

# ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The process of Dismantling Racism is not just about individuals changing our behavior and ways of thinking. This important individual work must in turn trigger a commitment to dismantling racism in organizations in order to position us to move effective and accountable racial justice organizing.

Organizations, like individuals, can evolve to become anti-racist. The transformation begins with developing a comprehensive understanding of how racism and oppression operate within an organization's own walls. From that analysis comes a commitment and concrete plans for dismantling racism within the organization and in the larger society.

There is no cookie cutter approach to anti-racist organizational development. The road to anti-racist organizational development is necessarily impacted by the size, structure, mission, constituency and geographic location of an organization. Some organizations may need to commit to transforming their organization into a multi-cultural anti-racist organization. Other predominantly white organizations may decide that it is most appropriate to evolve toward being an anti-racist white ally organization that can work in alliance with organizations of color. People of color organizations may decide to engage in organizational development to address internalized racist oppression within the organization in order to strengthen their ability to build power for communities of color.

This section of the Dismantling Racism Resource Book is designed to provide tools to help organizations begin the discussion of their anti-racist organizational transformation. If we build a shared and strong analysis of race and racism within our organizations then we will be able to select the tools and processes to achieve anti-racist organizational transformation most appropriate to our organization.

## FOR ORGANIZATIONS STRIVING TO BECOME MULTI-CULTURAL ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZATIONS

### Anti-Racist Organizational Development

*Adapted by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun based on work done by the Exchange Project of the Peace Development Fund, Grassroots Leadership's Barriers and Bridges program, and the original concept by Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman.*

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The goals of this exercise are to give you time to begin to analyze your organization in terms of the organization's anti-racist vision. This is an evaluation tool.

This evaluation is designed for organizations that are either all white or which include both white people and people of color.

Because racism is reflected in every institution and organization in the U.S., it is also present in progressive, social change groups. The structures and cultures of non-profits and grassroots organizations reproduce white privilege and racial oppression found in the wider society. But organizations, like individuals evolve, change and grow. Groups can transform themselves into anti-racist groups.

We are presenting four states of organizational development. Most organizations have characteristics from each of the states. No organization fits any stages precisely, although you will find that one stage may be dominant. Whatever the dominant characteristics of your organization, it is impossible for an organization at the All White Club stage to move directly into becoming an Anti-Racist Organization. Any transition requires moving through the elements of one stage to the next.

In order to use this assessment, read through the written descriptions and the chart of characteristics and think about how your organization reflects the various states. Then fill out the worksheet that follows.

## **The All White Club**

All White Clubs are non-profits that, without trying, find themselves with an all white organization.

These are not groups that have intentionally excluded people of color. In fact, many times they have developed recruitment plans to get more people of color involved in their group. However, when people of color join the group, they are essentially asked to fit into the existing culture. Many leave after a frustrating period of trying to be heard. After years of trying, the Club cannot figure out why they do not have more people of color in their group; they begin to blame people of color for not being interested in the group's important issue or work, or they just give up. They do not understand that without analyzing and changing the organizational culture, norms, and power relations, they will always be an all white club. While they are good people, they have no analysis of racism or of power relations and no accountability to people or communities of color.

## **The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization**

The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization is committed to eliminating discrimination in hiring and promotion.

The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization sets clear affirmative action goals, clear and unambiguous job qualifications and criteria, a percentage of people of color who need to be in a candidate pool for a new job, and a bias-reduced interview process. Staff and board are encouraged to reduce and/or eliminate their prejudice and the organization may conduct prejudice reduction workshops toward this end. There may be one or two people of color in leadership positions. For people of color, coming into the organization feels like little more than tokenism.

The Affirmative Action of 'Token' Organization is still basically a white club except it now includes structural and legal means to bring people of color in.

## **The Multi-Cultural Organization**

The Multi-Cultural Organization reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and products or services.

It actively recruits and welcomes people of color and celebrates having a diverse staff and board. It is committed to reducing prejudice within the group and offers programs that help members learn more about the diverse cultures that make up the organization. White people in the organization tend to feel good about the commitment to diversity. Like the previous two, however, people of color are still asked to join the dominant culture and fit in.

An interesting point to consider is that most multi-national corporations are at this stage, while most non-profits, even social change non-profits, are still predominantly in one of the first two stages. Multi-national corporations recognize that their financial success is tied to their customer base and their customer base is racially diverse. So, for example, in states where there are active English-only campaigns, the banks are offering ATM machines in English and Spanish. This is not to say we should model ourselves after multi-national corporations, but it is worth thinking about how they are further ahead than most of us in thinking about the implications of a changing demographics for their organization.

