



EDWARD W. HAZEN FOUNDATION

**The Edward W. Hazen Foundation
2010-2014 Strategic Planning**

**January 2009 Teleconference on
Racial Justice and Social Movements**

Summary

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Applied Research Center's Strategic Framework for Advancing Racial Justice

1. **Focus on structural racism and systemic inequality rather than simply personal prejudice.** Structural racism — the overarching system of racial hierarchy and inequality that routinely privileges whites and disadvantages people of color—profoundly affects most issues and institutions in the U.S. In addition to addressing historic underpinnings and root causes, a structural racism focus speaks to the cultural norms and popular ideas that contribute to current racial inequities.
2. **Focus on impacts rather than intentions.** Racially disparate impacts and outcomes, regardless of intent, are sufficient evidence that racism exists. Impacts can be documented, while intentions are debatable and difficult to prove. Rather than dwell on who is a racist, it's far more useful to focus on the causes and effects of racism.

- 3. Address racial inequality explicitly but not necessarily exclusively.** Racism must be illuminated in order to be eliminated. Challenge so-called “colorblindness,” which seeks to deny the realities of racism and render people of color invisible. Often other significant factors are involved that must also be made visible, such as gender, class, ethnicity and immigrant status.
- 4. Propose solutions that emphasize equity and inclusion rather than diversity.** Racism is pervasive, but it need not be permanent. Offer proactive solutions that are equitable, inclusive, and viable. It is important to distinguish the principle of equity, which is fairness, from that of diversity, which is about variety.
- 5. Develop strategies to empower stakeholders and target institutional powerholders.** Build inclusive and cohesive cross-racial alliances that prioritize the full engagement of people of color as leaders. Make the powerholders with decision-making authority enact changes that target institutional racism.
- 6. Make racial justice a high priority in all social justice efforts.** A successful progressive movement must recognize racial justice as a central component of social justice. The struggle for racial justice is not a zero sum game. Instead of allowing racism to drive social division and disparities, we must make racial equity the driving force for uniting and benefiting all people.

Universalist Strategy vs. Racial Justice Strategy

Racial Justice and Social Movements exist within the historical context of overt discrimination in the United States, with what are now new race neutral regulations.

The people creating these new regulations and rules have adopted a tactical strategy that addresses race implicitly, doesn't employ a racial analysis, and does not emphasize the racial justice elements of regulations. This has led to the creation of a body of laws and institutions that are inadequate at actually closing the racial divide. The racial divide was initiated in a period of very explicit and intentional racism, but has continued through to our present situation where explicit intention is not necessary to turn out the same disparities. Contemporary structural racism is a system in which you have racism without racists. So, when you are building systems atop racist structures, even if you have no intention to create racial divides, or you don't feel any racial animus yourself, the system starts to perpetuate racism anyway. Intention is not required in order to produce racist impact, and that's an abstract concept that the Applied Research Center (ARC) works on explaining to people everyday. The Center has the most success in explaining the perpetuation of racism without intent by using simple, clear stories of everyday people contextualized in the institutions that shape their lives.

Quite often what looks to be a race neutral policy isn't race neutral at all, and it either leaves the racial divide in place or exacerbates it. ARC uses the example of class size reduction in California to show how this could happen. In the late '90s/early 2000s, the California State Legislature adopted a policy to give out incentive grants to California schools that were able to reduce their class sizes. The State wanted to reduce class sizes

through this incentive system, but there was no targeting of that money at all, even without using race and poverty language. The advocates who pushed that policy through made a very clear and explicit decision not to racialize or include class impact analyses. So what happened was the wealthier districts with resources were able to reduce their class sizes first, which enabled them to get the incentive money. Even worse, the most qualified teachers in the State began to move from the poor districts they were teaching in, that had larger class sizes, to the wealthier districts where they could now have a class with a reasonable number of students in it. The California incentive grant program is an example of how good intentions, without a racial justice strategy, missed its mark. Understandably, policy makers wanted to close the achievement gap and didn't want their bill to be attacked. They thought they could use the resources in way that would eventually trickle down to the target communities of color, which didn't actually happen. This disconnect between intent and outcomes is a reason why ARC has been pushing for racial justice analyses of existing and proposed policies, so that reform efforts correlate to intentions around racial disparities,

Another shortcoming of a universalist approach, on race issues in particular, is that social conservatives still use race to divide the electorate and legislators around policies that improve life for everyone. The Democrats have either played right into race-baiting debate or have refused to refute it. So, one problem with taking a universalist approach to issues that have racism at their root cause is that we're not actually mounting an effective argument against the rightwing race-mongering by refusing to talk about it. What ends up happening is that we allow the conservatives to manipulate conversations related to race, thereby putting racial justice advocates into a defensive posture on issues that are both related, and un-related to race.

Avoiding Racial Justice Has Negative Impacts on Society

The mortgage crisis, for example, began in communities of color. It's based on the racial dynamics of the banking and housing industries which eventually led to the evolution of the subprime mortgage scheme. Communities of color were particularly vulnerable to those kinds of lenders because they could not get mortgages from traditional, "legitimate lenders" and because no one paid attention to the problem as the foreclosure crisis began to hit communities of color (despite that three to five years ago, a number of people were writing about this). The problem of subprime lending eventually grew to such a size that it basically took down the housing industry and was a critical blow to the financial services industry. Now we have arrived at a crisis that affects everyone regardless of race and in some ways, regardless of what their income level is. So, there are those kinds of examples of explicit race issues that ARC uses to warn people by saying, "pay attention to this or it's going to come to you next."

