Creating Cultures & Practices for Racial Equity

A Toolbox for Advancing Racial Equity for Arts and Cultural Organizations

By Nayantara Sen & Terry Keleher, Race Forward

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As communities across the U.S. find themselves entangled in an escalating culture war...

...all arts organizations — and especially white-led arts institutions — *must refocus their efforts on racial and cultural justice.*

Poster by Rommy Torrico/ Amplifier.org

Letter to the Arts and Culture Field

Dear artists, arts advocates, culture bearers, and cultural workers,

On behalf of Race Forward's Narrative Arts and Culture program, we are delighted to bring you this toolbox on Creating Cultures and Practices for Racial Equity. It contains a variety of tools to help you imagine, plan, and implement racial equity strategies in your arts organization.

Whether you are an arts or cultural practitioner already working with a racial equity team and plan or just beginning the journey towards organizational transformation, these tools can help guide, focus, and reinvigorate your efforts.

The arts and culture sector is far behind where it should be in terms of racial and cultural equity.
As museums, theaters, music and dance organizations, and arts institutions tackle diversity, equity, and inclusion work—sometimes through formal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committees or plans—they can experience inertia, avoidance or entrenchment when dealing with racism. DEI efforts lose potency and impact when they are deracialized, depoliticized, and dehistoricized. Many arts organizations deal generally with diversity issues, but fall short of specifically addressing racial inequities in their institutions, in all kinds of decisions such as curation, compensation, and organizational culture.

Racial inequities have also been worsening in the arts and cultural sector. Helicon Collaborative's research[1] tells us that racial disparities in the art sector and cultural philanthropy have shockingly increased in the last ten years. This being the case despite an uptick in awareness, workshops, and trainings about diversity and inclusion issues. Across the arts sector, most notably in museums[2] and in the entertainment world[3] , leadership, staff, and boards are disproportionately white-led and do not represent the racial and cultural makeup of their audiences or communities.

1 Helicon Collaborative's "Not Just Money: Equity Issues in Cultural Philanthropy" report, 2017
2 Mellon Foundation's Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey report, 2018
3 UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying economic crisis has revealed and exacerbated racial disparities in the arts and culture sector. Since the onset and spread of the novel coronavirus, artists and arts organizations have faced extraordinarily adverse impacts, causing large swaths of the arts sector to cancel programs and events, lose revenue and sustainability, and lay off or furlough cultural workers. Two-thirds of artists have become unemployed. And cultural institutions rooted in low-income communities of color are shuttering. From the gutting of smaller, under-resourced community arts organizations led by Black and/or Indigeneous People of color (BIPOC) to the inequitable layoffs of BIPOC staff (who are relegated to lower level positions and frequently occupy frontline roles within larger, white-dominated arts institutions)—the fallout is racialized and racist.

Now is the time for arts leaders and arts administrators to steadfastly, purposefully, and strategically commit to transforming arts institutions for racial and cultural justice. Arts and cultural institutions are the cornerstones of a national culture.

> DEI efforts lose potency and impact when they are deracialized, depoliticized, and dehistoricized.

They generate, amplify, and reproduce stories and narratives about who belongs and who is valued. Narratives that uplift the art, culture, voices, and experiences of marginalized communities — BIPOC; immigrants and refugees; women of color; LGBTQIA+ communities, transgender, queer and disabled people — must be central to the work of all arts organizations. As communities across the U.S. find themselves entangled in an escalating culture war and more visible, violent manifestations of white supremacy and white nationalism, all arts organizations — and especially white-led arts institutions — must refocus their efforts on racial and cultural justice.

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ADOPTING A CLEAR COMMITMENT for racial equity is the first step. But commitment is not enough. We must also act with vision, discipline, and strategy, and for that, racial equity tools are essential. Audre Lorde taught us that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." We need a different tool box to help us build new models of just, decolonial, worker-centered arts organizations. We must imagine and innovate as we build — and we must be ready to change ourselves in service of this humanizing work.

Readying your arts organization for racial equity is challenging and complex work. Institutional efforts for racial equity require creativity, innovation, deep collaboration, vulnerability and openness to learning — and importantly, strategies and tools. Fortunately, racial

justice practitioners, activists, and artists are always dreaming up creative tools and tactics, so you can lean on a wide and growing array of equity tools in your journey towards racial justice.

Here, in this toolbox, we have lovingly curated a set of six racial equity tools that emerged from Race Forward's *Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab*, a 2-year intensive from 2017-2019 that supported 58 arts organizations in New York City in developing racial equity prototypes, practices and skills, and in integrating a race equity lens into their work. You can learn more about our Arts Lab and watch videos about racial equity in the arts at https://www.raceforward.org/practice/nyc-arts. An appendix at the end of this toolbox includes additional favorite tools and resources as well.

Amidst the converging ecological and social crises of our time, we are called to step up and confront the realities of racism in our arts and cultural spaces with courage, truth-telling, and love.

As the Cultural New Deal[4] reminds us, we are the artists, the culture bearers, the healers of the spirit, the first responders to the community's soul. Arts leaders and artists are uniquely positioned to innovate towards a just, multiracial, democratic culture. As an arts practitioner, you can work collectively and creatively to champion this work.

We, like many, many others, are on this journey with you. As you navigate these waters towards the horizon of racial and cultural justice in the arts, we wish for you courage, clarity, fortitude, and faith. If you find this toolkit valuable, please consider sharing it with others who might benefit from it.

In solidarity,

Nayantara Sen,
Director of Narrative and
Cultural Strategies, Race Forward

Terry Keleher,
Director of Strategic Innovation,
Race Forward

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4 Cultural New Deal: https://culturalnewdeal.com/

(glossary)

First, here are some terms that are helpful to understand for doing this work.

BIPOC: A term referring to "Black and/or Indigenous People of Color." While "POC" or People of Color is often used as well, BIPOC explicitly leads with Black and Indigenous identities, which helps to counter anti-Black racism and invisibilization of Native communities.

Racial Equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.

Racial Justice is a vision and transformation of society to eliminate racial hierarchies and advance collective liberation, where Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color, in particular, have the dignity, resources, power, and self-determination to fully thrive

Cultural Justice is the healing and remedying of the erasure, suppression, and marginalization of people's artistic and cultural practices.
Cultural Justice restores and creates for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color ways of living, being, and sense-making, allowing all of us to express ourselves and be recognized in our full complex humanity, and moves all people toward a richer, more vibrant multiracial democracy.

Choice Point is a decision-making opportunity to consciously consider racial equity and influence outcomes. Example choices points may be decisions made within program development, event planning, budgeting, hiring, policy development, etc.

