CHANGING THE RULES OF THE GAME:

youth development & structural racism

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Findings from the Youth and Racial Equity Project

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Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity
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The goal of the **Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity** (PRE) is increasing the amount and effectiveness of programmatic and financial resources to combat institutional and structural racism. With multiyear funding from the C. S. Mott Foundation, PRE's primary activities include capacity building, education and convening of grantmakers and grantseekers. It is a project of the **Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund** (LCCREF), the Washington, D.C.-based research and education arm, and sister organization, of the leading coalition of organizations committed to civil rights in the United States, the **Leadership Conference on Civil Rights** (LCCR). For further information about PRE, visit www.racialequity.org, or visit www.civilrights.org for additional information about LCCREF or LCCR.

mosaic assists organizations and foundations to develop new ideas, strategies, and capacity for achieving racial and social justice. *mosaic* specializes in collaborative inquiry that allows progressive organizations to imagine, plan, document, and assess innovative work. *mosaic* consultants draw on their extensive experience and networks in community organizing, leadership development, issue analysis, and training. For further information, visit www.mosaicideas.com.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Executive Summary

With support of the Ford Foundation, the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) and *mosaic consulting* embarked on an 18-month study into the ways select community organizations engage youth in confronting structural racism. For this report we use the definition of structural racism developed by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change[1]: "The history, public policies, institutional practices, and cultural stereotypes and norms that together maintain racial hierarchies and inequitable racial group outcomes."

Four primary research questions animated this project:

1. How do youth development organizations conceptualize and approach structural racism in their work?

2. Are there commonalities across these definitions and approaches?

3. What challenges do they face?

4. What can we learn from them?

To answer these questions, the Youth and Racial Equity Project (YRE) proceeded in four primary phases:

1. A preliminary scan of published reports and documents produced by the youth development, allied youth, and youth organizing fields

2. Regional convenings of practitioners in Oakland, California; Chicago, Illinois; and Atlanta, Georgia

3. A meeting with national "intermediary" organizations in Washington, D.C.

4. Follow up interviews and site visits with practitioners to examine specific work more closely

This report focuses on a sample of 16 youth development and youth organizing groups that address structural racism as part of their work.

The findings summarized below suggest that youth development organizations that adopt a structural racism framework and approach can dramatically increase their effectiveness. Such approaches allow youth themselves to better understand, analyze, and respond to the concrete effects of structural racism in their everyday lives. This framework can also build on the relationships, recognition, and resources of youth development organizations that are uniquely situated to expand the possibilities for racial justice.

YRE FINDINGS

1. Practitioners lack support for addressing structural racism issues they face in their everyday work.

Our preliminary scan of research and organizational descriptions produced by the leading national youth development, juvenile justice, and youth employment organizations suggested that racism and racialized outcomes received little explicit attention. But the local youth development and youth organizing practitioners we subsequently met with and visited told a dramatically different story. For their organizations, understanding and addressing racism was fundamental to their day-to-day youth development work and broader theory of change. The table below summarizes some of the distinctions between traditional youth development and youth development that incorporates a structural racism framework.

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1 Keith Lawrence, "Structural Racism and Community Revitalization," (New York: Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives, 2000), Working paper.

Youth Development with a Structural Racism Framework: Some Common Features

	TRADITIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT	YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WITH A STRUCTURAL RACISM FRAMEWORK
ANALYSIS of RACISM	Racism treated as either a minor or immutable factor in the development of youth, or ignored all together.	Racism recognized as an important factor influencing the life chances of youth and addressed explicitly and intentionally in most aspects of program work.
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	Focuses on individual achievement and success, typically ignoring structural forces.	Focuses on examining youth experience and emotion in context of racialized structures of power.
ACTION	Offers few action opportunities for youth or builds those opportunities around volunteerism and community service.	Offers opportunities for collective action responses to individual problems and leadership roles for youth.
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	No explicit political analysis of racism; organizational self-perception as "race neutral."	Organization prioritizes a shared anti-racist political analysis that influences program development and implementation.

2. A keen analysis lies at the core of any structural racism approach.

YRE sought out groups, which viewed racism as a structural phenomenon, rather than as a function of individual bias. While each group had a particular view of their role in addressing racism, all shared a similar analysis that informed their work.

Using different vocabulary and approaches, each group acknowledged, to varying degrees, three defining features of racism:

▲ **History** – Present-day racism was built on a long history of racially distributed resources and racialized ideas that continue to shape our view of ourselves and others.