### **The Anti-Racist Organization**

Based on an analysis of the history of racism and power in this country, this organization supports the development of anti-racist white allies and empowered people of color through the organization's culture, norms, policies and procedures.

The Anti-Racist Organization integrates this commitment into the program, helping white people work together and challenge each other around issues of racism, share power with people of color, take leadership from and be accountable to people of color, feel comfortable with being uncomfortable while understanding that we are all learning all the time. The Anti-Racist Organization helps people of color become more empowered through taking leadership, sharing in the power, transforming the organizational norms and culture, challenging white allies and other people of color, sharing in decisions about how the organizations resources will be spent, what work gets done as well as how it gets done, the setting of priorities, and allowing people of color to make the same mistakes as white people. The organization does this by forming white and people of color caucuses, providing training and encouraging discussions about racism, white privilege, power, and accountability, setting clear standards for inclusion at all levels of the organization, reviewing the mission, vision, policies, procedures, board agreements, etc. to insure that the commitment to end racism is a consistent theme, helping people to understand the links between the oppressions, and devoting organizational time and resources to building relationships across race and other barriers.

	<b>All White Club</b>	<b>Token or Affirmative Action Organization</b>	<b>Multi-Cultural Organization</b>	<b>Anti-Racist Organization</b>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>made by white people (often men)</li> <li>made in private in ways that people can't see or really know</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>made by white people</li> <li>decisions made in private and often in unclear ways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>made by diverse group of board and staff</li> <li>token attempts to involve those targeted by mission in decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>made by diverse group</li> <li>people of color are in significant leadership positions</li> <li>everyone in the organization understands how power is distributed and how decisions are made</li> </ul>
<b>Budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developed, controlled, and understood by (one or two) white people (often men)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developed, controlled, and understood by (one or two) white people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developed, controlled, and understood by (one or two) white people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developed, controlled and understood by people of color and white people at all levels of the organization</li> </ul>
<b>Money From</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>select foundations</li> <li>wealthy or middle-class college-educated white donors</li> <li>often a small number of very large donors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>foundations</li> <li>wealthy or middle-class college-educated donors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>foundations</li> <li>wealthy or middle-class college-educated donors</li> <li>some donations from people of color and lower-income people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comes from the community most affected by the problem(s) being addressed</li> <li>supplemented by foundation grants and donations from allies (those concerned but not directly affected)</li> </ul>
<b>Accountable to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>funders</li> <li>a few white people on board or staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>funders</li> <li>board</li> <li>staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>funders</li> <li>board and staff</li> <li>token attempts to report to those targeted by mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>communities targeted in mission</li> </ul>

	<b>All White Club</b>	<b>Token or Affirmative Action Organization</b>	<b>Multi-Cultural Organization</b>	<b>Anti-Racist Organization</b>
<b>Power and Pay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ white people in decision-making positions, paid very well</li> <li>▪ people of color (and/or women) in administrative or service positions paying low wages</li> <li>▪ few if any benefits, and little job security</li> <li>▪ people at bottom have very little power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ white people in decision-making positions, paid relatively well</li> <li>▪ people of color (and/or women) in administrative or service positions that pay less well</li> <li>▪ few, if any benefits for anyone</li> <li>▪ sometimes 1 or 2 people of color in token positions of power, with high turnover or low levels of real authority</li> <li>▪ people at bottom have very little power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ white people in decision-making positions, paid relatively well</li> <li>▪ people of color in administrative or service positions that pay less well</li> <li>▪ 1 or 2 people in positions of power, particularly if their work style emulates those of white people in power</li> <li>▪ training to upgrade skills is offered</li> <li>▪ people of color may not be at equal levels of power with white people, but a level of respect is present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ people of color in decision-making position that pay a decent wage comparable to the wages of white people in the organization</li> <li>▪ administrative and service positions perceived as stepping stone to positions of more power (if desired) and those positions reflect some decision-making power and authority</li> <li>▪ training and other mentoring help provided</li> </ul>
<b>Located</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ in white community</li> <li>▪ decorations reflect a predominantly white culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ in white community</li> <li>▪ decorations reflect some cultural diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ physically accessible to people of color</li> <li>▪ decorations reflect a commitment to multi-culturalism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ physically accessible to community served</li> <li>▪ decorations reflect a commitment to multi-culturalism and power sharing</li> </ul>
<b>Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ white people, with token number of people of color (if any)</li> <li>▪ members have no real decision-making power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ white people and people of color, with only a token ability to participate in decision-making</li> <li>▪ people of color are only aware of the organization because it is providing a direct service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ from diverse communities</li> <li>▪ token encouragement to participate in decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ from range of communities targeted by mission</li> <li>▪ encouraged to participate in decision-making</li> <li>▪ provided training to enhance skills and abilities to be successful in the organization and their communities</li> </ul>

