REAL Action: Advancing Racial Equity in Local Government

Speakers:

Simran Noor  
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March 11, 2017

The objectives of this workshop are to:

- Gain understanding of racial equity concepts
- Build skills at analyzing policies and practices from a racial equity perspective
- Expand leadership skills to advance racial equity in multiple environments

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 – 2:15</td>
<td>Welcome and group introductions</td>
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<td>2:15 – 3:15</td>
<td>The importance of government / the importance of leadership</td>
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| 3:15 – 4:15| Normalizing racial equity – affirming a shared understanding and common definitions  
- Scenario, part 1 |
| 4:15 – 4:45| Operationalizing racial equity – using a Racial Equity Tool  
- Scenario, part 2 |
| 4:45 – 5:00| Organizing to advance racial equity – building a movement within government to advance racial equity |
| 5:00 – 5:30| Communicating about race change theory  
- Scenario, part 3 |
| 5:30 – 6:00| Leadership strategies and challenges                                  |
Drivers of Inequity Scenario

Narrator: Recent media reports have highlighted the changing demographics in many neighborhoods. A newly proposed subsidized housing complex has led to tension in one neighborhood. A community meeting is taking place to discuss the new housing and the public safety concerns expressed by some residents.

Andi, from the city is facilitating the conversation, and two city staffers are there to help respond to questions, Laverne who works in planning and zoning and Officer Melton, who is a police officer in the neighborhood. The manager for the new complex, Eduardo, is also in the room. The room is packed, with meeting participants clearly divided, including Patty and Nick who are opposed to the housing and Darlene who has been on the wait list for housing for 8 months and is eager to move in.

Andi: Welcome to tonight’s discussion. I want to start by sharing a few of the results of the recently released “Community Equity Profile: Housing.” As stated in that profile, our vision is that we have an adequate amount of safe and affordable housing for all income groups. The data collected in that profile illustrates that we have work to do, especially since there are big differences based on race – 10% of Whites pay more than 50% of their income on housing, as do 36% of Blacks, and 27% of Asians. There just is not enough affordable housing for people who need it. The city has approved the permits for the new project, and we are excited that this new housing will help to close the gap. We also understand that there have been a lot of concerns expressed about the safety of the neighborhood. We want to talk tonight about how this new project can benefit both the new neighbors and the existing neighbors. Thanks to everyone who has signed up to share your perspectives – we have two hours scheduled and fifty people who would like to speak. That means that you should keep your comments short. Let’s start at the top of the list with Patty.

Patty: I can’t believe the city approved this project. This is in the middle of a single-family neighborhood. Having all these people move into our neighborhood means an increase of crime and more traffic. It just isn’t right. The city has to stop.

Andi: Nick is next.

Nick: I’ve already seen an increase in loitering and you know that those people are dealing drugs. Our children are not safe. If this project gets built, I’m not sure I will even want to keep my children in our local school. It has always been a good school until now. I want to know what the police are going to do.

Andi: Ben is next.

Nick: Wait, I said I want to know what the police are going to do! Can’t Officer Melton respond? He works in this neighborhood and I want to know what he thinks. Officer Melton?

Officer Melton: I used to work at one of the other complexes, and when people missed too many months of rent, I was the one who had to evict them. I hated to do that, but that was what had to be done. We used to have a social services aide who tried to help people get assistance, but when there wasn’t any assistance, I just had to put their stuff out on the street. That’s not why I signed up to be a police officer.

Nick: See, he works for the city, and he doesn’t even like it.

Andi: We need to get back to the city, and he doesn’t even like it.

Nick: Sure, in a minute, but we need to know how this project is going to be managed. What are they going to do to keep our neighborhood safe?

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1 Based on an exercise from RaceForward (https://www.raceforward.org) and adapted by the Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative and Government Alliance on Race and Equity.
Eduardo: Safety is our number one concern. We will be doing criminal background checks to make sure that nobody with a record moves into our project. As you can see by the design posters in the back, this will be a pretty project and we want to keep it that way.

Nick: And what about the permit approval, that doesn’t seem right. Lavern, what did you have to do with that. Was this some sort of buy-off?

Laverne: No, this is a good project and I can tell you more details.

Darlene: I’m sorry to interrupt, but I didn’t know I was going to have to wait two hours to say something. I rushed here after work, and have to pick my kids up at their childcare program and it is about to close. I really need housing. I’ve been paying two-thirds of my paycheck for rent, and can’t even pay other bills some months. I’m trying hard to make it, but just can’t when the pay is so low. I have to go now, but I would like to be a part of this neighborhood.

