

Understanding Structural Racism and Promoting Racial Equity

December 6th and 7th, 2005
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Baltimore, Maryland

© *Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change*

Contents:

- I. Chronic Racial Disparity: The Basic Problem of our Society.**
- II. White Privilege and Structural Racism: Poverty Explanations We Tend to Avoid.**
- III. How Structural Racism Operates in the US Today**
- IV. Understanding Racial Equity; Concrete Steps toward Achieving Racial Equity Outcomes.**
- V. Frequently Asked Questions**

I. Chronic Racial Disparity: The Basic Problem of our Society.

We Know That Chronic Racial Disparities Exist In. . .

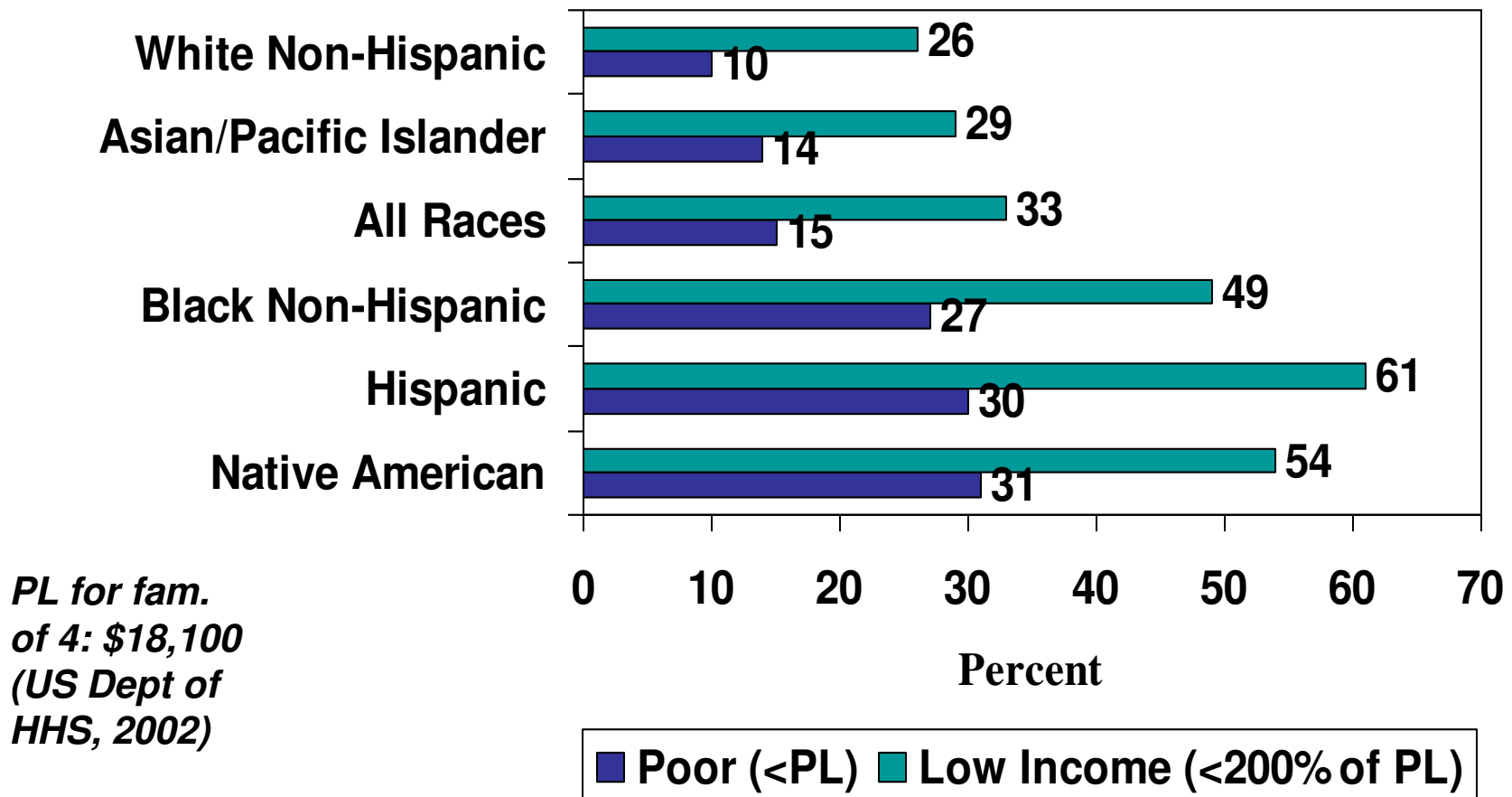
- Political, economic power
- Access to opportunities
- Institutional treatment and outcomes
- Public policy impacts

. . . whether these disparities are **intentional** or **not**.

*Disparities are produced by
combined effects of “neutral” public policies, institutional practices
and cultural representations
that do not take
legacies of racial oppression and injustice sufficiently into account.*

Chronic Racial Disparity: *Strong and Pervasive Evidence of Racial Inequities in Key Areas*