	<b>All White Club</b>	<b>Token or Affirmative Action Organization</b>	<b>Multi-Cultural Organization</b>	<b>Anti-Racist Organization</b>
<b>Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ top down, paternalistic</li> <li>▪ often secretive</li> <li>▪ success measured by how much is accomplished</li> <li>▪ little if any attention paid to process, or how work gets done</li> <li>▪ little if any leadership or staff development</li> <li>▪ no discussion of power analysis or oppression issues</li> <li>▪ conflict is avoided at all costs</li> <li>▪ people who raise issues that make people uncomfortable are considered troublemakers or hard to work with</li> <li>▪ leaders assume “ we are all the same”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ still top down although inclusivity is stressed</li> <li>▪ those in power assume their standards and ways of doing things are neutral, most desirable and form the basis for what is considered “qualified”</li> <li>▪ people expected to be highly motivated self-starters requiring little supervision</li> <li>▪ some training may be provided</li> <li>▪ no power analysis</li> <li>▪ conflict avoided</li> <li>▪ emphasis on people getting along</li> <li>▪ discussion of race limited to prejudice reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ organization looks inclusive with a visibly diverse board and staff</li> <li>▪ actively celebrates diversity</li> <li>▪ focuses on reducing prejudice but is uncomfortable naming racism</li> <li>▪ continues to assume dominant culture ways of doing things most desirable</li> <li>▪ assume a level playing field</li> <li>▪ emphasize belief in equality but still no power analysis</li> <li>▪ workaholicism desired and rewarded</li> <li>▪ still uncomfortable with conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ organization actively recruits and mentors people of color</li> <li>▪ celebrates diversity</li> <li>▪ has a power analysis about racism and other oppression issues</li> <li>▪ a diversity of work styles encouraged with active reflection about balancing what gets done and how it gets done</li> <li>▪ a willingness to name racism and address conflict</li> <li>▪ resources devoted to developing shared goals, teamwork, and sharing skills and knowledge (mentoring)</li> </ul>
<b>Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ not about building power for communities of color</li> <li>▪ designed to help people who have little or no participation in decision-making</li> <li>▪ emphasis is on serving or “helping” those in need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ intent is to be inclusive</li> <li>▪ little analysis about root causes of issues/problems</li> <li>▪ people in programs appreciated until they speak out or organize for power</li> <li>▪ designed to help low-income people who have little or no participation in the decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ designed to build power until people speak up and out</li> <li>▪ some attempt to understand issue/problem in relation to big picture</li> <li>▪ some participation by those served in program planning</li> <li>▪ constituency may have only token representation in the organization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ designed to build and share power</li> <li>▪ designed to help people analyze and address root causes</li> <li>▪ people most affected by issues/problems centrally involved in program planning</li> <li>▪ opportunities for constituents to move into leadership roles in the organization</li> </ul>

## **Stages of Anti-Racist Organizational Development: Worksheet**

List of characteristics my organization shares from the following stages:

The Club

The Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization

The Multicultural Organization

The Anti-Racist or Liberation Organization

My organization's dominant stage is \_\_\_\_\_

Things I noticed:

Some goals for the future in terms of our organization's anti-racist development might include:



## ASSESSING ORGANIZATIONAL RACISM

*Western States Center Views, Winter 2001*

*"We don't really have a problem with racism in our community because most of our population is white."*

When it comes to race and racism, many social change organizations have trouble walking their talk (and for some, even talking the talk gets short shrift). Predominantly white organizations may think that racism is not their issue until more people of color join. Or they may think that the extent of their work around race is to get more people of color to join.

The Dismantling Racism Project at Western States Center believes that racism is everyone's problem, whether or not people of color are involved in your organization. Primarily white organizations can and should become anti-racist, even if their racial composition does not change. Becoming a multicultural organization is not a necessary goal of antiracist work.

