

Committing to Racial Equity in Rural Community Wealth Building

Lift all Boats?

Narrow the Gaps?

Or stage a Revolution?

(that is, Eliminate Racial Disparities)

prepared by

Andrea Anderson, Ph.D

Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change

for the NRFC Funders Institute

Wye, Maryland

November 14, 2006



Asset Building & Poverty Reduction

- The issue of reducing poverty through asset building and wealth accumulation is complex.
- It gets even more complex when we consider America's racial history and contemporary racial disparities.



Racial Gaps in Poverty and Wealth Are Not Accidental

Despite the fact that there are multiple causes of persistent poverty in rural communities, what is clear is that the history of racial hierarchy and the racialized distribution of power and wealth in America is at play in creating the conditions for maintaining these gaps.



Multiple Potential Lenses

- There are actually multiple ‘lenses’ we could use to understand the persistence of racial disparity
 - Individual
 - Institutional
 - Structural

The Individual Lens

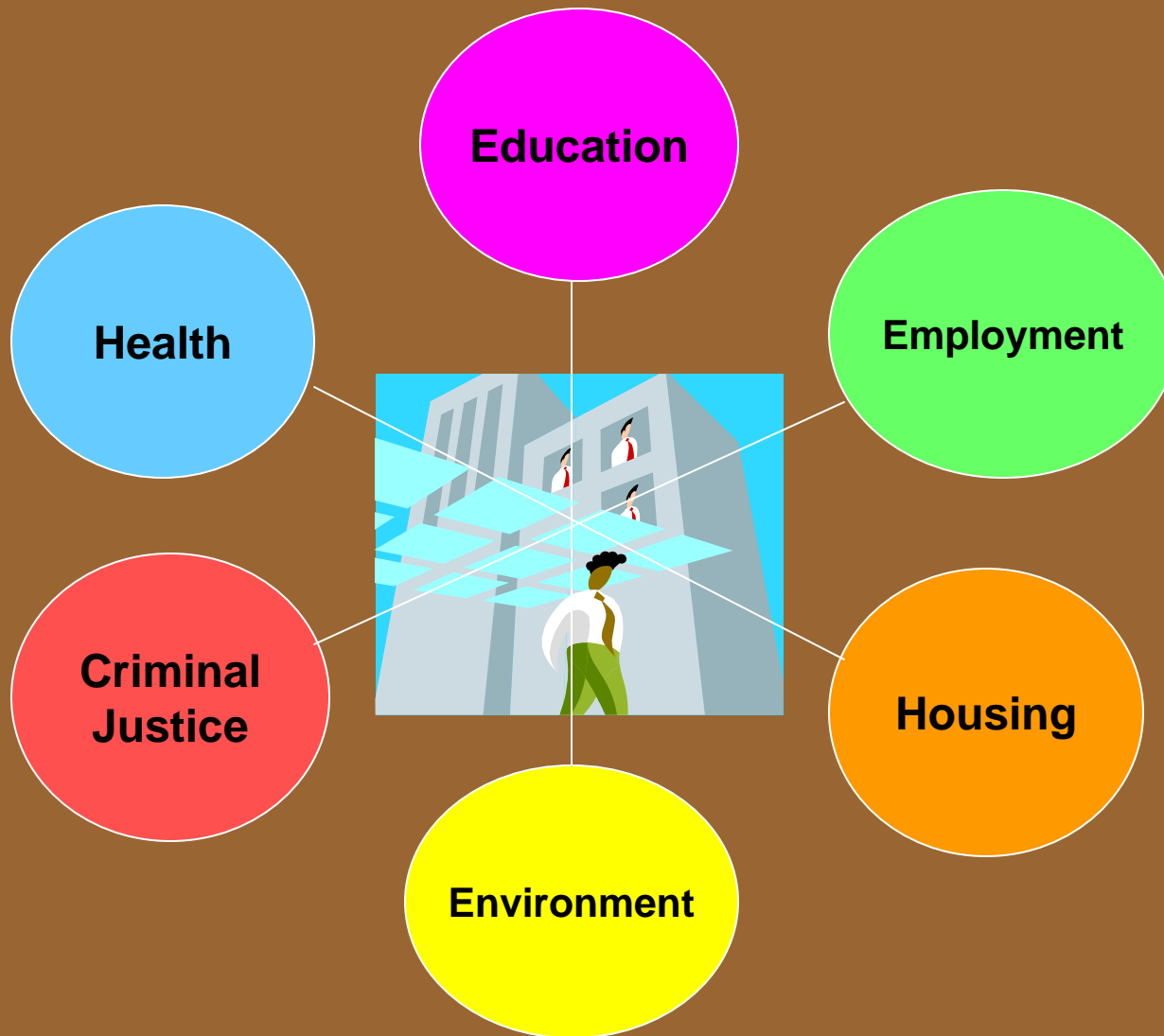
You *****s don't belong in this neighborhood. Get the \$*\$@ out, or I'll kick your *%&& !!

