Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Homeless Services:
A Journey in Anti-Racism

May 25, 2019
Honoring Native Land

Before we begin, we acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the seized territory of the Nacotchtank Tribe and other Indigenous peoples.

Learn more: https://usdac.us/nativeland
Group Agreements
Talking about racism is hard.
In order to create a safe space to learn together, we commit to:

- Respect the value of each other’s opinions and experiences
- Maintain confidentiality
- Acknowledge it’s okay to disagree, respectfully and openly
- Remain present and engaged
- Listen to each other
- Seek to understand our blind spots
- Assume positive intent

- Honor the limitations of time, speak concisely
- Know when to *Step up* and *Step back*
- Be on time when returning from break
- Practice mindfulness and self-care
- Silence phones and other devices
- Snaps
Why are(n’t) we here?

• We live in a racist society, so, unsurprisingly, people who are homeless are disproportionately people of color. The story of homelessness in the US is inextricable from the history of slavery and genocide.

• We are *not* addressing our individual prejudices. We’re focusing on our organizations’ roles in resisting racism.

• We are *not* checking a box; not patting ourselves on the back. That’s not how culture change works.

• We’re *not* here just to learn from a panel. We are here to learn from each other.

• Long overdue, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council is committing to racial equity. As one example, we have organized a learning collaborative on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
2019 DEI Learning Collaborative

- 9 participating organizations
- Six monthly videoconference meetings
- Two faculty from Portland and Boston
- Staffed by Michael Durham and Bobby Watts
- Members encouraged to commit to a DEI initiative
- Second cohort launching next January: apply!
Speakers

• Sonja M. Spears, JD: Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer
  Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program

• Sonia Lee, MPH: Senior Manager, Client Services and Communications
  Health Outreach Partners

• T. Renata Robinson, EdD: Chief Human Resources Officer
  Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

• Moderator: D. Michael Durham, MTS: Technical Assistance Manager
  National Health Care for the Homeless Council
Racism and Homelessness

Sonja Spears
Figure 1: Map shows eviction rates across neighborhoods for 2017, the last full year included in this empirical study. The text box (bottom right) contains data over 3.5 years of court records.
In neighborhoods that are majority Black, one in four renters experienced a court ordered eviction.

In neighborhoods that are majority white, one in twenty four renters experienced a court ordered eviction.
Figure 7

Figure 8: These maps were produced by juxtaposing current eviction data (depicted in green) onto New Orleans redlining map created by the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation in 1939 (depicted in red).

The legacy of redlining is still impacting residents within affected neighborhoods, with formerly redlined neighborhoods experiencing much higher rates of eviction. Many of the neighborhoods that are coded red on the map on the right were majority Black during the decades where redlining was legally sanctioned, and these communities suffered systemic disinvestment. The eviction data overlaid onto the 1939 redlining map are census block areas that experienced high eviction rates between 2015-2017.24
"Although Black people comprise 13% of the general population in the United States and 26% of those living in poverty, they account for more than 40% of the homeless population, suggesting that poverty rates alone do not explain the over-representation."
Homeless Services Workforce

The homeless services workforce is not representative of the people it serves:

- Those working in senior management positions were 63.6% White, 12.0% Black, and 10.1% Hispanic/Latino.
- Staff in all other jobs were 72.3% White, 22.1% Black, and 14.0% Hispanic/Latino.

Key Domains Influencing Homelessness for People of Color

The oral histories revealed five major areas of focus regarding racial inequity and homelessness:

2. Housing. The unavailability of safe and affordable housing options presents both risk of homelessness and barriers to permanently ending homelessness.
3. Criminal Justice. Involvement in the criminal justice system, especially when such involvement results in a felony, can create ongoing challenges in obtaining jobs and housing.
5. Family Stabilization. Multi-generational involvement in the child welfare and foster care systems often occur prior to and during experiences of homelessness, and people of color are often exposed to individual and community level violence.

Implications

This study is grounded in the lived experience of people of color experiencing homelessness, and it offers numerous insights for policy makers, researchers, organizational leaders, and community members as they work to address homelessness in ways that are comprehensive and racially equitable.

Lack of economic capital within social networks precipitates homelessness for many people of color.

Equitable strategies to address homelessness must include programmatic and systems-level changes, and they must begin seriously to address homelessness prevention. It is not enough to move people of color out of homelessness if the systems are simply setting people up for a revolving door of substandard housing and housing instability. Efforts must begin to go upstream into other systems—criminal justice, child welfare, foster care, education, and healthcare—and implement solutions that stem the tide of homelessness at the point of initial entry.

This brief report aims to present quantitative and qualitative findings from the SPARC study, examine what can be learned from these data, and begin crafting strategies to create a response to the homelessness crisis that is grounded in racial equity. Additional articles, reports, and other publications are forthcoming that will delve more deeply into specific insights gleaned from this project.
Racism as a Structure
Understanding its impact on health

Sonia Lee, MPH
Health Outreach Partners
May 25, 2019

National Health Care for the Homeless Council Conference & Symposium, Washington, DC
Why are people poor and sick?

“No one has a right to work with poor people unless they have a real analysis of why people are poor.”

- Barbara Major
  Former Director, St. Thomas Health Clinic
“Structural determinants of the social determinants of health”
Structures

The policies, economic systems, and other institutions (judicial system, schools, etc.) that have produced and maintain modern social inequities as well as health disparities, often along the lines of social categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability.
“Structural violence is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way... The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people.”

