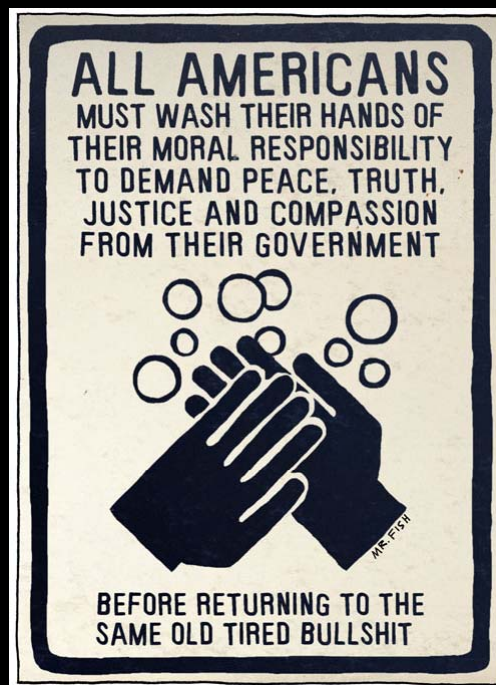


Inequality, Equity and Race: *Changing the terrain of public discourse*

Patrick Bresette – pbresette@demos.org



www.publicworkspartners.net

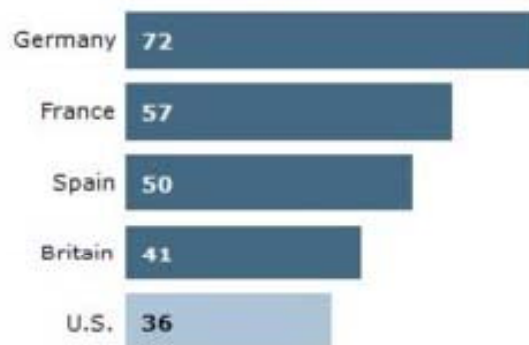


Inequality – a Tough Subject for Americans

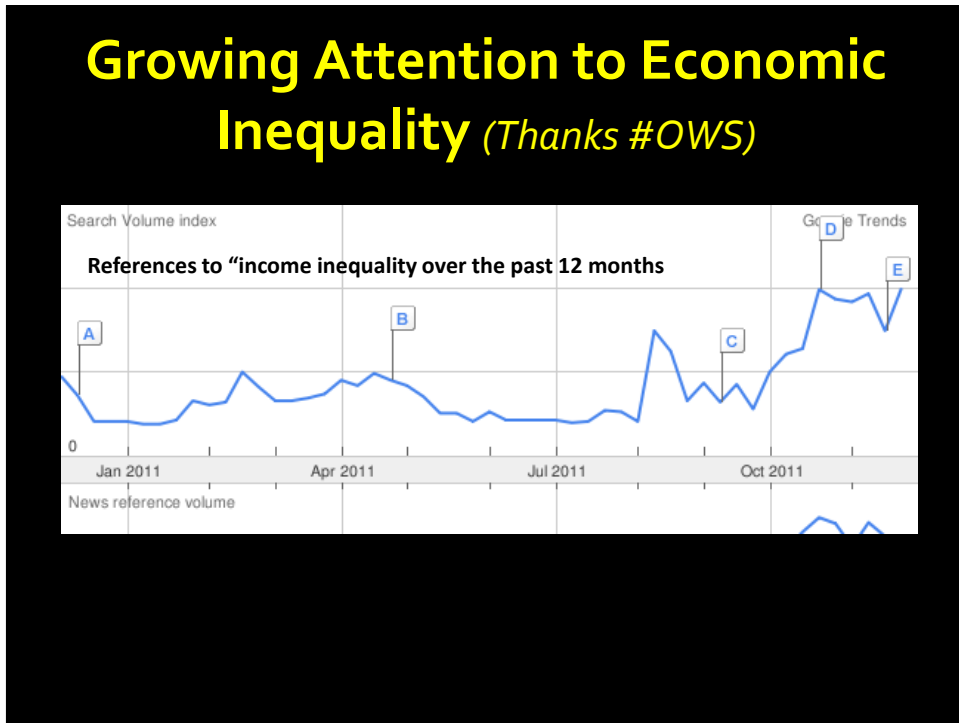
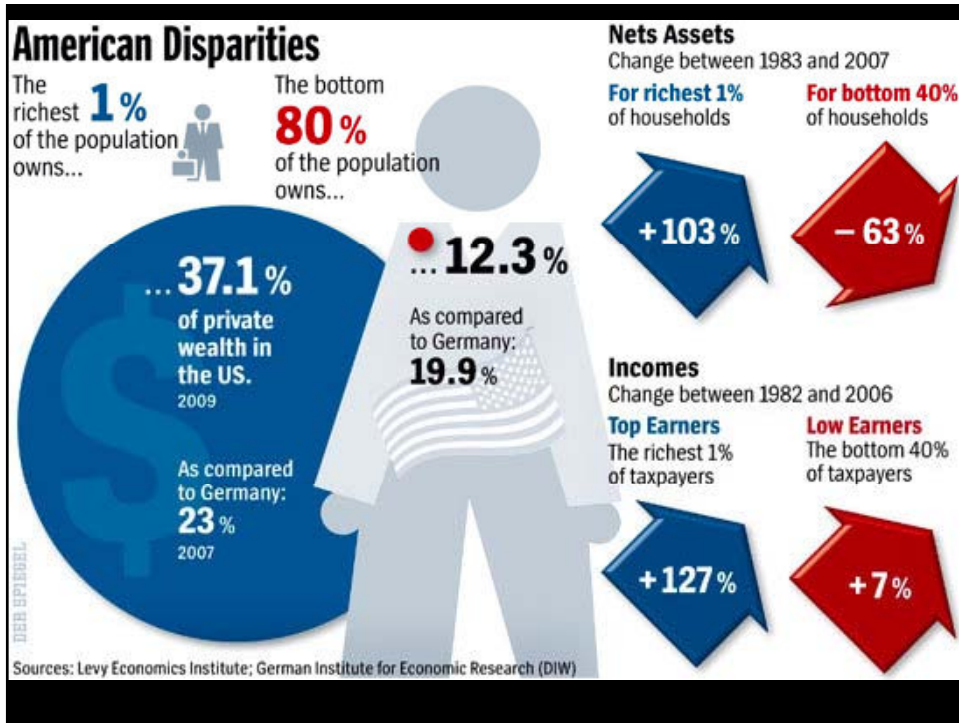
- Self-made man/woman
- Morality of Reward and Punishment
- Individual Actor Economy
- Land of Opportunity