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<th>Part 1: What are examples of implicit bias, and individual, institutional and structural racism in the scenario?</th>
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<th>Part 2: How could a Racial Equity Tool be used to address racial inequities in this scenario?</th>
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<th>Part 3: What would you have to say to Darlene? Nick? Andi? Others?</th>
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Congressional City Conference

Advancing Racial Equity
The Role of Government

March 11, 2017
Washington, DC

Julie Nelson, Senior Vice-President of the Center for Social Inclusion / Director of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity; @JulieNelsonGARE

Simran Noor, Vice-President of Policy, CSI / Deputy Director of GARE; @SimranNoo
Objectives:

✓ Gain understanding of racial equity concepts
✓ Build skills at analyzing policies and practices from a racial equity perspective
✓ Expand leadership skills to advance racial equity
Government Alliance on Race and Equity

A national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

- A membership network of jurisdictions in leadership
- Expanding jurisdictions – in 30 states and more than 100 cities – all levels of government
- Providing tools and resources to put theory into action

Center for Social Inclusion

Center for Social Inclusion’s mission is to catalyze communities, government, and other institutions to dismantle structural racial inequity and create equitable outcomes for all.
Our learning environment

• Take space, make space
• What is said here, stays here
• What is learned here, leaves here
• Offer what you can, ask for what you need
• One mic, one diva
Laying it on the Line

1. People who engage in public meetings are the ones who care most about the issues.

2. Hiring and promotion decisions should be based solely on merit.

3. I believe we can end racial inequity.
Values and realities

• All men are created equal
• With liberty and justice for all
• Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth
History of government and race

Initially explicit

Government explicitly creates and maintains racial inequity.

Discrimination illegal, but “race-neutral” policies and practices perpetuate inequity.

Became implicit

Proactive policies, practices and procedures that advance racial equity.

Government for racial equity
Current context

![Images of Barack Obama and Donald Trump with protest signs for justice and race equity]
National best practice

Normalize
• A shared analysis and definitions
• Urgency / prioritize

Operationalize
• Racial equity tools
• Data to develop strategies and drive results

Organize
• Internal infrastructure
• Partnerships
Small group discussion

1. What are characteristics of good leaders?
2. What are the additional characteristics needed to lead for racial equity?
3. What are the additional characteristics needed to lead in crisis?
Normalizing
Equity? Equality?
What’s the difference?
Racial inequity in the U.S.

From infant mortality to life expectancy, race predicts how well you will do...
Racial equity means:

- “Closing the gaps” so that race does not predict one’s success, while also **improving outcomes for all**

- To do so, have to:
  - Target strategies to focus improvements for those worse off
  - Move beyond “services” and focus on changing policies, institutions and structures
The Unconscious Mind

**Schemas:** the “frames” through which our brains help us understand and navigate the world:

1. Sort into categories
2. Create associations
3. Fill in the gaps
Schemas

Help us organize information into broader categories. They largely reside in the sub-conscious.

✓ Objects
✓ Human beings

Schemas are social. They exist in and are shaped by our environment.
How We Think

Humans need meaning.

• Individual meaning
• Collective meaning

Only 2% of emotional cognition is available consciously

Racial bias tends to reside in the unconscious network

We unconsciously think about race even when we do not explicitly discuss it.
What color are the following lines of text?

- Cvur zxyq brrm
- Xoc jbni oew mne
- Vqeb peow ytro
- Vqeb peow ytro
What color are the following lines of text?

- Black
- Red
- Blue
- Green
What color are the following lines of text?

- Green
- Black
- Yellow
- Blue
Bias

The evaluation of one group and its members relative to another.

We all carry bias. Acting on bias can be discriminatory and create negative outcomes for particular groups.

Source: Unconscious (Implicit) Bias and Health Disparities: Where Do We Go from Here?
Explicit bias

- Expressed directly
- Aware of bias / operates consciously

Example – Sign in the window of an apartment building – “whites only”

Implicit bias

- Expressed indirectly
- Unaware of bias / operates sub-consciously

Example – a property manager doing more criminal background checks on African Americans than whites.
What to do with bias?

• Suppressing or denying biased thoughts can actually increase prejudice rather than eradicate it.

• Openly acknowledging and challenging biases allows us to develop strategic interventions.
What creates different outcomes?
Institutional / Explicit

Policies which explicitly discriminate against a group.

*Example:*
Police department refusing to hire people of color.

Institutional / Implicit

Policies that negatively impact one group unintentionally.

*Example:*
Police department focusing on street-level drug arrests.

Individual / Explicit

Prejudice in action – discrimination.