Equity Prime is a prompt or reminder to direct your attention towards centering racial equity and BIPOC. It can often take the form of a simple visual image, some key words, provocative questions, or a checklist.

Racial Equity Tool is a guide for thoughtfully and systematically addressing racial equity during a choice point. It often involves a series of steps with corresponding questions used with direct and diverse stakeholders to analyze and address racism and racial equity. (A simple equity prime can remind you to use a more robust Racial Equity Tool.) For further explanation, see Appendix 1: What is a Racial Equity Tool?.

Visioning for Racial Equity involves identifying core values and aspirations, and imagining transformative and equitable change.

Normalizing for Racial Equity involves routinely discussing and analyzing racism and racial equity.

Organizing for Racial Equity involves building relationships and engaging stakeholders, partners, and leaders to take action to advance racial equity.

Operationalizing for Racial Equity involves strategically systematizing and scaling racial equity practices, policies, and culture often by using Racial Equity Tools[5].

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5 (The framework of "Visioning, Normalizing, Organizing, and Operationalizing" was developed and applied by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, another area of Race Forward's work.

How to use this Toolkit

In order to develop racial equity policies, practices, and culture in your arts organization, we recommend following four sequential steps, listed in the chart below. Each step has corresponding curated tools and primes.

Racial Equity Tools & Primes

Step 1: Aim for Racial Equity Outcomes and Impact.

Get clear about the specific internal and/or external outcomes and impacts that you'd like to work towards in your organization.

Organizational Equity Impacts and Outcomes Assessment.
This tool can help you pause and envision what racial equity could look and feel like in your organization. It includes a list of specific possible impacts or outcomes for different areas of your organization's work.

p.12–23

Step 2: Use Choice Points to Counteract Racial Inequities.

Identify specific decision-making opportunities where you can consciously apply a race lens.

Choice Points Criteria and Selection Worksheet.
This tool provides a set of five criteria for identifying, prioritizing, and selecting choice points in your work.

p. 24–29

Step 3: Use Equity Primes.

This provides you an immediate prompt or short-term visual reminder to center racial equity and BIPOC.

Race Forward Equity Prime.
This is a beautiful poster you can pull out, print, and post in your workspace to remind you to pay attention to racial equity considerations.

p.23

DreamYard Equity Prime.
Co-developed by staff at DreamYard, an arts organization in the Bronx, NY, this visual reminder helps redirect attention to racial equity dynamics.

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Step 4: Use a Racial Equity Tool to generate creative strategies and tactics.

This helps you analyze institutional racism and its root causes, generate solutions, assess impacts, and develop strategies and actions. There are lots of different types of tools. You can use one from this Toolbox, from other sources, or create your own. Use the tool for building generative and creative space to develop new ideas and actions.

R.A.C.E. Lens Tool.
This includes both a prime (visual image) and a tool (questions for robust and participatory analysis) to focus on racial equity. This multi-purpose tool can be used for designing events, developing programs, etc.

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Values-Based Racial Equity Tool.
This tool guides you in turning core values into corresponding practices and strategies that point you in the direction of racial equity.

p.38 & 39

Each tool or prime in this toolbox is unique and serves different purposes. We encourage you to review the tools, mix and match, and use as you see fit. You might find that some tools are better suited for your organizational context and culture than others.

The tools are designed for use in a collective and participatory manner, with colleagues, stakeholders, community partners, and leaders — with attention to full inclusion and active participation of marginalized, Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Racial equity is best undertaken collaboratively — the more you can engage relevant stakeholders, the better. Additionally, misalignment, resistance, or reluctance from your staff is possible. If you think leaders with positional power might disrupt your racial equity efforts it might be worthwhile to engage gatekeepers, allies, and leadership strategically with these tools right from the outset. In doing so you can better set up your efforts for institutional success and subsequent implementation.

Some tools may take more than one sitting to use. Some involve worksheets and assessments. Don't rush through them! We recommend carving out ample time to reflect on the questions. A lot of racial bias occurs when we move too fast, at the speed of habit, instead of slowing down to investigate, reflect, dig deep, and initiate new practices. Also, the process may not always unfold in a sequential and predictable manner. It often flows more iteratively, where you may need to jump back and forth between questions as new ideas and insights emerge.

We have designed this toolkit as a zine for a few reasons. Zines are a print and art form that emerged from LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities and storytelling traditions. As marginalized folks they have been excluded from the literary and arts institutions of writing and publishing. Zines rely on DIY print-making techniques that prioritize self-determination and expression, which is an essential function for cultural justice. And, we also wanted to make it easy for arts leaders and all kinds of readers to download, reprint, photocopy, and share these tools. We hope you find these reusable tools helpful for your racial equity journey. You are welcome to reprint and share widely, with appropriate attribution to this toolkit, Race Forward and/or DreamYard.

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YOU WILL MAKE BIG MISTAKES

TOOL #1:

Organizing Racial Equity Impacts and Outcomes Assessment

WHAT DOES A TRANSFORMED, HEALTHY, RACIALLY EQUITABLE arts organization look and feel like?

This tool is designed to help you and your teammates get clear about the racial impacts and equitable outcomes that you want to see unfold and take root in your organization. Working towards racial equity involves creativity, imagination, inquiry, clarity, and purpose.

Ultimately, racial equity involves concrete, tangible, specific, and measurable results and outcomes experienced by all your staff, stakeholders, and audiences.

Unlike diversity, racial equity is **more than just quantitative or demographic shifts** in the numbers of BIPOC in your visitors, audience, staff, or Board.

Racial equity is fundamentally about **interrupting patterns and practices** that harm, impede, silence, marginalize, or disempower BIPOC within institutions.

Racial equity involves differentiated, targeted treatment that **meets the needs of BIPOC** and materially improves their conditions.

Racial equity outcomes often produce conditions for shared collaboration, growth, and joy within your organization. As you navigate the complex waters of organizational change for racial equity, we must underscore that it helps to **keep specific outcomes in mind.**

Before you begin, take some time to *IMAGINE* what exactly you're aiming for.

"Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads."

PREFIGURATION — the ability to imagine a future just society *as though it is already happening now* — is an essential characteristic of cultural change. For arts professionals working towards racial equity, it's important to prefigure racial equity in your organizations and to truly imagine and visualize what equity can look and feel like.