▲ **Hierarchy** – Racial categories and exclusions still determine the distribution of resources, power, and opportunity.

▲ **Infrastructure** – A broad range of policies and institutions sustain the history and hierarchy of present-day racism.

The following chart summarizes the distinctions between a "racial bias framework" and a "structural racism framework" based on how each defines the origins of racism, its current dynamics, and the way racism functions in institutional settings.

The groups we focused on view racism as a primary force affecting the life chances of young people of color and limiting opportunities for youth in general. In these organizations, racism is not an issue relegated to a particular program. Instead, a racial justice framework infuses even the most traditional aspects of their youth development work. Still, each of these organizations faced many challenges stemming from the broader unwillingness within contemporary society to acknowledge, understand, or address the reality and impact of racism.

Different Frameworks/Different Approaches:
Racial Bias v. Structural Racism

RACIAL BIAS FRAMEWORK	STRUCTURAL RACISM FRAMEWORK
Origins of Racism: Racism stems from negative attitudes of dominant individual/group toward others, not from dominant group's preservation of inequitable distribution of resources. **Solution:** Focus on history of groups' positive contributions as way to build positive attitudes toward others and self.	**Origins of Racism:** Present-day racism is built on a long history of racially distributed resources. **Solution:** Understand and explore history to make sense of current inequities and to contextualize individual experiences.
Dynamics of Racism: Racial disparities are an unintended result of policies and practices. Negative attitudes toward others and self do not reflect actual inequities. **Solution:** Focus on insuring equal treatment within context of existing policies and practices and on "correcting" negative attitudes.	**Dynamics of Racism:** Racial hierarchies currently exist that continue to distribute resources based on race and shape our views of ourselves and others. **Solution:** Focus on understanding current racial distribution of resources and building politicized racial identities committed to ending racial inequity.
Scope of Racism: Some policies and institutions continue to be marred by negative racial attitudes and under-representation of people of color. **Solution:** Correct negative attitudes and increase representation of people of color.	**Scope of Racism:** A broad range of policies, practices, and ideas that support hierarchies of present-day racism. **Solution:** Analyze how policies, practices, and ideas perpetuate racism and develop intervention strategies specifically targeting them.

3. Structural racism approaches are grounded in processes that engage youth in analytic and emotional explorations of racism.

The core racial justice "practice" of these groups is the engagement of young people in critical examination of the root causes of the issues they face and solutions to the problems they experience. Along with an intense focus on analysis, many groups expressed an urgent need to create opportunities for youth to process deep and painful emotions regarding racism. These groups viewed themselves as blending analysis with emotional exploration, seeing this intersection as critical for engaging youth who have been most pushed to the margins.

As youth development and youth organizing practitioners and thinkers engage in this dialogue, much more attention and reflection must be directed toward the question of how to strike an effective balance between providing individual support and promoting youth leadership in social change.

4. Structural racism approaches often include a collective action component.

Because racism affects people as a group and not just individually, anti-racist approaches must also operate at the collective level. Groups working with youth and focusing on racism include collective action as a part of their program models. This collective action may take different forms – such as community action projects or organizing campaigns – depending on the orientation and strategy of the organization. This collective action involves a

highly developed participatory process of issue identification that acknowledges young people's collective experiences of racism.

5. Developing a structural racism approach requires specific and intentional organizational investment.

One of the most time- and resource-consuming aspects of maintaining a racial justice focus is the need to develop a shared analysis and framework among staff and volunteers. Traditionally, youth development groups might place the highest value on individual areas of professional expertise of their staff, such as case management, substance abuse counseling, and academic guidance.

By contrast, youth development with a racial justice focus might prioritize a set of racial justice competencies such as analysis, ability to engage young people in critical thinking, and skill in developing innovative curriculum (for which there are far fewer resources and structured opportunities to develop). A key resource to youth development and youth organizing groups appears to be national and regional intermediaries who can offer materials and training grounded in a well-developed racial justice analysis.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS

Youth development organizations can play an important role in a broader democratic movement for racial justice. Funders are crucial to this effort, both in directly supporting organizations doing racial justice work and in creating opportunities for the youth development field to engage with the ideas and implications of a structural racism framework.

YRE's recommendations for funders:

1. REFLECT. Examine your institution's assumptions about why racial disparities still exist and consider how structural racism fits within the institution's broader theory of change.

2. LISTEN. Create opportunities to hear directly from those affected by racism as you develop your strategies or identify grants.

