

Centering Race and Racial Equity in Pathways Design and Process

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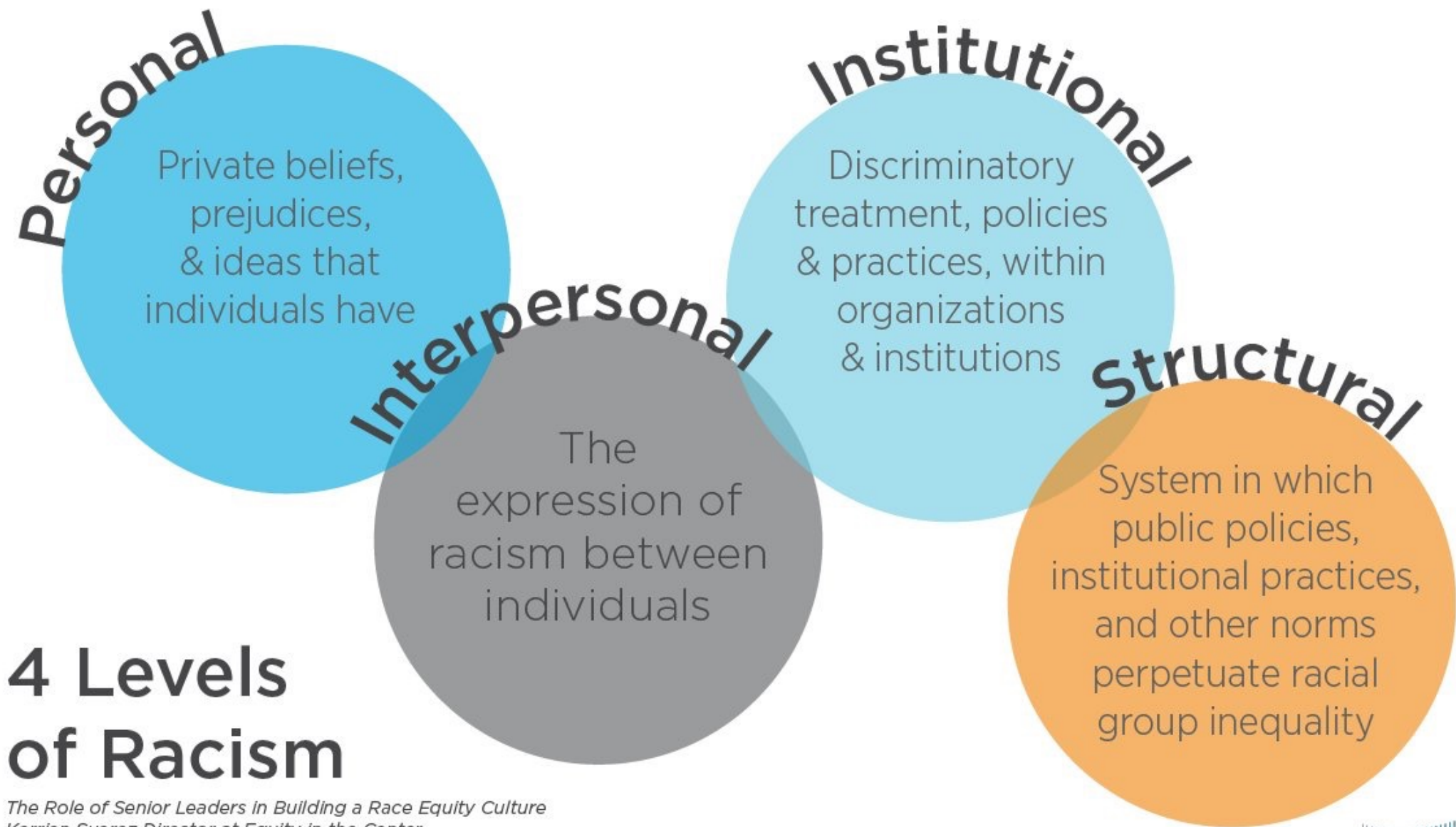
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2021 Pathways to Prosperity Network Spring Institute

Racism Is...

- ▶ “A **system of advantage** based on race” - David Wellem
- ▶ “A **powerful collection of racist policies** that lead to racial inequity and are substantiated by racist ideas” - Ibram X. Kendi
- ▶ “Racism in America exists to exclude people of color from opportunity and progress so that there is more profit for others deemed superior” - Ijeoma Oluo
- ▶ “The **construction of “races”** from particular biological characteristics people have, **and the use of this construction** to lift up certain groups in society into a dominant class and keep other groups in a lower, oppressed class” - Anneliese Singh
- ▶ **An ideology embedded in and across systems to uphold a social, political and ECONOMIC structure that advantages one racial group over others racial/ethnic groups.**



4 Levels of Racism

The Role of Senior Leaders in Building a Race Equity Culture
Kerrien Suarez Director at Equity in the Center

An Ecosystem of Partners

- ▶ The **talent development ecosystem** is a socio-economic community supported by interacting organizations and individuals who educate, train, prepare, place and hire and support students & workers.
- ▶ This ecosystem **includes** workforce training practitioners, K-12 & higher education partners, support service providers, community-based organizations, employers/business owners, entrepreneurs, legislators, policy makers, advocates, job candidates, students and workers.