Positive Societal Impact of Racial Justice Approach

An example of overall beneficial societal impact of a racial justice approach can be seen through the Restaurant Opportunity Center in New York City (ROCN) which started out organizing only back of the house, low-wage immigrants of color in the restaurant industry, and that over the course of five years, became something that everybody who relates to the industry can benefit from. This includes employers who are trying to do the right thing and front of the house workers who are largely white U.S. citizens, but who are also taken advantage of through low wages, tip garnishing, safety, sexual harassment, et cetera. We use the case of ROCN to say that if you want to build something really inclusive, you have

to start with the people who are the most marginal because if you can build something that includes them, then you can probably cover everybody else. But, if you start in the middle, or you start at the top, then you're going to have a much more difficult time reaching out to everyone, and it'll be harder to grow a really inclusive organizational culture.

Another example of the importance of advocating for the most marginalized communities was through the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations (NWFCO) in Idaho. NWFO did a testing project where they sent in trios of white and Latina women to apply for food stamps. The trios were the same in every way (number of kids, income levels etc) except for their race. They found that even though most women were rejected, the Latina women were asked intrusive questions about their immigration status. They actually never made that research public, but they used the threat of publicity to force the Department of Health and Human Services in Idaho to create a much simpler self-certification process for food stamps that benefits all poor people. Since most poor Idahoans are white, all the beneficiaries of the new certification process were not of color, but they've benefited hugely from that policy change.

Equity and Inclusion in Philanthropy

In the social justice field today there's a plethora of resources that focus on changing how Black people are perceived, which is very important work, but it's perhaps 90 percent of what is supported right now and 10 percent focus on structural causes. Those figures have to be evened out much more if in fact we're going to drive people toward organizing toward racial justice and structural change.

The Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, following the release of ARC's Short-Changed report, documents the fact that communities of color are left out of philanthropy in large and damaging ways. Following that report, the Philanthropic Initiative and ARC came up with an assessment process that foundations could use to look at where they were making progress and what else they had to do. We piloted that process last year with the Consumer Health Foundation and with the Barr Foundation in Boston and in both cases what we found was that the foundations had put a lot of energy into describing their commitment to diversity, but they had done just about nothing to connect diversity to justice. These Foundations have done really good work in defending a diversity ethic, but it was not clear what the strategy, and in business terms, what the business argument is

REFRAMING RACIAL DISCOURSE

[Hazen Trustee] In rural sites that we do work, the public schools are largely African American and private schools are serving white students; most white people in Mississippi rural schools are not going to public schools. Also these are places where school boards are either still a majority white or the economic interests of the community so dominate African Americans who may serve on the board that they might as well be run by white folks. Some of the biggest supporters who are not worrying about segregation much are actually African Americans themselves who want to have control of their schools, who want to be in the leadership positions, and should be.

[Rinku] We talk about segregation as a terrible problem, but the country doesn't actually think it's a terrible problem. Maybe consciously they do and it's not supposed to be where we are, but I think the *problem* approach to it isn't serving us terribly well. The big thing that we know about framing is that people's frames don't typically shift with data. The stories you tell can't be all victim stories. Some of them have to be agent

stories, stories of people taking agency and doing something different, and it's very difficult in situations like education where we've had these really persistent disparities and there aren't a lot of happy stories to tell. Nevertheless, I think we have to look for those stories that indicate that change can happen, and gives us some sense of what that change will look like.

Another big problem is that in the American popular imagination, poverty equals race. So when you say "poor people," what most Americans come up with in their heads is the image of a black person or a Latino. So in the immigration debate, for example, I've noticed that a bunch of the anti-immigrant think tanks have started to say "peasants." "We don't want anymore peasants coming to our Country. We don't need any more uneducated peasants." They're talking about Mexican farmers who have been forced off the land by NAFTA. If we talk only about poverty in urban and farm areas with large immigration populations, for example, people are going to come up with the immigrant image, the Mexican peasant image, and it's something that happens in people's heads. It's a psychological thing and most of our political strategies haven't taken that into account. So, one reason not to just talk about poverty is that sometimes poverty doesn't cover everybody you need to cover. In issues around civil rights, for example, or around discipline in schools, you can't change a set of disciplinary standards that's mostly about kicking kids out of school, but are really along racial lines, by just talking about poverty. So if that's part of your educational reform agenda, then you have to deal with people's racial ideas and their stereotypes and then you have to create some structures inside of schools and some policies and rules that catch stereotypes before they go into action.

Racial Justice in a "Post-Racial" Society

The feeling coming out of Washington is so much better than it has been for, some say eight years, but realistically more like forty. So, the idea that we've now hit the "post-racial" state is very popular. It's getting lots of traction. It is the main thing that the right wing is going to use to bash us all over the head with over the next presidential administration period. However, the argument ARC is working with is that "post-racial" is not the goal, not the end goal. Racial justice is the end goal and racial justice is different from post racialism in a variety of ways. Racial justice is central to happy society and can make things better for everyone.