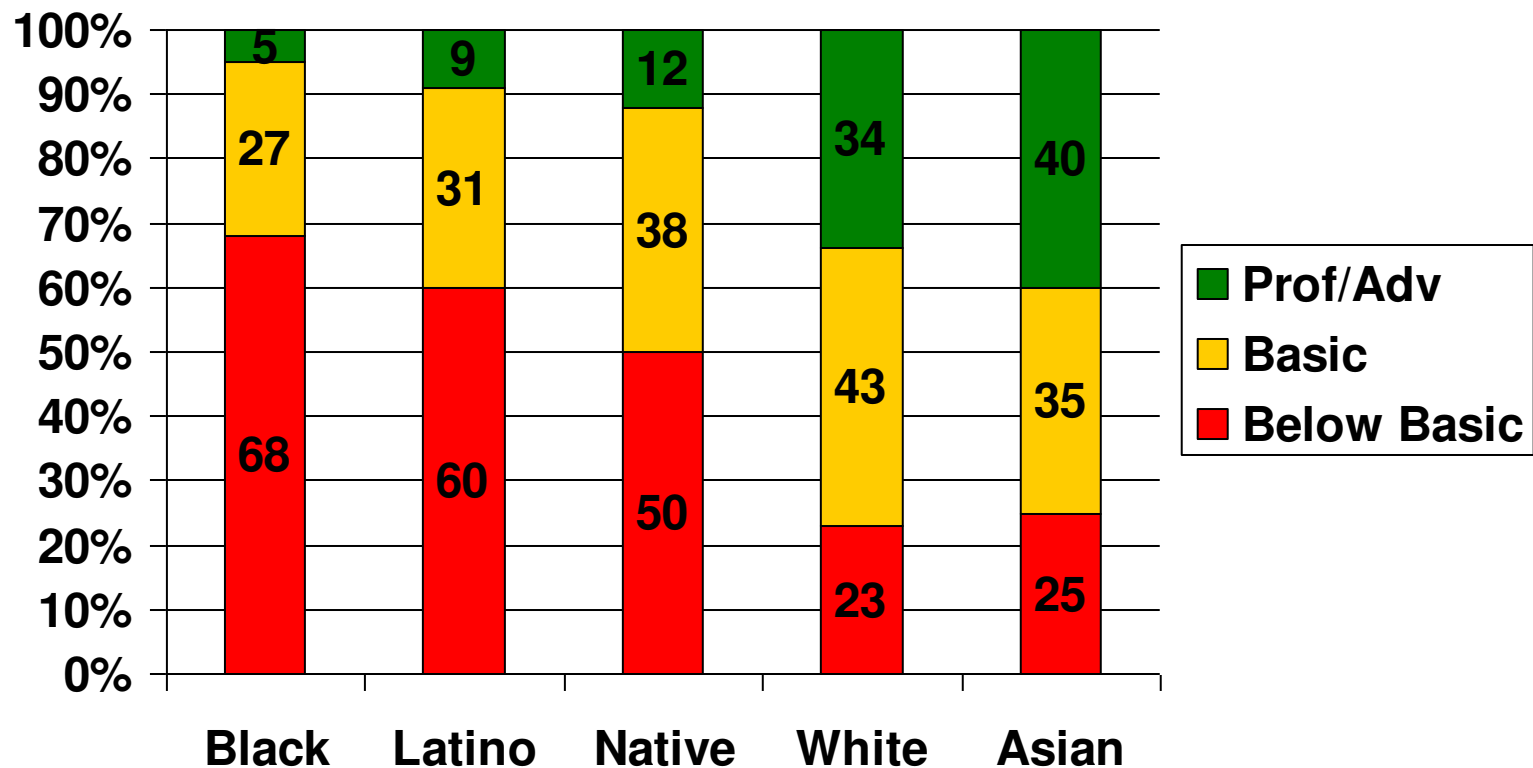
POVERTY OUTCOMES



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families

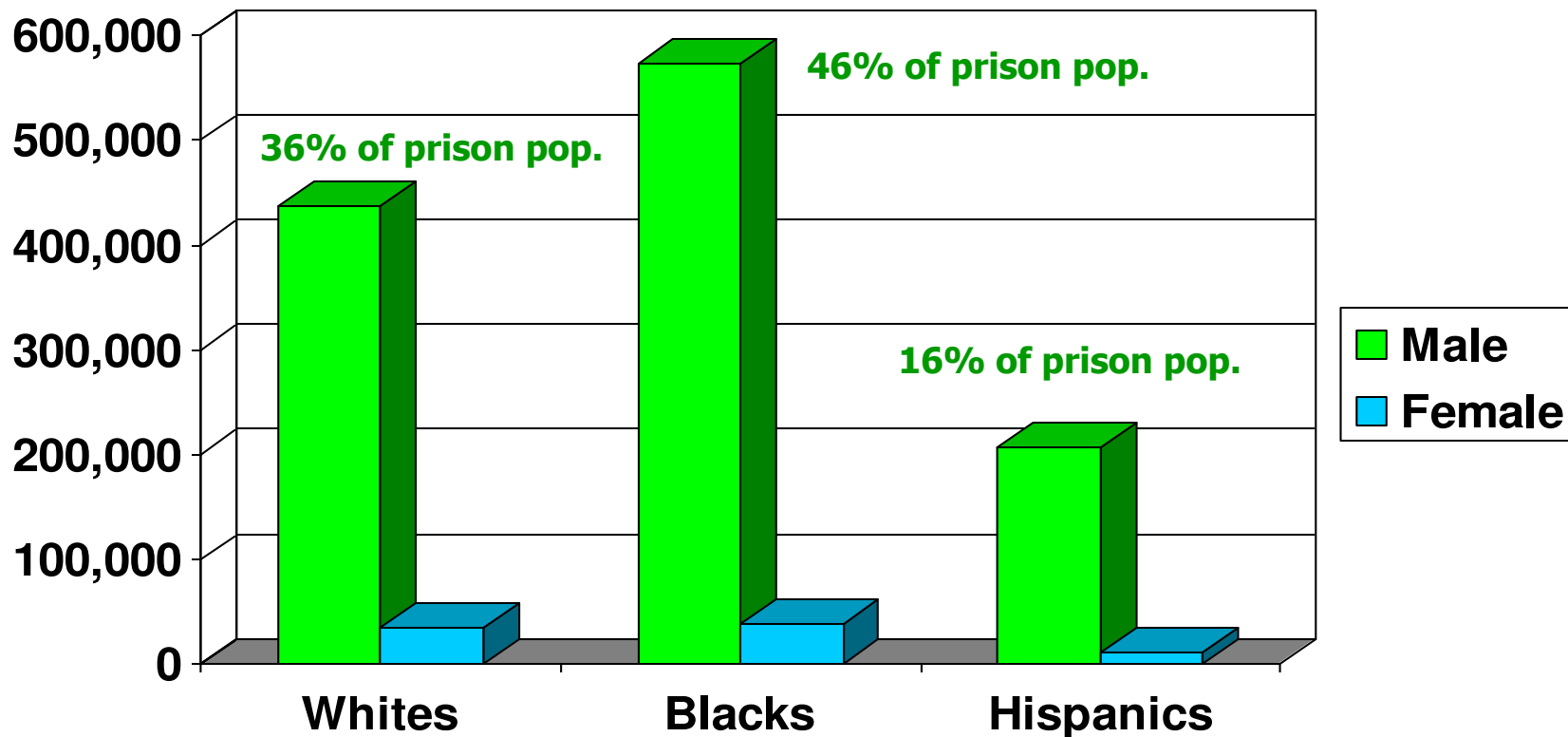
Or, Test Scores in Math . . .

NAEP 8th Grade Mathematics Scores, by Race, Ethnicity 2000



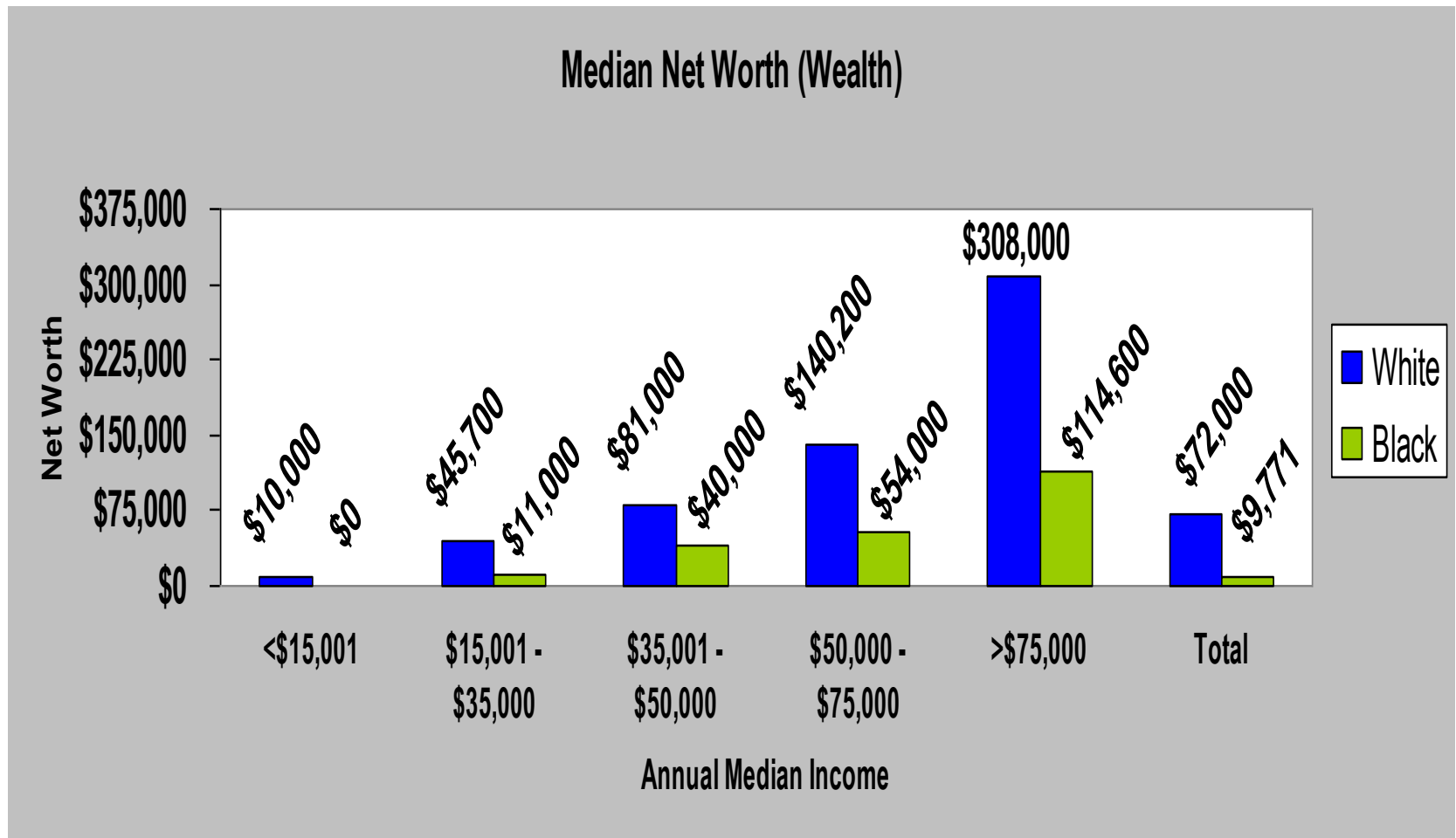
Or, PRISON SENTENCING

Number of Sentenced Prisoners under State or Federal Jurisdiction
by Gender, Race, Hispanic Origin, 2000



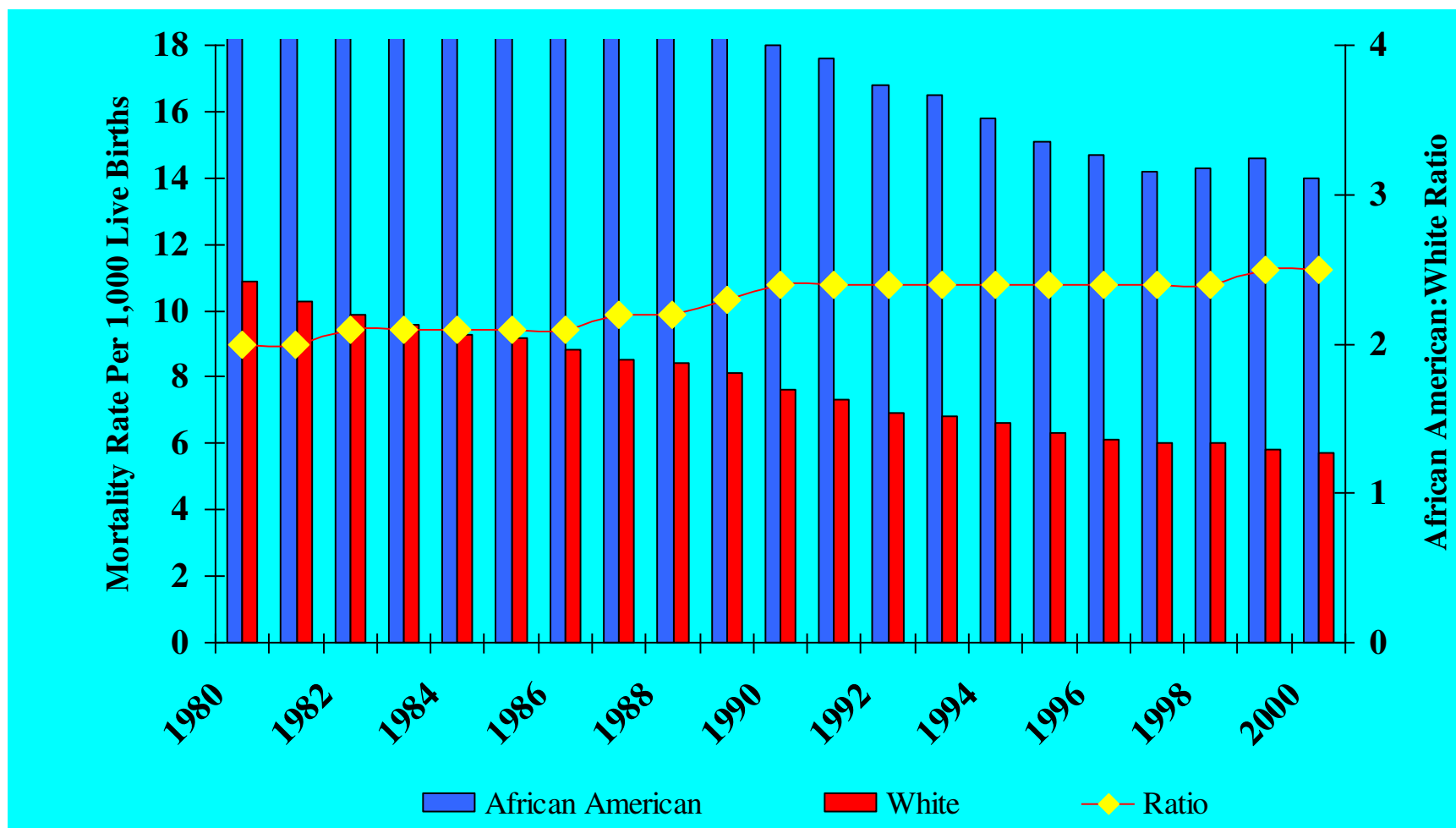
Source: U.S. Department of Justice

Or, ACCUMULATED WEALTH



See Dalton Conley. *Being Black and Living in the Red*. University of California Press (1999):

Or, Infant Mortality for African Americans and Whites, United States, 1980-2000



Data: National Center
For Health Statistics

Looking at these racial disparities....