Success in Life Is Determined by Forces Outside Our Control

% Agree



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q15a.



Growing sense that the game is rigged

“ . . . I have always been fascinated by the apparent tolerance in the United States for a huge gap between rich and poor. Survey data from a few years ago show that this tolerance has been due to the American public’s strong belief that you can be poor today but rich tomorrow, that your children will do better than you, and that anyone who works hard and has a certain amount of talent can make it in America . . .

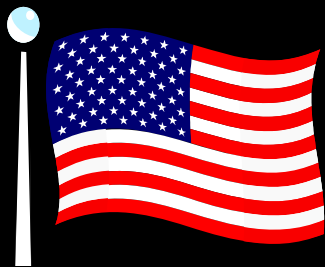
Now it seems many Americans have decided that playing by the rules doesn’t work . . .

It is not the outcomes they complain about but the fact that the game itself is not fair.”

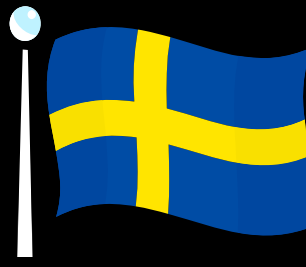
- Isabel Sawhill, Brookings

<http://www.democracyjournal.org/arguments/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-and-the-demise-of-the-american-dream.php>

