



**Public Works**  
*Building Public Will for the Common Good*

Government: a tool for racial justice

Advocates College  
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# talking about race: what is your top of the mind reaction?




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## Pieces of the Puzzle



- ❑ **Setting the Context**
- ❑ Our Framing Challenge
- ❑ Making the Case



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## Conversations in Context

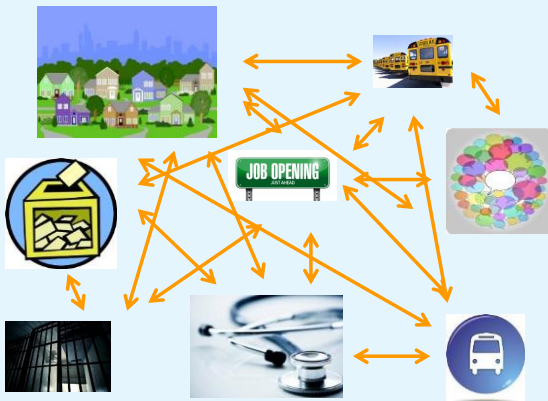


## Why talk about race?

“Racial labels perform a decisive function in public debate. In particular, race is a dividing line that is used to define the “other”, and, by implication, define the “underserving other” and undermine public support for public welfare programs.”

- *Talking the Walk*, 2006

## Why talk about race?



## Policies → Define Opportunity



Photo credit: children's bureau, gettyimages & Nelson, Caputo

## Large Group Discussion

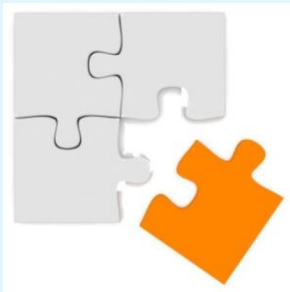
- ✓ What are some examples of current governmental policies or systems which exacerbate racial discrimination, exploitation, segregation or other forms of racialization?
- ✓ What are some examples of current governmental policies or systems that work to reduce racial discrimination, exploitation, segregation or other forms of racialization?



Government can be a tool for racial justice or injustice.

How do we reclaim it for the common good?

## Pieces of the Puzzle

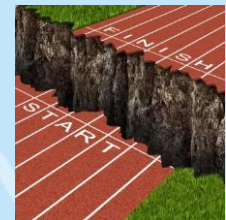


- Setting the Context
- Our Framing Challenge**
- Making the Case

## Limited Role for Government



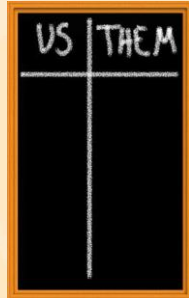
## Racial Disparities are Inevitable



There is no role for government in promoting equity



Government is not for me but for a racialized "other"



## How we "Otherize"

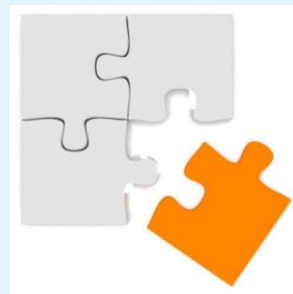
vulnerable children . . . the poor . . . at-risk youth...



## Separate Fates



## Pieces of the Puzzle



- Setting the Context
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## Circle of Human Concern



## Targeted Universalism



## Defining situations not people

- ✓ What is at stake for community members? Why does this matter?
- ✓ What are the barriers and systemic causes of this situation? Document the inequities between systems.
- ✓ How has this impacted overall well-being and community resiliency and strength?
- ✓ What is the systemic call to action we all must take? Describe it as a win-win.

## Naming barriers to opportunity structures



## Places not Faces



## FACES not places

Unemployment rates in Michigan for the two largest communities of color, **African Americans and Hispanics**, have been disproportionately higher, sometimes double, in comparison to their white counterparts for at least the last 10 years. In 2011, **African Americans** had an unemployment rate of 20.1%, **Hispanics** of 10.7%, and **whites** of 8.9%. Michigan currently ranks **2nd highest in African American unemployment** among the 50 states.