*Example:*
Police officer calling someone an ethnic slur while arresting them.

Individual / Implicit

Unconscious attitudes and beliefs.

*Example:*
Police officer calling for back-up more often when stopping a person of color.
Examples from your jurisdiction –

Institutional/Explicit

Policies which explicitly discriminate against a group.

Institutional/Implicit

Policies that negatively impact one group unintentionally.

Individual/Explicit

Prejudice in action – discrimination.

Individual/Implicit

Unconscious attitudes and beliefs.
Individual racism:
• Pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race.

Institutional racism:
• Policies, practices and procedures 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.
Scenario, part 1
Operationalizing
Race in governmental policies

Federal Housing Administration

Location of city facilities

Streetlighting
What is a Racial Equity Tool?

Process

Actively inserts racial equity into decision making processes

Product
What is a Racial Equity Tool process?

1. Desired results
2. Analysis of data
3. Community engagement
4. Strategies for racial equity
5. Implementation plan
6. Communications and accountability
Who should use a Racial Equity Tool?

- Elected officials
- Government staff
- Community
Scenario, part 2
Organizing
Late 1990’s - community pressure, some departments initiate racial equity efforts

2004 - Mayor Nickels launches City-wide racial equity initiative focused internally

2009 – Expanded partnerships with community; City Council legislation passes unanimously; plans and tools institutionalized.

2015 - New plan providing expanded focus on community outcomes
Racial Equity Leadership Team – senior leadership

- Accountability agreements
- Departmental work plans
- Performance reviews
- Racial Equity Tools
- Institution-wide work plans

Core Team
leadership development and capacity building

Interdepartmental Teams
contracting equity, workforce equity, community engagement

Housing
Transit
Police
Parks
Courts
Communicating Effectively on Race
Movements have narratives. They tell stories, because they are not just about rearranging economics and politics. They also rearrange meaning. And they're not just about redistributing the goods. They're about figuring out what is good.

~ Marshall Ganz
The Role of Narrative:
What is framing?
What are frames?

*Networks of association that shape how we think, not just what we think*

- People reject facts that don’t fit their frames
- People carry multiple frames that are sometimes linked and sometimes contradictory.
- Framing is a long-term project because people need to receive it in multiple forms and overtime to shift
What are frames?

*Networks of association that shape how we think, not just what we think*

- People reject facts that don’t fit their frames
- People carry multiple frames that are sometimes linked and sometimes contradictory.
- Framing is a long-term project because people need to receive it in multiple forms and overtime to shift
What are meta-frames?
Meta-frames on race:

- Personal Responsibility
- Limited Government
Advancing racial equity

Effective, inclusive democracy
Framing and Messaging

• Framing
  – Comprehensive long term strategy

• Messaging
  – re-packaging arguments with language changes

• Meta-Frames: umbrella frames that encompass multiple values and symbols (e.g., individualism)
Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

Associated Press

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it...
Dog Whistle Racism
Understanding Implicit Bias


How race gets triggered in messages

**Implicit Bias:**
Unconscious bias developed through networks of association on race

Using symbols to trigger unconscious racism

**Symbolic Racism:**
The use of images, code words, and metaphors that implicitly signal race
Messaging on Policy:

1. We did two rounds of testing
   - Round 1 - Healthcare, Housing
   - Round 2 – Fiscal Policy

2. Developed 1-minute storyboards / commercials
   - Emotional, visual, and ready to deploy

3. Tested four different messages
   - 1 “Race Wedge” Message
   - 3 Messages to counter the “Race Wedge” message that varied in their degree of racial explicitness

4. Gave the test online to a nationally representative sample using a dial-test
   - Round 2 – we tested for implicit bias
Messaging on healthcare and housing

We asked respondents:
On a scale of 0 to 100, how much do you agree or disagree with the message?

Average agree/disagree rating (0-100)

- Explicit race: 76.2
- Implicit race: 70.2
- No race: 68.1
- Conservative: 63.9
Messaging on policy

1) Progressive policy messages that specifically name race are successful.
2) Most people are holding two frames at once.
3) Even people with high implicit bias still agreed with progressive fiscal policies.
4) Talking about race does not elevate individual implicit bias.
5) Multiracial spokespeople are better received than White-only spokespeople.
What we learned

• **Framing matters** – Attack the dominant race frames by pointing out inclusive values

• **Effectively talking about race** can move people on policy
In order to counter the race wedge, we must name race
Communicating about race
It’s more than just talk – ACT

Affirm
- Start with the heart
- Explain why we are all in this together

Counter
- Explain why we have the problem
- Take on race directly

Transform
- Reframe winners and losers
- End with heart and a solution

CSI CENTER FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION
LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON RACE & EQUITY
Communicating about race: It’s more than just talk – ACT

Affirm

• Start with the heart
• Explain why we are all in this together

The health of our children, families, and loved ones depends on the environments in which we live.