Americans would prefer Sweden’s Level of Inequality



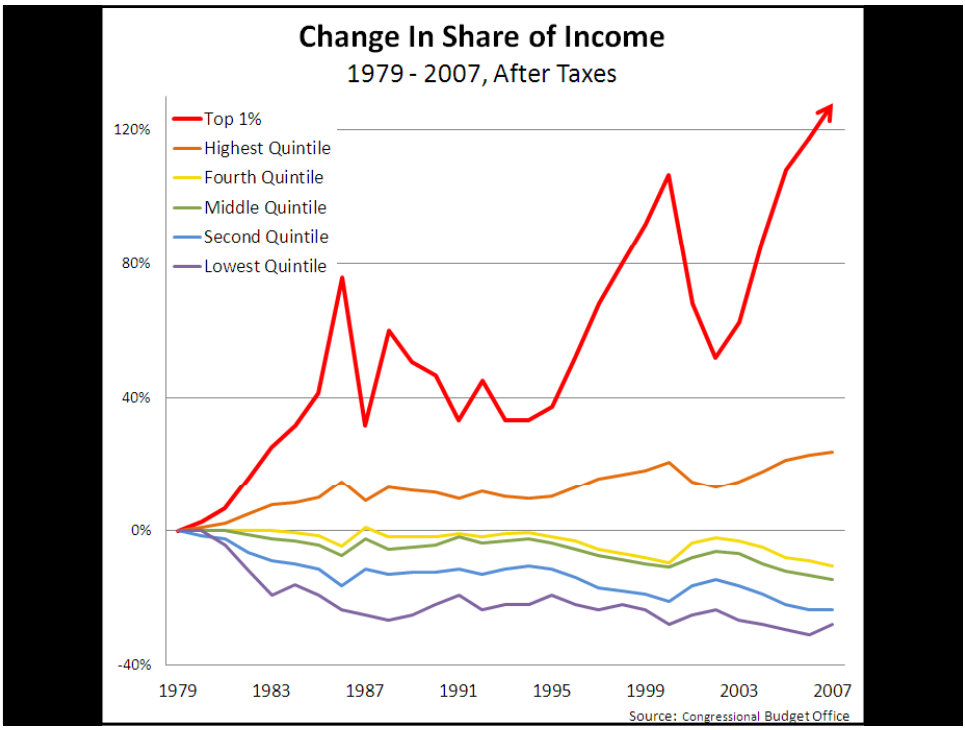
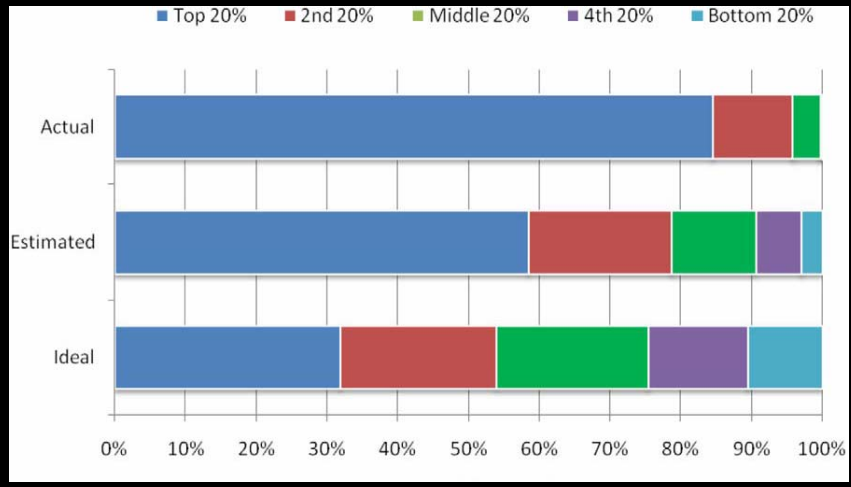
Top Quintile has 84% of Wealth



Top Quintile has 36% of Wealth

<http://www.people.hbs.edu/mnorton/norton%20ariely%20in%20press.pdf>

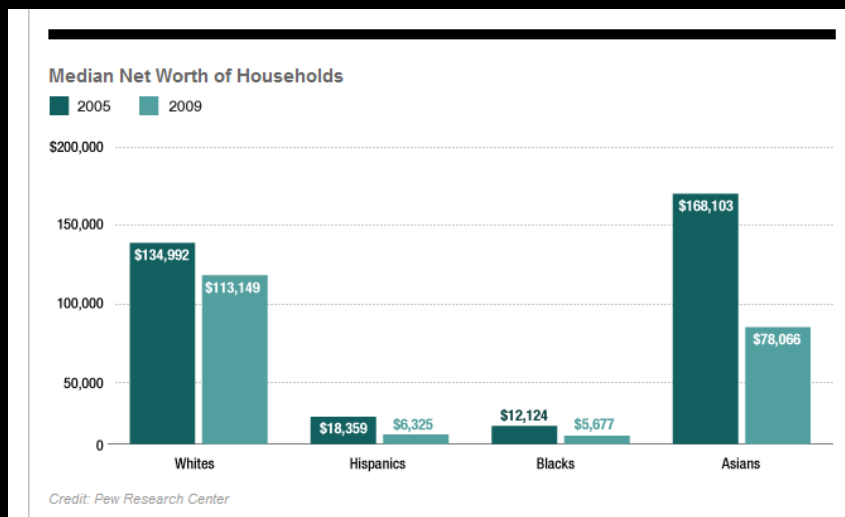
Americans' Perceptions of Inequality



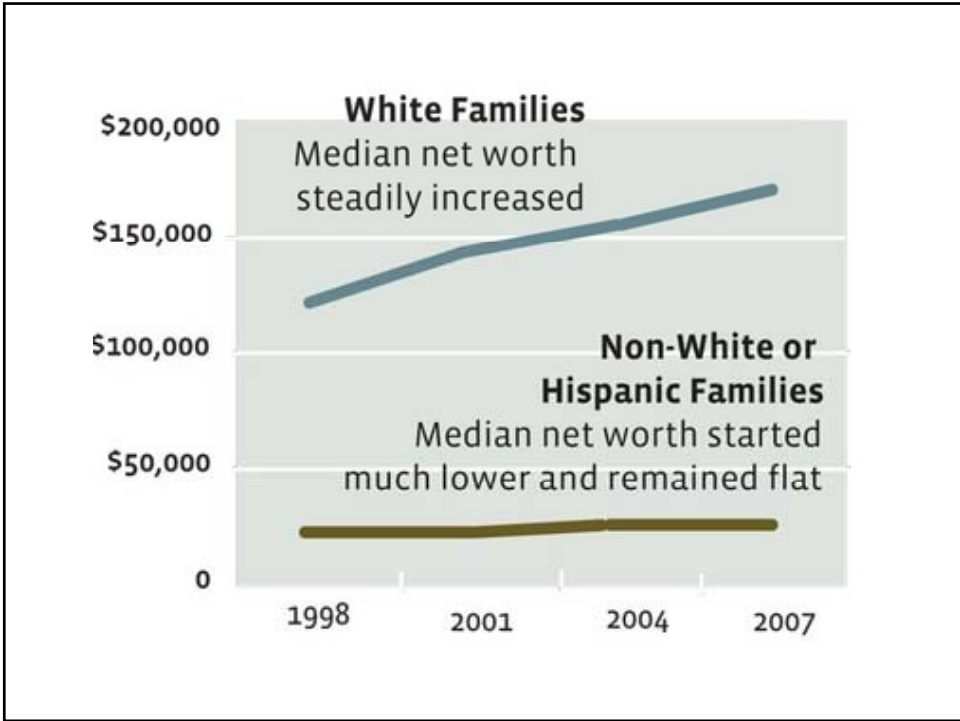
IF U.S. LAND WERE DIVIDED LIKE U.S. WEALTH