3. SUPPORT. Increase support for racial justice capacity building among organizations working with youth.

4. FACILITATE LEARNING. Because there needs to be greater learning on multiple fronts, funders should support exchange and collaboration among youth organizations seeking to define and apply a structural racism perspective.

YRE also encourages funders to invest in:

1. RESEARCH that examines how youth themselves experience, define and respond to structural racism.

2. CURRICULA used by youth development organizations to understand and engage structural racism.

3. TRAINING that provides support and assistance for youth organizations to develop competencies in defining and applying a structural racism perspective.

4. ASSESSMENT based on different ways to measure success, recognizing that a structural racism approach will produce different outcomes.

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I. Introduction:
A STRUCTURAL RACISM FRAMEWORK
WIDENS POSSIBILITIES FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Youth development organizations can play a central role in a broader democratic movement for racial justice. Consider this example:

"It all boils down to this," 17-year-old Kyle Ellison told a reporter from his hometown Wichita (Kansas) *Eagle*, "Racism still exists today." [2] Ellison's pronouncement summarized the findings of a recent report, *A Suspension Crisis in Wichita Public Schools*, which found that one in four Black middle and high school students was suspended in the previous school year, resulting in thousands of days of missed classroom instruction. While the ten-fold increase in the total number of students suspended during the last decade affected thousands of White students as well, Black students bore the brunt of the escalation. The report, and a series of community meetings and negotiations with school officials that followed, led to important reforms in the school district's "zero tolerance" student discipline policies which will keep more students in school. [3]

The hallways of the organization that organized this successful project are not filled with the civil rights attorneys or hardscrabble political activists one might expect. Instead, on a typical afternoon, algebra tutoring, writing workshops, and service-learning projects fill the Hope Street Youth Development's modest quarters. The 14-year-old organization began as an unassuming mentoring initiative for middle school students and retains a core focus on the academic support and community service typical of youth development groups around the country. But the group began a youth organizing component sev-

eral years ago to complement the focus on individual growth and skill building, and soon turned its attention to issues of racial justice in the Wichita school system, where students of color comprise almost half of the district's 47,000 students.

"There's no doubt in my mind that it's an issue," explained Ti'Juana Hardwell, referring to the high suspension rate of Black students. [4] Hardwell, Ellison and three other students developed the report and organized to win new policies for teacher training and evaluation and the expansion of student (peer) courts. Their report effectively linked the suspension crisis with the "racial gap" in academic performance and the ways Black students are pushed out of school and into the criminal justice system. "Suspensions as punishment is an outdated idea," they declared.

> To resolve a problem of structural racism, Hope Street had to reframe the issue of student discipline. They looked beyond the issue of individual student behavior and developed an analysis of the racial impact of the school's suspension policy.

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2 Joe Rodriguez, "Group studies higher Black suspension rate," *The Wichita Eagle*, 8 September 2003, Section 11A.

3 Hope Street Youth Development, "A Suspension Crisis in Wichita Public Schools," (Wichita: Hope Street Youth Development, 2003), available from www.hopestreet.com.

4 Rodriguez, *Group studies higher Black suspension rate*.

impact of the school's suspension policy. In doing so, the organization demonstrated to young people the power they have to challenge the "rules of the game" – the supposedly race-neutral policies that nonetheless result in racist outcomes. Stories such as these, and their implications for youth development and organizing, served as the catalyst and inspiration for the Youth and Racial Equity Project (YRE).

In the spring of 2003, the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) and *mosaic* began exploring the ways that the fields of youth development and youth organizing understand and address racism. We began with a particular focus on organizations seeking to address racism as a structural phenomenon with deep roots and lasting impact.

Through YRE, we found that a small but diverse set of community organizations are engaging youth in recognizing, questioning, and challenging the ideas, dynamics, and institutions that sustain racism as a powerful and enduring social force. These efforts to apply a structural racism framework offer a glimpse of emerging strategies for other youth development and youth organizing groups, as well as for the larger goal of social justice. They also underscore the difficulties and challenges that groups face in taking on this work.

A Good Starting Point: From solving youth problems to problem-solving youth

In the last decade, one of the major shifts in models and theories of youth work in the United States has been the growing emphasis placed on "positive youth development." In contrast to the "deficit-based models" prevalent through the late 1980s that typically viewed young people as "problems to be solved," the positive youth development approach engages youth as "assets" and as subjects of change, rather than objects of change. