

How is Structural Racism Operating?

Racism is like a weed. We can try to get rid of it by picking the leaves and stems that we see growing above the surface, but if we don't get the roots it will keep coming back.

Those roots are the way racism is structured into our society – also called 'structural racism.' Analyzing the structure can help identify ways to get at the roots of the problem.

The OpenSource Framework

History

The deepest root is history, because our society is rooted in racial preferment and discrimination. For 90% of our 500 year history, racial discrimination was both legal and socially accepted. Many of those historical patterns of belief and behavior still affect us today.

Stories

All the ways we understand the world and communicate about it, including everyday stories like gossip, jokes, stereotypes, news stories, and media images, as well as big-picture myths and stories like cultural beliefs (what is considered 'normal'), nationalism (what it means to be 'American') and economics (why people succeed or fail).

Rules

Even if they don't mention race, rules can create injustice and inequities – not just formal laws and policies, but also common practices, unwritten rules, and 'just the way we do things here.'

Resources

Resources include money and other building blocks of life like housing, food, health care, transportation, work, and child care, as well as things you can't touch, like education, safety, access to opportunities, and social and professional connections.

People

Including all the individuals, groups, roles and relationships that affect and are affected by the history, stories, rules, and resources. All of us are in these structures, and the structures are in us.



Analyzing Structural Racism

Experiences and Disparities

What is the situation you want to analyze or the racial inequity you want to address?

History

How is the inequity you see today a reflection or continuation of historical events and patterns?

Stories

What are the coded images, myths and assumptions that are used to rationalize this inequity?

Rules

What policies and practices may be contributing to the racial inequity?



Resources

How are resources distributed along lines of race? Who is controlling the resources? Whose needs do they meet?

People

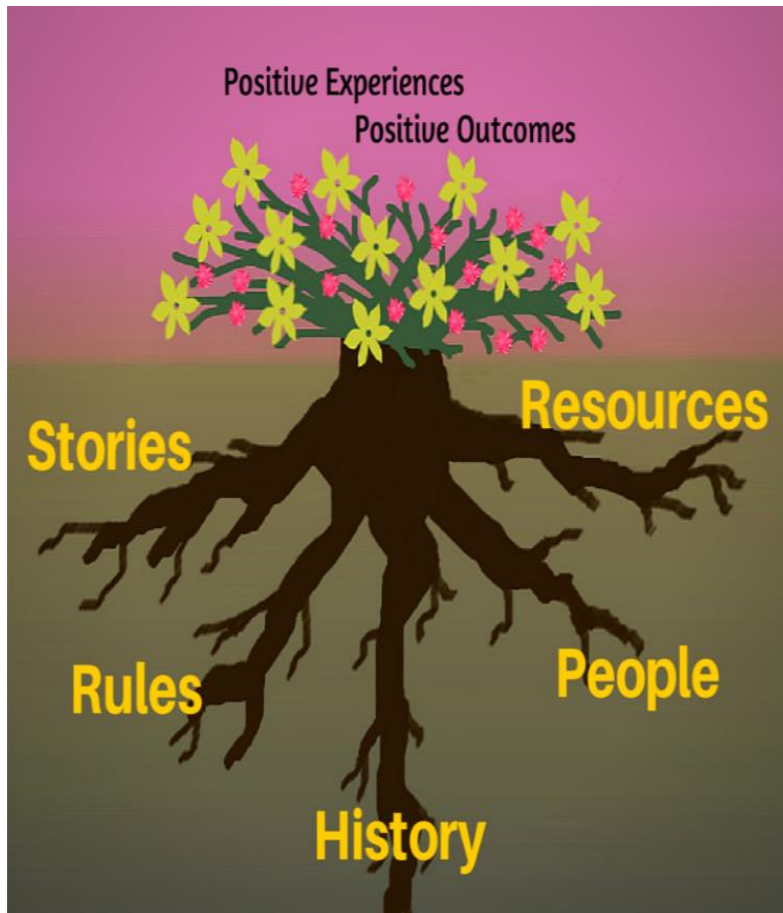
What beliefs and behaviors are contributing to this inequity? Who has the formal and informal power to make change? What is your own sphere of influence?

How Could Racial Equity Take Root?

If racism is structured into society, how can it ever be changed? It's true that the process will not be quick or easy, but people have already been working on it for a long time.

Racial equity, in fact, is rooted in the same social structures.

Generations of people have worked to grow a healthy plant that bears flowers and fruit – a society with institutions and relationships that are free from racial privilege and oppression.



The OpenSource Framework

In a racially equitable society, people of all identities have opportunities, access, security, and the ability to meet their basic needs. Some may have more and some less, but *not because of race*.

History

In every generation, people of all racial identities have struggled for justice and equality. Our work today is built on their achievements. Their stories can inspire us, and we can learn from both their successes and their mistakes.

Stories

- Include people of color as people, not pathologies or tokens.
- Bust the myth of meritocracy and acknowledge unfairness: tell the story of how structural racism is operating.
- Expose white privilege as well as racial discrimination.
- Share stories of resistance, resilience and change.

Rules

- Eliminate policies that create disparities, addressing both racial discrimination and racial preferment.
- Challenge the idea of 'race neutral' policies.
- Design policies and practices that promote equitable outcomes, focusing on impact and not just intent.

Resources

- Make sure resources are available, accessible, high quality, culturally relevant and what people need and want.
- Distribute resources fairly, taking historical and current inequities into account.
- Put control of those resources in the hands of those who most need them.

People

- Organize collective action among the people who are most affected.
- Engage high-level leaders and decision makers.
- Engage 'daily authorities' like supervisors, teachers, and police officers.
- 'Do our own work' to understand how each of us has internalized racial beliefs and attitudes.

Strategizing for Racial Equity

Goals

If we succeed, how would things be different? What is the racial equity outcome we are hoping to achieve?

History

What historical leaders, struggles and accomplishments can teach or inspire us today?

Stories

What assumptions, myths and stereotypes need to be de-bunked? What positive stories and images do we want to communicate?

Rules

What policies and practices should be changed? What new policies and practices would help promote equity?

Resources

What resources are needed to create more equitable outcomes? How should they be distributed?

People

Who is most affected by the situation, and how are they involved in change? Who has high-level power over stories, rules and resources, and how do we engage their support? Who has authority in day-to-day interactions? What is our own sphere of influence? Where do we have our own work to do?