. . . And the Racial Wealth Gap is Dramatic

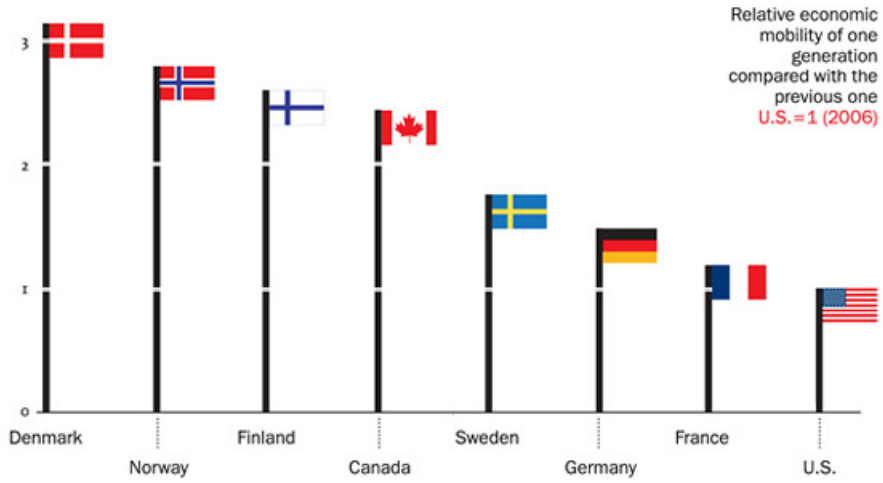


<http://www.npr.org/2011/07/26/138688135/study-shows-racial-wealth-gap-grows-wider>



Why We're Falling Behind

The U.S. trails other Western industrialized nations in many of the key areas that influence a person's prospects for economic mobility