Currently....

- ▶ Most talent development efforts are approached/developed from a **“universalist” OR “race neutral”** perspective which assumes that everyone has equal access and opportunity.
- ▶ Such an approach, however, **does not account for the structural and institutional barriers** to opportunity that continues to operate in American society.



Pathways to Prosperity

- ▶ Pathways is a strategy to connect education with careers to meet the needs of youth, educators, and employers build a more thriving and equitable economy.
- ▶ Five Key Levers:
- ▶ Grades 9 to 14 College and Career Pathways
- ▶ Career Information & Advising Systems
- ▶ Intermediaries
- ▶ Effective leadership & enabling policies
- ▶ Employer Engagement



Manifestations of Racism in Career Pathways

“...the low-skill label is a social construct that at least in part reflects the structural racism and sexism endemic in our economy. We understand jobs to be low-skills because of the kinds of people who hold those jobs; we see certain skills as valuable because of the kinds of people asked to use those skills; and we shunt workers into “low-skill” jobs due to circumstances out of their control.”

- Annie Lowrey, “Low-Skill Workers Aren’t a Problem to Be Fixed”

The Career Ladder vs. The Lattice



Career Advising & Coaching

- ▶ “It’s possible, in fact, that during our short meeting the college counselor said things to me that might have been positive and helpful, but I can recall none of it. Because rightly or wrongly, I got stuck on one single sentence the woman uttered.”
- ▶ “I’m not sure,” she said, giving me a perfunctory, patronizing smile, “that you’re Princeton material.”



Employer Engagement

- ▶ “Employer is King”
 - ▶ Employers over workers
- ▶ Biased “Professionalism” Standards
 - ▶ Standards that center white dominant norms
- ▶ Diversity over Equity & Inclusion
 - ▶ Racial/Ethnic/Gender diversification over Wage Parity, Workplace Culture & Belonging



Language & Narrative

"Academic Rigor"

RIGOR ITSELF ISN'T NECESSARILY A BAD THING — BUT WHEN COMBINED WITH GRADING IT BECOMES A TOOL TO CREATE CLASSROOM MERITOCRACY. IN THIS WAY RIGOR IS WIELDED AS AN EXTENSION OF THE CARCERAL STATE, TO PUNISH STRUGGLING STUDENTS BY CREATING FAILURE WHERE GROWTH MIGHT OTHERWISE EXIST.

THIS CYCLE OF STRATIFYING STUDENTS INTO SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN CLASSIST AND RACIST INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE.

@SUBVERSIVE.THREAD

"College Ready"

THE BAR FOR "COLLEGE READINESS" CENTERS WHITE STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES BECAUSE IT REQUIRES ACCESS TO INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT THAT MOST MAJORITY BI&POC DISTRICTS HAVE BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY CUT OFF FROM (RACIST ZONING LAWS, REDISTRICTING, & EDUCATION POLICY THAT TIES SCHOOL FUNDING TO PROPERTY TAXES). HERE "COLLEGE READINESS" BECOMES A MEANS TO TRAP PREDOMINANTLY POOR BI&POC STUDENTS INTO REMEDIATION AND EXHAUST THEIR FINANCIAL AID BEFORE THEY CAN GRADUATE.

@SUBVERSIVE.THREAD

Language & Narrative

"Achievement Gap"

**THERE IS NO "ACHIEVEMENT GAP."
THERE IS A PREDICTABLE DISPARITY IN
LEARNING OUTCOMES BETWEEN WELL
AND POORLY RESOURCED COMMUNITIES.
CALLING IT AN ACHIEVEMENT GAP
OBFUSCATES THE GENERATIONAL
WEALTH AND ACCESS AFFORDED TO
WHITE STUDENTS. CREATING AN
EQUITABLE EDUCATION SYSTEM MEANS
DECENTERING RACIST OUTCOMES LIKE
TEST SCORES & GRADES AND SHIFTING
RESOURCES TO MEET HISTORICALLY
EXPLOITED COMMUNITIES' MATERIAL
AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL NEEDS.**

@SUBVERSIVE.THREAD

Centering Race & Racial Equity in this work means...

- ▶ Acknowledging the presence of systemic & institutional racism in the education system and actively working to disrupt it
- ▶ Acknowledging & explicitly naming the role that race/ethnicity/gender and other intersectionalities play in career advancement and creating strategies that meet these needs
- ▶ Acknowledging the white, heteronormative workplace cultures of most “high-wage” industries & developing strategies to address workplace culture AND prepare workers of color to navigate these industries



What are the operating assumptions of this work that may be perpetuating racism & upholding inequity and generational poverty?

How would this work shift/change/transform if we truly centered race & racial equity?



THANK YOU!



Thank you for joining us!

Learn more at
[JFF.org/pathwaystoprosperity](https://jff.org/pathwaystoprosperity)

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