Do you find any particularly striking or surprising?

Can you think of other areas in which there are stark racial disparities in indicators of well-being?

How have you seen these disparities play out in your hometown?

Policymakers and Opinion Leaders

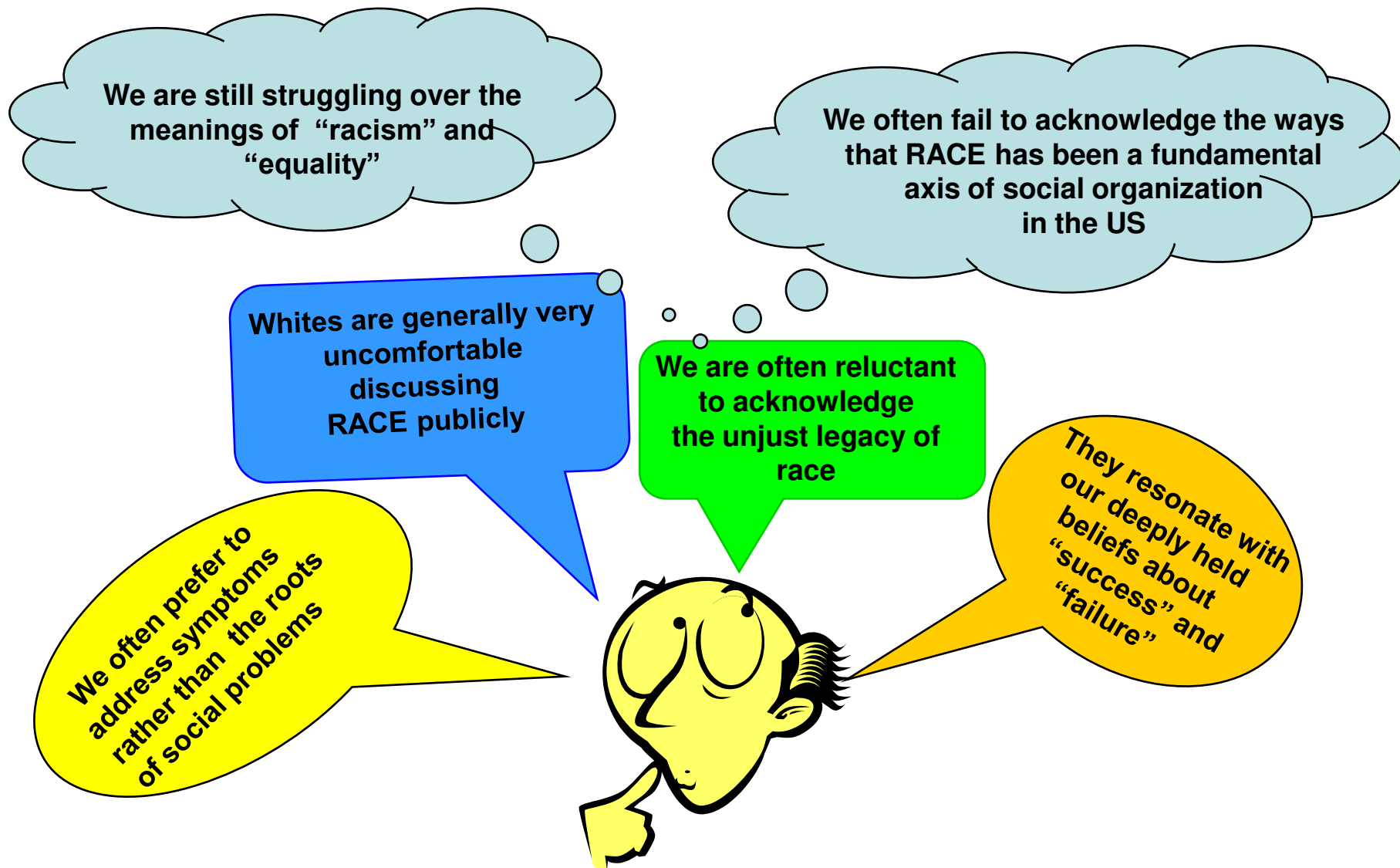
Prefer to **NARROWLY FRAME**

Chronic Racial and Ethnic Disparities



as **INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY and COMMUNITY** Problems

Why Are Such Narrow Interpretations So Appealing?



Can you think of other reasons why such narrow interpretations of racial disparities appeal to so many people?

II. White Privilege and Structural Racism: Poverty Explanations We Tend to Avoid.

**To Explain Chronic Racial Disparities,
We Must Recognize . . .**

“White Privilege”

and

“Structural” Racism.

What is White Privilege?



“As a white person, I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.”

From article by Peggy Macintosh

What is White Privilege?



“...an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious....”

From article by Peggy Macintosh

© Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change

Structural Racism Preserves White Privilege

Structural racism is a defining characteristic of U.S. political economy and culture. It preserves a racial order of white privilege, or supremacy.

Today, the racial order is maintained mainly through a societal consensus, or “common sense,” around values that disguise historical racial inequalities and injustices.

Structural Racism Preserves White Privilege

This consensus generates **public policies, institutional practices** and **cultural representations** that consistently place people of color at greater disadvantage.

Group positions within the racial order, or **hierarchy**, are complicated, fluid and often situational.

Structural Racism Preserves White Privilege

But, in general, “**whiteness**”/”**nonwhiteness**” and “**blackness**”/”**nonblackness**” remain reliable markers of relative social privilege.

Structural Racism, in brief

In sum, “STRUCTURAL RACISM” refers to the ways in which

- ❑ *History*
- ❑ *Public **POLICIES***
- ❑ *Institutional **PRACTICES***
- ❑ *Cultural Stereotypes and Norms
(**REPRESENTATIONS**)*

Work to
normalize
chronic racial
disparities.

Let's look more closely at how it works . . .

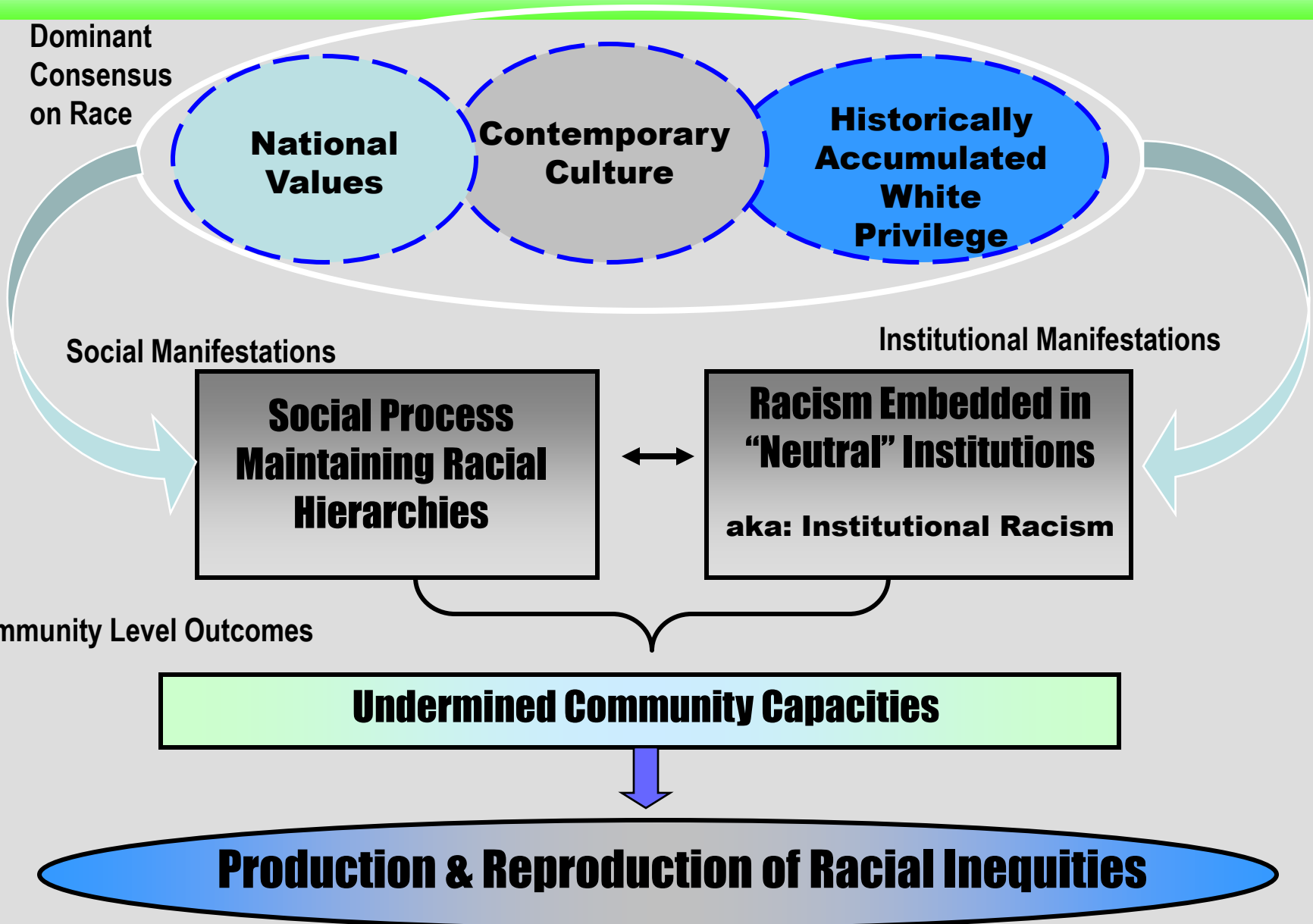
We often describe structural racism as a “lens” that allows us to “see more clearly” as we look at our history, values and social outcomes as a nation.