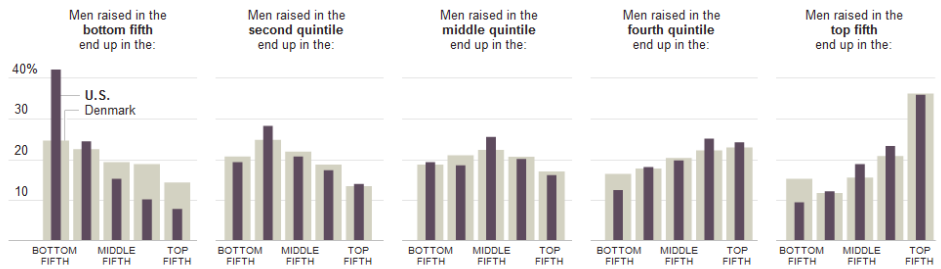
Published: January 4, 2012

RECOMMEND TWITTER LINKEDIN SIGN IN TO E-MAIL SHARE

Comparing Economic Mobility

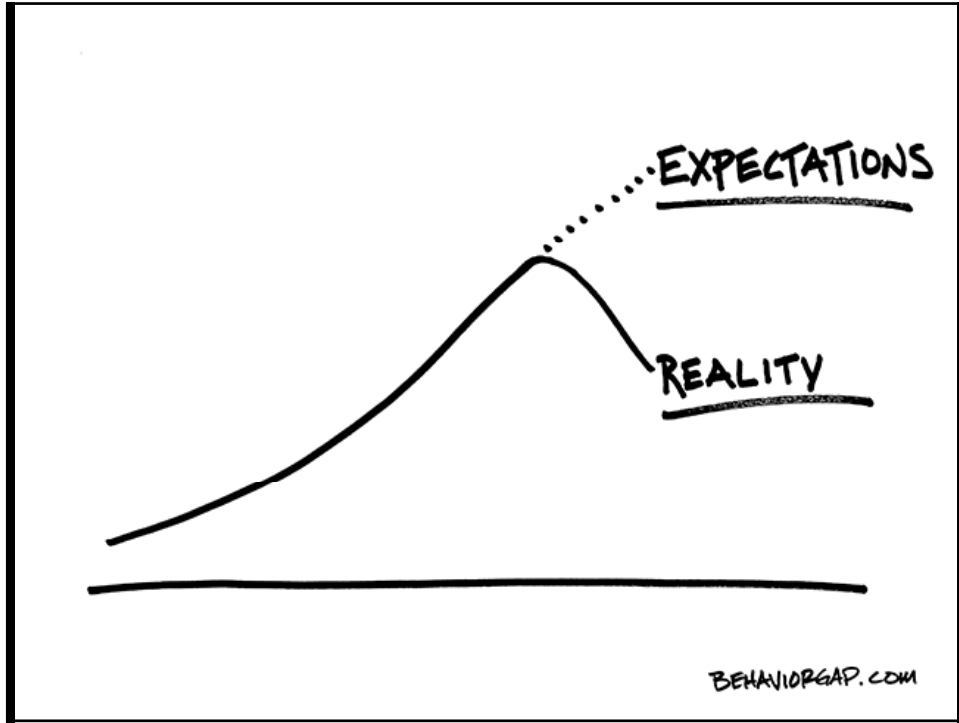
American men born in the bottom quintile are more likely to stay there than the Danish, according to a study of earnings across generations.

Related Article »



Send Feedback

Source: "American Exceptionalism in a New Light," by Markus Jantti and colleagues



Summary of Grady/Aubrun

Challenges:

- Unequal outcomes don't indicate a problem
- Individual responsibility is a deeply ingrained value
- Cognitive blindness to systemic factors
- Historical perspectives offer little help
- Us/Them thinking
- "Rhetorical mode" = closed minds
- Guilt and denial
- Compassion fatigue
- Powerlessness

Summary of Grady/Aubrun

Recommendations:

- Highlight practical steps that can be taken
- Find ways to link the issue to "all of us."
- Talk about the harms of Inequality itself – ways in which gaps are inherently corrosive of overall wellbeing
- Be careful to explain the causes in ways that are hard to tie to individual choices and behavior
- Depict affected parties in language and pictures that help audiences identify with them rather than creating distance between them

“Ultimately, Inequality is about our society, not individuals. It needs to be seen as a structural problem: a matter of public policy, not just personal behavior. When some have a lot and others have little, the tendency is to attribute this circumstance to individual effort. But most sources of Inequality are rooted in the way that we have organized our society, and how that organization ends up favoring one group over another. To accelerate progress in eliminating structural inequalities we have to talk more effectively about structures, say why they matter, and offer tangible solutions for transforming them.”

From: Provoking Thought, Changing Talk: Putting it into Practice
Lori Dorfman, Dr.P.H., Berkeley Media Studies Group & Lawrence Wallack,
Dr.P.H., College of Urban & Public Affairs, Portland State University

Anat Shenker-Osorio Inequality is a Barrier, not a Gap

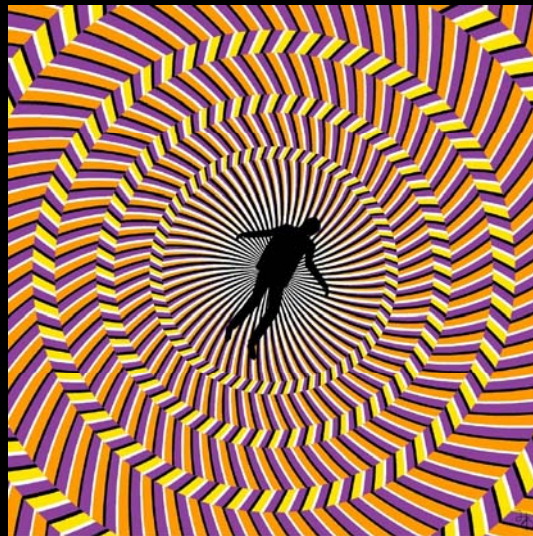


Inequality as a “Barrier”

- Blocks people from getting resources
- Holds people back
- Sets in place obstacles for:
 - “access to resources”, “access to opportunities” “participating fully in the economy”

Avoid inequality as gap and inequality as top/bottom: these work against helping people see the sources of unequal outcomes and building the will to address effects

Inequality as Vertigo



Inequality as Vertigo



“An economy that has gotten off-kilter”

“Excessive inequality leads to instability”

- It implies there’s an economic system that can be externally *swayed* or put off its axis
- It’s tangible and part of lived experience, we’ve all lost our balance



**Talking about Race:
Navigating the Multiverse**

Or maybe it's a Minefield



ARE YOU LOSING THE DEBATE?



SHOUT RACIST

**AND YOU SILENCE THE OPPOSITION
WHICH ENDS THE ARGUMENT
ALLOWING YOU TO CLAIM VICTORY**

A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT FROM AMERICA'S PROGRESSIVES.