Artwork by Nansi Guevara
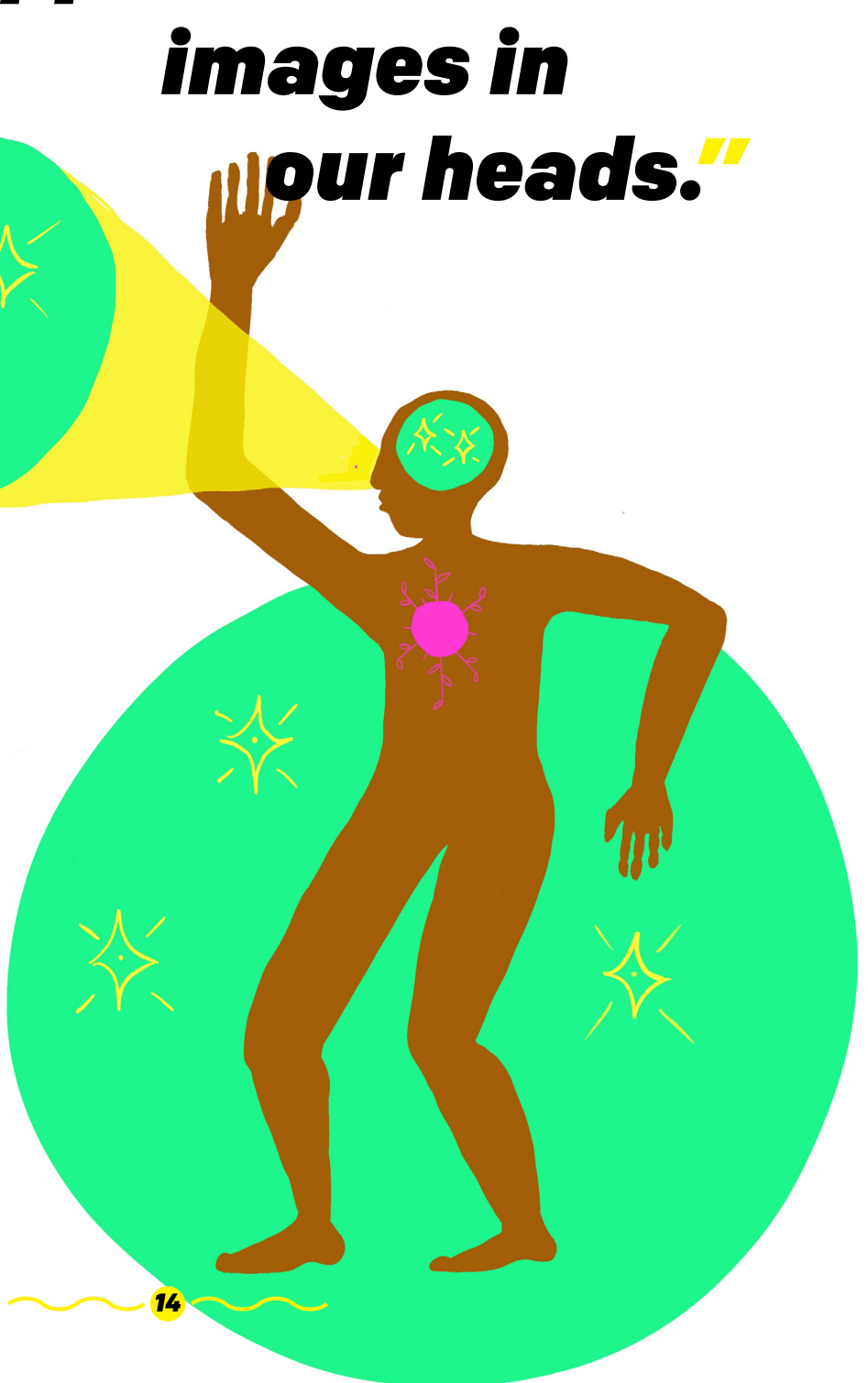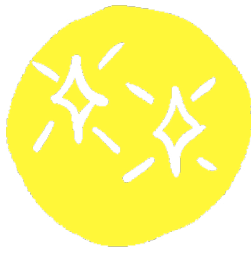
Visioning Worksheet Questions:

Take some time to imagine what a transformed, racially equitable, healthy organization looks and feels like. Answer the questions in the section below and then move on to reviewing the examples of racial equity impacts in order to get clear about what changes you're attempting to make.

Q1. What can racial equity look like in your workplace? And what would it feel like? What behaviors, policies and practices would have to change to enable racial equity in your organization?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2. How would relationships in your organization have to change in order to foster racial equity?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3. What would it feel like to be a workplace where BIPOC thrive and are truly well — and for all stakeholders to experience equity, belonging, and wellness?

_____

_____

_____

_____

INSTRUCTIONS: The tables below list some examples of internal and external facing racial equity impacts and outcomes at arts and cultural organizations. This list is a sampling and not comprehensive — there might be other kinds of racial equity results that you could aim for in your work.

For each impact or outcome, assign a score on a scale of 1-5 in the right column reflecting your assessment of your organization's current state in this area. Use the scoring key to the right.

1 = Inadequate/Not addressed/Not achieved
2 = Insufficiently addressed/Insufficiently achieved
3 = Adequately addressed/Adequately achieved
4 = Sufficiently addressed/Sufficienty achieved
5 = Exemplary practice
NA =Not applicable.

Internal-Facing Racial Equity Impacts:
Which would you like to see happen at your organization?

AREA OF WORK	IMPACT OR OUTCOME	RATING
Budgeting, Expenditures and Investments	Financial systems ensure that an equitable and growing share of your expenditures and investments go to enterprises and organizations owned and/or led by BIPOC to counteract race and gender wealth gaps. Decisions about resource and fund allocations prioritize racial equity and consider the impacts on BIPOC staff and stakeholders. Racial equity projects and programs are appropriately funded and resourced — and fundraising efforts are continually underway to enable successful racial equity implementation.	
Vendor Procurement and Contracting	Operational systems prioritize relationships and contracts with local BIPOC vendors and BIPOC small business in order to counteract race and gender wealth gaps. Vendor procurement processes eliminate barriers through strategies like translated documents, accessible forms, and transparent policies and communication. BIPOC Vendors are treated with respect and compensated equitably.	

