

Practical Real Talk About Equity

Racial and cultural equity is not an HR, or governance, or a programs challenge. Racial and cultural inequity and inequality in our society was not created by people of color to oppress their own communities. They didn't break it, and alone they don't have the power to fix it.

Thus, we are not talking about equity, diversity, or inclusion. Equity Statements alone are not enough. Statements are a beginning, but they are not the first step on this journey as one must do some deep work first in order to develop an authentic statement.

As Dr. King noted we just want America to live up to the words they put on paper. So equity statements, then, are a means of holding oneself, one's organization accountable to a public document outlining one's values, principles, and ideals.

Those of us on this webinar are interested in going deeper, further, faster as we jointly try to address centuries of systemic and structural processes that have resulted in a divided nation on a rapidly warming planet.

From Statements to Action: Six Practical Points to Consider

1) If there is only one thing I hope people take away from this webinar it is this, **social justice, social change is a process not a project**. It requires a fundamental belief in our ability to transform ourselves, our communities, and by extension our society. We have to build circles of partners, allies, and collaborators who together *co-create* and design systemic structural change grounded in radical love, and transformative justice, to build true racial and cultural equity.

2) We must spend time envisioning the world we want to build, *we know what we want to liberate ourselves from but what do we want to liberate ourselves to?* Answering this is what will motivate everyday people, engage them, and move them to action. To get to your truest answer, ask this question three times.

3) DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) first *acknowledge that the lack of equity, diversity and inclusion in our world, in our sectors, and communities are results and outcomes of policies, practices, systems and structures designed to deliver inequality, and inequity*. In other words the systems are working just fine.

Equity statements then should lead to actions, strategies, and plans to design racial and cultural equity from the ground level up.

Design Questions to Consider

4) **Intention:** Most important step. *Why take up this work? Why now? What is it that you seek to change?* Ask this question three times, it will get you closer to your true answer. How will you know you are making a difference, are closer to achieving your goal? What do you need in order to do this work that you don't already have? Who's voices are missing? And why are they missing?

5) **Attention:** Achieving racial and cultural equity is a process. Once you have your intention, then co-create your goals, values, and principles with as many people as possible who will be impacted, affected by the decisions made. Then develop policies, and practices aligned with values and principles.

Pay attention to and clarify who is responsible for getting this work done? Check in regularly on your progress. Establish realistic goals. Take the time to understand the roadblocks and obstacles that stand in your way.

Take the time to assess and acknowledge policies and practices that have attributed to and perpetuated inequality and inequity.

6) **Accountability:** Who are your accountability partners as you embark on this journey? For nonprofit organizations, board and staff, what role does the larger community have other than being an audience, or consumer/customer.

For community organizations, are there people in the community on whose behalf you are working? And are they aware that you are working on their behalf. In other words, is it reciprocal? Accountability has to involve some level of reciprocity, answerability to someone outside of yourself.

What does accountability mean: Responsibility, liability, answerability.

Liability takes on added urgency when American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco is being sued for racial discrimination by a former faculty and staff member. For nonprofit organizations it is critical to take up this work, to create a culture of equity from the ground floor up.

Answerability, whether you are a government entity, nonprofit, or community based grassroots organization, we are answerable to the taxpayers, or neighbors, or communities.

I think the contradictions, the systems of oppression we all face are so clear, present and urgent, and consequences for inaction so dire, there hasn't been a time in recent memory where I have felt such a sense of people being ready to work, to run with the work.