As political scientist Robert Dahl noted almost a half a century ago, race is one of the fundamental sources of cleavage in American life. The dramatic advances precipitated by the modern civil rights movement of the mid-20th century notwithstanding, America continues to struggle with positive discourse about racial matters. Indeed, most of us have experienced the rather awkward fits and starts of conversations about race in our everyday lives; whether in the workplace, in social settings, or in the public square.

- Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., Ph.D., *The Architecture of a New Racial Discourse*

Where to Begin

- What kind of conversation are you trying to have?
- Where are you in your conversation?
 - have you established any common understandings, perceptions, definitions
- How urgent or heated do you want the conversation to be?

Modes of Conversation



Confrontational or
Oppositional



Bridging and
Reconciling



Terrain-
Changing

Essential Questions:

- What is your purpose?
- Who is your audience?
- What are you trying to achieve?
- Which part of the multiverse are you operating in?

What can happen when you don't ask yourself these first questions?

A Video Example

A Spectrum of Approaches

Lead with shared values, shared fate >>>> Lead with race and racism



FrameWorks > AECF > Opp Agenda > Kirwin > PolicyLink > ARC > Praxis

Remember:

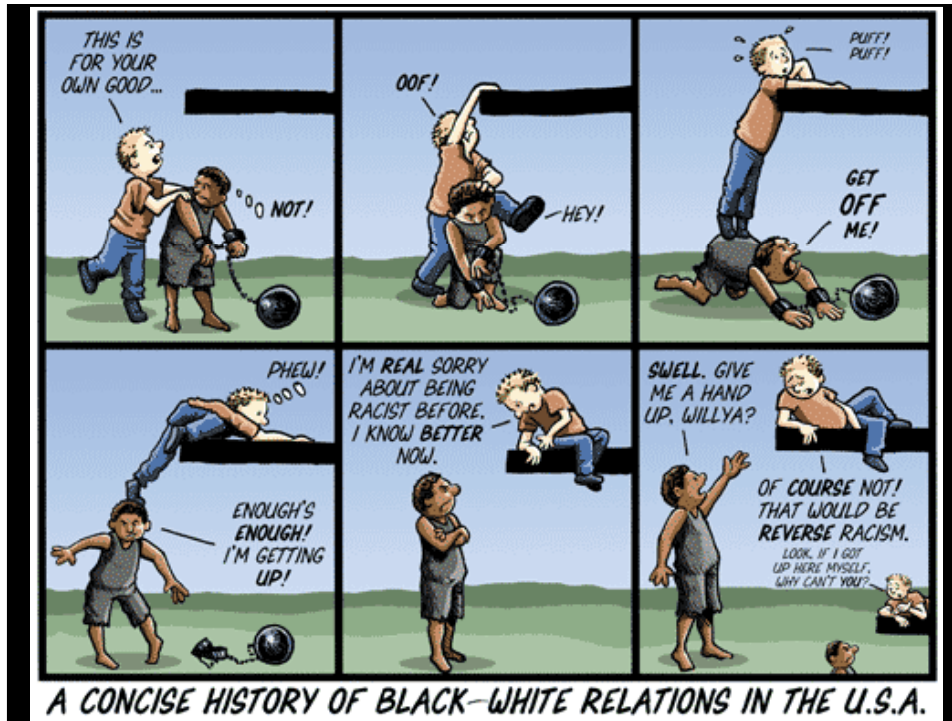
- What is your purpose?
- Who is your audience?
- What are you trying to achieve?

FrameWorks Institute: Race Research

- What are the pictures in the public's mind when it comes to race?
- What can be done to redirect these pictures in ways that support racial justice policies?

Elements of the Dominant Race Narrative

- Racism is a thing of the past
- To the extent it still exists it resides in the hearts of evil men and women (who can be white or minority)
- Racial disparities are best understood as a function of individual responsibility as ascribed to the self-making person
- Whites and non-whites do not share common fate.



Separate Fates: Consequences

- Easier to characterize minorities as the “Other” and, by definition, out of the system.
- Allows people to place the **concerns of minorities** “over there” and not connected to themselves; and
- Makes it much **harder to make the connection** between minority life chances and structural factors.

The Graveyard of Framing Hypotheses

Their research found little support for several oft deployed framing strategies – *Diversity as Strength; Prevention – The Miner’s Canary; White Privilege; Structural Racism; Disparities/Discrimination; Color Blind Society; and Fairness Between Groups.*

Fairness Between Places

- situating the issue of fairness not in persons, but in **places or systems**, improved support for redistributive policy.
- imbued with **systems thinking**, **structuralizes** the issue of disparities.

Implications

- Conversations cannot begin by priming the historical legacy of racism;
- They cannot lead the audience to think about the issue as being about people, as opposed to situations;
- They cannot focus on the triumphant individual or other exceptionalizing mechanisms;
- They cannot engage in a rhetorical debate about the intentionality of bias; and,
- They cannot focus on problems/disparities to the exclusion of solutions.

