Beyond Diversity: How to Cultivate an Anti-Racist Organization
ABOUT CROSSROADS ANTIRACISM ORGANIZING & TRAINING

Crossroads is best known for its work assisting organizations institutionalize their antiracism commitments. We describe what we do as creating antiracist institutional practice that is race-informed and intersectional. Our particular focus is on race, racism, and the intersections of racism with other systems of oppression. We do so by recognizing racism is not the only system of oppression in the United States, but that racism occupies a unique place in our country’s economic, legal, and social formation and has been particularly difficult for us to face as a society and continues to produce deep chasms among us.

FACILITATORS

Emily Drew is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Ethnic Studies at Willamette University, where she teaches courses about race, racism, immigration, and social change. She is actively engaged in the educational reform and immigrant justice movements, producing research, and engaging in campaigns to create access to education, restore families, and intervene in structural violence. Her work revolves around understanding how race, whiteness and racism operate inside of social institutions, with the goal of helping to illuminate more effective strategies for building more equitable institutions and society.

Jessica Vazquez Torres is a proven leader with 18-years’ experience in antiracism, anti-oppression, and cultural competency workshop development and facilitation. Jessica is deeply committed to addressing social structures and cultural dynamics that marginalize and minoritize communities and limit their access to the resources necessary to thrive not just survive. A 1.5-Generation ESL Queer Latina of Puerto Rican descent, Jessica holds a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Florida, a Master of Divinity from Christian Theological Seminary, and a Master of Theological Studies from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University.
OUTCOMES

As a result of this online seminar, participants will be able to:

- Recognize how your organization is caught up in a power arrangement that maintains racial inequality;
- Assess why so many of your organization’s “solutions” to racism are ultimately a part of the problem and do not affect change at a root level;
- Take learnings back to your organization and infuse them into practices with the goal of change
THE BORDERLANDS

- Created by the White Dominant Center for resource exploitation
- Populated by all those whom the White Dominant Center has declared unfit, deviant, uncivilized, dangerous, and a threat as well as exotic
- Created and sustained by the White Dominant Center's Misuse of Power

THE WHITE DOMINANT CENTER

- Establishes the norms by which all must abide
- Conditions everyone to work for its maintenance
- Produces a cosmology - a understanding of reality - that centers whiteness and white people as the dominant social group
- It generates ways of thinking, being, and living that seek the dominance of whiteness and the subjugation of all others

"The U.S-Mexican border is *una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country — a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the halfdead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal." Gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens — whether they possess documents or not, whether they’re Chicanos, Indians or Blacks. Do not enter, trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot. The only "legitimate" inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites. Tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus. Ambivalence and unrest reside there and death is no stranger." Anzaldua, 3.
LEVELS OF AN INSTITUTION

**Personnel**
Those who are authorized to speak, act, and implement programs in the institution’s name. They act as gatekeepers for constituency and the general public. Their qualifications, actions and behavior are defined by policies. Personnel and personnel accountability derive from the identity documents and are defined by leadership within the structure.

**Programs, Products and Services**
What an institution provides for its constituency; These are designed to be attractive to members. The designs of programs, products and services are prescribed by institutional policies, procedures and practices. Institutional practice does not always reflect institutional policies. Policies and programs derive from the identity documents and are defined by leadership within the structure.

**Constituency**
Constituency is defined by an institution’s identity documents, along with its role in decision-making. It may include more than official members (e.g. potential members, client lists, product users, etc.) Every decision and action of an institution is taken in the name of and on behalf of the constituency.

**Organizational Structure**
Organizational structure, boundaries, product, and services are derived from identity documents. Institutional leadership implement issues of control and access as defined by identity documents (e.g. finances, policies, programs, constituency, etc.) Accountability of leadership to the constituency is defined by identity documents.

**Mission and Purpose**
The institution, as described by: its identity documents (e.g. constitution, by-laws, etc.) Its ideology, belief system, worldview, assumptions (e.g. Bible, Statement of Principles, etc.) its Mission statement/goals and its History and tradition.
COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS AGREEMENT

Courageous Space

- RESPECT
- LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND
- TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
- MAKE ROOM FOR DIVERSE VOICES
- PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF STORIES
- EMBRACE AMBIGUITY
CROSSROADS METHODOLOGY

Institutional approaches to “equity and inclusion” or “diversity” often fall short for a variety of reasons; including, a lack of understanding of the problem as one of systemic power, failure to consider the role of culture and historical oppression and privilege in shaping contemporary inequalities, and solutions that come in the form of programs, most of which are disconnected and rarely orbiting around a common purpose and mission of antiracism. Another dynamic revealed through an understanding of systemic power is the necessity for cultural shifts inside of institutions to create norms around equity and antiracism, and the need to institutionalize accountability to People of Color and other socially oppressed groups.