The fact is, racism is reflected in every institution and organization in the U.S.: social change groups are not exempt. The structures and cultures of community-based, grassroots groups reproduce the white privilege and racial oppression of the wider society. Whatever your social change mission, it's bound to fall short as long as racism continues to flourish and maintain the status quo.

Fortunately, organizations, like individuals, can evolve to become anti-racist. The transformation begins with developing a comprehensive understanding of how racism and oppression operate within an organization's own walls. From that analysis comes a commitment and concrete plans for dismantling racism within the organization and in the larger society.

This Organizational Assessment — an excerpt of a longer self-evaluation tool used by the Dismantling Racism Project — offers a place to start. This sampling of questions is designed to help you examine and change the ways your organization replicates larger racist patterns. Grab a snack and something to drink, get a pen and a pad of paper. Better yet, gather a few other people from your organization and work through these questions together. As you read each question, take a moment to answer it for your organization before reading the additional commentary.

Finally, remember: this is a starting place. The fundamental evolution needed to become actively antiracist is a long, slow, deep process. But organizations that have made the commitment are living proof that it can be done. The changes they've made confirm that the hard work of transformation is worth every minute.

### **Who makes decisions in your organization?**

- Does your organization have a goal to dismantle racism? Is this goal reflected in your decision making process?
- Is there a shared analysis of who has decision making power and who does not? Does everyone know how decisions are made?

- Is there a deliberate plan to develop the leadership of people of color staff members and to share decision-making authority?
- Is your organization accountable to people of color organizations and communities who are affected by but not part of the organization?

*Anti-racist organizations develop the leadership of staff and members so that power can be shared in a meaningful and accountable way. In an anti-racist multi-racial organization, decision-making power is shared across race. A white anti-racist organization must create a decision-making process that is accountable to organizations and communities of color; this task is essential, complicated and requires constant attention.*

### **Who has control and influence over financial resources?**

- Who develops the budget? Who does the fundraising?
- When the budget or fundraising plan reflects work to be done in support of people of color communities, do these communities have input on where the money comes from and how it is going to be spent?
- Does your organization advocate with funders to support the work of people of color organizations directly?

*In an anti-racist multi-racial organization the budget and fundraising plan are understood by people of color as well as white people at all levels of the organization. Budgeting and fundraising in a white antiracist organization must ensure accountability around racism.*

### **What kind of education about racism and oppression is provided through the organization?**

- Are people of color supported in seeking information around issues of internalized racist oppression and self-empowerment either within the organization or from outside the organization?
- Are white people supported in seeking information around issues of white privilege and supremacy either within the organization or from outside the organization?
- Are there regular trainings and discussions at the member, staff and board level about dismantling racism and accountability?

*An anti-racist organization will provide training and encourage discussion about racism, white privilege, power and accountability with board, staff and members. People of color within an organization will have specific opportunities to understand and dismantle internalized racist oppression, while white people are charged with understanding and dismantling white privilege.*

### **What is the culture of your organization?**

- What are the values and norms, stated or unstated?
- Are people of color welcomed in the organization only in so far as they assimilate into the existing organizational culture?
- Is white culture treated as the norm? Do the art, holiday activities, and food reflect people of color cultures?
- Is discussion of racism and oppression normal and encouraged or seen to distract from “the real work?” Do people in leadership positions participate in and support discussion of power and oppression issues?

- Are there people of color who consistently do not participate in meetings and discussion? If so, is there active reflection on why, and how to encourage more balanced participation?

*These questions reveal whether the day-to-day experience of the organization reflects the lives and cultures of people of color. Groups committed to addressing racism and oppression must examine the ways that we communicate, the space in which we work, and the activities we share.*

### **How does your organization work in alliance with people of color organizations?**

- Does your organization provide support and resources for members, staff, and board members of color to develop leadership through working with organizations or campaigns led by people of color?
- Does your organization seek input and guidance from people of color organizations and community leaders of color in its strategic planning and decision making?
- Does your organization advocate for the participation of people of color organizations when working in coalition with other groups?
- Does your organization provide support and resources for white members, staff, and board to develop as anti-racist white allies through working with organizations or campaigns led by people of color?

*An anti-racist organization will work in alliance with people of color organizations. However, the structure of an alliance is fundamental to the success of anti-racist work. Primarily white organizations often come to the table with greater staff capacity and financial resources than people of color organizations. This imbalance of power often undermines the leadership of organizations of color when working in alliance.*

*This Assessment Tool was developed by the Dismantling Racism Project at Western States Center, drawing heavily from Dismantling Racism curriculum designed by **changework**, 1705 Wallace Street, Durham NC 27707, (919) 490-4448.*

# CHANGE TEAMS

## What is a Change Team?

Many organizations have found that anti-racist organizational development is most successful when an organization has a Change Team. A Change Team is a working committee whose overarching goal is to provide leadership and momentum around anti-racist organizational development.