Shifting the story about institutional racism

Traditional

- White privilege imbedded in the history and culture of the USA
- Intentional use of power – through public and private structures – to thwart the challenges to status quo
- Results in continued oppression of people of color (US v. THEM)

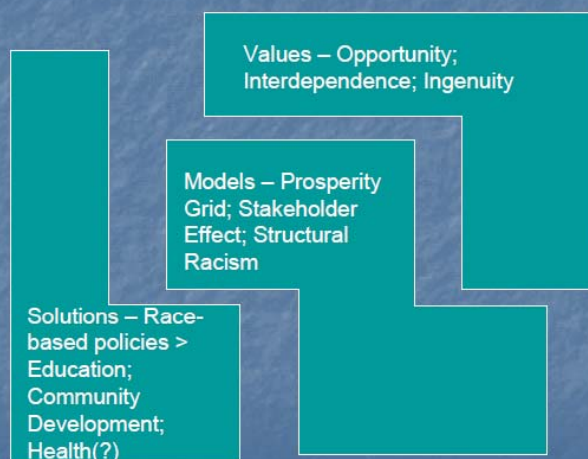
Revised

- America continues to struggle with the problem of racial inequality
- The system of discriminatory practices perpetuates itself automatically (outcome)
- Shared Fate – the impact of such a system on all of us (WE)

Findings

The Opportunity for All and Ingenuity frames show great promise in their ability to move both racial attitudes and policy preferences. This is especially true when coupled with the prosperity grid and stakeholder simplifying models. While the opportunity frame demonstrates the greatest impact, both frames have broad appeal across demographic groupings. The opportunity model is effective because of its ability to overcome several of the deleterious effects of the dominant frame of understanding. For instance, it enables big picture thinking which, in turn, makes it easier for people to have a conversation about systems reform. Put differently, it takes people out of a dialogue about personal racism and fixes attention on the deeply held American belief in opportunity. At the same time it elevates notion of shared fate among people, thus negating the belief that minority concerns are unrelated to the concerns of the broader society.

The Architecture of Racial Discourse

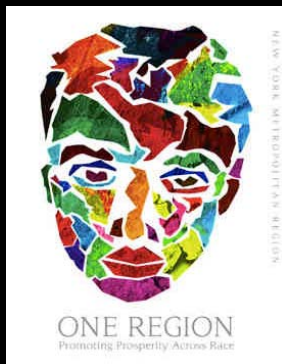


© 2006 - FrameWorks Institute

Opportunity Agenda

1. Lead with shared values: Opportunity and the Common Good.
2. Show that it's about *all of us*.
3. *Over*-document the barriers to equal opportunity—especially racial bias.
4. Acknowledge the progress we've made.
5. Present data on racial disparities through a contribution model instead of just a deficit model.
6. Be thematic instead of episodic
7. Carefully select vehicles and audiences to tell the story of contemporary discrimination.
8. Be rigorously solution-oriented
9. Link racial justice solutions with broader efforts to expand opportunity.
10. Use Opportunity as a bridge, not a bypass.

Center for Social Inclusion



The New York metropolitan region needs policies and investments that target those in greatest need to promote a thriving economy and more socially cohesive region. As earlier sections lay out, policies helped create high- and low-opportunity areas. Policies have created both avenues and barriers to good housing, jobs, education, transportation, health, and a clean, safe environment. This uneven growth has not only deepened the lack of opportunity in communities of color, it has also weakened the region's resilience. But we can produce a strong, resilient region by building bridges to opportunity where they do not exist . . .

The Need to Change the Way We Talk, Think, and Act on Race

john a. powell

Director, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
Williams Chair in Civil Rights & Civil Liberties, Moritz College of Law

OSU Authors and Conversation Soul Food Luncheon Series
October 22, 2010



Race Neutrality?

- The question is not if we should talk about race, but how we should talk about race
- Race-neutral tactics may appear to have appeal, but in reality, we're not seeking race-neutrality—we're seeking racial fairness
- Colorblindness is not an appropriate shift in how we perceive race
- Colorblindness will not end racism



Highlight Deep Shared Values

Unity	Security	Opportunity
Community	Mobility	Redemption
Fairness		Liberty

24

Framing Conversations

Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on terms that bring people together rather than those that are divisive • A "we" perspective rather than an "us/them" mindset • "We the people" recognizes <i>all</i> the people
Linked Fate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fates of all people are linked • We need to understand the effect that institutional arrangements have on <i>all</i> individuals

22

institute/2...ulfoodluncheonseries?from=ss_embed#btnNext

A Transformative Agenda

Transformative change in the racial paradigm in the U.S. requires substantive efforts in three areas

Talking about race: Understanding how language and messages shape reality and the perception of reality

