CREATING AN ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZATION

NYAPRS Executive Conference
April 22, 2021

CCSI
Coordinated Care Services, Inc.
Innovative Solutions in Human Service Delivery
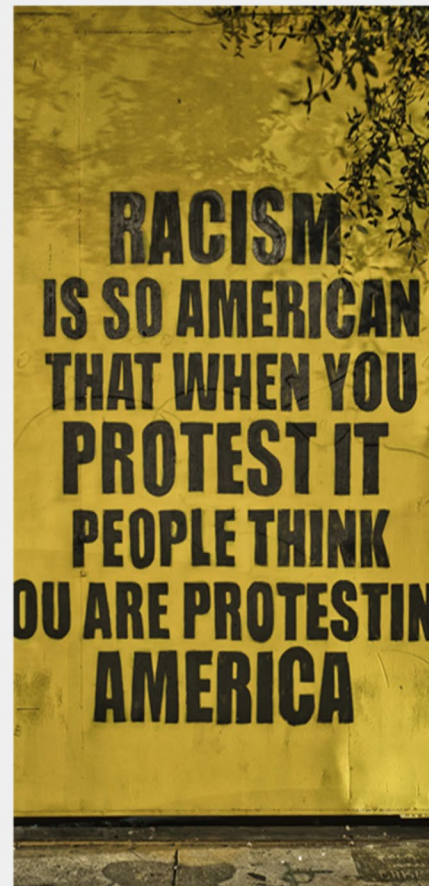
Black Lives Matter supporters carry placards as they march from Newport Civic Centre to Newport University on June 11, 2020 in Newport, Wales United Kingdom.

Huw Fairclough | Getty Images

No matter your RACIAL, POLITICAL, or OTHER IDENTITY, these events are almost impossible to escape. In particular…

Millions of Black people and their allies are hurting…

…and these issues are not ones that organizations or their leaders — from CEOs at the top of the hierarchy to team managers on the frontline — can ignore.

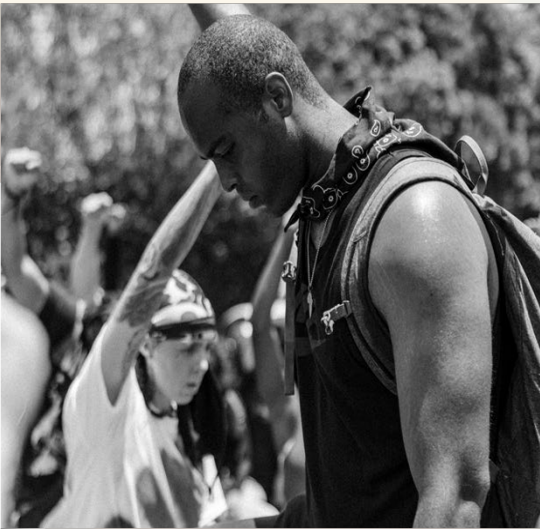**While conventional diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives focus on employee engagement and belonging…**

…today's challenges reach **far beyond marginalization in the workplace**.

WE NOW SEE AND HEAR BLACK AND BROWN PEOPLE…

…who are suffering from the weight of dehumanizing injustice and the open wound of racism that has been festering for centuries.

Mark Felix/Getty Images

Millions of Black people and their allies are hurting, and today's challenges reach far beyond marginalization in the workplace.

The psychological impact of these public events — and the way it carries over into the workplace — cannot be overstated.

Research shows that how organizations respond to large-scale, diversity-related events that receive significant media attention can either help employees feel psychologically safe or contribute to racial identity threat and mistrust of institutions of authority.

MISTRUST OF INSTITUTES OF AUTHORITY

Without adequate support, minority employees are likely to perceive their environments as more interpersonally and institutionally biased against them

Here are some COMMON MISSTEPS to avoid:

- KEEPING SILENT

- BECOMING OVERLY DEFENSIVE

- OVERGENERALIZING

- Ways that Companies and Leaders Can TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION.