## Who should be on the Change Team?

Each organization needs to decide how to build a Change Team that can support meaningful change in your organization. Many Change Teams are comprised of staff and board members working together. In most cases it is important to have participation on the Change Team from your membership or constituency as well.

**Job Description for Change Team Members** (*Adapted from James Williams: Grassroots Leadership's Barriers and Bridges Workbook.*)

**Change team members are people who:**

- really want to see positive change in their communities;
- bring enthusiasm and commitment to the process. They are role models and cheerleaders;
- have a certain degree of skill in helping make change happens;
- have some degree of leadership in their organization or community;
- are willing to see themselves as change agents;
- but understand that they can't do it alone. They must build a group or organization of people who will take over leadership of the process and in turn develop new leaders.

**Their job is to develop a group of people who will work together to reach their goals. This involves working with others to:**

- assess the present situation, define problems, and set goals for solving them;

- identify the values the group or organization brings to this work, i.e. making sure people are clear about how they want be with each other as they work toward these goals;
- develop a strategy to accomplish their goals.
- insure that the strategy is carried out.
- evaluate and make changes in the strategy as needed.
- make sure that all contributions are appreciated and that everyone has a chance to grow change throughout the process.

### **What is the Job of a Change Team?** (Developed by changework, 1705 Wallace Street, Durham NC 27707 .919.490.4448)

1. To lead and organize the process towards becoming an anti-racist social change organization
  - Help move people into actively supporting (or at least avoid resisting) the changes necessary to move the organization towards that vision
  - Help to resolve conflict
  - Avoid becoming 'morality police' by including others in the work of the change team
2. To lead and organize a process to evaluate the organization as it is now
3. To lead a process to help the organization envision what it would look like as an anti-racist social change organization
4. Lead a process to establish specific, clear, and meaningful goals for reaching the vision
5. Build community and move the organization to collective action
  - Help the organization think about how to integrate and/or educate those in the organization who have not been through a DR training
  - Be in open communication with all members of the organization
6. Insure the integration of the work of the change team with program work
7. Think like an organizer in helping the organization move toward its goals
  - work with members of the organization to think strategically about how to reach the goals of the organization

## **How Can the Change Team Do Its Job?** (Adapted by Grassroots Leadership's Barriers and Bridges program from Judy H. Katz, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training*)

1. Identify the problem that you want to address.
  - Who else sees this as a problem?
  - Is it widely felt?
2. Identify who has the power in your organization to solve the problem.
  - What is their self-interest?
  - Do you expect them to support you or oppose you?
3. State the specific goal or goals that will move your organization toward solving the problem.
  - These goals need to be tangible. In other words, 'eliminate racism' is not a tangible goal while 'get the board to adopt by-laws specifying percentages based on race, gender, income, sexual identity, etc.' is.
  - Talk about how this goal (or goals) is (are) in line with your organization's values and mission.
4. Identify who needs to be involved in helping to shape these goals.
  - Avoid setting the goals by yourself; involve a larger group whose participation in setting the goals will raise their stake in achieving them.
5. Identify who in the organization shares a desire to reach these goals.
  - How much power do they have to influence decision-makers (answer to number 2) in the organization?
  - What is their self-interest?
6. Identify who in the organization is threatened by or opposed to these goals.
  - How much power do they have to influence decision-makers (answer to number 2) in the organization?
  - What is their self-interest?
7. Identify any additional risks or barriers you face.
8. Identify your strengths and resources.

9. Identify the specific strategy steps the change team will take to meet the goals.

- How will you involve allies and address challenges from those who are threatened or opposed?
- How will you include those who might otherwise oppose you?
- Who should be recruited onto the change team?
- Who will coordinate the efforts?
- When and how will people meet to work on these goals?
- Develop a timeline.

10. Build in evaluation and reflection.

- At what points will you revise your strategy?
- How will you build change team morale and relationships?