Face-to-face or covert actions toward others that intentionally express prejudice, hate, or bias, based on race...

based on belief in the superiority of one's own race.



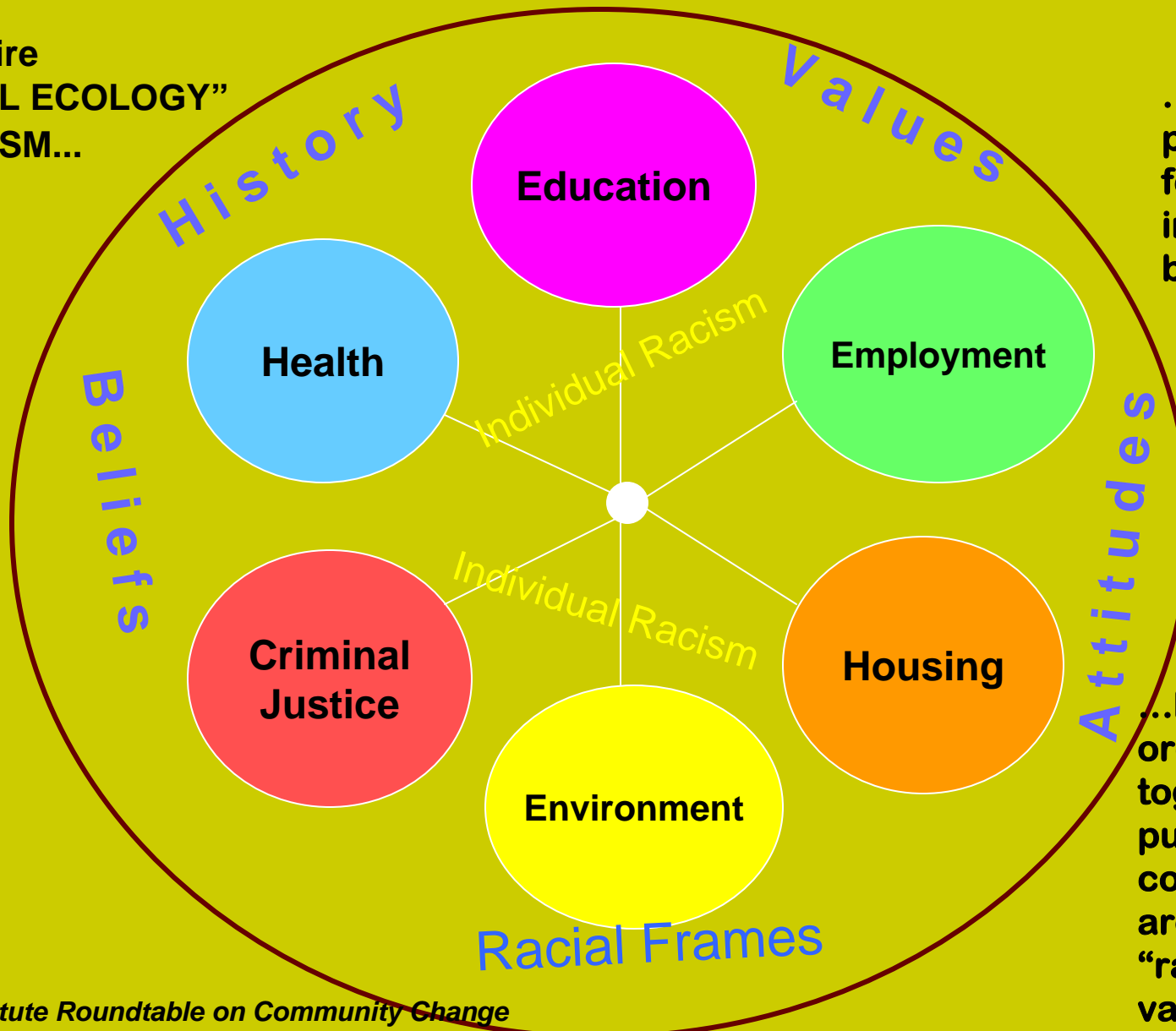
The Institutional Lens



Policies and practices within and across institutions that, *Intentionally or not*, produce outcomes that **chronically favor or disfavor** certain racial groups.