COMMON MISSTEPS…

KEEPING SILENT

- The default response is often silence

- Many Whites fear being seen as prejudiced, so they adopt color blindness instead

- Many managers think they lack the skills to have difficult conversations around differences

- No one has the perfect words --- however, it is the leader's responsibility to try, conveying care and concern for all employees

- **Desmond Tutu once said,** *"If you are neutral in the situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."*

- **Dr. Martin Luther King remind us**, *"in the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."*

COMMON MISSTEPS...

BECOMING OVERLY DEFENSIVE

- When our worldviews, position, or advantages are questioned or challenged, accept the individual's truth and seek to understand

  - Example, diminishing protestors by focusing on and judging those who engaged in looting instead of discussing the unjust act that drove people to the streets

  - Another example, searching for evidence about what the victim did to deserve police abuse rather than demonstrating compassion and empathy

- Leaders must resist such reactions because they do not allow for constructive engagement

COMMON MISSTEPS...

OVERGENERALIZING

- There is diversity within groups that must be recognized.

- Leave room for dissenting points; instead of talking about "everybody knows," how "all of us feels" and what "none of us would ever do."

- When in doubt ask employees about their individual experiences to honor their uniqueness

- Think of ways you can allow your employees to discuss what's happening without putting them on the spot or asking them to speak for everyone in their identity group

Best Buy Statement

"We write about these … events… not because most of us know what this fear must be like. We are a group, by and large, not people of color. We write this not because most of us have known anyone personally in a situation like this. Thankfully, most of us do not. We write this because it could have been any one of our friends or colleagues at Best Buy, or in our personal lives, lying on the ground, struggling to breath or filming someone as they threatened us."

TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION...

Leaders must **not** only offer **PHYSICAL** and **PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY**: they also have the **POWER AND THE PLATFORM TO LEAD CHANGE**.

- **Statements from the top are valuable; they are just a start**

- Anyone at any level of the organization, can take small steps to exercise compassion and initiate action that provides needed support and promotes racial justice for BIPOC as well as others who are marginalized

- Managers have a particularly important role in connecting with their employees on these issues

TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION...

- **ACKNOWLEDGE** – **any arm that BIPOC have endured**

- **AFFIRM** – individual's **right to SAFETY AND PERSONHOOD** and **help them feel protected**

- **ACT** – think critically about how you can **use your power to EFFECT CHANGE**

Racism is not just BIPOC problem; its everyone's problem because it erodes the fabric of society. Leaders at every level must use their power, platform, and resources to help employees and communities overcome these challenges and build a better world for all of us

ANOTHER MEANINGFUL ACTION...

OPERATIONALIZE RACIAL EQUITY IN YOUR ORGANIZATIONS

RACIAL EQUITY DEFINED...

"A mindset and method for solving problems that have endured for generations, seem intractable, harm people and communities of color most acutely, and ultimately affect people of all races.

This will require seeing differently, thinking differently, and doing the work differently.

Racial Equity is about RESULTS that MAKE A DIFFERENCE and LAST."

OpenSource Leadership

DEALING WITH CONFLICTS

- **ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT** typically increases during the organizational racial equity change process

- **TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE CHANGE** work that includes developing a culture that effectively engages conflict

- **UNADDRESSED AND/OR POORLY MANAGED CONFLICTS** are more likely to doom a change effort rather than produce clearer thinking that illuminates the path to meaningful change.

- **CONFLICT-AVERSE NORMS** usually work against creating a culture in which people can speak their truth,

OPERATIONALIZING RACIAL JUSTICE...

- **Understanding the history of racism**

- **Implementing interventions that use and intersectional analysis**

- ***Centering Blackness* and building community, cultural, economic and political power**

- **Applying the practice of love**

A PLACE TO START...

- How do we get started becoming a racially just organization?

- How do we deal with conflicts and tensions that will happen in a racial equity change process, especially when they are complicated by power dynamics?

- What can we expect may be included in an organization's roadmap for racial justice?

- What are ways to measure progress and be accountable to the communities and people we work with?

- How do I choose what tools and resources to use in our work of becoming a racially just organization?

Adapted from OpenSource Leadership
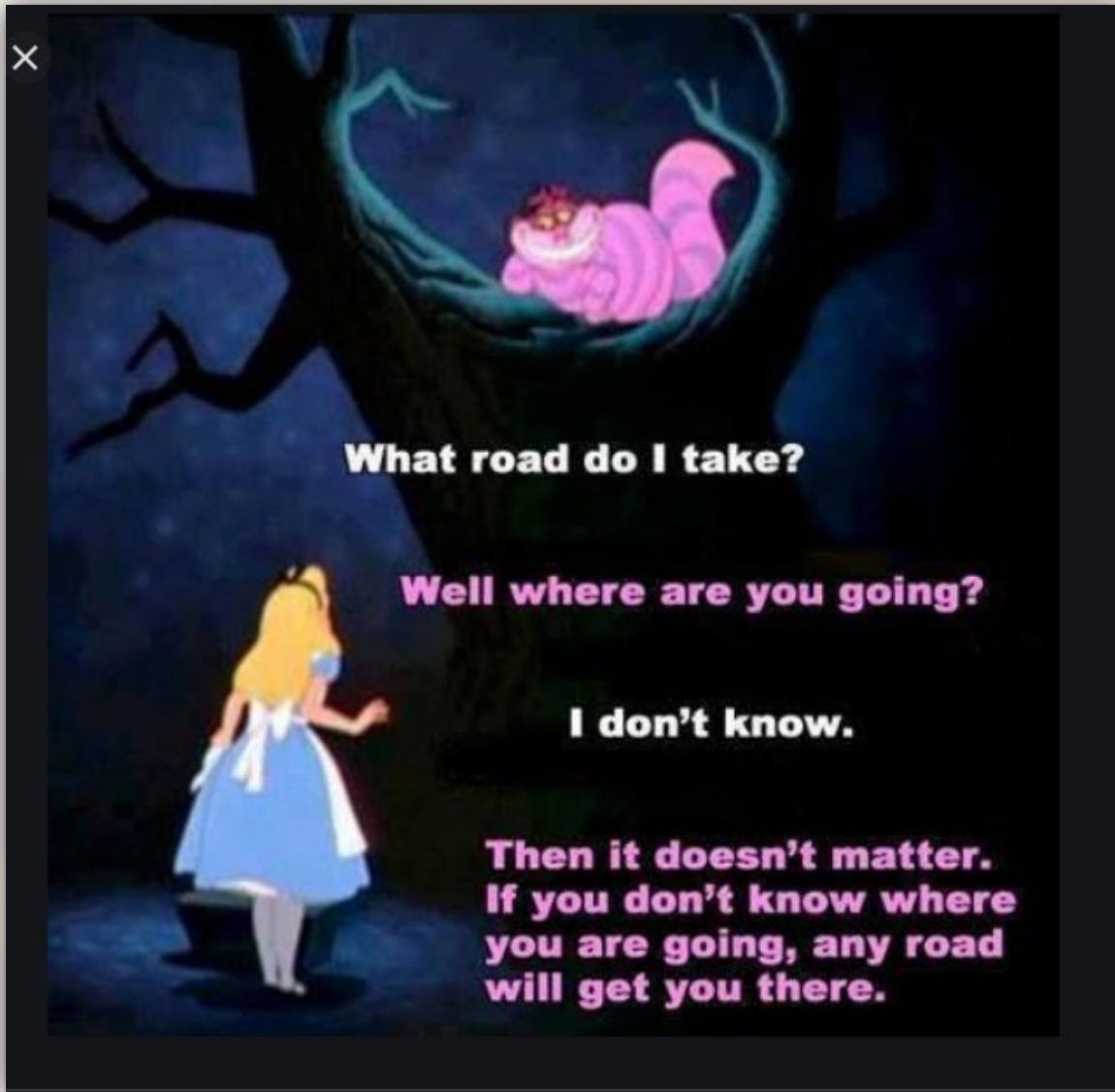
If you don't know where you are going, will you know when you get there?