There are other “lenses” that allow one to shape his/her perspective of an issue. Can you think of other lenses that we use to see and understand the world?

How do we know which lens to apply in any given context?

III. How structural racism operates in the US today

Structural Racism and Racialized Outcomes



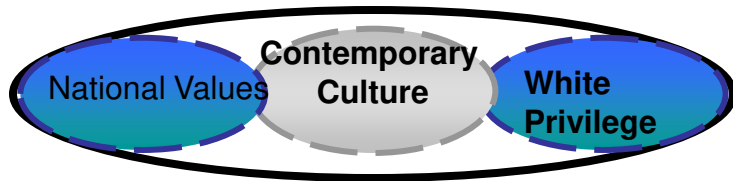
The next few slides detail each element of the

Dominant Consensus on Race

and its

Social and Institutional Manifestations

Structural Racism (Re)produces Racial Inequities Through . . .



National Values

that are deeply racialized
Such as:



**“Personal Responsibility”
and
“Individualism”**

The belief that:

***People CONTROL their fates,
REGARDLESS of SOCIAL POSITION***

***Individual BEHAVIORS and CHOICES
DETERMINE material outcomes***

Most Americans are proud of our national values—personal responsibility, meritocracy and equal opportunity – which are foundational ideals to the American way of life.

But are they equally realized by all Americans?

Try to think of a time when you competed for something and won because of a social connection or “inside information” that helped you out-compete your peers. Or, think of a time that you competed for something and lost because the playing field was not level.

Does this help you better understand the mythical nature of these values?

Structural Racism (Re)produces Racial Inequities Through . . .



Contemporary Culture



Society's norms, values and practices reinforce **racial stereotypes**; emphasize "innate" capacities of different groups.

Media perpetuation of racial stereotypes is particularly pernicious.

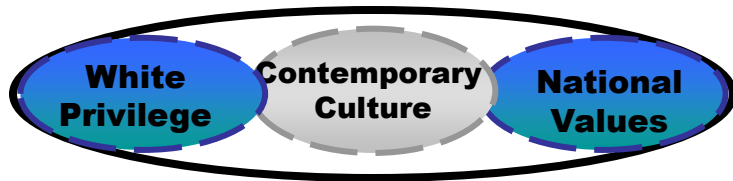


Take a moment to think about some of the cultural representations you have been exposed to that have shaped how groups (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans and Latinos) are commonly seen.

How do they differ from the representations that are used to shape how we think about whites?

Can you give an example of both types of representations?

Structural Racism (Re)produces Racial Inequities Through . . .



Historically Accumulated White Privilege

Whites' **historical** and **contemporary**
advantages in access to:

Quality education,
Decent jobs and livable wages,
Home ownership,
Retirement benefits, etc.



have helped **create** and **sustain**
advantages in **WEALTH** accumulation.

Accumulated White Privilege

“Whiteness” is a renewable social resource, passed on from generation to generation.

This is accomplished through inheritance of money, property and businesses, and affiliation with educational institutions and networks that provide easy access to, and opportunity for, wealth accumulation.

Parents/grandparents of white Americans:

- Had higher incomes/earned salaries***
- Accumulated retirement through union membership, participation in social security, etc.***
- Benefited from homeownership policies and were able to buy property in rising neighborhoods***

Accumulated White Privilege

At all income levels blacks have less than half the net worth of whites.

In fact, while even poor whites on average have some net worth, poor blacks have nothing but debt to pass on to their children.

Over the past decade, almost one-third of black households had zero or negative net worth, compared to just about 1 in 6 white households.

In a crisis, nearly eight out of ten African American families would not be able to survive on their assets at poverty level for 3 months.*

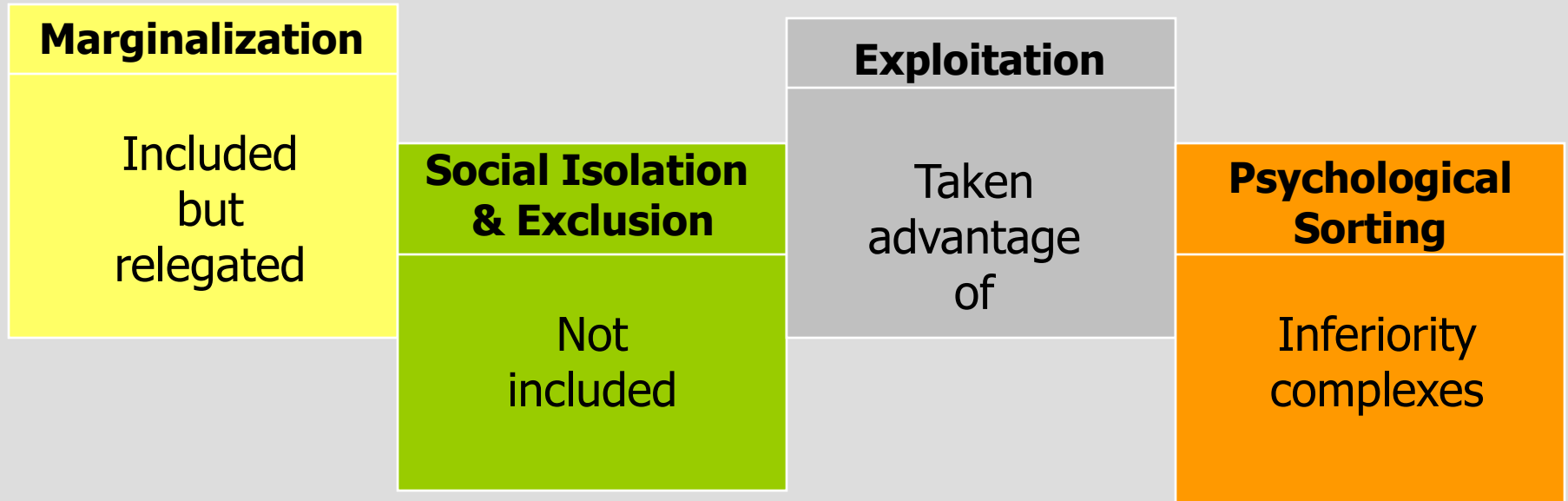
***See “Asset Development Policy: The New Opportunity,” by Larry W. Beeferman. Asset Development Institute, Center on Hunger and Poverty. Brandeis University. October 2001. Section III, p.3. www.centeronhunger.org/pubs/workingpaper**

Can you think of other ways that historic white privilege continues to play out today?

Can you think of some privileges that accrue to someone with great-grandparents of European ancestry who lived in America in the early 1900s compared to someone who had African American, Mexican, or Native American great-grandparents in America at the around the same time?

Social Manifestations

reconstructed and preserved through various social processes such as:



Particularly Problematic is the Process of ...

These are all examples of racial “sorting” in America.

How does this dynamic play out in your home town?

Are there venues at home that act as “neutral grounds” upon which folks of various backgrounds interact?

What would it take to create more of these spaces where you live?

Social Manifestations

Progress and Retrenchment

Progress has been made through major
“racial equality” victories



BUT

Gains on some fronts are often challenged,
neutralized or undermined. Significant
backlashes develop in key public policy areas

The “progress and retrenchment” dynamic may be a difficult to understand. Think of it in terms of this example:

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited housing discrimination of all types. This legislation helped minority groups find decent housing in the cities in which they worked, greatly increasing the likelihood that minorities could escape the deplorable housing conditions in which many were trapped as a result of legal segregation.

Around the same time, cities experienced the greatest loss in the white middle-class (“white flight”) during the 1970s due to the boom in suburbanization which was largely supported by Federal government investment in highways and mortgage taxes deductions that benefited homeowners.

Can you think of some of the effects that this “progress and retrenchment” has had on urban communities?

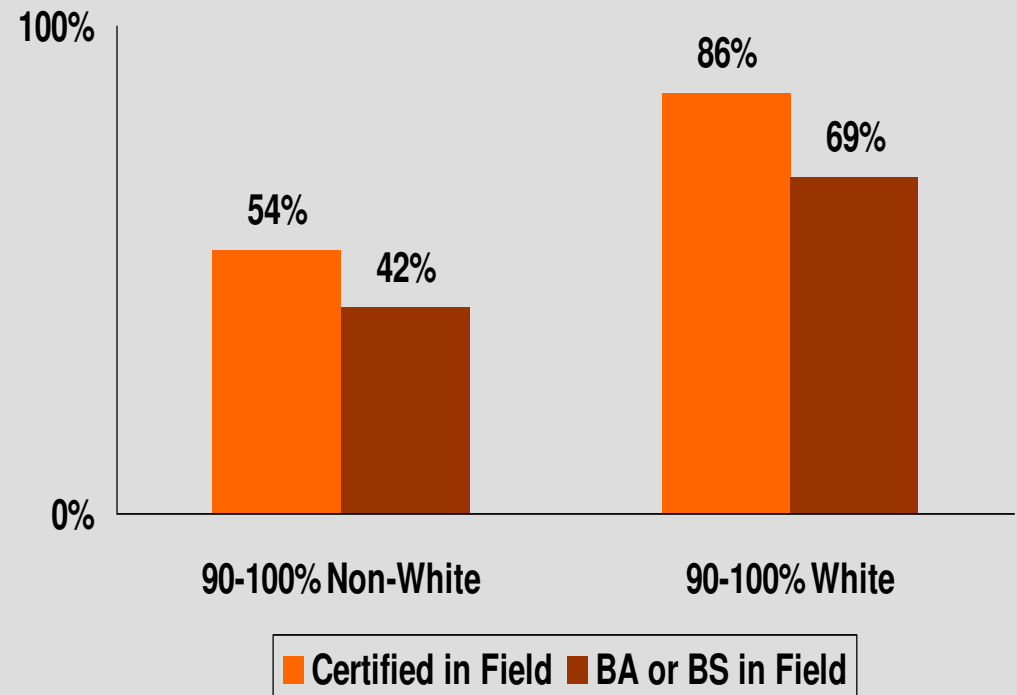
Structural Racism is Embedded in “Opportunity” Institutions ...