## PLACES not faces

*For our communities to thrive and succeed, we need ample job opportunities* in Michigan that allow our children and families to *have the quality of life we all deserve no matter what race you are*. This has not been the case for many years in Michigan. In some cities, for every job opening there are 10 people seeking employment. This makes it difficult for our communities to prosper and *unevenly impacts our communities of color. We can do better* by making sure that we create more jobs in the places that need it the most.

## Fairness between places



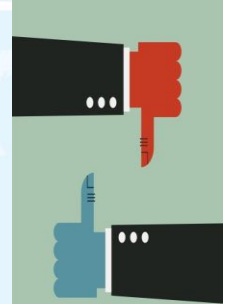
## Recommendations Summary



1. Expand the circle of human concern and speak to our shared fate
2. Name the barriers to opportunity structures
3. Reclaim government as a tool for racial justice

## Critiquing our government without undermining it

- ✓ What is the core public value at stake?
- ✓ Is this system living up to the core purpose or value?
- ✓ If not, how do we reclaim it?



Once again the actions of our city housing department show that its all about who you know if you want to get anything done. If you don't have some big money political clout you can't get any response out of that bureaucratic mess of an agency. As always our working-class communities of color are just overlooked. But we are taxpayers too! We paid our share into the city coffers and we should be getting some attention and services in return.

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**Just Politics**

**Bureaucratic Blob**

**Consumer-thinking**

One of the most important jobs of our city government is to help create clean and safe neighborhoods where residents can live, work and play. Unfortunately, our housing department is not living up to that essential responsibility and neighborhoods are not prioritized equitably. This system needs to address the disparities that are impacting our communities of color in order for our whole city to thrive. It is time for all of us to work together to get this public agency back on track and focused on community needs.

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## Mission and Purpose –

### Why it Matters

### Critique

### Civic thinking

## Criminal Justice Example



“Government has an important role to play in addressing crime and maintaining safe communities, but we have some major changes to make so our communities get what they need.”

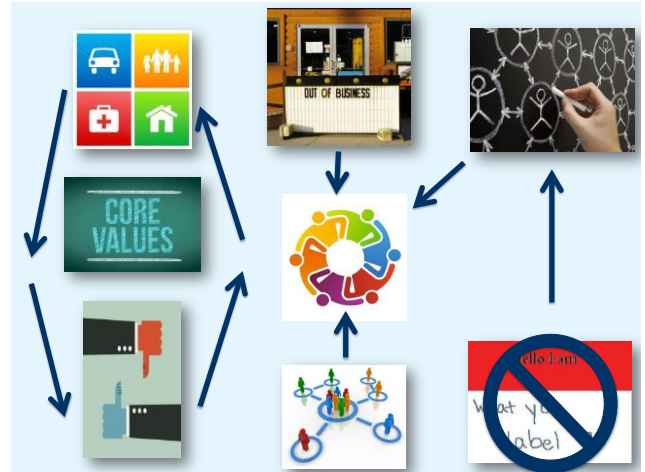
“By exploring some of the common goals and values between victim-oriented groups and criminal justice reform organizations, a very different discourse could emerge about criminal justice policy that improves the outlook for all people most impacted by the system.”

## Small Group Discussion

- ✓ Give an example of a time you felt that a public system had fallen short of its purpose
- ✓ How could you critique that specific public system without undermining the role of government?



## Putting the pieces together



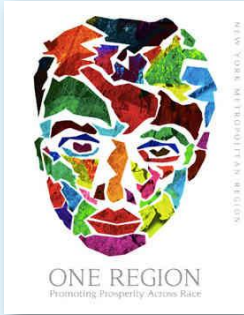
## Making the Case: Examples



## Define American

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLzwe-D9vUE>

## Center for Social Inclusion



“The New York.....needs policies and investments that target those in greatest need to promote a thriving economy and more socially cohesive region.....”

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 . . .”

