

*Centering Equity in Our
Organizations: Barriers and
Future Possibilities*

Why do we need to make changes?

- How did we get to this moment?: Recent social unrest, folks are garnering with shame and have incentives to do something (COVID, murders of black folks, institutional violence).
- “You can't work outside if you dont address inside
- Racism impacts everything, including housing. Racism has shaped housing and continues to shape housing, only now the conversations around race are veiled and even more insidious, i.e. “urban neighborhoods.”

- These are daily practices, we have all been socialized to center whiteness and most importantly, to other blackness, as a default. This is not an American problem, it is a world-wide problem, which shows up in staff/practices of organizations.
 - I.e. how many folks are on your staff/board, how recently have you started making changes?
 - Colorism among communities of color. I carry privilege in my own work.

Racism in housing is based on very explicit and tangible policies put in place, which still have real world impacts.

Eviction and Rental Assistance Distribution During Covid,

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/jo.l.arvizo.zavala#!/vizhome/EvictionProject-2019and2020CohortAnalysisbyZipcode/2019EvictionMap>

- “Only 34% of the total number of approved rental applications went to zip codes which have a disparity rate of two times (2x) the state as a whole. This means that there is significant room to improve rental assistance approval in zip codes that have a high eviction disparity but are underrepresented when it comes to approved applications.”
- “Disparities in evictions do exist with a significant number of evictions (over 80%) occurring in zip codes that are predominately BIPOC.” Disparities were present even with eviction moratoriums in place. Additionally, an initial finding is that BIPOC women are disproportionately impacted by evictions in the state of Utah.

How has this work been valuable/what have we found?

- The need for one concise source of information for Native American housing resources.
 - No public understanding
 - Lack of dialogue and communication, folks working in silos.
 - Capacity for Housing Authorities is a large barrier.
 - Urban Native American populations: fit-premise issues.

- Access to information is limited, folks have to go through the individual tribal Housing Authority.
 - Outreach is limited because of capacity, which means folks don't get access to federal programs.
- Understanding culture and historical ramifications that created current situations.

How has this work been valuable/what have we found?

- Community partnerships: increasing connections to orgs that work with BIPOC communities to address inequity.
 - 21 ERAP orgs
 - Providing more information/resources to folks like Community Health Workers, Spanish speakers are reaching out for resources, being allowed into spaces that are for BIPOC folks (to provide information) is a big deal.

Challenges

- Capacity and engagement: we are two people and outside organizations are often capped.
- BIPOC folks have seen these “changes” before and will most likely approach this work with scepticism, in fact there’s an idea that this is only temporary (pros: some engagement to “seize moment”, cons: distinct lack of belief in institutions).
- Need to prove we mean this work.
 - Keep showing up.

- These conversations are not supposed to be comfortable.
 - Must be willing to be vulnerable and this is very hard.
 - We must accept that we are not the experts of these experiences.
 - Must be willing to accept past negative practices.
 - You have to be willing to have conversations that make you uncomfortable. You have to do your own work on a daily basis.
 - There is investment in keeping these systems in place.
- Being good or bad is not relevant, “I don’t have to understand it for it to be valid.”

Pause, take a breath.

Pause/Challenges Aftercare

- First, it is ok to center compassion and acknowledge you will make mistakes.
- When someone corrects you, it is out of care and because it matters. It is dangerous to call people out b/c you are often stereotyped or there may actually be dangerous repercussions. Treat this as such.
- If we try to dictate how BIPOC folks respond to racism, we are trying to limit a response based on our comfort, this recreates the very power dynamics we are trying to get rid of.

Where can we go (connected to the why)?

More Research:

Surveys:

- Case managers, folks who have experienced evictions, folks who received rental assistance, landlords who have applied on tenant's behalf.
- Centering racial equity in all of our work. This is the lens with which we approach everything.
 - “A rising tide lifts all boats”
 - Trust: less silos, more helpful to clients, more success within your organization, and while we may not achieve equity, we are doing something about this.

Sources

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Questions?

Thank you!