e.g., EDUCATION

Here, key disparity areas include:

- ☐ Expenditures (per pupil)
- ☐ Teacher Qualifications and Placement
- ☐ Discipline and Expulsion rates
- ☐ Student Tracking / Sorting
- ☐ Enrichment Programs

Math and Science Classes of Mostly Minority Students Are More Often Taught by Out of Field Teachers



Source: Jeannie Oakes. *Multiplying Inequalities: The Effects of Race, Social Class, and Tracking on Opportunities to Learn Mathematics and Science* (Rand: 1990)

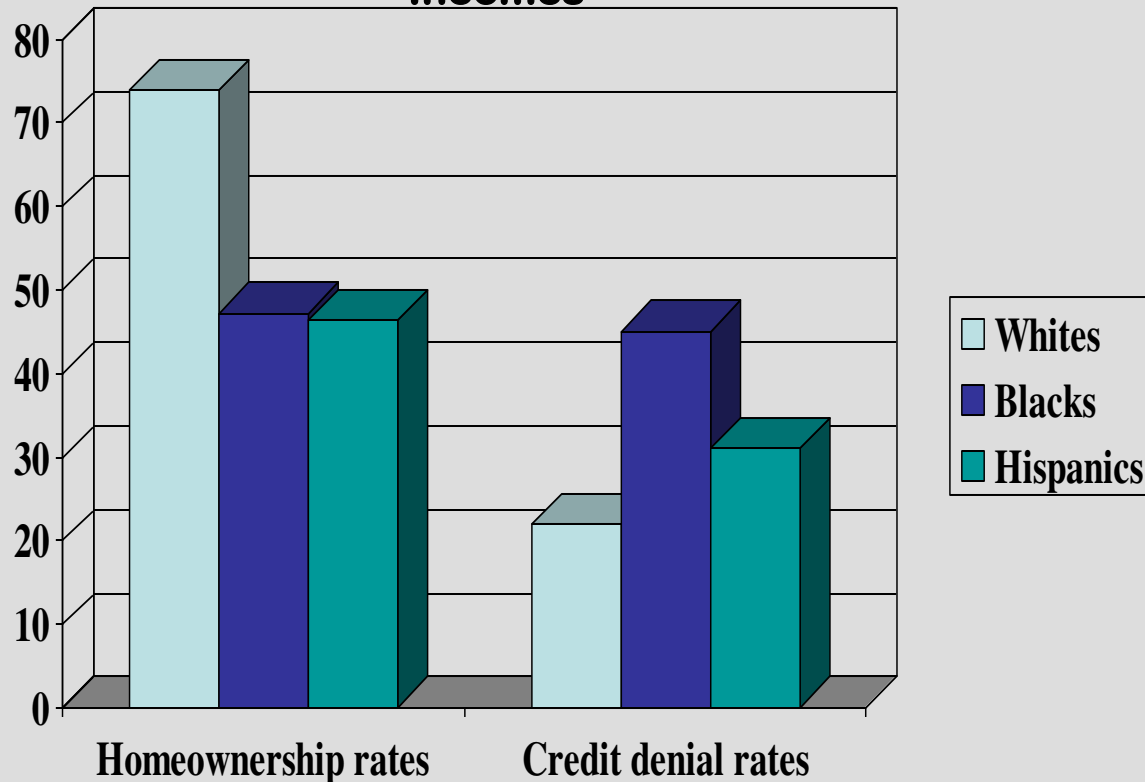
Structural Racism is Embedded in “Opportunity” Institutions ...

e.g., THE HOUSING MARKET

Private homeownership plays a major role in wealth accumulation. But racial barriers exist:

- ❑ “Predatory” mortgage lending
- ❑ **Credit denial**
- ❑ Residential segregation
- ❑ Exclusionary zoning

2000 PATTERNS IN HOME OWNERSHIP & ACCESS TO CREDIT
For Individuals With The Same Incomes



Source: Institute on Race and Poverty.

Structural Racism is Embedded in “Opportunity” Institutions ...

e.g., the LABOR MARKET

Various “Hiring Practices” to
Exclude, Exploit and
Marginalize

workers of color.
Including:

Disproportionately high Net Job Loss for Black Workers during the early 1990’s recession.

❑ *Informal Hiring
through social networks*

❑ *Zip code, Name-based,
and other forms of
discrimination*

❑ *Ethnic / Racial
Occupation Segregation*

❑ *Last hired/ First fired*

❑ *Reliance on Temporary
Workers*

Company	Black % of Workforce	Black % of Total Decline
Coca Cola	17.89%	42.06%
Sears	15.85%	54.32%
American Cyanamid	11.17%	25.19%
TRW	8.95%	13.88%
BankAmerica	7.9%	28.11%

Source: Rochelle Sharpe. 1993. “In Last Recession, Only Blacks Suffered Net Employment Loss”
Wall Street Journal, (September).

Think about the conventional explanations of the racial disparities in the opportunity areas just presented. How do you think most Americans would explain the stark race differences in outcomes?

How do these explanations contrast with a structural analysis? Looking at the chart depicting teacher qualification disparities, can you think of a “conventional” explanation for the prevalence of unqualified teachers in classrooms of color?

Do the same for the “last hired/first fired” chart.

Using the SR lens, can you think of an alternative explanation for these differences?



IV. Understanding Racial Equity; Concrete Steps toward Achieving Racial Equity Outcomes.

How Does a Structural Racism Analysis Challenge Us To Approach Social Change Work?

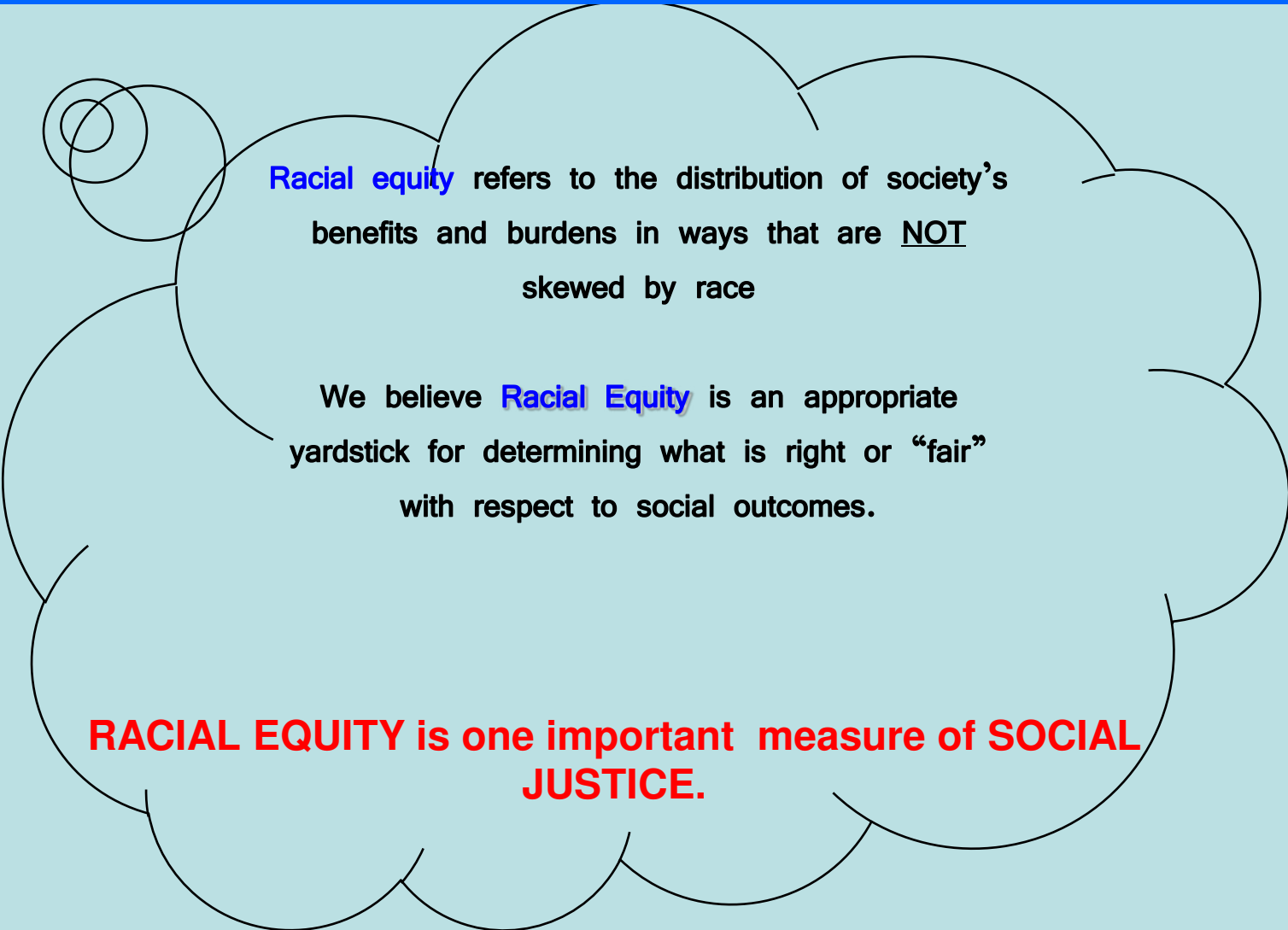
WE first must believe that

Racial Equity

Is
All of Our
Business



What Is Racial Equity?



Racial equity refers to the distribution of society's benefits and burdens in ways that are NOT skewed by race

We believe **Racial Equity** is an appropriate yardstick for determining what is right or “fair” with respect to social outcomes.