The Structural Lens

The entire
"SOCIAL ECOLOGY"
of RACISM...



...not just a
problem of a
few flawed
institutions, or
bad actors...

...but a racial
order held
together by
public
consensus
around
"racialized"
values

	Individual / Inter-Group	Institutional	Structural
Definition	The bigotry, bias, prejudice and exclusion an individual exhibits or experiences based on race.	Racism embedded in "neutral" institutions, resulting in policies and practices that have disparate impact by race.	The ways in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations (stereotypes and norms) interact to maintain racial hierarchies and inequitable racial group outcomes.
Focus of Analysis	Personal injustice; individual attitudes, assumptions, feelings, and behaviors	The site (institution or organization) of injustice or oppression.	Linkages across public policies, institutional practices that reinforce inequalities, as well as the historically-rooted beliefs, frames, and assumptions relating to race in the surrounding culture.
Assumptions about Causes	Prejudice, bias, group stereotypes, socialization, fear, anger, etc.	"Legitimate" decision-making and standard operating procedures of public and private institutions that, though seemingly race-neutral, continually generate racially biased outcomes.	Racial hierarchy embedded in "equalizing institutions"; racist synergies across institutional boundaries; racialized societal norms that have remained unexamined and unchallenged over our history; "progress and retrenchment" cycle in social equality reforms.
Theory of Change	Individual change through introspection, awareness and education; a critical mass of transformed individuals.	Change institutional norms, values and practices through individual awareness and political action.	Develop capacity to change policy, practice and representations; coalition building and collective action.
Intended Outcomes	Individuals will use new awareness within personal and professional spheres; appreciation for group differences, improved communication and better cooperation.	Institutional accountability; a level playing field and greater opportunity within an institution.	Racial equity on important community outcomes.



History and Culture Make Racial Disparities Seem “Normal”

The current racial arrangement is supported by our history and our culture which allows the pattern of white privilege seem “normal.”



How does one “undo” a “structural” problem?

So, if we accept that structural racism produced and continues to maintain racial disparities throughout our society, what are we to do about it?



One Dream....

Total and complete revolution—
understanding the hypocrisy of our traditional
American values of meritocracy,
individualism and personal responsibility—
replaced with socialization of private sector
and private property, third party politics,
reparations, redistribution of unearned
wealth.....



Ok, but to be serious....

But until we can get these types of ideas in a fundable proposal, we need come up with good “second best” ideas to fund and support



Applied Research Center

- Our friends at the Applied Research Center have put forward a framework that is also useful to consider
- It contrasts “colorblind” with “race focused” strategies
- It can help us see why it is important to be able to recognize the difference

“Colorblind” / Racist Framing of Issues	Racial Justice/ Race Conscious Framing of Issues
Conceals racism, denies it exists	Reveals and explicitly addresses racism
*Focuses on contemporary explanations for racial gaps in wealth	*Demonstrates the historical antecedents of the contemporary racial gaps in wealth
Focuses on, and blames, individuals	Focuses on institutional inequities
Blames and scapegoats people of color	Exposes the scape-goating and lies
Appeals to white people’s fears and hatred	Appeals to white people’s sense of fairness and justice
Denies the existence of power and privilege	Makes structural racism, and the [*history of white privilege] apparent
Focuses on individual intentions, efforts, attitudes and beliefs	Focuses on institutional impacts and policy outcomes
Asserts “colorblindness”	Promotes racially-conscious, equitable, accessible and inclusive strategies, proposals and outcomes



NRFC/Aspen Framework

The team at NRFC and the Roundtable took this a step further, and developed a different typology for dealing with racial inequities in poverty and wealth

- Lift all boats
- Narrow the Gaps
- Eliminate the Gaps



Lift All Boats

These strategies assume that there is a level playing field, equal opportunity, etc., and are designed to improve the overall economic conditions in a community, with the expectation that everyone will be able to benefit from better schools, economic development, or new health care facilities.



Lift All Boats

The Structural Racism analysis suggests that lift all boats strategies have little potential to close racial gaps, because they do not disrupt the mechanisms that generate and maintain racial inequities in the first place.

“Narrowing the Gap” Strategies

Strategies designed to narrow racial gaps often move forward by focusing investments and policies on disadvantaged communities and are aimed at reducing specific racial disparities.