Crossroads is unique in its approach to racial justice. While there are many organizations working on diversity, cultural competence, equity & inclusion and racial reconciliation, Crossroads is among the few that works specifically and directly on dismantling structural racism. We call the work we do “antiracism organizing.” The Aspen Institute, in their report titled, Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion, identified Crossroads (formerly Crossroads Ministry) as being unique in the approach of working within institutions to dismantle structural racism.¹

Education is a key component to dismantle structural racism; because of its covertness and complexity institutional racism is rarely consistently understood across an institution. Therefore, we find it is often helpful to begin working with clients through strategically planned and designed educational workshops. The goal of these educational experiences is to begin to build shared understanding of systemic oppression and/or systemic racism among institutional stakeholders. From these shared understandings and analysis, the leaders of the initiative build an institutional base to make strategic changes to institutional policy and practice and to incorporate antiracism and social justice values into the institutional culture.

The power analysis utilized by Crossroads makes clear some fundamental dynamics of institutional racism: that institutions are intended to serve all constituents in equitable ways, but because of historic barriers created by racism and other forms of social inequality, institutions enact their missions in racially inequitable or discriminating ways. We are mindful that being equitable does not mean serving everyone the same, it means meeting the specific needs of the variety of constituents in the organization. Crossroads acts as an outside partner to the institution providing capacity building and technical assistance.

Crossroads’ methodology is based on community organizing principles that have been adapted to be effectively used inside of institutions. Our approach is to organize strategic relationships within an institution to build an increasingly larger cohort of people within the institution who are working together to transform the institution and enter strategic relationships with their community to work more broadly for racial justice.

¹ See the full report at: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/rcc/training.pdf)
VALUES SHAPING WHITE INSTITUTIONS & CREATING DISCOMFORT/DYSFUNCTION, A BY-PRODUCT OF THE EMBEDDED OPPRESSION AND MISUSE OF POWER.

Either/Or Thinking: Right/wrong, black/white, male/female, etc. Forces out diversity; complies with rigid ways of being. Power consolidated & maintained with select few ‘right, good, white, male’ against which all else is measured. Creates myth that it is efficient for everyone to be the same.

Scarcity Worldview: Budgets reflect finite resources & become excuse for limiting activities. Creates environment rife with ‘automatic’ reaction of “No – we don’t have enough money for that.” “No” becomes automatic answer to innovation, anti-oppression, and liberation. Cannot be mission-focused when default setting is ‘No’.

Secrecy Mode: Information is power; when it is distributed on a “needs-to-know” basis, power is also unequally distributed. Secrecy controls power; it is almost always destructive - leads to dishonesty and triangulation. Secrecy destroys trust. Confidentiality gets confused with secrecy; “confidential” decisions are often in reality carried out in secret to maintain the power status quo.

Individual Action: Isolates and sets people up to compete with one another. Compartmentalized activities increase competition, creating a redundancy of activities -- similar functions cannot be combined/shared. When focusing internally on competing for resources, mission, and relationships with the world outside the institution are lost. Individual achievement nurtured by white culture undermines ability to work for a larger whole.
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONAL VALUES
Robette Ann Dias, Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training (©May 2008 – Do not use without permission)

Transforming Values, often in conflict with traditional white institutional values; cultivate terrain for anti-racist accountability to germinate.

Both/And thinking with a bias toward action: Acknowledges that multiple realities/myriad ways to ‘do’ institutional life exist. Purpose: work through differences to find solutions that move toward anti-racist goals. Bias toward action means not allowing conflict to paralyze us into indecision and immobility.

Abundant worldview that uses resources responsibly: If we operate from premise of “We have an abundance of power; how do we want to use that power?” then questions about resources begin to shift. What we understand to be resources begins to change, and how we use resources is transformed.

Transparent communication & decision making that guards personal integrity: Inclusive processes take longer to come to consensus, but once a decision is made, implementation is quicker. Confidentiality (not secrecy) is important to transparent communication, allowing individuals to make mistakes and recover from them without being scapegoated or demonized by the institution.

Cooperation & Collaboration that nurture individual creativity: Maintaining a spirit of cooperation & collaboration bound by a collective perspective/commitment to the analysis of racism allows institutions to stand amid diversity with integrity and respect. Individual creativity happens in the parameters of an accountable, responsible relationship with the rest of the community.

In conclusion,

The Power Analysis of racism makes clear the fundamental dynamic of institutional racism: that institutions are not, and have never been, accountable to People of Color. New values that are out-ward oriented with an overarching bias toward effectiveness are needed. The need for these values begins to emerge when institutions reach a critical mass of members who are claiming an antiracist identity where there is a growing awareness of the need to be accountable to anti-racist People of Color. Transforming Values create an institutional environment that makes accountability to People of Color and other socially oppressed groups possible.

*www.crossroadsantiracism.org/newsletters/Fall%202006_NEWSLETTER-TER_Website.pdf