RACIAL EQUITY is one important measure of SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Are you comfortable with this notion of “racial equity?”

Do you think it realistic, or is there another principle or goal that you believe to be more appropriate for the community change field?

To Move Toward Racial Equity Social and Community Change Workers Must. . .

CRITICALLY EXAMINE and **SHIFT:**



HOW?

- ☐ Lead with race; take responsibility for racial equity
- ☐ Understand the role of power
- ☐ Develop data, strategies, capacities to change PPRs
- ☐ Engage politics and governance: protest, education, public awareness campaigns are not enough

Organizational Hints for Promoting Racial Equity

- ✓ **ADOPT RACIALLY EQUITABLE OUTCOMES** AS AN EXPLICIT PART OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL VISION.
- ✓ **LOCATE YOUR ORGANIZATION AND YOURSELF** IN THE LARGER SYSTEMS, INSTITUTIONS, AND PROCESSES THAT REPRODUCE INEQUITY & INJUSTICE.
- ✓ DISTINGUISH THE OUTCOMES YOU CAN CONTROL FROM THOSE THAT REQUIRE **ALLIES** AND **COLLABORATION**.
- ✓ DISAGGREGATE **DATA** TO DOCUMENT RACIAL DISPARITY, SET REASONABLE **EQUITY GOALS**, AND CREATE INTERIM BENCHMARK **INDICATORS**.
- ✓ **LEVERAGE YOUR POSITION;** BE AWARE OF ‘MULTIPLIER EFFECTS.’

Organizational Hints for Promoting Racial Equity

- **USE AVAILABLE TOOLS TO ASSESS POLICIES AND PRACTICES** (E.G., POLICY EQUITY, CULTURAL COMPETENCE) AND TO IMPROVE INDIVIDUAL INTERACTIONS (E.G., INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION).
- **IDENTIFY AND BUILD UPON FAMILY AND COMMUNITY STRENGTHS** FOR CULTURALLY COMPETENT PRACTICE. BUT REMEMBER THAT THESE STRENGTHS AND ASSETS CAN BE OVERWHELMED WITHOUT ATTENTION TO POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT UNDERMINE THEM.
- **DON'T FOCUS ON BLAME OR PAST MISTAKES.** TAKE ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR RACIAL EQUITY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.
- **BE AWARE OF POWER & PRIVILEGE** AS THEY MANIFEST IN RACE.

Work Strategically/Stay Strong

- **DIVERSITY TRAINING** alone won't bring about racial equity.
- **RACIALLY EXPLICIT ISSUES** may or may not imply **RACIALLY EXPLICIT INTERVENTIONS** (e.g., race v. income).
- **KEEPING FOCUSED ON DESIRED RESULTS ANCHORS POTENTIALLY SENSITIVE DISCUSSIONS.** still, you must be willing to work through/around/ within zones of discomfort.

Final Thoughts. . .

**COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY IS A
LIFELONG COMMITMENT,
SO BUILD ALLIES,
CELEBRATE SMALL STEPS,
AND KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE.**

V. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What Do You Mean By “Race?”

Race is NOT a Biological Category.

Race is Socially Constructed.



- ☐ *We invent labels* for people who share certain physical and cultural characteristics, and give those labels different levels of social and political value.
- ☐ In general, these labels give “whiteness” more social privilege than “color.”

Ethnicity, culture, nativity and other factors, continually *complicate* and *alter* the hierarchy of privilege, however.

***Popular understanding* of who belongs in any given racial category *changes over time*.**

It may help to think about how race is defined in other countries in order to understand the concept of race as a “social construction.”

Have you ever traveled to a country where race was defined differently, or where racial distinctions were different from the ones we have come to understand here in America?

If so, what are your thoughts about this place?

Q. Who's INCLUDED in the Structural Racism Framework?

EVERYONE. . .

Whites, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, other "minorities". . .

SR sorts us all into racial "spaces" associated with certain privileges or disadvantages.

We do define our OWN identities based on culture, group history, nativity, etc., but society ALSO categorizes us based on appearances and cultural stereotypes.

**OBJECTIVELY, everyone is part of a
COMPLEX HIERARCHY OF RACE PRIVILEGE
based on white supremacy.**

Q. How is *Structural* Racism Different from *Individual* and *Institutional* Racism?

What's the “Value added” of a Structural Perspective?

Individual Racism

and

Institutional Racism...

are only parts of the racism picture.

Individual Racism Is:

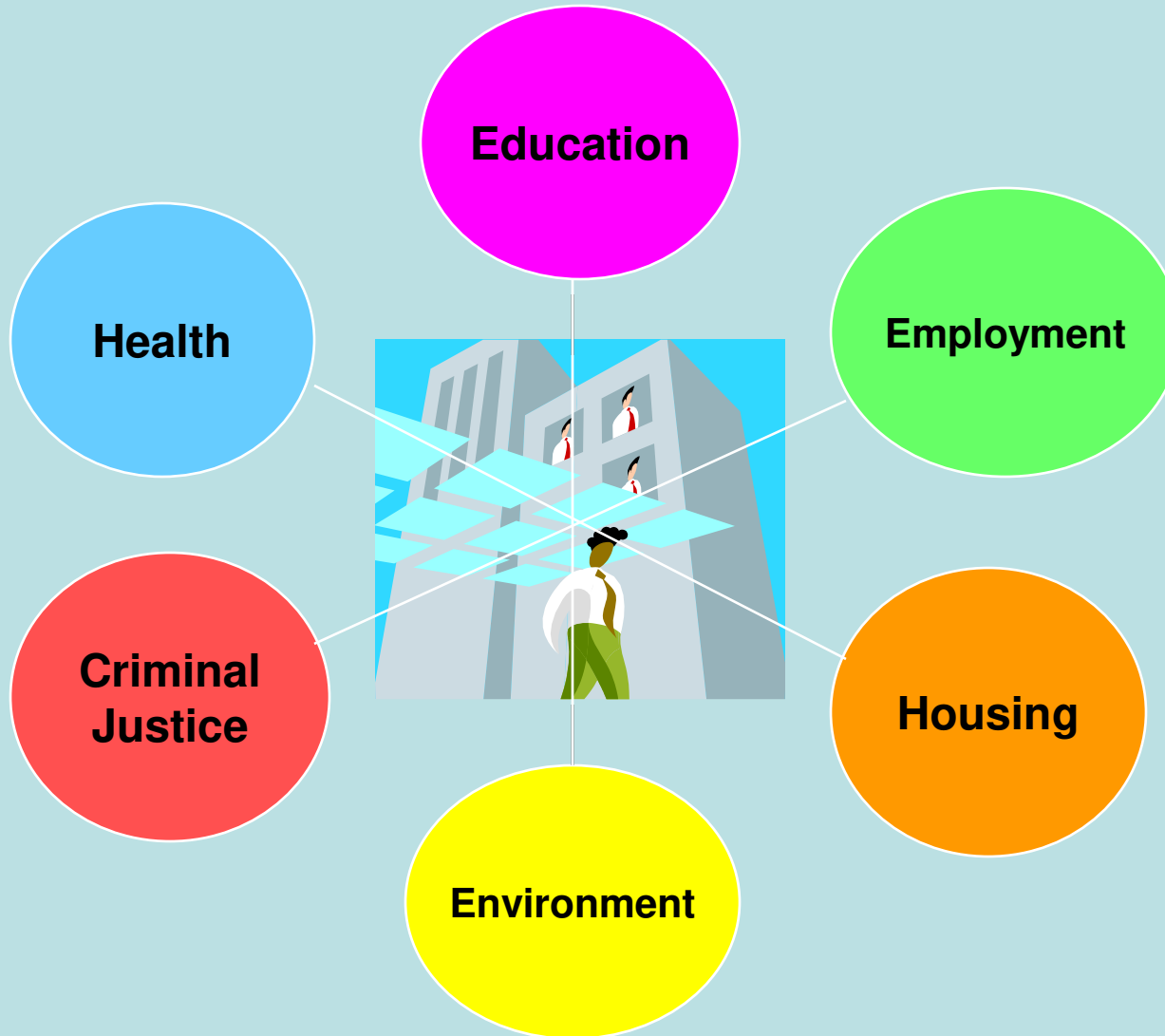
You ***s don't belong in
this neighborhood.
Get the \$*\$@ out, or I'll
kick your *%&& !!**



