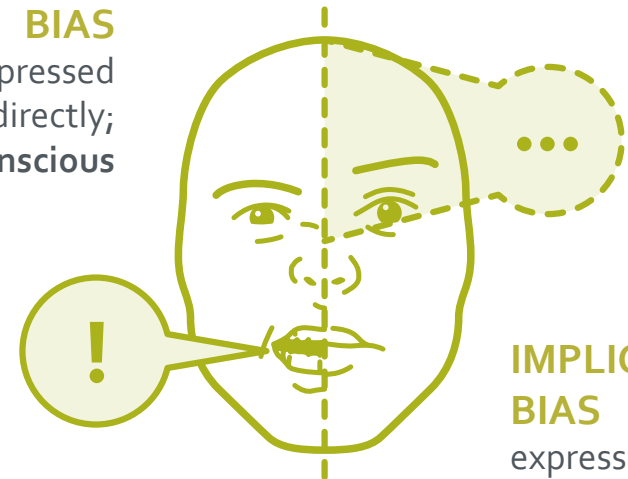
Policies or practices that work better for White people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.



STRUCTURAL RACISM

A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

EXPLICIT BIAS
expressed directly;
conscious



IMPLICIT BIAS
expressed indirectly;
unconscious

[Click here to download these graphics and others for use in your materials.](#)



GLOSSARY - VISUALIZED



LEARN MORE

Toolkit: [GARE Resource Guide](#)

Video: [PBS: Race, the Power of An Illusion](#)

Video: [The Myth of Race](#)

Research: [The State of Race in America](#)

Research: [CSI's Talking About Race Tools](#)

Article: [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)

Netflix Video: [13th](#)

Video: [On Intersectionality](#)

Research: [White Supremacy](#)

Research: [National Equity Atlas](#)

Research: [Center for the study of Ethnicity & Race](#)

Book: [Racing to Justice](#)

Book: [The New Jim Crow](#)

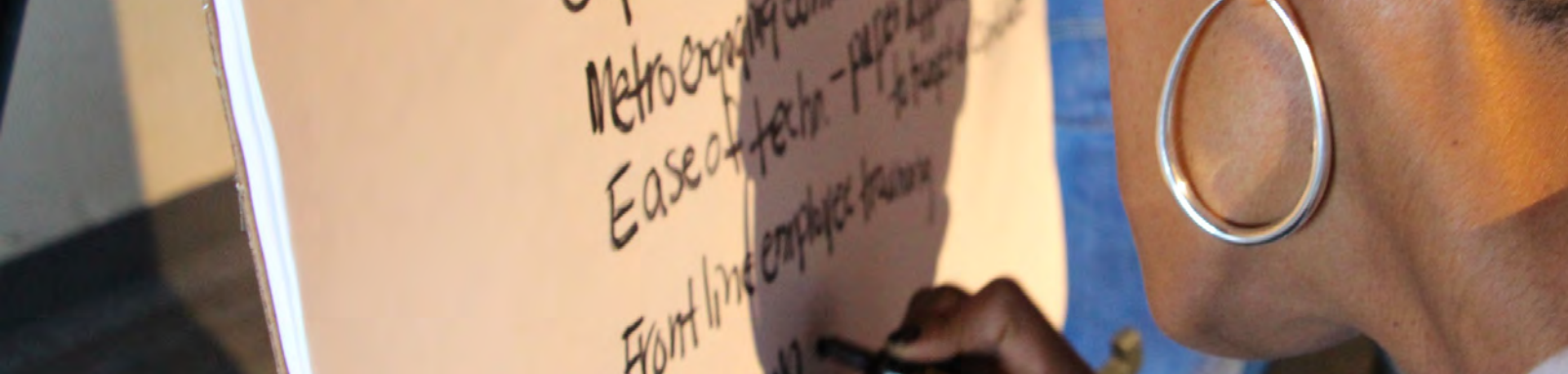
Book: [Race Matters](#)

Book: [Racism without Racists](#)

Article: [Structural Racism](#)

Video: [How do I Explain Racism to my Black Son?](#)

Article: [America's Changing Color Lines](#)



MESSAGING STRATEGY

This chapter provides a national messaging framework for use across GARE cities in communicating with colleagues, partners and communities about institutional and structural racism. The strategy documents vision, values, target audiences, core message, and character.

For me, racial equity is a thread that runs through many of the core problems we face as a community. Whether it is housing, economic opportunity, or environmental justice – we find disparate outcomes. If we can address racial equity, we can have a positive impact on these and other issues we are trying to resolve.

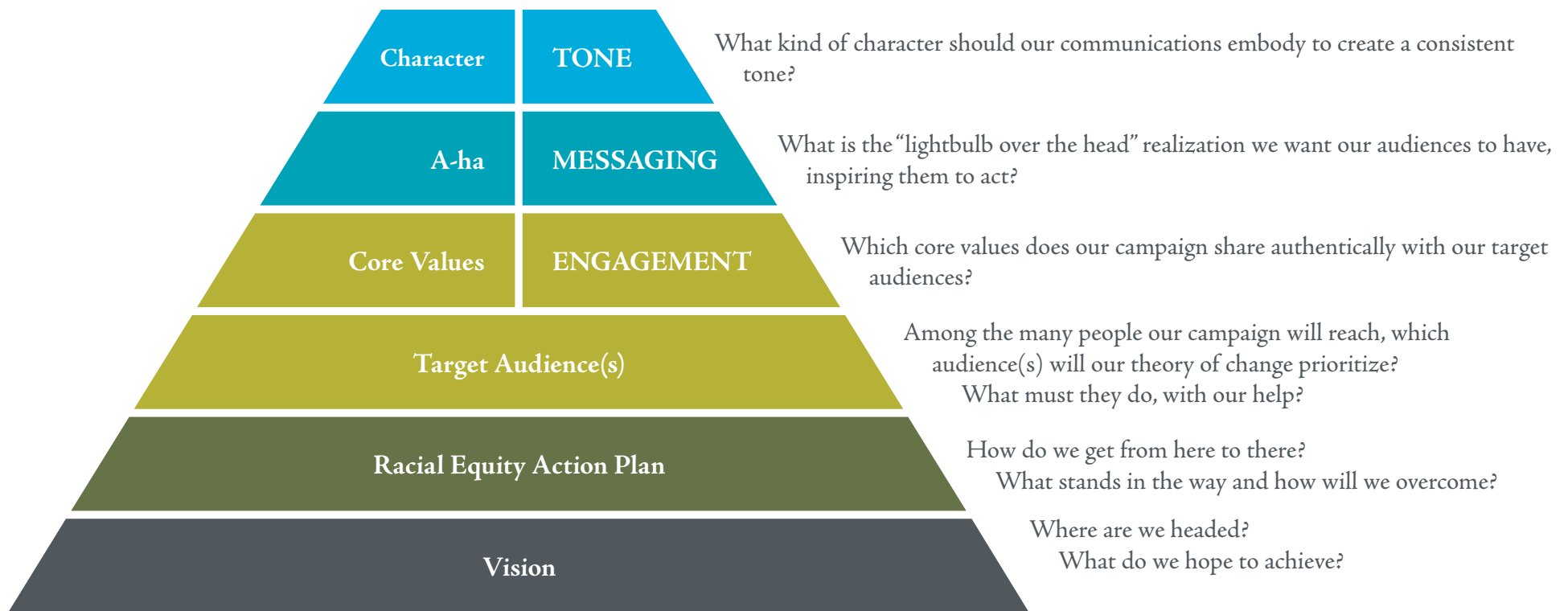
**— Grand Rapids Mayor
Rosalynn Bliss**



WHAT IS A MESSAGING STRATEGY?

A messaging strategy is a simple, one-page tool (page 50) to unite all of our communications about racial equity work with a similar tone, feel and message. Use it as a starting point for drafting and a checklist for revisions.