STARTING & CONTINUING
THE RACIAL JUSTICE JOURNEY

RE-IMAGINE WHAT A RACIALLY JUST ORGANIZATION WOULD LOOK LIKE?

- **A RACIAL EQUITY ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE PROCESS** will disrupt and stretch the organization in sometimes scary, chaotic, and also unifying ways.

- **It is important to have a healthy and candid conversation about taking on this work**, especially for organizations who are just starting.

What risks are we willing to take to operationalize its value of racial justice?

- *Is the organization open to being explicit about naming structural racism, anti-blackness, and the system of white supremacy?*

Are we ready to be explicit about naming racism?

- *How can we use the foundation's power and privilege to make a stand   and/or leverage social capital to open doors to grantee partners?*

Are we ready for there to be disruption in how we do our work so we can transform our policies, practices, and culture to align with our value of racial justice?

SOME GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What practices are we willing to stop doing if they aren't moving us toward racial justice, even if they have been successful and we have received affirmation for them?

- *Will we share with others our decision to do so and be accountable if the practices reinforce inequities and/or cause harm?*

After reviewing policies and practices, if past or current policies or practices have reinforced inequities and/or caused harm is our organization willing to be transparent so credibility can be rebuilt, and accountability is clear moving forward?

SOME GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do we respond to our stakeholders that do not agree with our focus, or being racially explicit, and/or making investments for racial justice?

- *What might we need to do as an organization to increase our confidence and commitment to deal with backlash?*

How will our organization invest in and center building relationships?

- *What types of supports will be put in place for staff and trustees of color, since they are often burdened by the racial equity organizational change process – e.g., by its pacing, by whites' hesitations, and by the consequences when truth about the impact of racism is shared?*

Is our organization prepared to end programs and services that are not moving toward racial justice, even if they have been successful and received affirmation and/or funding?

SOME GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Is our organization ready to examine policies, practices, and partnerships to see if they are reinforcing white dominant culture or racial inequities?

How is our organization open to using its power and privilege to make a stand and/or use its voice and standing in the community for justice?
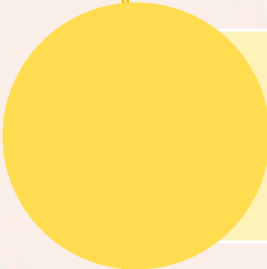
Is our organization prepared to hear candid feedback and to listen to different points of view and hard truths?

SOME QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

How am I embedding the values of racial equity and justice in what I do at work?

How am I using my voice in ways that have been effective in talking about racism and racial equity?

What has been challenging? What is confusing? What supports do I need?

HOW DO WE GET STARTED TO BECOMING A RACIALLY-JUST ORGANIZATION

Critical and Consistent Components of the Change Process

1. **Create a Racial Equity Leadership Team**

2. **Develop a Common Language and Analysis**

3. **Conduct a Racial Equity Organizational Assessment**

RACIAL EQUITY LEADERSHIP TEAM

- **THIS TEAM NEEDS TO BE DIVERSE** by departments, positions, identity groups, tenure, and informal/formal leadership.

- **INVEST IN THIS TEAM** – provide time in people's schedules to participate, build their skills and knowledge, and ensure staff and other stakeholders have clarity about their role.

- **BE EXPLICIT ABOUT THE AUTHORITY**, decision-making autonomy, team responsibilities, and expectations of staff in the change process.

- **PROVIDE EQUITABLE SUPPORT** to each team member

COMMON LANGUAGE AND ANALYSIS

Staff and board must participate in training(s) and ongoing learning engagements to learn basic definitions*, to understand structural racism and the history of racism, and to be introduced to and practice using a racial equity analysis
*(e.g., racial equity, racial justice, white privilege, power, white dominant culture, anti-blackness, oppression, system of white supremacy),

In planning for training using external consultants, provide sufficient time for the facilitators to obtain baseline information about the participants and organizational issues, build relationships, and ensure post-workshop steps are planned.