***Face-to-face or
covert actions
toward others that
intentionally
express prejudice,
hate, or bias, based
on race...***

***based on belief in
the superiority of
one's own race.***

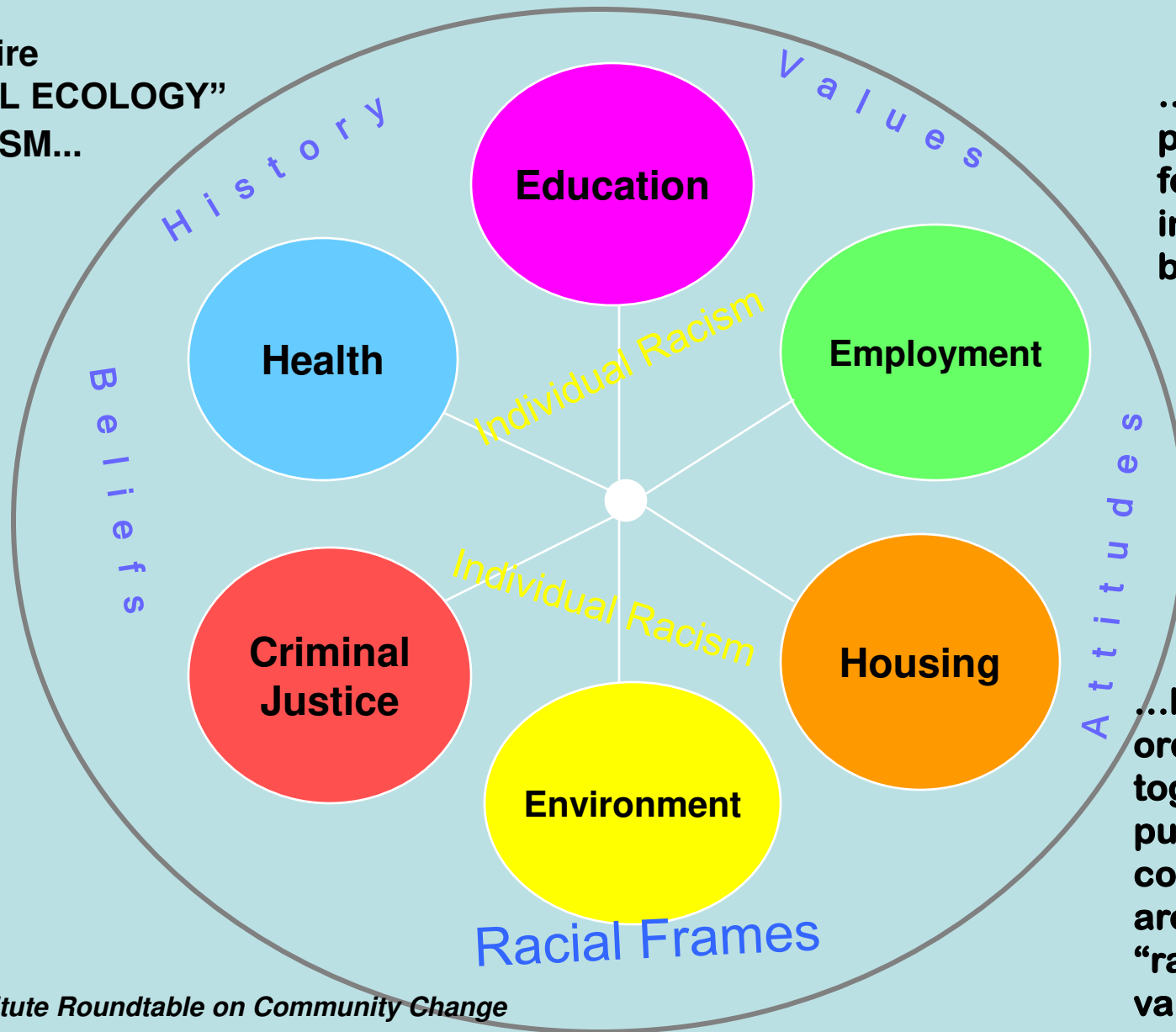
Institutional Racism is:



Policies and practices within and across institutions that, *Intentionally or not*, produce outcomes that **chronically favor or disfavor** certain racial groups.

Structural Racism Is...

The entire
“SOCIAL ECOLOGY”
of RACISM...



...not just a
problem of a
few flawed
institutions, or
bad actors...

...but a racial
order held
together by
public
consensus
around
“racialized”
values

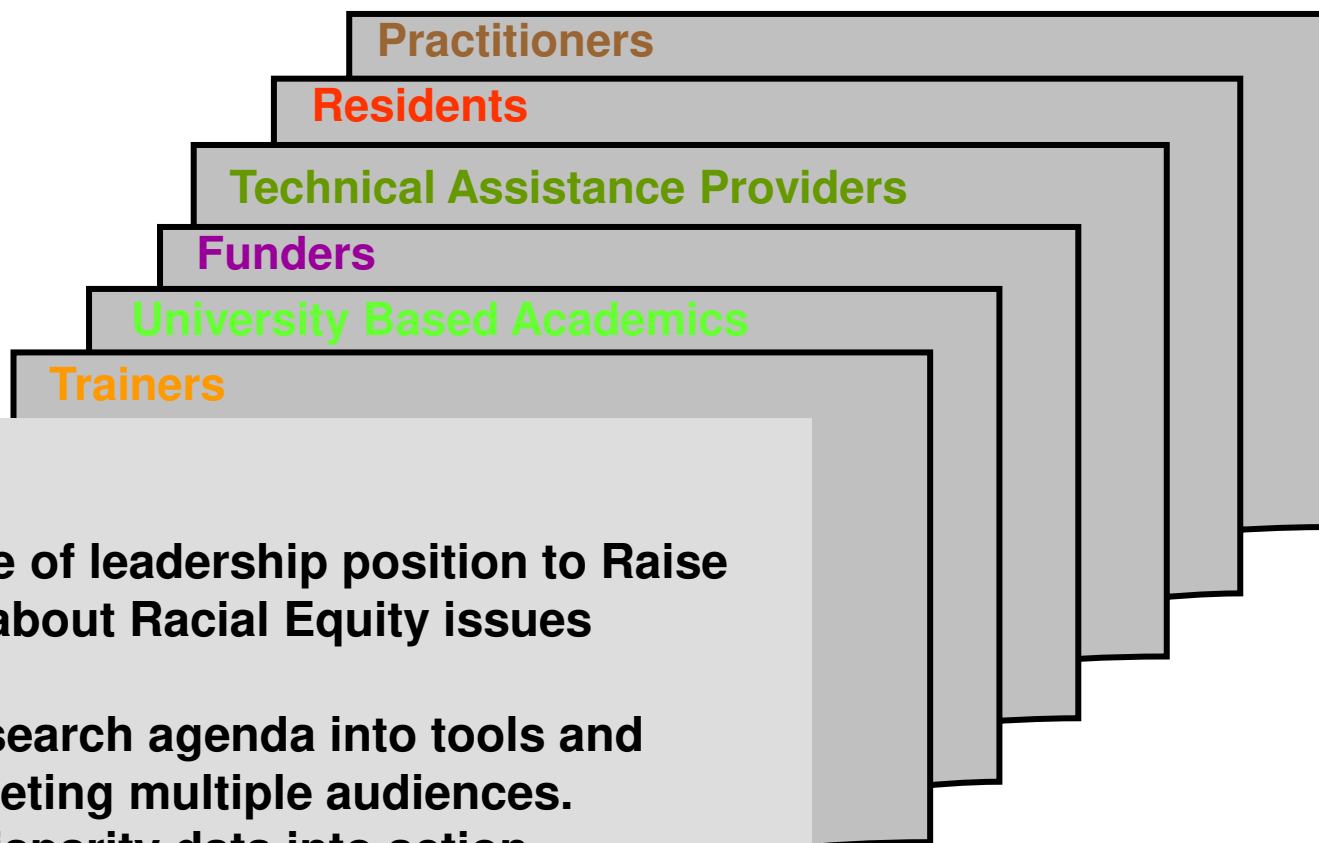
Q. What Does a Racial Equity Agenda Mean for the Community Building Field?

The Community Building “field” is taken to include:



Moving Toward Racial Equity In The Community Building Field

**Some
Concrete
Actions Might
Include**

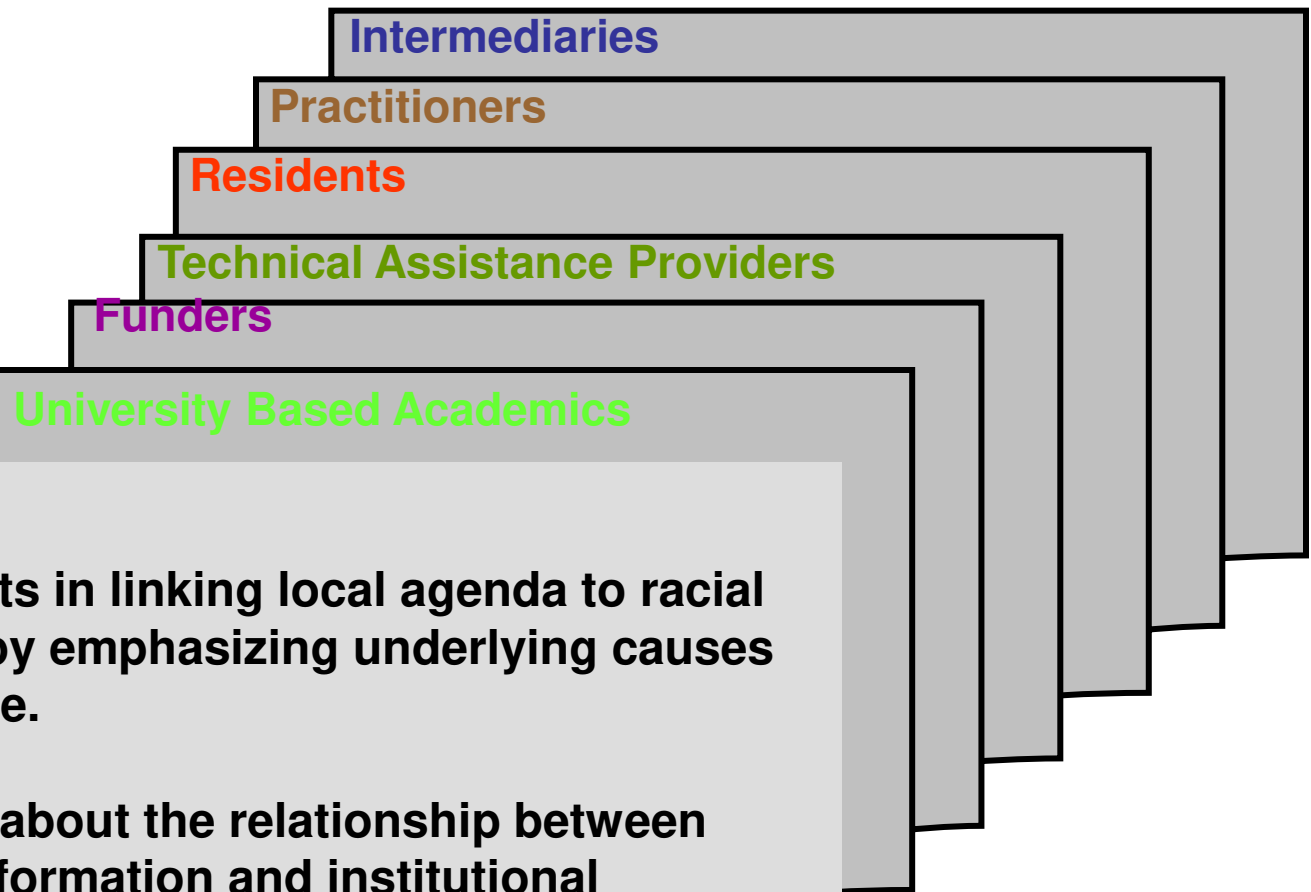


For: Intermediaries

- Taking advantage of leadership position to Raise Consciousness about Racial Equity issues
- Transforming research agenda into tools and applications targeting multiple audiences.
 - ↳ Transform disparity data into action
- Making Racial Equity a central operating principle