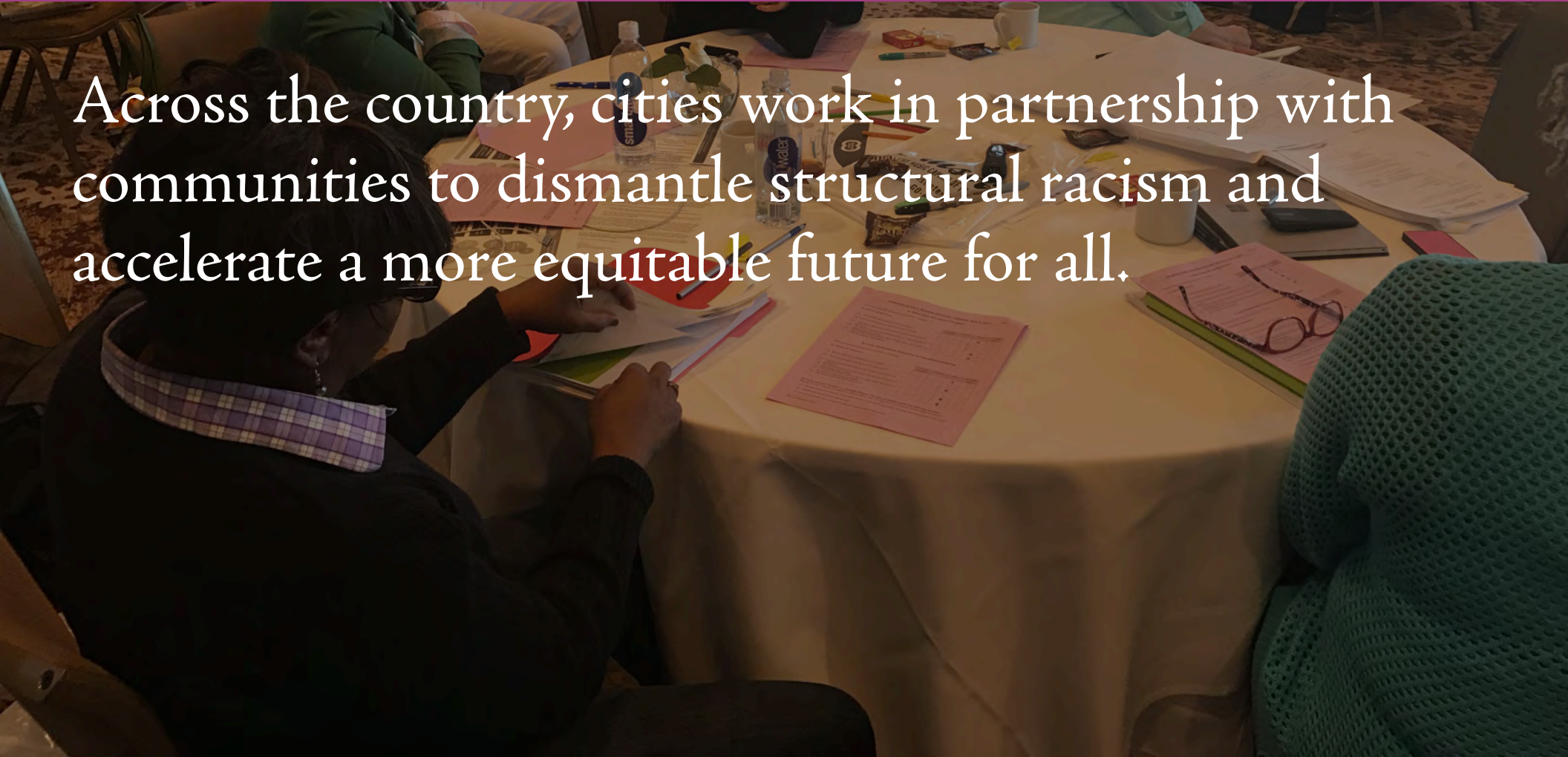
The following pages describe the purpose of each messaging strategy element.





VISION

Across the country, cities work in partnership with communities to dismantle structural racism and accelerate a more equitable future for all.



OUR TARGET AUDIENCES

PRIMARY

The Sparkplug

Sparkplugs are everywhere — but they don't always hold formal positions of power. They are early adopters and natural advocates, catalyzing racial equity work and sustaining it when it's challenged.

Optimistic, visionary and tenacious, they work at all levels of government, lead community groups and are outspoken advocates.

SECONDARY

The Decision-Maker

Decision-makers have the platforms, resources and influence to accelerate racial equity — their active leadership is critical. We aim to give decision-makers the tools they need to be effective advocates.

Results-oriented, resourced, and under political pressure, decision-makers hold authority, but have many competing pressures so may be more challenging to access, engage, and secure as champions.

The Cautious Ally

Hidden within the ranks, many allies-in-waiting exist. **Hardworking, justice-oriented,** but perhaps **disillusioned,** they may be apathetic or skeptical because of the legacy of racial inequity, the immensity of the task ahead, or memories of prior failed attempts.

Sparkplugs or decision-makers are best suited to encourage and sustain this person. Once collectively engaged, this audience accelerates organizational change.

VALUES

Every organization conveys values (often indirectly) through communications. By being thoughtful about the values we wish to communicate, we'll do so with greater intentionality.

JUSTICE

We are clear-eyed about the past and rigorously committed to a new way of governing, one that intentionally creates just, equitable outcomes for people of color.

Government played a primary role in the historical creation of racial inequities, and, despite milestone civil rights laws, has continued to maintain racial inequities. Local governments are uniquely situated to examine and transform policies and practices toward racial equity.

COMMUNITY

The principle “nothing about us without us” is a core tenet of our approach. We partner with and support the leadership of those most impacted by our history of inequities, communities of color, to guide and shape efforts toward racial equity.

The history of progress in the United States has been driven by community organizing. While we are working to build the skills of leaders and workers within government to advance racial equity, we recognize we can only achieve success when we center and collaborate with communities of color.

MOMENTUM

Our work to advance racial equity is urgent, but we know that lasting change can't happen overnight. We balance progress with pragmatism, seeking not perfection but meaningful steps forward every day.

We build solutions, constantly evolving, learning and adapting to accelerate the pace of our collective progress.

VALUE 4

Consider adopting additional core values unique to your jurisdiction.

VALUE 5

Consider adopting additional core values unique to your jurisdiction.

A-HA

Communications are most effective when they consistently orient toward one, over-arching core message or truth (with all other messages and talking points in support). This is the core belief or insight at the heart of all of our communications — the truth that guides everything we do.

Government created and continues to perpetuate racial inequity. We must transform government to advance racial equity.

OUR CHARACTER...

The Bridge Builder

Visionary, hands-on, collaborative and adaptive, we build bridges not just for the sake of connection, but because we're all better off when the bonds between us are intentional and resilient.

A bridge builder leverages diverse perspectives, considers the complexity of the landscape and the depths of its divides, and ultimately creates lasting structures that connect us with each other and the future we must create.

It's critical that any communications campaign speak with a common tone of voice — the easiest shortcut for that consistency is the adoption of a recognizable archetypal character to guide all communications.

...GUIDES OUR TONE

Visionary

Our tone is aspirational, true to our long-term vision of structural transformation.

Hands-On

We go deep, becoming expert in the structures that create inequity so that we can shape them intentionally from the inside.

Collaborative

We are constantly deepening bonds with jurisdiction staff and regional, national and community allies. Only with a spirit of authentic partnership can we collectively transform government toward racial equity.

Adaptive

Every good engineer knows failure is a precursor to breakthrough. We celebrate the idea of learning while doing, constantly building and evolving forward.

CORE MESSAGING STRATEGY

Character	The Bridge Builder, Tone: Visionary, Hands-on, Collaborative, Adaptive
A-ha	Government created and continues to perpetuate racial inequity. We must transform government to advance racial equity.
Core Values	Justice / Community / Momentum / 4th Value / 5th Value
Target Audience(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sparkplug2. Decision-Maker3. The Cautious Ally
Theory of Change	Normalize » Organize » Operationalize » Visualize
Vision	Across the country, cities work in partnership with communities to dismantle structural racism and accelerate a more equitable future for all.



AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

We engage with a wide variety of audiences in order to 1) build skills for organizational change and implementation within the public sector, and 2) in collaboration with community partners, recognize that an “inside-outside” organizing model will create the conditions for greater success.

The following pages provide tips for engagement with some of our key audiences. Across audiences, remember to meet people where they are at. Part of organizing is increasing engagement, so be sure to approach your audience with concrete action steps for engagement that will help to advance racial equity.

Albuquerque will become an inclusive community where equitable success is the norm and race and ethnicity will no longer predict outcomes.

-- Albuquerque Racial Equity Statement

SPECTRUM OF COMMITMENT

SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT

Source: [Creating Advocates](#)



Generally speaking, we want to **equip our advocates to get to work, convert apathetics and skeptics into advocates, and dissuade active resisters.**

Not everyone is on board with racial equity work, but **the good news is we don't need everyone.** We need a culture shift — research indicates that if we can shift at least 30% of our staff into advocate roles, we can create a tipping point that will make racial equity a de facto priority in our work. Then, we must expand and deepen our racial equity strategies to engage more employees and have better impact.

RESOURCES BY ROLE

Leadership, Management, Frontline Staff, Partners, Community

This communications effort must effectively reach people within a wide variety of roles, both inside the government and in our communities. But the purpose and goals for our communications will change depending on role. In the next few pages, we outline **general strategies, goals for engaging each role, and ways to engage productively with skeptics and resisters.**

HOW TO ENGAGE LEADERS

Purpose

Government leaders can serve as spokespeople for racial equity actions, drive visibility through media coverage, and secure high-level signoff on key pieces of content.

Strategies & Tactics

- ✦ Target sparkplug leaders (or the sparkplugs leaders listen to) first — once they're on board, they create momentum and energy.
- ✦ Work to understand which of our core values resonate most with leadership — then speak to those values specifically in every communication.
- ✦ Position leaders as facilitators and enablers of structural change — and reassure them that they'll have broad institutional support. Emphasize the need for public, visible leadership as a critical role for them to fill.
- ✦ Give leaders opportunities to share and refine their own stories — sharing with staff and community the "why" behind racial equity work in their own words.
- ✦ As much as possible, reduce the lift and time commitment racial equity work entails for leadership.
- ✦ When possible, engage the support structure around key leaders to understand and leverage the best ways to reach and engage leaders themselves.
- ✦ Develop brief, leader-specific elevator pitches, both data-driven and story-driven.

HOW TO ENGAGE MANAGEMENT

Purpose

We engage managers as key leverage points in organizational change, specifically, we need them to a) embrace racial equity as a core part of their own work b) become role models for their staff and galvanize resources to build and implement action plans c) build their own skills.