“Narrowing The Gaps” Examples

- ❑ Enforcement of anti-discrimination policies that limit access to capital in minority markets
- ❑ Regulation of predatory lending in minority markets
- ❑ Development of affordable housing alternatives to manufactured homes in rural minority markets
- ❑ Minority-owned agricultural cooperatives that can compete in market with larger/white firms
- ❑ Community benefit agreements that document how economic development (such as the construction of a new plant or expansion of a university) can be used to benefit community members



...But These Strategies May Never Be Enough

Despite the fact that it makes sense to try to provide good services to the poor (lift all boats), or to eliminate known discriminatory practices (narrow the gaps), we at the Roundtable believe that the best solution to the racial gaps we seek to eliminate will always involve structural change.



Structural Solutions....

But, while we advocate “structural solutions,” we must remember that there is no magic “structural bullet” that will automatically eliminate racial gaps....



Structural Solutions....

There are no “magic bullets”...and there are many different combinations of fundable strategies that could be employed in the name of promoting racial equity—so the goal is to be able to put this on the table, to change the conversation from one about “community wealth” to a conversation about **racial equity in community wealth**



Structural Solutions....

- Expand the discussion from *simply improving* social conditions to one about *promoting racial equity as well*
- Work to change the knowledge context that maintains the status quo
- Connect history and the legacy of overt racism to modern racial inequities



Structural Solutions....

- Look across multiple institutions
- “Structural” necessarily means that the way any one institution works is linked to all of the others



Structural Solutions....

- Coordinate the efforts of many allies to “work multiple angles” of the problem simultaneously
- Change power relationships to include the voices and choices of people and communities of color



So, where are the examples?

...if we had lots of examples of structural solutions to racial inequity, would we be sitting here?

...but important guiding questions may help us stay on track as we create examples of how to promote racial equity.



Key Questions that Guide Racial Equity Work

- “have we become comfortable with lifting boats?”
- “is this strategy getting at the root causes of inequity?”
- “ are we challenging the conventional wisdom about this problem, changing the knowledge context”
- “ are there parts of the institutional web that we are not attending to?”
- ...these and other questions are the ones that guide our work if we commit to a racial equity agenda....



Good Ideas Are Brewing...

- ❑ Indian Land Tenure's Policy Advocacy
- ❑ Tallulah's Prison to College Conversion
- ❑ Roots of Change—Changing Food Distribution
- ❑ Forming Cooperatives of Agricultural Workers
- ❑ Farmers markets in the South creating a “common ground” for cross-racial interaction and local economic development



So what are we supposed to do?

Our advice about how to close racial gaps in wealth is **not tactical** ...there are endless potential combinations of strategies that could be used to stimulate the economy in these regions

Key Questions...

- What we must ask is:
 - How do we develop the power and political will to do anything new?
 - How do we make sure that the intended beneficiaries of our new policies are the ones who actually reap the benefits?



“Undoing” Structural Racism

Some promising ideas, like the ones proposed by the Mid-South Commission, may appear to be ‘COLORBLIND’ yet offer the potential for racial equity impacts if they are implemented with racial equity as a measure of success



Creating A Theory Of Change Is Just Step One

The difficult issue in this work, and in the other examples we can share, is not in the identification of outcomes in **a theory of change**, but in the tactical work that is required to bring these changes about and to sustain them.



In Addition To Creating A Solid Theory Of Change We Must Also...

- Change the “conventional wisdom” about the economic potential of the community—dispel myths and stereotypes
- Change policies that are barriers to economic development in the region



In Addition To Creating A Solid Theory Of Change We Must Also...

- Challenge the decision making structures that have historically moved resources away from the community
- Make decision making more transparent and fair



In Addition To Creating A Solid Theory Of Change We Must Also...

- Develop political power at community level to bring state and federal resources in to build infrastructure that supports economic development
- Develop the ability to exploit natural resources without damaging environmental impacts



In Addition To Creating A Solid Theory Of Change We Must Also...

- Develop power to negotiate with private sector for community benefit agreements that leave wealth in the community
- Develop the mechanisms required to invest wealth in the community to multiply the effects—keep wealth in the community



Concluding Advice

- Creating Racial Equity Theories of Change with the above mentioned preconditions in place should take us a long way toward our goal of promoting and maintaining racial equity in key opportunity areas in rural America.
- The key, we think, is to be vigilant about these values, and flexible in your strategies



For more information....

For more information about Racial Equity Theories of Change, please contact:

Andrea Anderson

Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change

281 Park Avenue South, 5th Floor

New York, NY 10010

andreaA@aspenroundtable.org

212 677 5510, ext 34