Moving Toward Racial Equity In The Community Building Field

Some
Concrete
Actions Might
Include

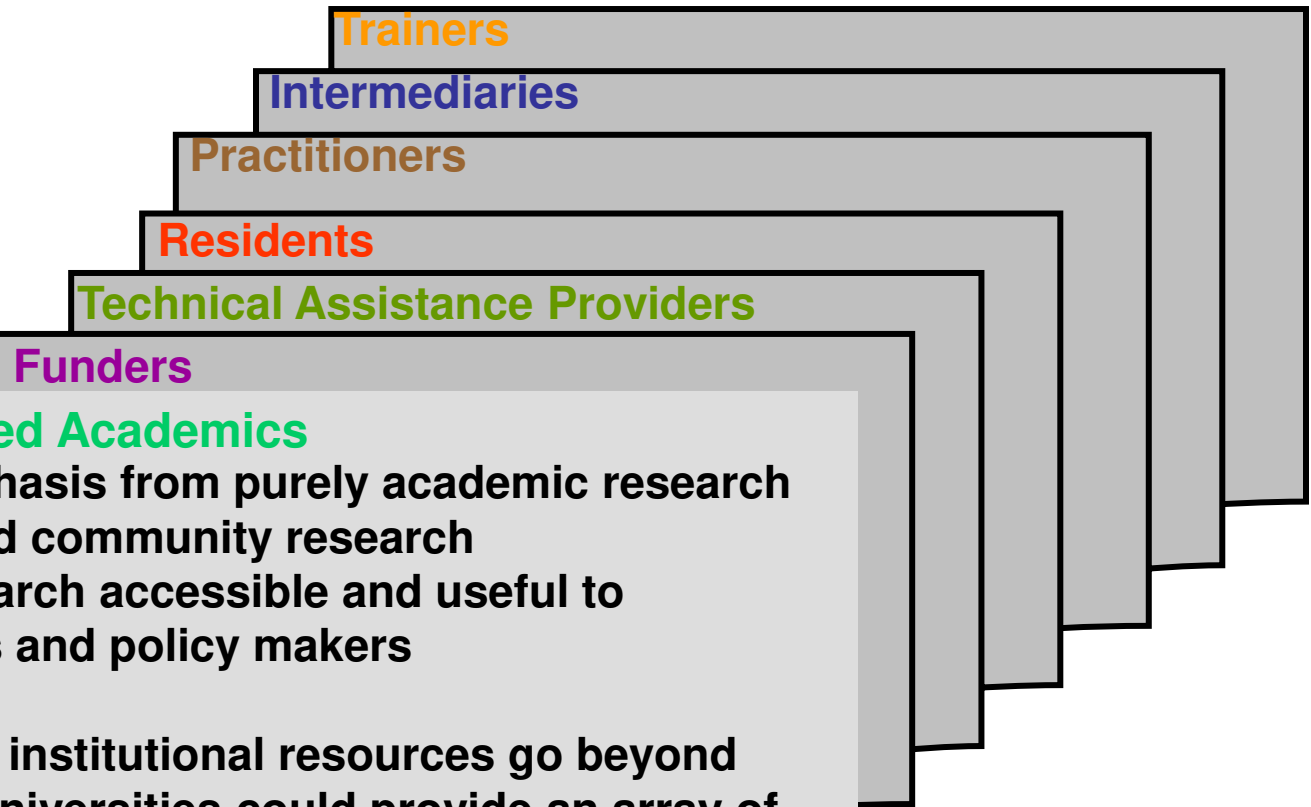


For: Trainers

- Assisting clients in linking local agenda to racial equity issues by emphasizing underlying causes of disadvantage.
- Being explicit about the relationship between personal transformation and institutional and policy change.

Moving Toward Racial Equity In The Community Building Field

Some
Concrete
Actions Might
Include



For: University Based Academics

- Broadening emphasis from purely academic research to valuing applied community research
 - ↳ Making research accessible and useful to practitioners and policy makers
- Recognizing that institutional resources go beyond the classroom. Universities could provide an array of community resources, such as:
 - ↳ free education, disparity data, etc.
- Developing measures of racial equity in critical areas

Moving Toward Racial Equity In The Community Building Field

**Some
Concrete
Actions Might
Include**

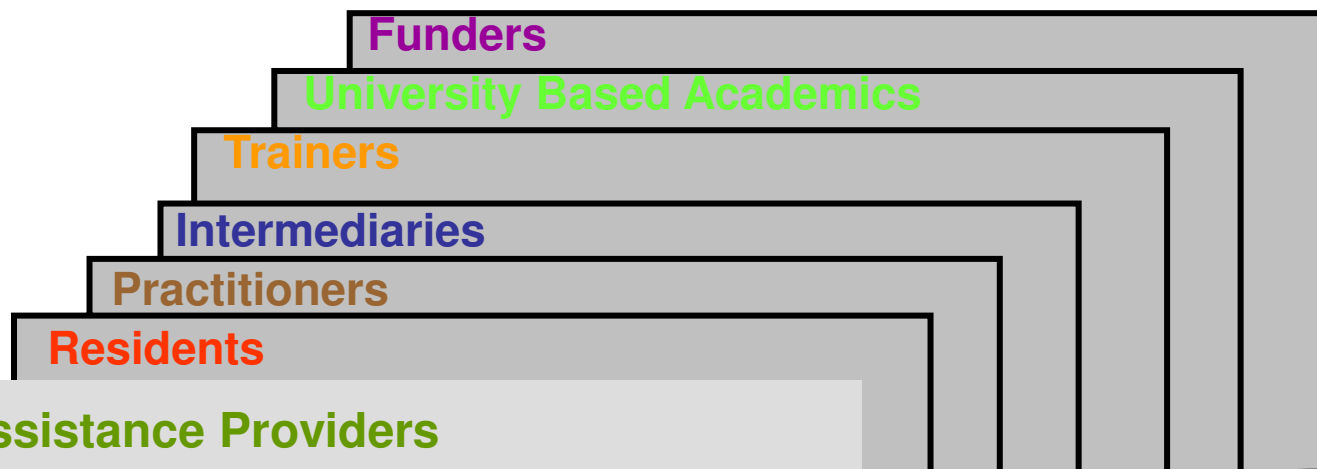
University Based Academics
Trainers
Intermediaries
Practitioners
Residents
Technical Assistance Providers

For: Funders

- Providing core support for racial equity organizing.
- Providing resources to conduct research into measures of racial equity AND supporting organizations that make dismantling racism a core operating principle
- Providing internal staff/ board members/ grantees access to racial equity training

Moving Toward Racial Equity In The Community Building Field

**Some
Concrete
Actions Might
Include**



For: Technical Assistance Providers

- **Assisting clients in developing a comprehensive picture of problems**
 - ↳ **A better understanding of history, “power brokers”, and linkages among various domains**
- **Helping clients develop “Power Maps” that outline important issues and key local decision makers**

Moving Toward Racial Equity In The Community Building Field

Some
Concrete
Actions Might
Include

Technical Assistance Providers

Funders

University Based Academics

Trainers

Intermediaries

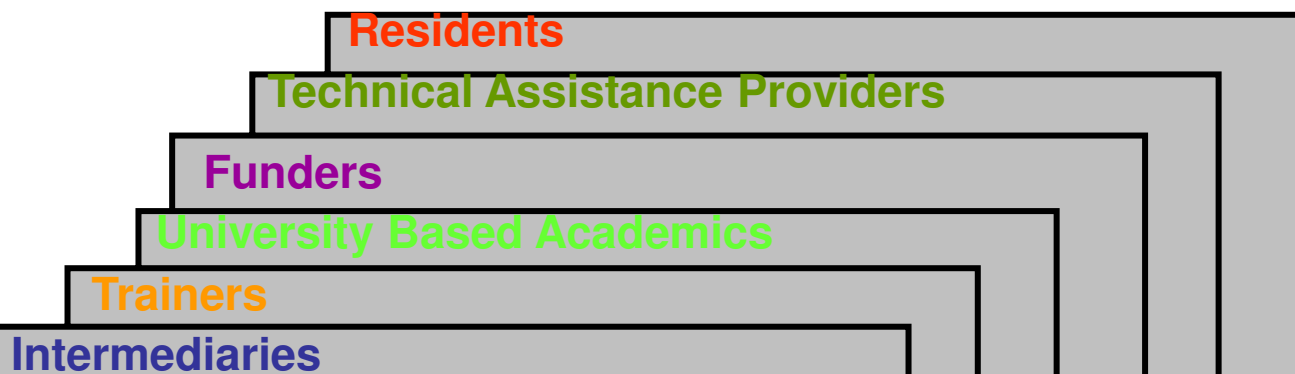
Practitioners

For: Residents

- Challenging popular perceptions of people living in low income neighborhoods by:
 - ↳ Re-defining issues of concern to reflect a structural racism perspective (“telling our story”)
 - ↳ Organizing strategically
 - ↳ Using data to support organizing efforts
 - ↳ Defining rules of local govt. engagement
 - ↳ Developing capacity to hold local institutions accountable

Moving Toward Racial Equity In The Community Building Field

Some
Concrete
Actions Might
Include



For: Practitioners

➤ Applying a structural “lens” to local issue analysis, thus highlighting linkages across policy areas, and potential for broader institutional and spatial (e.g., regional) collaborations.

.

➤ Challenging practices that reproduce unequal distributions of power and encouraging a type of empowerment that can lead to genuine structural change