AREA OF WORK	IMPACT OR OUTCOME	RATING
Human Resources	HR and personnel practices eliminate bias and barriers in hiring, retention, and promotion decisions to incrementally eliminate racial gaps. Goals and plans at all levels of employment reach parity in racial representation with the racial demographics of the community you reside in or serve. BIPOC staff are trained in using racial equity practices and receive ongoing learning and leadership development opportunities related to racial equity. BIPOC staff receive new and sufficient support mechanisms in order to succeed and lead, and have racial affinity spaces provided if needed. White staff receive training and leadership development support in order to foster white anti-racist advocacy and allyship, and have racial affinity spaces provided, if needed. Pay and compensation scales are periodically reexamined and revised in order to increase racial equity (and eliminate race/gender wage gaps). Racial equity expectations, standards, and measures are incorporated into annual employee performance appraisals. All staff experience a sense of clarity, comfort, proficiency, and institutional support in enacting racial equity goals and plans in their work.	
Program Design, Development, and Evaluation	Annual organization-wide and departmental/program-level racial equity goals and plans, with periodic reporting and accountability measures are implemented. Racial Equity is integrated into cross-cutting strategic planning goals and activities. Program evaluation systems track, measure, and report on programmatic racial equity progress and impact. Racial Equity Assessment Tools or Primes are used regularly before and during programmatic decisions, and shared racial equity tools are referenced across teams and departments. **(continued on next page)**	

AREA OF WORK	IMPACT OR OUTCOME	RATING
Program, Design, Development, and Evaluation cont.	Program managers are able to articulate how activities materially improve the conditions for BIPOC audiences, visitors, artists, and stakeholders. Storytelling about program impacts and results — for both communications and marketing efforts as well as fundraising — speak specifically and authentically about racial equity impacts experienced by BIPOC staff and stakeholders.	
Collections, Aquisitions, and Accessions	For collecting and exhibiting arts organizations, policies and practices ensure that BIPOC artists are presented in ways that edify, delight, and create space for new and expanded publics. Advisory committees for accessions and exhibitions include curators, scholars, and/or artists, and community experts who represent under-represented and misrepresented communities to help disrupt insularity, provide accountability, and produce equity-focused decisions that elevate BIPOC artists.	
Organizational Culture	Race conversations are normalized, constructive, and productive. Staff, interns, and volunteers feel comfortable, skilled, and supported by each other when engaging with learning, inquiry, and decision-making on racial equity issues. Staff are well-versed in the manifestations of white supremacy cultural norms like perfectionism, individualism, power hoarding, etc., and engage habitually to notice, address, and interrupt those norms. (For more information on white supremacy norms, see Tema Okun's article). Organizational policies, practices, and protocols prioritize staff physical and emotional health and wellness. Regular check-ins or assessments of staff happiness and quality of life are conducted. Conversations about shared and equitable labor, including emotional labor, are frequent and policies and decisions are adjusted to ensure that BIPOC staff are not overburdened or fatigued. **(continued on next page)**	

AREA OF WORK	IMPACT OR OUTCOME	RATING
Organizational Culture, cont.	New practices reflecting multi-racial and intersectional inclusion are developed and sustained. Cultures prioritizing story-sharing, skill-sharing, care-taking, celebration, and wellness are uplifted. Staff across all levels do not fear retaliation for talking about institutional racism and appropriate grievance policies protect against interpersonal issues.	
Governance and Decision-Making	Organizational decisions do not stem from white leaders' discomfort, biases or preferences, but rather from collaborative leadership that engages BIPOC staff and stakeholders and meets their needs. Racial equity decision-making tools are regularly used to make routine decisions, large and small, for planning, budgeting, hiring, policy-making, etc. An active and diverse racial equity team (cross-departmental, including senior level and newer staff) helps initiate, plan, and coordinate equity-related activities. A Board of Directors that is majority BIPOC and invested in racial equity action is cultivated, recruited, retained, sustained, and activated — by a designated date.	

External-Facing Racial Equity Impacts:
Which would you like to see happen at your organization?

AREA OF WORK	IMPACT OR OUTCOME	
Audience, Visitor, and Community Engagement	Barriers to access and engagement for BIPOC audiences and visitors are routinely discussed, and plans for addressing them are generated and implemented across the organization. Racial equity efforts are not siloed in or relegated only to front-line staff (such as visitor services or education department staff) but racial equity goals and plans are integrated into every department. BIPOC staff are not overrepresented in parts of the institution that have to do with engaging community members or educating audiences — but they occupy roles with positional power across the institution, including in leadership. **(continued on next page)**	*RATING*

AREA OF WORK	IMPACT OR OUTCOME	RATING
Audience, Visitor, and Community Engagement, cont.	Programs that authentically and reciprocally engage feedback, expertise, input, and investment from BIPOC communities are prioritized, resourced, and celebrated.

Race-explicit language that speaks to impacts on specific BIPOC communities is encouraged and used, rather than vague, generalized, or racially coded language.

Relationships and strategic partnerships with BIPOC communities — and organizations rooted in BIPOC communities — are honored and prioritized. Long-term, mutually reciprocal, supportive relationships become the norm rather than one-off, transactional, events-based partnerships. | |
| **Event Productions, Public Programs, and/or Exhibitions** | BIPOC artists are prominently featured and amplified in exhibitions and events.

Content, tone, relevance, and stance of programs and exhibits are evaluated with an understanding of racism and racial equity — rather than from a colorblind, race-neutral perspective. | |
| **Curatorial** | BIPOC hold key curatorial positions and are supported in bringing their life experiences into the processes of their work.

Curators value the aesthetics and cultural and experiential knowledge of formerly excluded communities.

Curatorial practices decenter the institution in favor of the communities they serve, and democratize processes to include artists and culture-bearers of formerly excluded communities. | |
| **Communications and Marketing** | Publicity, marketing, and programming of BIPOC artists is prominent and common-place.

Internal and external communications and educational materials include representative materials around BIPOC artists.

Racial dynamics are routinely and explicitly addressed in public communications and social media. Messaging and external communications speak directly to BIPOC communities and families.

(continued on next page) | |

AREA OF WORK	IMPACT OR OUTCOME	RATING
Communications and Marketing, cont.	Core issues and programs are framed with an explicit racial equity lens. Dominant narratives or stereotypes experienced by communities your organization serves are directly interrupted rather than reproduced through communications.	
Artist Development Programs, including Fellowships, Commissions, Residencies	BIPOC fellows, residents, teaching artists, and commissioned artists are equitably supported, resourced, and amplified. Dedicated and targeted support — including grant funds, mentorship opportunities, and guidance — are provided to BIPOC artists. Metrics and indicators of progress are tracked over time to assess rates of retention, growth, and success of BIPOC artists in programs. Selection processes employ equitable strategies and account for barriers to applications and access to artists programs. Selections, hires, and commissions are made after candidate pools are representative and diverse.	
Facilities, Physical Space and Maintenance	For arts presenting organizations that have facilities, meeting spaces, galleries, theatres, gardens, exhibition and event spaces, care is taken to make physical spaces feel welcoming to BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities. Accessibility and inclusion standards are implemented. This includes access to gender neutral bathrooms, translated gallery signage and materials, and ADA-compliant physical spaces. Facilities, maintenance, grounds, and security staff are treated with respect, compensated equitably, and experience reliable career mobility within the institution.	