Strategies & Tactics

- ✦ Depending on strategy and the staff size, you could target initial outreach based on role (HR, community engagement, etc.) or based on personal commitment to racial equity. Target about a third of managers to provide leadership on your racial equity initiative. Learn from these conversations as you develop strategies to reach all managers.
- ✦ Work to understand which of our core values resonate most with a particular manager's job description or key pain points, then speak to those values specifically in every communication. Align specific racial equity priorities with their work, needs and urgent needs.
- ✦ If a particular manager is new to racial equity work, be sure to introduce it in manageable phases, tying racial equity outcomes directly to success in his or her role.
- ✦ When possible, introduce racial equity work to managers in a brief, friendly way that doesn't overwhelm. Perhaps a 5-minute "coming soon" preview at a managers' meeting with a few exciting details rather than the entire action plan document.
- ✦ Develop understanding about expectations for each manager's team — are we expecting managers to train teams themselves, or to require that each team member attend a racial equity training? Go to managers with proposed solutions rather than more problems to solve.

HOW TO ENGAGE FRONTLINE STAFF

Purpose

We engage frontline staff for many reasons. Typically, we need to: a) get them bought-in to the work b) explain our action plan and integrate their ideas into it c) make specific requests d) enlist their partnership as a leader in racial equity work e) build their own skills

Strategies & Tactics

- ✦ Work to create a pervasive culture of racial equity through the usual culture-building channels in your jurisdiction.
- ✦ In addition to empowering managers with tools and support to engage their teams, our Racial Equity Team will have routine face-time on racial equity with the full staff. Ahead of time, strategize about how to make those all-team or large group racial equity trainings powerful through storytelling, engaging facilitation, community panels, and memorable takeaways like posters, pins and stickers to keep racial equity visible even when staff is widely dispersed in daily work life.
- ✦ Think about the ways culture is built in your jurisdiction as a workplace — what's unique to your staff community that you can leverage? Partner with Human Resources to strategize about this. For example, if you have a beloved staff social activity every year, think about how racial equity work can have an approachable presence there.

HOW TO ENGAGE PARTNERS

Purpose

Potential partners vary widely — from the head of a new housing development to the school district to the head of a community organizing group to a potential new funder. Generally speaking, we want to a) facilitate genuine enthusiasm and long-term commitment to racial equity b) secure tangible commitments in the form of contracts, funds and public allegiance.

Strategies & Tactics

- ✦ Most likely, the best spokespeople to encourage new partners to develop and implement their own racial equity efforts are current partners — showcase the stories of rich, authentic partnerships already in place.
- ✦ Consider existing partnerships, unrelated to racial equity, that we can leverage. For example, if a school-business partnership already exists to provide free computers to area schools, develop a plan to approach that same partner with a request to partner on ensuring that computers are distributed equitably, and over time, to publicly support the jurisdiction's racial equity work as a whole.

HOW TO ENGAGE SKEPTICS & RESISTERS

Purpose

In racial equity work, we will sometimes encounter skeptics and resisters. They may be skeptical because of the legacy of racial inequity, the immensity of the task ahead, or memories of prior failed attempts. It is important to engage skeptics and resisters. We want to a) convert skeptics into allies b) reach a tipping point catalyzing organizational change c) dissuade active resisters.

Strategies & Tactics

- ✦ Skeptics and resisters are the prime audience for leveraging the Affirm, Counter, Transform. Do as much prep ahead of time as you can when you know you'll be presenting or communicating with those who are likely to push back as a default. Learn the source of their resistance in order to most effectively engage them.
- ✦ Start from a place of shared values. What common ground can you use as your foundation for engagement?
- ✦ Try to be specific in your communications, avoid throwing out too many varying examples. Instead, go deep with one example until they show understanding and then extrapolate from that point of agreement. If appropriate, use personal anecdotes to make the point more human. If appropriate, share your own journey from skepticism to increased engagement.
- ✦ Ultimately, if an active resister refuses to hear your points, re-allocate your energy to people that can be engaged, or reiterate whatever formal policy or expectation exists as a backstop. As we know, not everyone has to be on board to create organizational change.

HOW TO ENGAGE PRESS

Purpose

With press, we always hope to facilitate accurate, positive coverage, showcase stories and develop long-term partnerships with journalists and media outlets for depth of coverage as our work progresses. For most journalists, they will also need some level of background context and education to cover our work successfully.

Strategies & Tactics

- ✦ Develop a racial equity-specific press kit, with digestible pieces of background content like the short version of our community's racial history, a few quotes from the mayor, partners and community supporters, and links to photos they can use.
- ✦ Before you have important press releases to share, develop relationships with specific journalists whose columns or publications appear values-aligned. Sit down with them and share the "Intro to Racial Equity" content in digestible form, helping them get on board with the importance of your racial equity plan and some of the facts that make up its context.
- ✦ To the extent possible, work with community partners ahead of any press needs to support them as spokespeople for the work. In any piece of coverage, ideally a journalist can quote both supporters within the government and easily available community supporters.



CONTENT & STORYTELLING

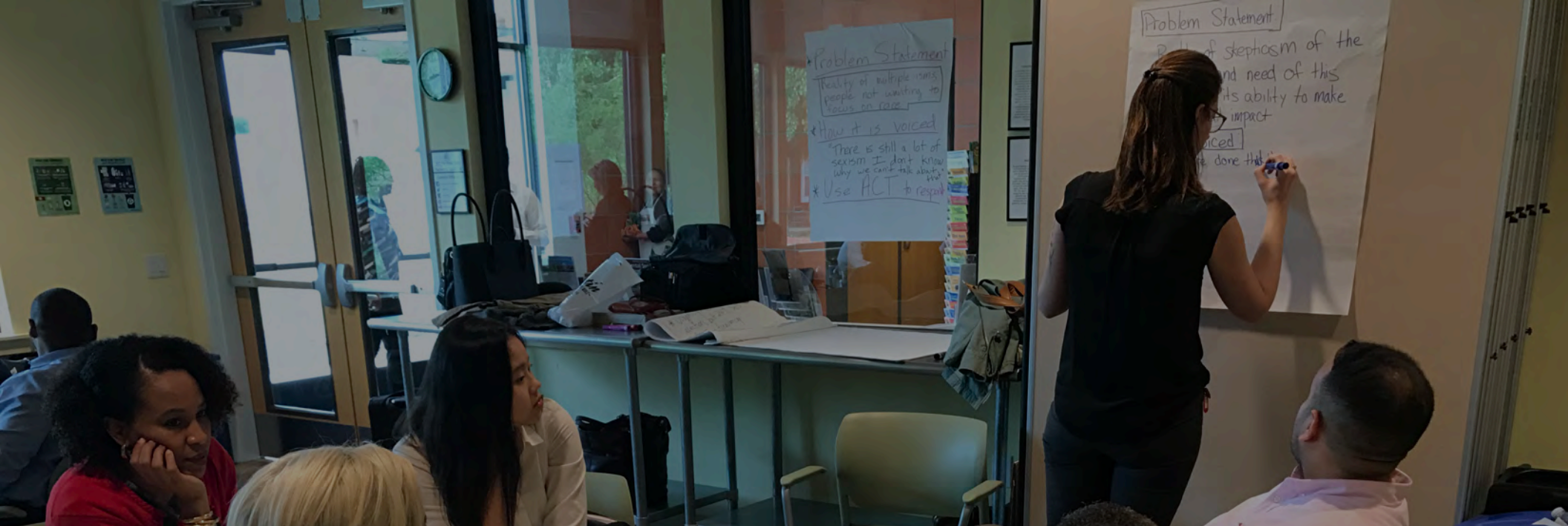
This chapter is all about ongoing content development and storytelling. First, we offer ways to translate the messaging strategy into aligned content with how-tos and checklists. Then, we provide ready-to-go copy, words and images. Finally, we outline a number of different story types for ongoing collection and sharing, with how-tos for interviewing and drafting them.

This content can be repurposed for training colleagues and community members about **how** to communicate successfully about race and racial equity.