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## Equity is the Superior Growth Model



“This is not a zero-sum game. It is a win-win proposition: The more we invest in each other, the better off we will all be.”

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## Closing the Racial Wealth Gap for the Next Generation

- Leading with values
- Connecting the dots
- Intentional economy



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The screenshot shows the Colorlines website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'NEWS FOR ACTION' and sub-menus for 'NEWS & ANALYSIS', 'INVESTIGATION', and 'ACTION'. Below this is a 'HOT TOPICS' section with links to 'Boston Bombing', 'Budget Cuts', 'Guns', 'How We Eat', 'Immigration Reform', 'Jackie Robinson', and 'Stop-and-Frisk'. The main content area is titled 'NEWS & ANALYSIS' and features several articles:

- ARTS & CULTURE: Teen Actors Keep Playwright August Wilson's Legacy Alive [VIDEO]** - by Jay Smooth, May 3, 2013. The August Wilson Monologue Competition celebrates the work of the African-American playwright through the powerful performances of high school actors. Here, two finalists share their monologues with Colorlines.com.
- ARTS & CULTURE: L.A. Food Culture Offers a Glimpse Into 'The New America'** - by Julianne Hing, April 26, 2013. The U.S. will be "majority-minority" in a few decades, but in the City of Angels the future is now. In fact, you can literally taste it.
- GENERS & SEXUALITY: LGBT Athletes of Color Who Paved the Way for Jason Collins** - by Jambal King, April 30, 2013. NBA player Jason Collins became the highest-profile openly gay black man in America yesterday. As with any big step, he didn't get there alone. Here, a look at some LGBT athletes of color who came before him.

At the bottom, there are sections for 'BLOGS & COLUMN' (Alisa Solomon, Dispatches, Kai Wright, NOW Blog) and 'THE LATEST NEWS & ANALYSIS IN RACIAL JUSTICE' (Decoding the Invisible Whiteness in Boston Bombing Coverage by Alisa Solomon on April 25 2013, 12:05PM). A call to action box says 'Take Action to Drop the I-Word! No Human Being is "Illegal." Sign the pledge today and check out our campaign toolkit for ideas on how to get involved.' with a 'GET STARTED' button.

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## Connecting the Dots: How would you...

- ✓ reinforce notions of shared fate & and interdependence, broadening the circle of concern?
- ✓ make the case for why there is a role for government in addressing this issue?
- ✓ critique a system of government without fueling anti-government attitudes?

“When Americans accept their differences in a context of certain **shared principles and values**, the myriad cultures present and emerging here become **wellsprings of spiritual strength and social justice** in a great, transnational experiment. A more **multicultural America** offers an exciting opportunity **to extend freedom and democracy** to people who haven't had it before and to enrich it for those who have.”

## Health barriers / disparities statements. Use two steps:

- Step One – Universal statement
  - All children regardless of their race or ethnicity should have access to the health care they need to be healthy (75% Strongly agree, 18% Somewhat agree)
  - All people should have equal access to a basic level of quality health care (62% Strongly agree, 26% Somewhat agree)
  - Every person has a right to be healthy (74% Strongly agree, 11% Somewhat agree)
  - Everyone should have access to the health care they need to be healthy (60% Strongly agree, 25% Somewhat agree)
  - Today, too many Oregonians face barriers to adequate health care. Our health care system should help everyone get the care they need. (49% Strongly agree, 24% Somewhat agree)

## Health barriers / disparities statements. Use two steps:

- Step Two – Call out barriers
  - Today, too many Oregonians face barriers to adequate health care. Our health care system should help everyone get the care they need. (49% Strongly agree, 24% Somewhat agree)
  - All people living in Oregon, regardless of citizenship status, deserve access to a basic level of quality health care. (36% Strongly agree, 30% Somewhat agree)
  - We know that today in Oregon, being born in a rural area can create barriers to a healthy life. We need to reduce the barriers faced by rural Oregonians to getting and staying healthy. (45% Strongly agree, 33% Somewhat agree)