– Farmer et al. 2006
Case

- **HPI:** Patient is a 37-year-old Spanish-speaking male found down with LOC
- **PMH:** Frequent flyer well known to the ED for EtOH-related trauma, withdrawal associated with seizures
- **PSH:** R orbital fracture 2/2 assault w/o operative intervention
- **SH:** Heavy EtOH use, other habits unknown. Apparently homeless
- **Meds:** currently noncompliant with all meds, D/C’ed after last hospitalization on folate, thiamine, multivitamin, and seizure prophylaxis
- **Neuro/Mental Status:** pt. muttering in incoherent Spanish, inconsistently able to answer “yes/no” and follow simple commands
In Emergency Department After Found on the Street

Begins Drinking More Heavily

Gets Assaulted

Standard Medical History

Begins Working as Day Laborer

Injury, Can’t Work

Can’t Pay Rent, Moves to Street

Moves to San Francisco

Influx of Cheap US Corn; Can’t Make a Living

4th Generation Corn Farmer in Oaxaca
In Emergency Department after found on the street

Begins drinking more heavily

Gets assaulted

City & federal policies contributing to gentrification & displacement

Racism/ racialized low-wage labor markets; US immigration policy

Begins working as day laborer

Injury, can’t work

Can’t pay rent, Moves to street

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

US healthcare system (no access to care)

4th generation corn farmer in Oaxaca

Legacy of colonialism; Systematic marginalization & violence against indigenous communities in S. Mexico

In Emergency Department after found on the street

Moves to San Francisco

Influx of cheap US corn; can’t make a living

4th generation corn farmer in Oaxaca
Structural Racism

“Racism is both overt and covert...We call these individual racism and institutional racism...The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. But it is no less destructive of human life. The second type originates in the operation of established and respected forces in society, and thus receives far less public condemnation.”

Institutional racism leaves individuals and communities “destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community that is a function of institutional racism...”

- Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael)
Black Power: The Politics of Liberation
Mass Incarceration
Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment of U.S. Residents Born in 2001

- All Men: 1 in 9
- White Men: 1 in 17
- Black Men: 1 in 3
- Latino Men: 1 in 6
- All Women: 1 in 56
- White Women: 1 in 111
- Black Women: 1 in 18
- Latina Women: 1 in 45

“The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying?

We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin. And then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news.

Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.”

- John Ehrlichman (Nixon advisor)
Redlining

ABOVE A legend from a map of Philadelphia showing language used to describe neighborhoods.
2019 US County Health Rankings Report: California

Source: “Ten Solutions to Bridge the Racial Wealth Divide,” by the Institute for Policy Studies, the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and the National Community Reinvestment Committee.
Strategies to address structural forces

• Provide the down-payment for first-time homebuyers in historically segregated or red lined communities.

• Pass a Medicare For All Act that guarantees high quality health care and prevents bankruptcy resulting from the cost of medical expenses.

• Shift tax expenditures toward wealth-building programs for low-wealth people, especially people of color.

• Create a postal banking system to aid the disproportionately large number of people of color who lack bank accounts.

• Adopt a racial equity lens to address public policy to understand the impact of the racial wealth divide

• Create a direct and robust tax on ultra wealth, including inherited wealth and the expanding marginal income tax rates.

• Create a Congressional Committee on Reparations that studies and works toward a reparations plan or policy

Source: “Ten Solutions to Bridge the Racial Wealth Divide,” by the Institute for Policy Studies, the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and the National Community Reinvestment Committee.
Structural Vulnerability

The risk that an individual experiences as a result of structural violence – including their location in multiple socioeconomic hierarchies. Structural vulnerability is not caused by, nor can it be repaired solely by, individual agency or behaviors.

Thank you!
Roundtables

• Are there spaces for you to talk about institutional and structural racism at work? If so, how are these conversations received?
Break!
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace

Dr. Renata Robinson
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace

• Hiring
• Retention
• Training
• Development & Funding Support
Hiring

• Develop strong partnerships
  • Local Universities
  • Non-profit organizations
  • Community Leaders – Refer diverse candidates
  • Recruiting Guidelines

• External EID Council
  • Local community leaders in the work
  • Create a pipeline
  • Mentors
  • Collaboration – shared grants
Retention

• Professional Development Opportunities
• DEI leadership Goals/Recognition
  • Performance Management
• Pay Equity
• Mentorship and Leadership Representation for Staff and Board
Training

• All Staff
  • Different levels of training

• Equitable Performance Evaluations
  • Frameworks/Tools/Measurements

• External Training

• Equity Leadership Training
Policies and Procedures

• Overall Organization Mission
• Compensation – Pay Equity Review (P&P)
• Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (P&P)
• Gender-Inclusive Language (P&P)
• Glossary of Terms - Employee Handbook
Development

• Affinity Spaces
• Funding/Grants
• Dash Boards
Questions
Reflections at your tables:

• Where do you see room for growth in your own organization?
• What do you need next to make that happen?
• What lingering questions do you have that we can address as a group?
How do we create a culture of equity?
What will you do now?
What will you stop doing?
Please complete your evaluations!
Get involved: www.nhchc.org/ta