Once you've scored every area of work, use your ratings to identify and prioritize what needs attention and action. The tool is not designed to provide any composite score across all the items, since the items are all different, plus, not all items apply to every organization. First, take a look at the areas that you rated 4 or 5. These can give you insight into your strengths, accomplishments, and assets. Then look at the areas that you scored 1 or 2. These may need the most attention. Which could you prioritize for further attention and action? There may be some strengths or lessons from the highly scored areas that may help you address the items with the lower scores.

We have shared the blank template below for you to add other areas of work and impacts that are relevant to your organization or institution.

Which specific racial equity impacts or outcomes would you like to see happen at your organization?

AREA OF WORK	IMPACT OR OUTCOME	RATING

WHAT ARE THE racial equity impacts OF YOUR DECISION?

Choice Points Criteria and Selection Worksheet

When routine decisions are made without attention to racism and racial equity, the result is typically the continuation of the status quo which generally reinforces and reproduces white dominant cultural patterns, racial inequities, and exclusion.

CHOICE POINTS ARE decision-making opportunities to consciously consider racial equity and influence outcomes.

In your routine organizational operations, there are many choice points — some are big ones, some are small, some occur frequently, while others may be annual. Example choice points may be strategic planning, curatorial decisions, featuring artists in productions or exhibitions, HR and personnel decisions, budgeting, facilities management, program development, event production, audience engagement, etc. For all or most of these decisions in the daily life of your organization, there are likely a myriad of ways in which racial bias occurs, and therefore just as many opportunities to intervene to expand racial equity. When routine decisions are made without attention to racism and racial equity, the result is typically the continuation of the status quo, which generally reinforces and reproduces white dominant cultural patterns, racial inequities, and exclusion. The cumulative impacts of many small choices can be as significant as the impacts of big decisions.

In order to interrupt racial bias and inequities, it is critical to approach decision-making with a racial justice lens and the active participation of BIPOC. Without this, racism is likely the default operating system. When we're conscious of choice points and the related impacts, we're less likely to replicate implicit bias and the status quo, and we open new possibilities for equitable change. Racism can be interrupted and prevented at the point of decision-making, if we use these "choice points" thoughtfully. With intentional use of a race lens when you make decisions, you can shift your organizational culture from one that unconsciously and passively replicates racism, to one that consciously and proactively creates racial and cultural equity. If racial equity is truly a priority that is critical to your mission and community impact, there are opportunities to embed a racial equity framework at every turn.

We want to interrupt racial bias and inequities.

We don't interrupt racial bias and inequities.

OR

We approach decision-making with a racial justice lens and the active participation of BIPOC.

EXAMPLE CHOICE POINTS MAY BE

strategic planning

curatorial decisions

featuring artists in productions or exhibitions

HR and personnel decisions

budgeting

facilities management

program development

event production

audience engagement

etc.

Five Key Criteria For Identifying and Shortlisting Racial Equity Choice Points

As you reflect upon and identify your choice points, here are five key criteria to keep in mind. It is best to work with your team or department when selecting choice points, using these criteria, so you can collectively and collaboratively identify areas for intervention.

IS YOUR CHOICE POINT:

Race-explicit?

Are there areas where race is currently not being addressed head-on? Can race, racism, and racial impacts be talked about explicitly? Strategies for racial diversity and inclusion are not the same as strategies for racial equity. It's important to choose actions that are explicitly and specifically about institutional racism.

More than just diversifying?

Is your choice point moving beyond diversity to equity, with real consideration for how decision-making and power dynamics impact BIPOC? Is it an opportunity to move beyond outreach, access, and inclusion strategies — to meaningful equity strategies?

Right-Sized?

Is it right-sized for your organization in terms of your capacity, resources, readiness, internal will, and momentum? Will it stretch your "equity muscles" meaningfully or will it cause painful overreach? Is it a one-time intervention or is it repeatable?

An "Add-in" and Shared Across Organization?

Is it an "add-in," rather than an "add-on,"- so that racial equity work is integrated and embedded into existing work and projects, rather than becoming siloed in one department or within one team or person? **Is the labor and the work for engaging racial equity in this choice point shared equitably amongst the team with specific efforts made to not overtax, burden, or exhaust BIPOC?**

Enlisting more allies, peers, and partners in your organization and network?

Will your choice point generate options for engaging more allies within your organization and network, in order to build their investment, energy, and readiness for shared racial equity work?
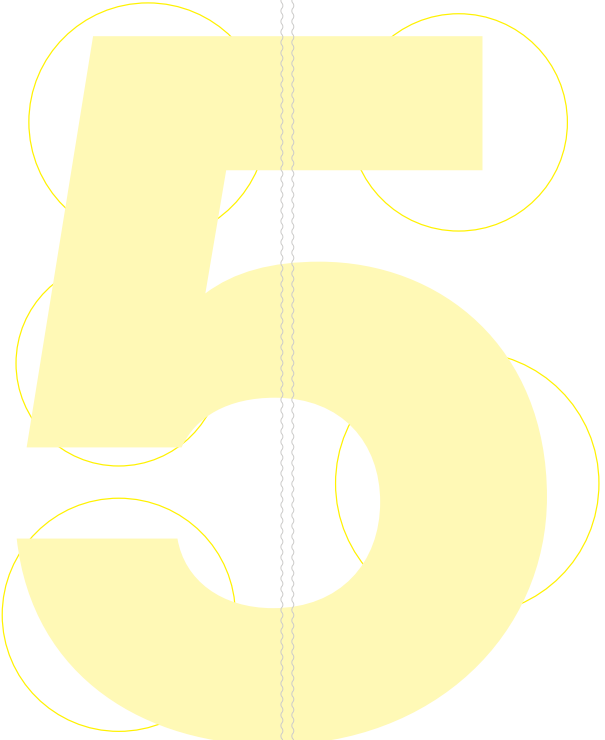
INSTRUCTIONS: Use the five key criteria from the previous page to identify some choice points where you can integrate a racial equity lens in your work. You can fill out this chart to identify choice points individually or collaboratively through discussion with your team.

PROGRAM	CHOICE POINT	DATE OR FREQUENCY	DECISION-MAKERS INVOLVED
Example: Artist Fellowships or Commissions	**Artist Support and Development:** How are BIPOC fellows and commissioned artists being supported, resourced, and amplified?	Bi-annual selection of artists	Program Manager, Communications Director, Current & Future Cohorts of Fellows & Commissioned Artists
	Narrative, Cultural and Aesthetic Priorities: What kinds of artistic media, genres, products, or forms are being represented? If white-centered or Eurocentric artistic forms or aesthetic traditions are featured, what are the content, stance and racial politics of the art being produced?	Monthly decisions for all the listed choices and questions	
	Storytelling and Representation: Which BIPOC communities are being represented? Whose stories are being told?		
	Community and Audience Engagement: Who are the priority audiences or communities that fellows or commissioned artists are engaging with?		

Instructions:

Use the five key criteria from the previous page to identify some choice points where you can integrate a racial equity lens in your work. You can fill out this chart to identify choice points individually or collaboratively through discussion with your team.

PROGRAM	CHOICE POINT	DATE OR FREQUENCY	DECISION-MAKERS INVOLVED

Instructions:

Use the five key criteria from the previous page to identify some choice points where you can integrate a racial equity lens in your work. You can fill out this chart to identify choice points individually or collaboratively through discussion with your team.

PROGRAM	CHOICE POINT	DATE OR FREQUENCY	DECISION-MAKERS INVOLVED

DreamYard

RACIAL EQUITY PRIME

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS USED WHEN MAKING DECISION TO ENSURE RACIAL EQUITY IN OUR WORK:

1) WHO IS BENEFITING FROM THIS DECISION?

2) HOW ARE WE BEING EXPLICIT ABOUT OUR COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE?

3) HOW DOES THIS DECISION AFFECT THE POC WE SERVE (PARTICIPANTS) AND POC STAFF MEMBERS?

4) WHAT IS THE DESIRED OUTCOME OF THIS DECISION? AND HOW DOES THIS OUTCOME CONNECT TO OUR COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE?

5) WHO ARE WE EXCLUDING? HOW CAN WE BE MORE INCLUSIVE WITH THIS DECISION?

At DreamYard we have a commitment to working towards becoming an Anti-Racist Institution. Our racial equity work began out of a need to have conversations about race and power at DreamYard, based on the experiences of racism both internally and externally.

The DreamYard Organizational Prime For Racial Equity was cocreated by Yesenia Macedo and Rajeeyah Finnie-Myers through the support provided in the 2017-2018 Race Forward Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab. It is a set of questions intended to ensure accountability for decision making that includes but is not limited to taking on new partnerships, programming opportunities, hiring, firing, and/or promoting. It serves as a reminder that we are committed to centering People of Color and explicitly addressing racial inequity.

DY
BX

Who should be a part of the conversation when going through the questions?

When should the conversation take place?

How do we know we are done having the conversation?

What happens once the conversation is over?

art by Nando Alvarez / Amplifier.org

DreamYard's Equity Prime: Equitable Decision-Making and Accountability

by Rajeeyah Finnie-Myers

This team sought to use the prime to further develop culture, practices, and conditions that would hold everyone at DreamYard accountable for the organization's commitment to racial equity — rather than depending on just a few staff members to keep the work going.

DREAMYARD IS A NATIONALLY recognized community arts organization in the Bronx, New York that uses the arts, digital tools, and social justice to collaborate with Bronx youth, families, and schools in building pathways to equity and opportunity. We've deeply invested in the Bronx through our public school — the DreamYard Preparatory High School, our Community Art Center, creative career pathway opportunities, entrepreneurship support, and arts partnerships with 40+ public schools across the borough.

In 2017, DreamYard joined *Race Forward's Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab* in New York City. Through the support of the Arts Lab, Rajeeyah Finnie-Myers, Director of Professional Development and Yesenia Macedo, former Associate Director of In-School Programs created the DreamYard Organizational Prime For Racial Equity, which is featured on the next page. The prime is a set of questions intended to ensure accountability for equitable decision making that includes but is not limited to taking on new partnerships, designing programming, and HR decisions affecting staff. It serves as a simple, usable reminder that as we make organizational decisions, we are committed to (1) centering people of color and (2) explicitly addressing racial inequity. Once this prime was introduced and tested amongst the leadership team, we introduced the tool to the whole staff at a monthly staff meeting in 2018. The intention was to implement it into our daily decision-making processes across the entire organization.

In 2019, DreamYard was invited into Round 2 of the Arts Lab with an expanded team of four staff members. This team[6], sought to use the prime to further develop culture, practices, and conditions that would hold

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6 DreamYard's Round 2 Team members were Moriah Carlson, Director of School Partnerships; Austin Greene, Director of Art Center Programs; Joshua Poyer, Director of Here to Here Hub and Rajeeyah Finnie-Myers, Director of Professional Development.

everyone at DreamYard accountable for the organization's commitment to racial equity — rather than depending on just a few staff members to keep the work going. As leaders with significant decision-making power, the Round 2 team worked to normalize a race-based approach to our decisions, our vision, mission, and our operations by promoting the use of the prime as often as possible. The team shared some of the most significant outcomes from using this prime as follows.

Our annual 360 review now includes an assessment of all staff members' involvement with our racial equity work. Additionally, we implemented accountability for white executive leadership by establishing a practice of annual 360 reviews for the co-founders/executive directors.

The prime served to support our leadership team in completing our organizational anti-racist statement. A visual statement on our website serves as a reminder to be more inclusive and to center people of color in decision-making. We share our anti-racist statment with stakeholders, post it on the walls, in promotional materials for school partners, and in our media kit.

DreamYard's 35 full time staff members are divided into smaller working groups to work on self-selected racial justice projects that implement racial equity into our daily work practices. This equity prime serves as a guide for these projects. The Leadership Team and pre-existing steering committee, which is responsible for curating monthly staff meetings dedicated to our racial equity work, work together to ensure follow through. To learn more about DreamYard's Racial Justice Projects (RJPs), visit our guidelines document here:
https://bit.ly/DreamYRJP

At DreamYard, we have been commited to being an anti-racist organization since 2014. We lead with race because we operate in a country founded on the genocide of Indigenous people, the enslavement of African people, and the oppression of countless others. We acknowledge the role this history plays in perpetuating inequity and dominant white culture.

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We are intentionally building a path toward racial equity by:

Challenging oppression and its intersections

Using art and education as a platform to offer a hopeful vision of the future

Identifying and uplifting the power and cultural assets that exist within our community of educators, artists, dreamers, young people and life-long learners

Encouraging the principles of justice, unity, equity, creativity, and joy

Transforming policies, procedures, practices, and programs

Understanding our staff, community members and partners are at different levels on the anti-racist continuum and embracing that we all have a place in this work

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Encouraging the principles of justice, unity, equity, creativity, and joy

Transforming policies, procedures, practices, and programs. (For example: striving for transparency and equity in pay and compensation structures regardless of race, culture, gender, ethnicity, creed, etc.)

Understanding our staff, community members and partners are at different levels on the anti-racist continuum and embracing that we all have a place in this work

Despite our explicit racial justice commitment, we've found that normalizing the use of our equity prime takes constant reminders and ongoing conversation across departments. We now have language, text, and graphics that center the racial equity prime, and are putting it on display so that others can access it regularly and easily. There is a learning curve associated with developing and using our prime.