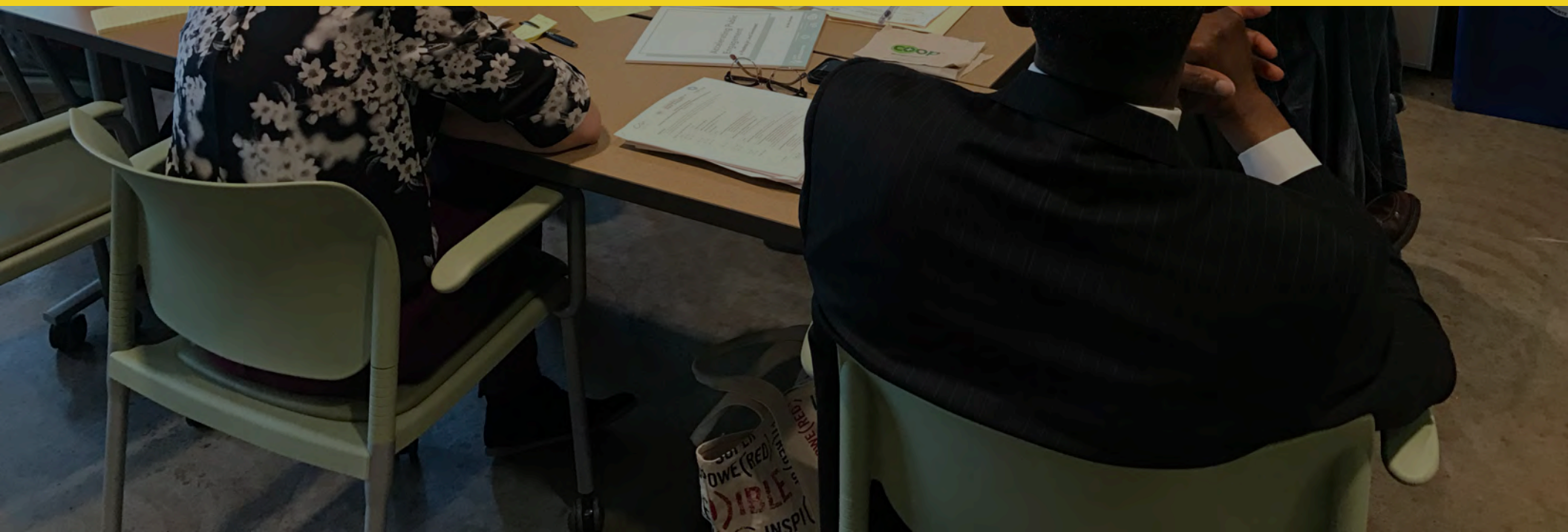
"I want to applaud you for taking on the third rail of American culture — race."

— Ben Hecht, CEO, Living Cities





CONTENT DEVELOPMENT



CHALLENGES & ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

“While conversations about race can sometimes cause tension, we've watched as thousands of people in jurisdictions all over the country have developed fluency and skill as they've normalized talking about race in order to advance racial equity. We encourage you to work through the challenges that come up as you begin to talk and communicate more about race in your jurisdiction, because if we're really serious about dismantling structural racism, we need shared language, practices and skills — it's not about being perfect, it's about communicating about race more and more effectively over time to drive better outcomes.”



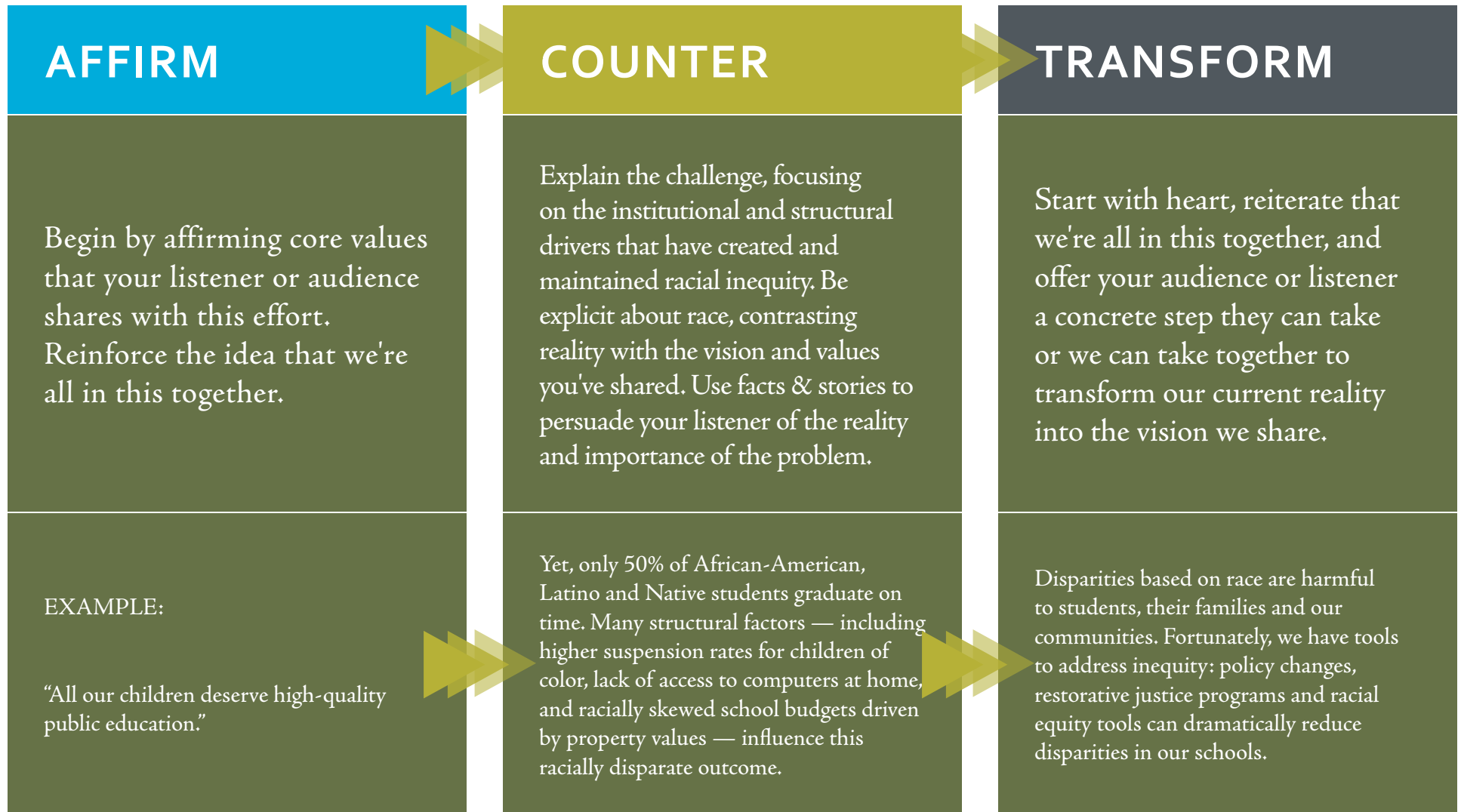
Let's start by being clear about some of the biggest challenges and questions at the heart of this communications effort:

- ➔ **HOW DO WE TALK ABOUT RACIAL INEQUITY TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T BELIEVE IT EXISTS?**
- ➔ **HOW DO WE HONOR PERSONAL STORIES WHILE DEVELOPING A DATA- AND OUTCOME-DRIVEN APPROACH?**
- ➔ **HOW DO WE ACCOUNT FOR WEALTH, GENDER AND OTHER FACTORS WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF RACE?**

While many aspects of language and communications strategy around race are still evolving, we have developed and collected many best practices over our 15 years of experience normalizing, organizing and operationalizing racial equity work in hundreds of cities and jurisdictions. The following pages offer our most successful strategies, tools, language and imagery to use and adapt in your own work.

ACT: AFFIRM, COUNTER, TRANSFORM

Affirm, Counter, Transform (ACT) is an easy-to-remember acronym with many of our communications best practices baked in. Throughout the guide, we'll note ways to adapt it for various purposes. For the research behind these insights, see the Center for Social Inclusion's [Talking About Race Toolkit](#)



BUILDING BLOCKS OF EFFECTIVE CONTENT

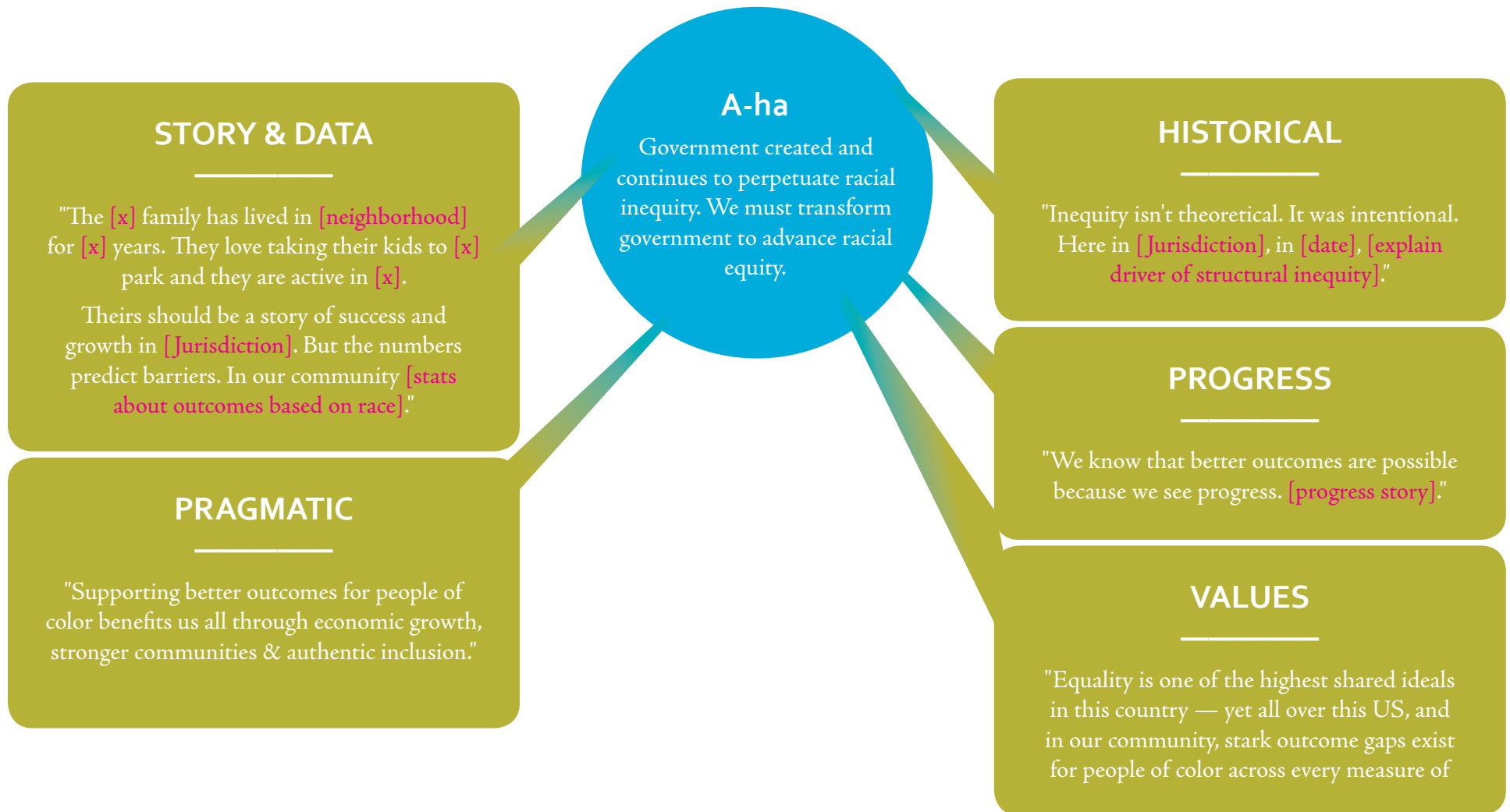
<p>A-ha & Data</p>	<p>Government created and has perpetuated racial inequity [relevant example] Now, we have the responsibility and power to drive equitable outcomes.</p>
<p>Audience & Values</p>	<p>In your role, I know [shared value] is so important to you. It's also a core value of our racial equity work.</p>
<p>Shared Vision</p>	<p>We are committed to [abbreviated city vision].</p>
<p>Action Plan</p>	<p>Here is the critical role you can play to drive changes to the way we work that help all [Jurisdiction] residents thrive.</p>
<p>Story & Data</p>	<p>I know that racial equity work can be daunting — but we're already making progress. [share relevant story and/or relevant progress data].</p>
<p>Values & Action</p>	<p>We believe in [value], and we have a plan to move forward. Can you [specific, tangible role or request] by [date]?</p>

Strategically mix and match messaging elements to speak to the values of a particular audience member and help them engage and commit to racial equity work as a whole and the specific role you're asking them to play.

MESSAGING HIERARCHY

Our A-ha is our core message, guiding all other messaging. Not every communication must contain our a-ha word for word, but you should

never craft key messages that contradict the A-ha—and all supporting messages should point to this larger truth.



GENERAL STRATEGIES

LEAD WITH SHARED VALUES

When developing any communication, first consider your audience (as specifically as you can) and your goal. Then, identify values that audience authentically shares with racial equity work, and consider how those values align with your goal.

BE RELENTLESS ABOUT VISION

Our vision is our north star — say it over and over again until it's irrefutably a part of our culture.

BALANCE DATA WITH STORY

Embed data and visualizations within a narrative — facts are far more interesting in the context of people's real lives.

NO ONE LIKES TO BE LABELED

Avoid negative, evaluative labels at all costs. Even seemingly neutral labels like “millennial” carry negative connotations for some audiences. Coded language can unintentionally trigger implicit bias.

ASSUMPTIONS ARE JUST THAT

Communicate based on fact, not assumptions, particularly about motivation behind behavior. Avoid charged, blaming phrases.

GENERALIZATIONS ARE SHORTCUTS

Avoid generalizations, citing research-based trends or patterns instead if they exist.

BE REFLECTIVE

Check your perspective — am I a part of the group I'm describing? What perspective or information might I be missing? — and get input or feedback on drafts before publishing.

BEYOND WORDS: THE POWER OF IMAGE & VIDEO

We know intuitively that a picture is worth a thousand words, but as communicators, we are rarely as thoughtful about our images as we are our language.

INVEST IN IMAGERY

Often, photos are chosen last-minute, even if they're not quite right. Spend time sourcing and using thoughtful images, graphics and video whenever communicating about race or your racial equity work. A few hours spent on an infographic may help all communities understand data far better than endless hours of work on a wordy report only a few people will ever read.

BE TRUE TO REAL COMMUNITIES

Use images that authentically reflect the racial diversity or lack thereof in the community or institution being portrayed. Resist the urge to select visually diverse images for the sake of visual diversity if authentic diversity doesn't exist.

AVOID STEREOTYPES & APPROPRIATION

Be cautious when selecting images about reinforcing stereotypes about any racial group. Today, we would never choose a person vacuuming in an apron and heels to portray a "woman" — be equally vigilant with stereotypes (positive or negative) associated with any racial group. In addition, always ask permission (or check

permissions on a photograph) to avoid leveraging someone's image without their knowledge. This is particularly important with community members.

BEWARE VISUAL TOKENISM

The concept of "tokenism" refers to inclusion of a single person of color's perspective for the sake of "diversity." Often, that person is also unfairly asked to speak for or represent the views of the entire racial group she belongs to. A visual manifestation of this phenomenon might appear in photo selection on a website or brochure, or the inclusion of only one "talking head" person of color in a video.

AVOID WHITEWASHING

We are immersed in a marketing and communications culture with a pervasive (conscious and unconscious) trend toward lightening dark skin. On top of biases that favor white people, lighter-skinned people of color are portrayed as more acceptable than people of color with darker skin. Avoid "whitening" either through photo or spokesperson selection or software.

CHARACTER DRIVES TONE

Maintaining a consistent tone is so important for a sustained communications effort. Based on the messaging strategy beginning on page 43, the tone we will try to maintain is that of the Bridge Builder — visionary, hands-on, collaborative and adaptive. See page 40 for details.

Example re-write

MAYORAL SPEECH

Original

Racial injustice plagues our city and only we can stop it. I urge you to stand up and fight for a city where everyone thrives and city practices lead to dramatically improved outcomes for people of color.

Rewrite for Tone

We have all the people, resources and ideas we need to become a fair, equitable city, one where race no longer can predict life outcomes like health, income, or life expectancy. But we can only achieve this vision through trusting relationships within and between our communities. The racial outcome gaps that still exist in our city are completely unacceptable — and each of us has a vital role to play in building solutions.

DRAFT & REVISION CHECKLIST

STRATEGY

Audience	Who is my target audience for this piece? How am I speaking directly to their needs and challenges? Will this piece resonate with sparkplugs, decision-makers & cautious allies ?
Values	Are the values of GARE— justice, community, momentum, value 4 and value 5 —woven into this communication?
A-ha	Is the core message of this effort reinforced by this communication?
Character	Is the tone of this piece visionary, hands-on, collaborative and adaptive , an embodiment of the Bridge Builder ?
Vision	Does this communication orient toward our vision ?

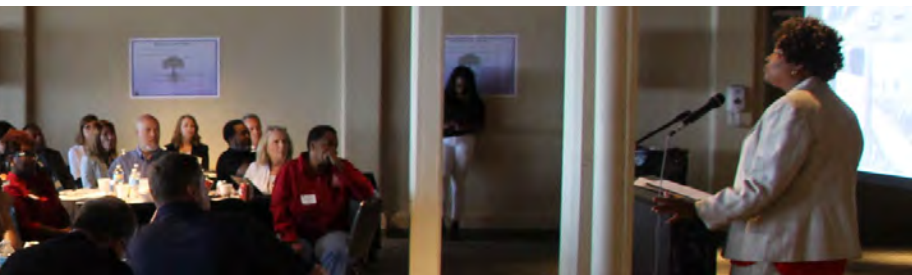
STRUCTURE

Affirm	Does this communication affirm a shared belief, value or goal and connect emotionally? Does it reinforce the “shared fate” frame — we’re all in this together?
Counter	Does this communication counter a prevailing belief ? Is it direct and clear about the problem and explicit about race while remaining collaborative in tone ?
Transform	Does this communication transform the conversation and offer a clear solution or hands-on way the audience can move toward our vision? Does it engage the audience and invite them to be part of the solution?



READY-TO-GO RESOURCES





OUR IMAGES REFLECT OUR CORE VALUES: JUSTICE, COMMUNITY & MOMENTUM.

Please read page 65 for more detail about imagery best practices in racial equity work. In selecting images for ongoing use, prioritize those that feature real members of our staff and community (with their permission — try to avoid stock photos if you can) that are high-quality in resolution. Aim for photos that convey a sense of justice, community, and momentum. Our imagery should capture both the positive vision we hold and the hard work it will take to get there.

STARTER KEY MESSAGES

JUSTICE

- ✦ Equitable outcomes require equitable operations.
- ✦ Government should be a force for good.
- ✦ The public sector should be for the public good.
- ✦ Historically, racial inequities were intentionally created. We must now be even more intentional as we dismantle racial inequity.
- ✦ Racial equity isn't accidental. We have to transform government to achieve racial equity.
- ✦ Good government is impossible without racial equity.
- ✦ Our systems created and maintain racial inequity — and this is what they will perpetuate until we redesign them.
- ✦ Equality is one of the highest ideals in American culture yet race can predict one's success on any and all indicators for success.

STARTER KEY MESSAGES

COMMUNITY

- ✦ We work to eliminate racial disparities while maintaining a high bar for all.
- ✦ We are positioned to make change here, now, in our cities, with our communities.
- ✦ Government should be of all people, by all people, and for all people.
- ✦ Nothing about us without us.

STARTER KEY MESSAGES

MOMENTUM

- ✦ Local governments can lead the way toward dismantling institutional and structural racism and setting our cities on an accelerated path toward vibrant growth for all.
- ✦ We must continue moving forward to advance racial equity. Doing nothing perpetuates racial inequities.
- ✦ Our systems were built for racial inequity — that's what they'll perpetuate until we recreate them.
- ✦ The system is producing the racial inequities it was designed to produce. Only we can change that.
- ✦ We can choose to govern forward.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

The most difficult moments — in the immediate aftermath of a single racially-charged incident or a new revelation of widespread injustice — are the most important in terms of communications. These are the moments when residents and colleagues in government need to know that their concerns are heard, that they can trust the judgment of leaders and staff, and that regardless of setbacks, we will still move forward.

CHOOSE YOUR STRONGEST SPOKESPERSON

When in the midst of a true crisis, it can be tempting to turn to the nearest available or default spokesperson to lead any public response. Each situation is different, but it is worth a slight delay in response for a spokesperson who has an established trust in and with communities most affected. This spokesperson should be supported to speak from his or her authentic values and to feel ownership over the tone of the response as a co-creator.

BE WILLING TO APOLOGIZE

Transparency may be core to the work, but the public rarely knows that and even more rarely believes it. No matter how clear or “right” you think you have been in the events leading up to a heated or difficult moment, if there is clear harm to communities or individuals, apologize. Even if you or your team are not at fault, take responsibility and be accountable for harm or perceived harm, recognizing the critical role of the public sector.

DON'T MAKE UP SOLUTIONS ON THE SPOT

Any solution authored in the midst of a crisis will necessarily be pressure-driven, incomplete and reactive rather than strategic. Express commitment, double-down on what is true, but resist the urge to make promises you cannot keep. A false promise in a moment of crisis only perpetuates cycles of public mistrust.

BE HUMAN

To the extent appropriate, share your or your team's authentic feelings about what has transpired. Don't let public communications be dominated by emotion, but never offer a robotic response to an emotionally charged situation.

"...Findings from the Traffic Stop Study are very troubling," City Manager Greg Sundstrom said. "...The City does not shy away from these disappointing findings. We own this." [\[full press release\]](#)

WEATHERING ELECTORAL SHIFTS

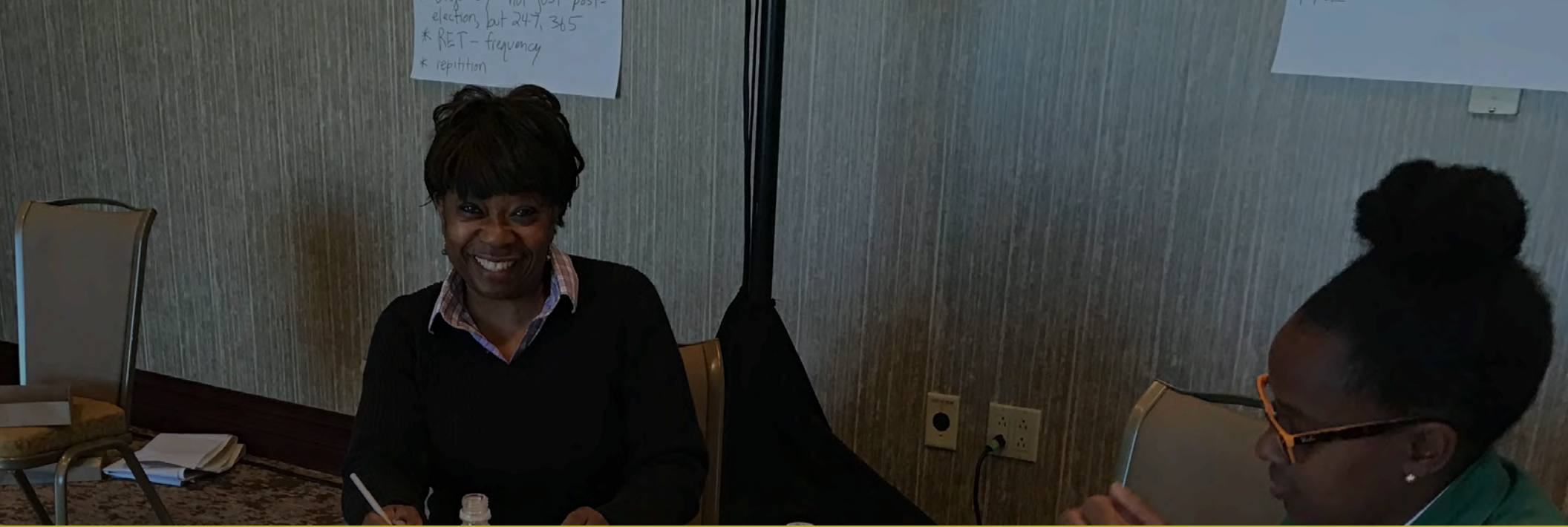
Our end goal is institutionalizing sustainable practices within our government toward more equitable outcomes and engaging the public to support their priorities around racial equity. But, the natural ebb and flow of elected offices and politics will create more urgency, opportunity and challenges during some periods of our work. Here are some best practices for planning for these shifts — they are all inevitable.

CHALLENGES DURING ELECTIONS

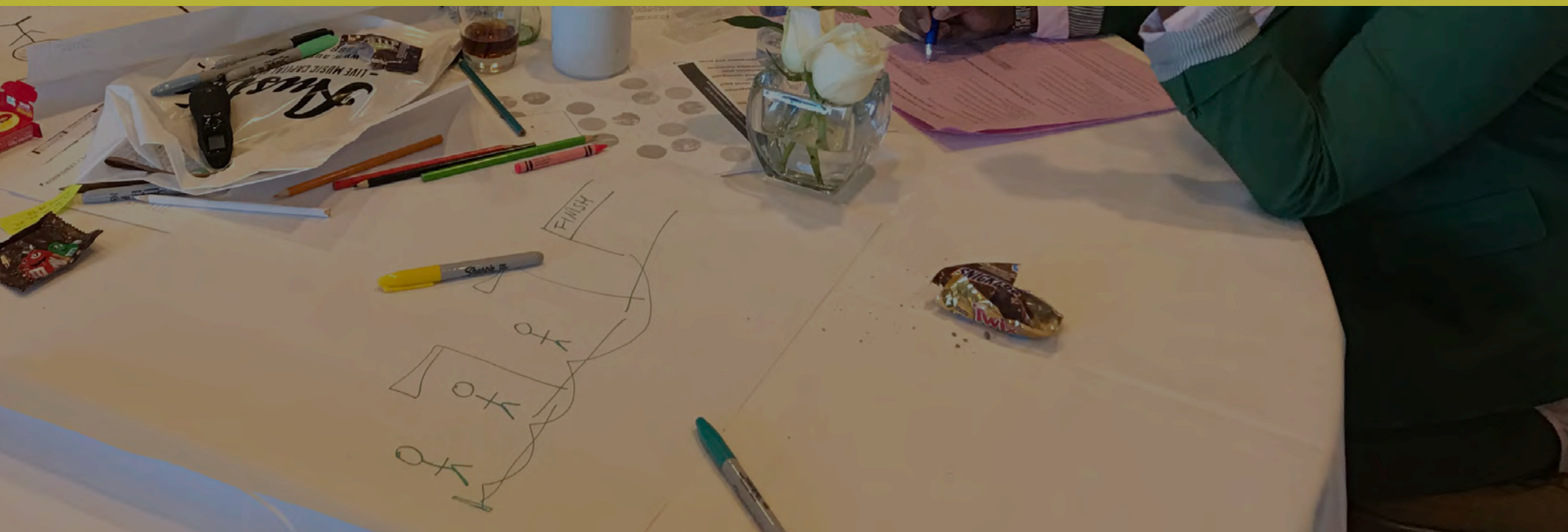
If your racial equity initiative has been an executive priority, and not fully institutionalized, introducing legislation prior to an election to formalize your jurisdiction's commitment can be a useful and strategic step. GARE can provide templates for such legislation that you can customize to your local conditions.

WHEN YOUR LOCAL PRIORITIES ARE NOT REFLECTED IN COUNTY, STATE OR FEDERAL POLICIES

The political context around our work will always shift as new leaders take office in surrounding counties, at the state level and at the federal level. Dedicate staff capacity to proactively liaise with key partners in your surrounding jurisdictions and make sure that your team is well-informed about the limits and freedoms of your jurisdiction's powers. If your team is clear, help the public to understand and rally around the powers that do exist. When an election is coming up in your surrounding state/region, educate all the candidates about the work of racial equity (in particular, sharing success stories and data about public support) and ask them to make it a part of their platform.



EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY



EXAMPLE: MAYORAL ADDRESS

AFFIRM — COUNTER — TRANSFORM

Seattle is a beautiful place with a strong economy and a welcoming spirit. It is one of America's fastest-growing cities, presenting new challenges and opportunities for those who live and work here. But while Seattle is strong and, I believe, getting stronger, we must recognize that the benefits of our thriving city are not jointly shared.

- Indeed, our median income is at an all-time high, and is the third highest of any city in the nation. But 23% of our people of color live in poverty (compared to 9% of Whites)
- We are the sixth-most educated city in America: 59% of our workforce has a Bachelor's Degree or higher, and we are attracting talent from all over the world. But only 40% of our Black or Latino or Low-income children are ready for Kindergarten (compared to 70% of White children)
- We created more than 63,000 jobs over the past five years. With an unemployment rate below 3.5%, we have been named the best city in the country to find a job. But 14% of Blacks are unemployed.
- Our strong housing market has created wealth for those who own. About half of White householders are homeowners, but less than one-fourth of Black householders are homeowners.

We see inequities in how we experience growth – between those who benefit from it and those displaced by it. We see inequities in prosperity – between those who can afford to live here and those being pushed out. I believe that as we grow, our City must ensure that we become a more livable and sustainable city.

I ask you to join me in holding this bold vision for our future: Seattle is a diverse city where all people are able to achieve their full potential regardless of race or means. Seattle's neighborhoods will be diverse and will include the community anchors, supports, goods, services and amenities people need to lead healthy lives and flourish. I ask you to join me as we launch a different approach to these issues and restructure City government to meet our rapidly changing city. We will accommodate growth by placing without displacing. We will provide plans for how the City will invest to ensure our current communities continue to thrive; and in places like Rainier Beach, where the unemployment rate is three times the city rate, we must plan for growth in jobs as we plan for growth in population.

I ask you to join me in doing the work to achieve our bold vision:

- ō *to fully integrate our Race and Social Equity Goals and Policies into departmental work plans and priorities*
- ō *to use an Equity Analysis to inform City policy, programs, investments*
- ō *to use our Equitable Development Framework to create strong communities and people, and great places with equitable access to housing, jobs, and neighborhood services and amenities*
- ō *to use a race and social equity lens to drive systemic change*
- ō *to make targeted place-based community driven investments to support community stability and economic mobility in high displacement risk, low access to opportunity areas; and finally*
- ō *to create the structures and expertise we need to hold this work as a priority now and into the future*

It is urgent that we do this work together and that we do it now. I fear that if we wait too long, we will lose our history and will lose our soul. The question today is the same as a half a century ago: Will we move towards greater polarization or will we attempt, as Dr. King urged us, to understand, comprehend, and approach this great divide with compassion and love? I ask you to join me on this journey to achieve a racially and socially equitable Seattle.

Letter from Mayor Ed Murray of Seattle, 2016

OTHER EXAMPLES

[Marc Ott's speech at ICMA conference](#)

[Mayor Bliss' "State of the City"](#)

[Louisville's Center for Health Equity
PhotoVoice project](#)

[Speech on the Removal of Confederate
Monuments, New Orleans](#)

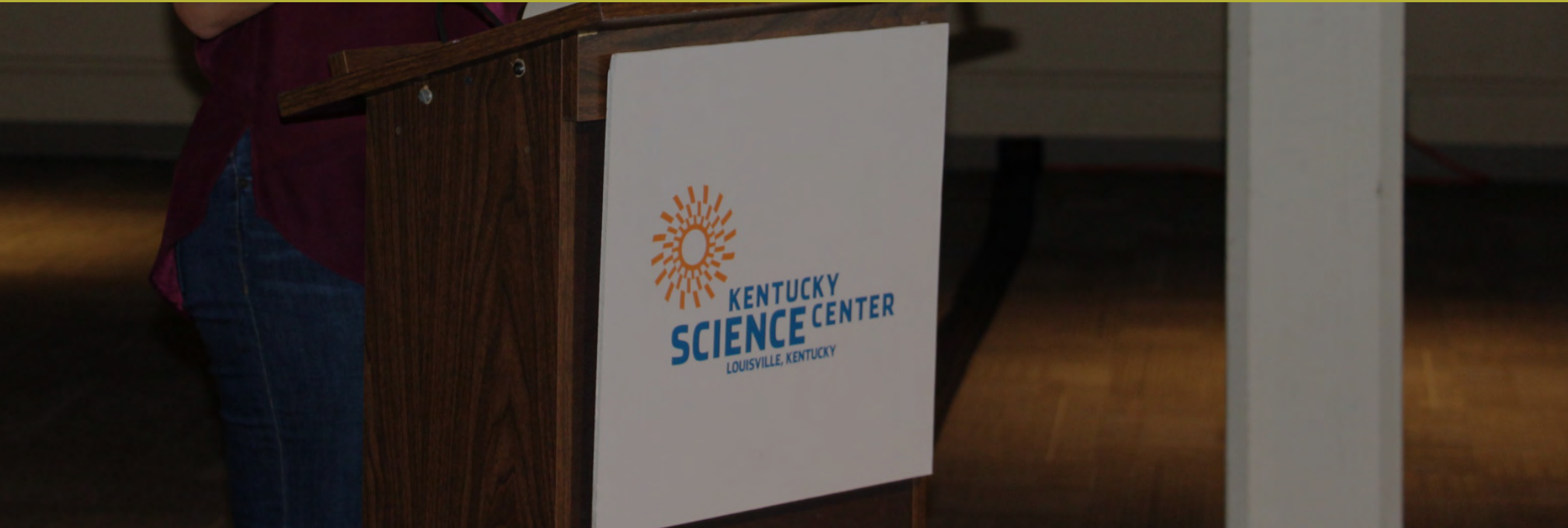
[Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer's Speech on
"Capturing Ali's Spirit"](#)

[Racial Equity in Albuquerque](#)





STORYTELLING



WE ARE WIRED FOR STORY

Introduction

It's tempting to believe that facts and figures on racialized outcome gaps will be enough to motivate people to action — but facts are far more powerful embedded within narrative structures. Human beings make sense of the world through stories, and we can use storytelling skills effectively to advance understanding and action.

Authentic stories, paired with effective data, are powerful communication tools. They provide all of us with deep insights about lived experience. They drive empathy. They transport us into other lives and worlds. And a well-told story stays with us for life.

Great stories share a few common traits. They are:

HUMAN — we have to really care about at least one person in a story. We care when we learn about someone's values, hopes, fears, and struggles.

EMOTIONAL — great stories never resolve with clean logic. They lead us — through a character we've come to care about — on a journey of ups and downs toward emotional resolution.

WISE — the stories that stick with us the longest, those myths we've been passing down for thousands of years, deliver a kernel of truth, or at least a deep question for us to ponder. Great stories convey deep insights, and we believe them because we've discovered those insights for ourselves alongside the characters we've come to trust.

LEARN MORE

Our Stories Remember: American Indian History, Culture & Values through Storytelling
Joseph Bruchac

Winning the Story Wars
Jonah Sachs

The Art and Science of Portraiture
Sara Lawrence Lightfoot

The Hero with a Thousand Faces
Joseph Campbell

Who can Speak for Whom? Using Counter-Storytelling to Challenge Racial Hegemony
Lisa R. Merriweather Hunn, Talmadge C. Guy, Elaine Manglitz

The Storytelling Animal
Jonathan Gottschall

On the Origin of Stories
Brian Boyd

The Hero & the Outlaw
Margaret Mark & Carol S. Pearson

Living Cities Podcast: Voicing Race — Storytelling in Traditional Media
Tanzina Vega & Barrett Pitner

SEE STORY EVERYWHERE

When we think about storytelling and racial equity, we think about listening to stories from our communities, and learning from them, and sharing them. This will be a key component of our storytelling work, but we can learn from and be inspired by many other kinds of stories. The following pages offer advice for collecting, crafting and sharing many different kinds of stories about racial equity work:

92 RACE HISTORY

We acknowledge and own the history of racial inequity in our community.

93 ORIGIN STORY

A short, memorable story to document how this effort started.

94 COMMUNITY STORIES

How do we invite and responsibly share stories from our communities?

INDIVIDUAL STORIES

NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES

95 TRANSFORMATION STORIES

For the skeptics among us, hearing stories of people who have shifted from skeptical to engaged provide a non-judgmental template to consider.

96 STAFF STORIES

As much as we might like to stay behind the scenes — we are real people living racial equity work as well. Let's learn to tell our stories of progress and struggle and inspiration.

INDIVIDUAL STORIES

DEPARTMENT STORIES

GOVERNMENT STORIES

Work with GARE to share your formal and informal leaders stories in GARES [“the people behind the movement”](#) blog.

97 PARTNER STORIES

How can we source and share stories from partners?

STORY: RACE HISTORY

Short: 250 - 350 words for any medium with 3-5 images highlighting key race milestones. Short version will be used for brief context setting on websites and/or within reports and will translate into 3-5 PPT slides for ongoing use in presentations. Long: 500+ words, perhaps an interactive digital timeline with 12+ photos.