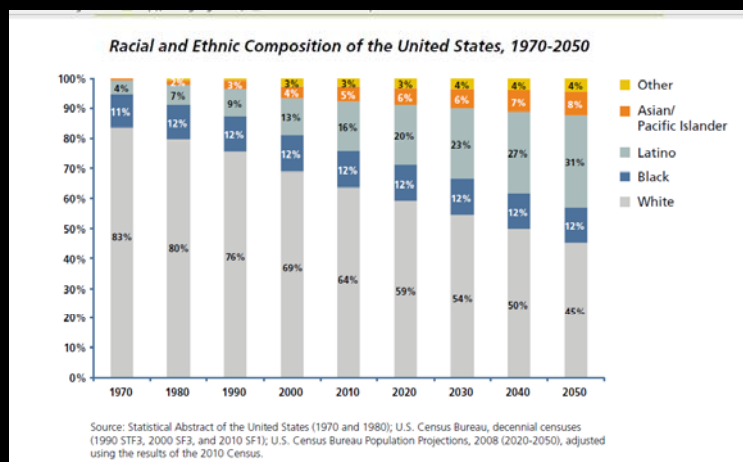
Thinking about race: Understanding how framing and priming impact information processing in both the explicit and the implicit mind

Linking these understandings to the way we act on race and how we arrange our institutions and policies

26

PolicyLink

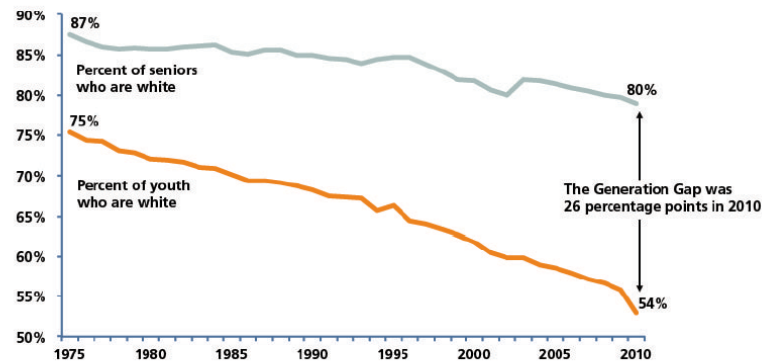
America's Tomorrow: Equity is the Superior Growth Model



PolicyLink

America's Tomorrow: Equity is the Superior Growth Model

There is a Growing Racial Generation Gap in the U.S.



PolicyLink/PERE analysis of data from the IPUMS CPS March Supplement and the 2010 Census SF1.

Applied Research Center

The Arc Is Bending Toward Justice. But That Doesn't Make Our Work Easier

There's still a ton of work to do to **centralize racial justice as a value**, and to reframe key debates through racial justice, especially debates over the economy. The victories we are starting to see owe a great deal to our collective effort to re-humanize people of color in the public discourse. We need to keep doing that. But **we also must go a little further to help Americans understand why taking down the country's racial hierarchy will ultimately unify us**. We need to avoid the temptation to advance blander versions of unity through "same boat" arguments that don't hold up under close scrutiny. Better to have a real analysis that takes into account existing divisions, so that we can figure out how to bridge them rather than ignore them.

http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/12/we_must_learn_to_win_in_2012_because_the_arc_is_bending_toward_justice.html

Praxis

Disrupting the Discourse: Framing at the Intersection of Racism and Opportunity, by Makani Thema-Nixon

The right frames nearly everything in a neat “us” and “them” and, more often than not, the dividing line is the color line. And they have centuries of stereotypes on their side. Their frames are like an old song that’s hard not to hum once the music starts. Winning hearts and minds on a wide range of social justice issues requires that we disrupt these centuries of programming with a few old songs of our own.

Disrupting the dominant frames on race, deservingness, and competency means focusing on two main questions: Why are things the way they are? And how can they be different?

Praxis

From “Fair Game: A Strategy Guide for Racial Justice Communications in the Obama Era”

“For liberals, the ‘opportunity frame’ is a classic Trojan Horse. Opportunity and fairness are two common, comfortable concepts for Americans . . . The trouble with this Trojan horse [is] if we’re all in it together and we all want the same things – how do you meaningfully address racial injustice?”

But later . . . “Smart research and framing helped Books Not Bars remind the public of what was really at stake: **opportunity for thousands of young people** who deserved much better.”

Race and the Role of Government

How do we:

- Recognize the historical and structural racism that has been imbedded in public systems and continues to exacerbate inequities, while
- At the same time upholding (at least aspirationally) the need for robust, supported and correctly-focused public systems as tools for shared prosperity and racial equity, and
- Engage communities of color in the effort to reclaim and rebuild government, since so many of their own goals for themselves and their communities depend on an adequate public sector, while also,
- Engage a broader public in these questions without triggering the “government is just for ‘those’ people” frame that has always been out there but is showing up starkly in recent polls.

The central challenge for modern, diversifying societies is to create a new, broader sense of “we.”

- Robert Putnam



Navigating the Multiverse

Discussion

- Commonalities and Divergences?
- Theory vs. Application?
- Implications for your work?
- Unanswered Questions?
- ??????