People of all races want to live in clean environments with decent housing, good jobs, and high-quality schools.
Communicating about race: It’s more than just talk – ACT

For decades, low-income communities of color have been the dumping grounds for environmental hazards.

Having access to neighborhoods that support success shouldn't be determined by your race.
Communicating about race:
It’s more than just talk – ACT

Those that contaminate our environment need to be held accountable. For our collective good, we need to value the quality of all of our neighborhoods above the profits for a few.

Join me in supporting legislation that will bring accountability. Those that pollute need to pay their fair share so that all of us can have healthy environments in our communities.

Transform

- Reframe winners and losers
- End with heart and a solution
One more example:

Affirm
• All our children deserve high quality, public education.

Counter
• Currently, only about 60% of African-American, Latino and Native American students graduate from high school on time.
• Harsh, punitive discipline based on subjective infractions drive that outcome.

Transform
• We need to remove the subjectivity from the policy and implement after-school programs that use a restorative justice approach to disciplinary challenges.
• These changes will benefit all of our children.
Communicating about race
It’s more than just talk – ACT

**Affirm**
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Scenario, part 3
Scenarios:

**Scenario 1:** At a town hall, a participant shares with you: “I don’t understand why my taxes should be raised so that those people can get a handout. Look, it’s not that I don’t feel bad for people whose luck ran out, but shouldn’t we be rewarding those who are working hard instead of punishing us? That’s how we’ll bring back the economy.”

**Scenario 2:** Your colleague says: “I don’t understand why we’re focusing on race. Shouldn’t we focus on income inequality instead of being divisive by calling out race? That’ll probably be the most effective way to create change.”
Changing minds

• The best way to change attitudes is to change behavior.
• Attitudinal change tends to follow behavior change.
• Requires both short and long-term approaches.
Advancing racial equity

Effective, inclusive democracy
Leadership
Leadership in Challenging Environments - Strategies

- Normalizing the Conversation
- Adding Risk into Learning Cycle
- Power Mapping
- Building the Community of Supporters
- Adaptive Perspective

Adaptive Leadership

Source:
Ten Adaptive Flags

1. No Known Solution
2. People Would Rather Avoid the Issue
3. Reason & Logic Alone Won’t Get You There
4. Recurring Problem
5. Emotional Response
6. Failure to Resolve Competing Priorities
7. Moving Forward Feels Risky
8. Casualties
9. People Must Work Across Boundaries
10. Progress Is not Linear

Source: CompassPoint Change, Transition & the Practice of Adaptive Leadership
Building An Adaptive Perspective

- Expect turbulence, resistance & discomfort
- Cultivate Courage, Daring
- Broaden Perspective & Definition of Success
  - Lean Into Incompetence
  - Fall in Love with Tough Decisions
- Focus on Practice & Movement
- Build Resilience
  - Practice optimism & realism
  - Find satisfaction daily & locally
  - Nurture your circle
Adding Risk to the Learning Cycle

- Experimentation Mindset
- Permission to Learn; Permission to be unsuccessful
- Choosing Acceptable Risk
- Encouraging Momentum: Implement, Learn, Adjust Quickly

Image Source: modified from Partners in School Innovation
Role of leadership

Overall

• Create shared vision

With frontline staff

• Create awareness

• Create sense of urgency

• Build momentum

As administrators

• Change policies, practices, programs

• Establish accountability
Remember

• Normalize conversations about race
• Learn from those bearing the burdens of racial inequity
• Set new expectations for equity and back them with resources
• Align internal structures
• Operationalize solutions, take action
• Assess, refine, sharpen
Leadership challenges
Communicating about race
It’s more than just talk – ACT

Affirm
- Start with the heart
- Explain why we are all in this together

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- Reframe winners and losers
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Contact information

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Key Take-Aways

NLC University – Advancing Racial Equity in Local Government

March 11, 2017
2 to 6 PM

Presenters: Julie Nelson and Simran Noor

- Government created and perpetuated racial inequity. Our systems were built for inequity — that’s what they’ll perpetuate until we recreate them. Racial inequities were intentional. Equity must be even more intentional.

- Racial equity isn’t accidental. We have to transform government to create it. Transformation means that we normalize conversation about race, operationalize new practices and policies, and organize, both within government and across sectors.

- Equitable outcomes require equitable operations. Good government is impossible without racial equity.