GOALS

- ✦ Explicitly document the history of race in our community, particularly ways government perpetuated racial inequity
- ✦ Motivate others to take action
- ✦ Educate colleagues and the public about the facts of the history of race

VISION

As we learn to tell our history, we aim to be:

- ✦ Clear-eyed about the facts
- ✦ Explicit about race
- ✦ Inclusive of different perspectives and representative of different group experiences

HOW TO CRAFT IT

This story is the most time-intensive to craft well. The most important first step is to get a workable first draft in place, partnering with local historians to create a timeline of facts and dates, incorporating national milestones into the story of your place. Then, after at least one round of thorough internal review, invite broader feedback through public presentations, local expert workshops, and interviews with local residents who remember some of these milestones firsthand. Where possible, incorporate these community stories into the longer version of the draft, either through written quotes, audio or video clips.

INSPIRATION

From Overt to Covert: Examples of Racism in Seattle

- 1862** Small pox kills 14,000 Northwest Coast Native peoples between April and December. The epidemic was both disastrous and preventable.
- 1942** Japanese Americans are ordered to leave Seattle under President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. Seattle Mayor Earl Millikan and Governor Arthur Langlie declares their support of the removal. A total of 12,892 persons of Japanese ancestry from Washington State are incarcerated in internment camps.
- 1964** By a margin of 115,627 to 54,448, Seattle voters reject an Open Housing Ordinance that the Seattle City Council had placed on the ballot the previous year. J. Dorm Braman, an opponent of open housing, is elected Mayor of Seattle, defeating John Cherberg, a supporter of open housing. Community leaders from the local chapters of the NAACP, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Central District Youth Club, and faith leaders like Rev. Samuel McKinney and Rev. Mance Jackson organize protests and sit-ins to do away with housing discrimination.
- 2008** Racially disproportionate outcomes exist across measures of success in all areas. Over previous decades, attempts to achieve racial equity have focused on helping people of color. Now, more institutions are beginning to look for the ways systems, policies, programs and procedures work to the advantage of white people and to the detriment of people of color. To achieve racial equity, systemic changes within institutions will be necessary.

Seattle's history of race

STORY: ORIGIN STORY

Short: 250 - 350 words usable across any medium with 1-2 photos to illustrate

GOALS

- ✦ Celebrate and share the human side of racial equity work in your jurisdiction
- ✦ Use as an example of what's possible

VISION

As we document the origin of racial equity work in our community, we aim to be:

- ✦ Inclusive of the many people who helped launch the work — not just those in the spotlight
- ✦ Honest about the struggle
- ✦ Inspiring about what's possible

HOW TO CRAFT IT

While it might feel too self-promotional to document an "origin story" of racial equity work in our community, we want to be clear that the current work — whatever it may be, at any time in the future — didn't spring out of nothingness. It took the work of a group of passionate people to a) recognize the need for racial equity work b) convince others to join in c) advocate for investment in it d) keep it going when the going got tough. While important, this story shouldn't be a heavy lift. Interview the people who remember how racial equity work started, and tell the story of how it came to be. Be sure to ask about unsung heroes, barriers, and lessons learned.

INSPIRATION



[Advancing Racial Equity,
Bloomington](#)

STORY: COMMUNITY

Ideally, each story can be used in different length versions:

- the quick anecdote (30 seconds to 1 minute, spoken or with PPT slides)
- brief (written or spoken, 250 - 350 words)
- long (written, audio or video, 5 - 12 minutes)

GOALS

- ✦ Invite community members to share their stories
- ✦ Document and share stories from a wide range of community members
- ✦ Tell the stories of communities and neighborhoods

VISION

As we learn to tell our history, we aim to be:

- ✦ **Authentic** — inviting community members to share their real experiences
- ✦ **Inclusive**
- ✦ **Open to a variety of kinds of stories** — those of struggle, of progress, and stories critical of the government

HOW TO CRAFT THEM

Community stories should be largely authored by communities — partner with journalists or existing community storytelling groups and offer racial equity work as an opportunity for individual and collective storytelling. Once community members understand the places their story could be shared, ask questions, listen, and preview drafts of any stories with those community members for their approval before publication. Take and use photos only with permission.

INSPIRATION



[Racial Equity in Albuquerque](#)

STORY: TRANSFORMATION

Short: 250 - 350 words, for use across different mediums, most likely within process-oriented or persuasive content.

GOALS

- ✦ Document the journey from less engaged to engaged, through real people

VISION

As we work to bring many people into racial equity work, we:

- ✦ Honor the idea of meeting people where they are
- ✦ Reiterate our belief in a growth mindset: people can change

HOW TO CRAFT THEM

We can tell stories of individual progress along the continuum of engagement from an insider and community perspective. These stories may not emerge until the work has been underway for a few years, but there will be people who begin skeptical and eventually, or suddenly, get on board. Ask these people if they'd be willing to be interviewed and share their story.

INSPIRATION

"...During racial equity trainings of the education roundtable, the Superintendent at the time was Latina and her Chief of Staff was an African-American woman. Both said that they had never had racial equity training like the two-day one we later experienced and it was life changing for them. That dropped a deep cord in me and spoke to my own personal need to open my mind and look at who I was on the issue of racial equity. It was a profound moment..."

Jane Eastwood, Director, St. Paul Public Library

STORY: STAFF

Short: 250 - 350 words, for use across different mediums, both within internal communications and community-facing stories.

GOALS

- ✦ Help dismantle myths about the government by sharing the real stories of the people on the inside
- ✦ Build storytelling skills amongst staff
- ✦ Build empathy between government staff and community members

VISION

As we develop our own skills in racial equity work, we aim to:

- ✦ Reflect on and share our own stories of progress, struggle and perseverance
- ✦ Express a commitment in the a public sector for the public good, advancing racial equity

HOW TO CRAFT THEM

Over time, engage sparkplugs in low-stress storytelling workshops, both as a way to build storytelling muscles and to reflect on the work to date. Give staff prompts or templates, and ask them to work in partners or small groups to tell a story of the work so far. Then, have workshop participants share with the group and select a few for followup by communications staff.

Keep a few of the best of these stories handy for general use, and encourage anyone who speaks on behalf of racial equity work to hone their own 1-3 minute story for ongoing use.

INSPIRATION

"...A major shift was in 2009 when I started becoming more involved with a faith-based organizing group in Minnesota...The personal transformation there helped me see myself as more of a leader, to have a stronger voice on more issues, and to develop a deeper understanding of our deep disparities and the role of our systems. Without question, my life's absolute best work is what I've done in this area. It's work I would do for free if I didn't have a mortgage..."

Joy Marsh, Equity & Inclusion
Manager, City of Minneapolis

"I've always been a practicing artist and in college, I worked as a teaching artist in schools, museums, and other institutions. When I moved to Seattle, I worked as an artist in residence in the youth jail in Tacoma..."

Diana Falchuk, Manager of Arts &
Racial Equity, City of Seattle

STORY: PARTNERS

Short: 250 - 350 words, for use across mediums, primarily for recruiting new partners or for current partner promotional use

GOALS

- ✦ Help partners feel included in the heart of the work
- ✦ Share stories of successful partnerships to engage new partners

VISION

As we develop a broad community of partners, we aim to:

- ✦ Honor their experiences as supporters of the work
- ✦ Promote the struggles, learnings and benefits they experience as engaged actors in racial equity work

HOW TO CRAFT THEM

Our partners are diverse, and our partner stories should reflect that. Work with partners who have been engaged for awhile, and interview them in an informal way to tell their story, share insights learned so far, and encourage new partners to join the effort. Be sure to humanize these stories, as partners are often listed by their brand name rather than the people behind the brand.

INSPIRATION

" I had a couple of great teachers in important points of life. First, I was studying at Carleton College and had Paul Wellstone as a teacher. He taught me the power of communities, of the grassroots, and of change coming from the people with the people having a voice. I found him so inspirational and that invited me into the world of social justice. I then went to University of Minnesota Law School and had John Powell as a professor. He helped me understand racial justice..."

[Vina Kay, Executive Director, Voices for Racial Justice \(Minneapolis\)](#)

"...we don't need solo voices – we need a choir. We need more leaders..We need more entrepreneurs like Damon Duvall of the Parkland Laundromat, and like Pam Haines, who vowed – even after vandals repeatedly broke her restaurant windows – that they would not break her soul or her business.

[Greg Fischer, Mayor of Louisville](#)

STORY DRAFT & REVISION CHECKLIST

Audience

Who is my target audience for this piece? How am I speaking directly to their needs and challenges? Will this piece resonate with **sparkplugs, decision-makers & cautious allies**?

Values

Are the values of GARE — **justice, community, momentum**, [value 4] and [value 5] — woven into this communication?

A-ha

Is the core message of this effort reinforced by this story?

Character

While the characters in a story might not always be bridge-builders, our tone as narrator should remain consistent.

Vision

Does this communication **orient toward our vision**?

HUMAN

Does this story introduce the listener or reader to a finely-drawn person, a real or imagined character they can identify with? Does this person share some core values with our campaign?

EMOTIONAL

Does this story take the audience on a journey through the ups and downs of authentic emotions? Frustration, joy, sadness, triumph, confusion?

WISE

Does this story invite audiences to consider difficult questions or help them to understand deep truths? Ideally, this wisdom aligns with our a-ha and at least some of our core values.



THANK YOU!

For your commitment to racial equity and to thoughtful communications!

We are here to help and are always open to feedback on this guide. Please email comments or suggestions any time to both ellen@provoc.me and nliu@thecsi.org.