### **Change Team Check-Up** *(Adapted from Andrea Ayvazian: Dismantling Racism: Workbook for Social Change Groups.)*

Use this checklist about once every two or three months to make sure your change team is staying on track:

1. When did the change team last meet? Do you have plans to meet in the future?
2. Who is leading the change team? Is there someone who takes responsibility for making sure the team is meeting and getting work done? Has this responsibility changed hands, or has one person pretty much been responsible? How is this leadership pattern good or bad for the change team?
3. How would you describe the morale of the change team?
4. What are some of the strengths of the change team?
5. Where is the change team getting stuck?
6. Is the change team meeting resistance from others in the organization or community? If so, why and what can you do about it? When you look at your reasons, are you stuck in blaming others, in other words are you requiring other

people to change before anything can get done? Or are you taking responsibility for addressing the problems that come up?

7. Is the change team finding the kind of support it needs in the organization or community? If not, why not and what can you do about it? Are you truly encouraging new people into the organization or community? Are you making them welcome and giving them a chance to grow?
8. Are you making time in your meetings for personal sharing and reflection? Or are your meetings all business and no fun?
9. Are you accomplishing your goals? If so, are you taking time to pat yourselves on the back and enjoy your success? If not, are you taking time to rethink your strategies?



# CAUCUSES

## What are Caucuses?

All people of color and white people are affected by racism and have to work together to end racism. However, how we are affected by racism and the work we have to do is different. Caucuses are times when people of color and white people within an organization meet separately in order to do our different work. Many organizations have gender caucuses or other types of caucuses as well.

## What are some reasons to have Caucuses?

### People of Color can caucus in order to:

- check in and assess an organization's progress in anti-racist organizational development or racial justice organizing
- provide a safe space for people of color to talk about and address experiences of racism within the organization and in the larger world
- talk about racism and how it affects people of color without having to explain it to white people
- gain tools to talk about racism
- create an alternative power base for people of color within the organization
- build relationships
- create a plan of action
- provide a space to address how internalized racism can hold people of color and racial justice work back
- look at barriers such as anger

### White people can caucus in order to:

- work through guilt and other barriers that hold white people back from being an ally and doing racial justice work
- ask questions and explore ideas that help white people learn about racism without having to learn at the expense of people of color
- hold each other accountable for actions and behavior
- build relationships
- check in and assess an organization's progress in anti-racist organizational development or racial justice organizing
- gain tools to talk about racism, white supremacy and privilege
- remind white people that work needs to be done to address racism every day

## Tips for Successful Caucusing

- Successful caucusing is often based on having a clarity of purpose. Caucuses are the place to identify and talk about issues or concerns about racism, but are not always the appropriate place to solve those issues. When issues or concerns are raised it is important for the caucus to identify which organizational structures or processes should address those issues. In the case where the issue is a result of a lack of organizational structure or process, the caucus will need to identify how to give direction toward the development of that structure or process.
- One of the goals of caucusing is to create a space for building relationships between people of color and between white people that will strengthen dismantling racism work. Successful caucuses will pay attention to creating activities and time that will support relationship building.
- It is critical that there is a clear communication structure that provides a way for caucuses to communicate with one another. Caucuses do not necessarily have to come together after meeting separately in order to "report back." However, there needs to be a conduit through which appropriate information is shared. In many organizations, this is one role of the change team.
- Confidentiality is crucial to successful caucuses. Confidentiality means that personal information, stories or concerns that are shared by individuals within a caucus are not shared outside the caucus. Individual sharing may lead to group proposals, ideas or plans of action that will be shared through the appropriate channels. Caucuses must take the time to be clear and reach consensus about what is being shared and what is not.
- In some cases it is important to have an outside facilitator for caucuses. The power dynamics within organizations often make it difficult for staff, board members or leaders to facilitate a caucus effectively.
- Some organizations have caucuses on a regularly scheduled frequent basis while others may hold caucuses infrequently or in relation to other events such as board retreats. The regularity or frequency of caucuses is often based on the logistics of bringing people together. It is important for an organization to

integrate caucusing, whether frequent or infrequent, in to the organizational workplan so that caucus members have a sense of timeline for getting together.

- Just as any other committee or working group, caucuses may need to be staffed. It is crucial that people of color caucuses receive equitable staff time and resources as compared to white caucuses. It is a common barrier to successful caucusing in predominantly white organizations that the white caucus has more staff and resources than the people of color caucus. This racist practice will undermine the caucus process.
  
- Caucus agenda's need to be developed with intention. People of color caucuses and white caucuses will often have very different agendas. But, an organization that is seeking to use caucuses as part of a process of anti-racist organizational development must think clearly about how the caucus agendas create movement toward organizational goals. Again, it is often useful for the Change Team to have a role in developing caucus agendas.