The main questions we are currently tackling are: Who should be a part of the conversation when going through the questions? When should the conversation take place? How do we know we are done having the conversation? What happens once the conversation is over?

We invite you to join us on this journey. You can learn more about our work at https://www.dreamyard.com/

We now have language, text, and graphics that center the racial equity prime, and are

putting it on display so that others can access it regularly and easily.

TOOL #4:

The R.A.C.E. Lens

The R.A.C.E. Lens image is an "equity prime," designed to remind you to consider racial equity for all planning and decision-making.

THIS IMAGE DIRECTS YOUR ATTENTION to racial justice, racism, and BIPOC. The R.A.C.E. acronym provides a simple framework—*Reveal-Assess-Create-Engage*—for transforming the way you make everyday decisions. By learning to use this framework, you and your colleagues or collaborators can collectively, consistently, and courageously build a habit and culture of centering racial justice and BIPOC, thereby disrupting Whiteness and systemic racism.

Reveal
realities & root causes of racism

Assess
racial impacts & alternative actions

Engage
BIPOC as decision-makers

Create
culture, policy & systems change

The R.A.C.E Lens Tool

Using the R.A.C.E. Lens Tool:
The following guide is a racial equity tool based on the R.A.C.E. Lens image or prime. This tool helps you dig deeper into the practice of using a race lens. For each element of the R.A.C.E. Lens image, acronym, and framework, there are key questions, practices, and values to highlight and apply. An equity _prime_ shifts your short-term attention, but an equity _tool_ helps you build a conscious practice that you and others can use over the longer-term. Using this guide can help you hone your practice and build your equity muscles and memory.

Reveal Racism

QUESTIONS:
- What's going on racially? ("What's race got to do with it?")
- Are there other intersecting factors, compounding the racism?
- Who benefits most and who is burdened?
- What are the patterns of inequity?
- How did things get this way? What are the root causes?

PRACTICE:
Normalize conversations that explicitly acknowledge and address racial inequities, realities, and histories in all planning and decision-making.

VALUES: **honesty, transparency**

Assess Alternatives

QUESTIONS:
- What are alternative strategies and solutions?
- What are the racial impacts of each option, for each racial group?
- How can we think and act boldly on our vision and values?
- How can we disrupt white dominant culture and power internally? externally?
- How can we maximize benefits and prevent harms?

PRACTICE:
Visualize new options and realities. Generate new strategies.

VALUES: **integrity, equity, cultural responsiveness**

Engage

QUESTIONS:
- Who is most directly and adversely affected?
- Who is marginalized or excluded?
- How can BIPOC be authentically and actively engaged?
- How can BIPOC build power in this moment?
- How can BIPOC leadership be supported and expanded?
- How can we strengthen relationships and solidarity across race?

PRACTICE:
Organize, internally and externally, with stakeholders and partners.

_VALUES:_ **inclusion, solidarity**

Create Change

QUESTIONS:
- How can we shift culture, dominant narratives, and social norms?
- What will be the measurable and material benefits to BIPOC?
- What can we do to make this doable, viable, successful, and sustainable?
- How can we align our internal and external strategies with our values?
- How can we institute and evaluate new practices, policies, and protocols?

PRACTICE:
Operationalize racial equity via new plans, practices, policies, strategies, solutions, systems, cultural norms & narratives.

VALUES: **creativity, innovation, courage**
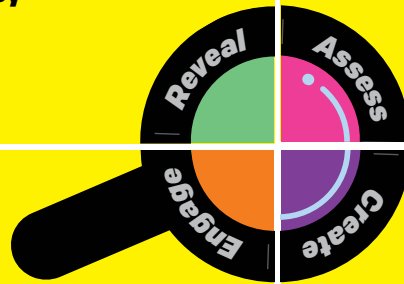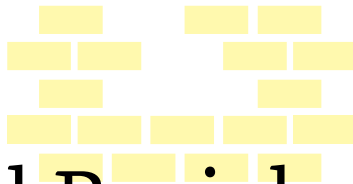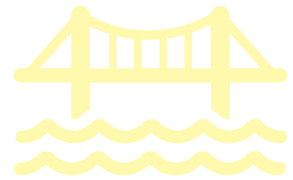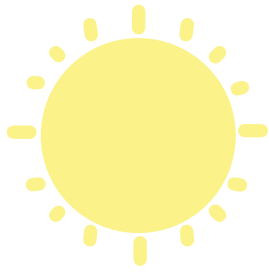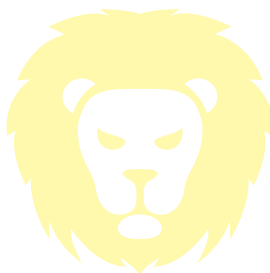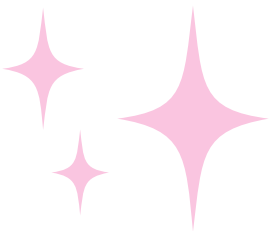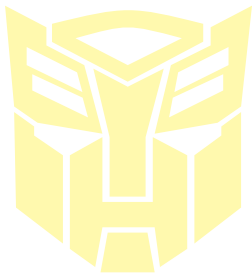
TOOL # 5:

Values-Based Racial Equity Tool

To make your vision and values aspirational <u>and</u> operational you can embed them into a set of questions to use as a racial equity decision-making tool. Values are not just beliefs, but can be turned into actions and practices — or praxis. By aligning beliefs and action, your work can have more integrity and impact. This tool can be tailored to your organization's values by addressing the questions that are most applicable, changing the questions, or adding new questions. It is best to use a participatory and inclusive process to discuss the questions with colleagues, community partners, and other stakeholders, especially BIPOC within marginalized communities.
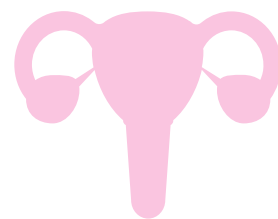
(TOOL #5: Values Based Racial Equity Tool**)**

HONEST

What can we do to be honest, by addressing racial inequities explicitly, candidly, prominently, and intersectionally, with specific attention to racial power dynamics and other compounding factors?

INCLUSIVE

What can we do to be inclusive, with active participation from stakeholders most impacted, especially BIPOC and those most marginalized?

UNIFYING

What can we do to be unifying by building authentic relationships, partnerships, mutual support, and solidarity across race and other characteristics?

ADAPTIVE

What can we do to be adaptive by addressing changing conditions and the real-time interests and needs of grassroots communities?