There needs to be an ongoing commitment to build staff and board's knowledge, skills, and confidence to talk about racism and white privilege and to operationalize racial justice.

It is an investment of time and yet it is important to note that the education process can be disruptive institutionally and interpersonally.

CONDUCT A RACIAL EQUITY ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The **RACIAL EQUITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS WILL BE DIFFERENT** based on the organization's size, budget, and what, specifically, the organization wants to learn more about.

SOME ORGANIZATIONS FOCUS ON LEARNING FROM STAFF ABOUT THE IMPACT OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES, their individual and collective knowledge and skills, or ideas on making progress toward racial justice, and hopes for the change process.

SOME ORGANIZATIONS CONDUCT A PARALLEL PROCESS with their board; **STILL OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WANT TO LEARN** .

It is critical to co-create a long-term roadmap and build the internal will and infrastructure for the change process to be sustained.

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SOME ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Dealing with conflicts and tensions that will happen in a racial equity change process** especially when they are complicated by power dynamics?

- **Giving and Receiving Feedback**

- **Centering Relationships**

- **Racial Identity Caucusing**

GIVING & RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Spend the time to invest in building staff skills and creating a set of RACIAL EQUITY NORMS

It is important for leadership to model using feedback well.

A healthy feedback practice thrives in an organizational culture

Create an organizational culture that welcomes and sets expectations for feedback,

CENTERING RELATIONSHIPS

- **Prioritizing Relationships…setting up INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE PROCESSES for working together, centering Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color's leadership, practicing accountability, and building authentic relationships.**

- **The Black Space Manifesto shares a set of practices. Here are a few examples:**
  - "Move at the speed of trust,
  - seek people at the margins,
  - center lived experience,
  - and reckon with the past to build the future."

- **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IS A CENTRAL PART OF RACIAL JUSTICE WORK, not an addition to it.**

RACIAL & IDENTITY CAUCUSING

- **ORGANIZATIONS CAN DEEPEN THEIR WORK AND BUILD SKILLS** by using the methodology of racial identity caucuses

- **THE VALUE OF CAUCUSING IS SO BOTH WHITE PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR HAVE INTENTIONAL SPACE** and time to focus on their respective work to dismantle racism and advance racial equity

- **CAUCUSING DOES NOT HAPPEN INSTEAD OF INTEGRATED GROUPS**; rather, caucusing can lead to more authentic and powerful integrated groups.

- **WORKING ONLY IN INTEGRATED GROUPS PUTS AN UNDUE BURDEN ON PEOPLE OF COLOR** to be teachers and obscures the responsibility of white people to do their own work

AN ORGANIZATION'S ROADMAP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

Policy Alignment

Program and Strategy Alignment

Evaluation

Leadership

Equitable Culture Development

POLICY ALIGNMENT

- Apply a **RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK** to current policies and practice.

- **DEVELOP POLICIES** that are informed by stakeholders and those most impacted.

- **PROVIDE SUPPORTS TO STAFF**

- Review recruiting, hiring, and retention practices to address inequities and racial bias.

PROGRAM & STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

- **CREATE A STRONG FEEDBACK LOOP WITH YOUR STAKEHOLDERS**, especially Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color.

- **EXAMINE HOW STRATEGIES ARE EXPECTED TO LEAD TO RESULTS AND THE WORLDVIEWS AND ASSUMPTIONS** (spoken and unspoken) that undergird the program's choice of strategies.

- **REVIEW STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION** to understand how racial inequities, white privilege and white dominant culture may be manifesting.

EVALUATION

- How is the data being collected and by whom?

- Who is defining success?

- How are outcomes being defined and are external variables such as funder deliverables being prioritized?

- Which data are informing the evaluation process?

- Is the data racially and intersectional disaggregated?

- Are the voices of participants who shared a critique or lower ratings part of the evaluation discussion?

- Are those most impacted by a particular issue sharing their experiences of the impact of the program and determining success?

LEADERSHIP

- Ensure conceptual understanding of structural racism, power, and white dominant culture.
- Provide supports and accountability for productive engagement of conflict and for leaders to build their confidence to speak up about racial justice and act.
- Interrogate leaders' own practices for interrupting bias and inequitable practices.
- Develop a willingness to take risks.
- Interrupt assumptions about who is a "good" leader.

EQUITABLE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure conceptual understanding of structural racism, power, and white dominant culture.

- Provide supports and accountability for productive engagement of conflict and for leaders to build their confidence to speak up about racial justice and act.

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ARE WE THERE YET?

"True equity requires us not to just throw around concepts at summits and sprinkle terminologies on websites and strategic plans, but to reevaluate our beliefs and practices and definitions and board and staff composition and leadership and hiring practice and funding allocation processes and who is at the table and who set the table in the first place, etc. It requires us to change our ways of doing things."

- *Vu Le of Nonprofit AF*

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Who is the organization's work going to benefit if it succeeds? Who will it benefit if the work does not succeed?

- What are the feedback and accountability processes in place?

- How are you addressing any burdens of resources or time with these individuals/groups who you are accountable to and in relationship with?

- How is your organization accounting for risks and unintended consequences of your work

- What is your organization doing to ensure the goals are met as promised?

TRACKING PROGRESS

- Who is involved in tracking benchmarks for progress?

- Whose voices and perspectives are you privileging to determine what progress looks like?

- What is the filter being used to assess if the process is too slow/fast

- How are policy changes, relationship building, and knowledge development being invested in by the organization?

- What is considered sufficient change and who is deciding what is sufficient?

- Does the progress being tracked address the root issues or are only quantifiable changes being prioritized?

CONCLUSION

Starting or deepening your organization's work to align with racial equity and to become a racially just organization will be a dynamic, maddening, emergent, intense and joyful process (sometimes all at the same time).

Often in racial equity work, we say, "we need to meet people where they are." As Arundhati Roy shared, we are in a portal between two worlds. Our focus needs to be not on meeting people where they are, rather we need to support people to re-imagine a just and liberated organization and then to collectively work to operationalize racial justice in our non-profit organization.

As we reimagine a racially just organization and work toward co-creating it, we need to increase our confidence to take risks, honor our justice warrior ancestors by acting with integrity and through solidarity, remember that racial justice work is done in right relationship and accountability to communities, specifically Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color communities, and act boldly while believing in what is possible. We are certainly at the point of no return

CONCLUSION

"Without new visions, we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics, but a process that can and must transform us. Protesting, organizing and education are all essential to activism, but they're not the entire story. To be most effective, we must also create spaces to cultivate collective freedom dreams. We live in a society where destruction has become the dominant culture, to be truly revolutionary, we need to create space built on love and solidarity."

~Robin D. G. Kelley, Professor of American History at UCLA and author of
Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination

SUMMARY

Now is the time to act on our commitment to justice, to interrogate how the system of white supremacy is operating, to be bold and take significant risks, and to work collectively for organizational transformation. It is well past time to operationalize racial justice.

"**To love is transformational**. . . . To translate this to others . . . requires our whole hearts, minds, actions, and accountable systems. All of this is a profound act of resistance and culture shift. We are swimming upstream against the normative practice of checking off our to-do lists… **Love, when fused with power, is our tool for justice, freedom, and liberation.** …Our very survival is wrapped in love and power. Our work is amphibious, living in the both/and, beyond the shores of the binary, colonized world of separation and othering."

~Shiree Teng & Sammy Nuñez, *Measuring Love in the Journey for Justice*

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THANK YOU!

END

Centering Blackness allows for a completely different worldview to emerge, free from the constraints of white supremacy and patriarchy. Imagine the possibilities of all our institutions and what it could mean for all of us if we centered Blackness and asked this foundational question: How does what I'm about to create and implement intentionally seek the voices of, lift, and protect Black people? What could we build? What would it allow us to collectively see? And how might we design new rules and institutions with the core goal of enabling Black people to thrive that would also ensure that all people thrive?"

~Centering Blackness: The Path to Economic Liberation for All, Insight Center for Community Economic Development, Medium.com