EQUITABLE

What can we do to be equitable, by shifting resources, power, leadership, and opportunities to measurably benefit BIPOC and those most marginalized?

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE

What can we do to be culturally responsive, centering the voices, experiences, and leadership of BIPOC?

TRANSFORMATIVE

What can we do to be transformative, by analyzing history and root causes, then generating strategic options and systemic solutions that change culture, institutions, and policies?

PROACTIVE

What can we do to be proactive by using the best information available to predict racial impacts, prevent harms, and advance positive and tangible benefits?

LOVING

What can we do to be loving and appreciative of the dignity, humanity, and goodness of all people and communities?

JOYFUL

What can we do to be joyful and rejuvenating and to create the space for diverse forms of expression, healing, and celebration?

COURAGEOUS

What can we do to be courageous, by fiercely disrupting the harms of white of dominant culture and power, and interrupting the exploitation and over-reliance of the labor of BIPOC?

CREATIVE

What can we do to be creative, by thinking and acting boldly on our vision and values?

Racial Equity Tools:
What, Why, Who, and How

What Is a Racial Equity Tool?

It's a planning and decision-making instrument that helps you give deliberate attention to racial justice and social justice. It's a guide and protocol for race- and equity-conscious decision-making that is participatory, strategic, and systematic. It can be used for a variety of decisions, such as assessing existing or proposed policies, practices, plans, programs, grantmaking, contracting, budgets, etc. The tool should be well-aligned with, and help further, your organization's mission, vision, and values.

Why Use a Racial Equity Tool?

It can help you:

> Proactively seek to eliminate racial inequities and advance equity;

> Identify clear goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes;

> Engage community stakeholders in decision-making processes;

> Identify racial impacts—who will benefit or be burdened by a given decision;

> Examine potential unintended consequences of a decision, and develop strategies to mitigate them;

> Develop mechanisms for successful implementation and evaluation of impact;

> Build opportunities to institute ongoing racial equity practices;

> Grow a racial equity-focused organizational culture.

In absence of using tools, you're more likely to default to replicating white supremacy culture and norms. To interrupt normative racist operating systems, we need tools to help us redirect our attention and actions to ones that serve the cause of racial equity, inclusion, and dignity. If you're building a house, you can't just imagine it — you have to have tools to build it. New systems of racial equity require racial equity tools. Using Racial Equity Tools is a practice for staying on mission and moving towards racial justice.

Who Uses a Racial Equity Tool?

Racial Equity tools are best used by a diverse team of people from different parts of the organization, that can also include external stakeholders and partners. For each specific use of the tool, the team identifies and engages relevant stakeholders, especially those directly affected by the decision under consideration. The real value of the tool lies not only in *what* considerations you address in decision-making, but also *who* is engaged. An inclusive process will yield more inclusive and equitable results.

How Do You Use a Racial Equity Tool?

Racial equity tools are often designed to be widely applicable to many different kinds of decisions. Every question may not be relevant for every decision. Feel free to tailor and update the tool you chose to make it most useful to inform your decision. Depending on the significance of the decision being made, you can engage in a robust, or simpler, analysis. Be sure to allow ample time to thoughtfully and inclusively address each step. It is not meant to be used and completed in one sitting. It often requires time to gather information and consult with various stakeholders over a series of meetings or engagements.

Additional Resources

RACE FORWARD'S RACIAL EQUITY IN THE ARTS INNOVATION LAB sourced, collected, shared, and taught a wide range of tools and resources. Our program participants enjoyed exploring and trying out these racial equity tools, and arts administrators across the country can benefit from them as well. Below is a shortlist of some of our favorite tools utilized in our Arts Lab program. For a wider database of curricula, tools, readings and resources, check out www.racialequitytools.org

Tools For Understanding Racial Equity Stories And Narratives:

The Storytelling Project Curriculum: Learning about Race and Racism Through Storytelling in the Arts by Irani, Bell, Roberts, and Murphy

Tools for Communicating about Race:

Annie Casey's Race Matters Toolkit: How to Talk about Race

Talking the Walk: A Communications Guide for Racial Justice by Hunter Cutting and Makani Themba Nixon

Tools for Racial Equity, Organizational Development, and Change:

The Six Typical Phases of Racial Equity Work by drworks

Annie Casey's Racial Equity Action Guide: 7 Steps to Advance Racial Equity

Racial Equity Guide for Planning and Evaluation by Race Forward

The Continuum on Becoming an Antiracist, Multicultural Organization by Crossroads Ministry

Racial Equity Impact Assessment Tool by Race Forward

Annie Casey's Race Matters Toolkit: Organizational Self-Assessment

Social Transformation Project's Wheel of Change

Racial Equity Core Teams: The Engines of Change by the Governmental Alliance on Race Equity

Awake to Woke to Work Toolkit by Equity in the Center

Additional tools and resources on www.racialequitytools.org

Resources for Understanding Culture Change:

CultureSurge

The Cultural New Deal

The BlackSmiths

No Going Back: A COVID 19 Cultural Strategy Activation Guide for Artists and Activists by The Center for Cultural Power

A Cultural Strategy Primer by Nayantara Sen and Art/Work Practice

Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy by the Culture Group

White Dominant Cultural Norms in Organizations by Tema Okun, drWorks

White Supremacy Norms and Something Different

Infiltration: How the Values of Oppressive Systems Tend to Arise in Organizations by Aorta Coop

Additional Recommended Readings and Resources:

Tasks for the Privileged and Subjugated by Ken Hardy

Racial Identity Development by Beverly Daniel Tatum

The Work is Not the Workshop: Talking and Doing, Visibility and Accountability in the White Anti-Racist Community by Catherine Jones

Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy by Andrea Smith

Introduction Chapter to White Fragility by Robin D'Angelo

Anti-Black Racism is Still the Fulcrum of White Supremacy by Scot Nakagawa

Artists Co-Creating Real Equity (ACRE)'s Equity Platform

Aorta Coop's Resources

Acknowledgements:

NYCT THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST

About Race Forward's Narrative, Arts and Culture Program:

The Narrative, Arts and Culture program aims to support and foster organized creative ecosystems for narrative and cultural equity, justice, and power. We do this through racial equity work in media and journalism (through Colorlines.com), through narrative and cultural strategies, and the arts and culture sector. We organize with arts and cultural organizations and arts philanthropy to build capacity, interventions, skills, and collaborations for racial and cultural justice.

For More Information:

To learn more about the *Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab*, and to read updates and watch videos about the program, visit:
https://www.raceforward.org/practice/nyc-arts

To reach the authors of this toolbox, contact Terry Keleher at tkeleher@raceforward.org and Nayantara Sen at nayantara.sen@gmail.com.

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https://www.colorlines.com/subscribe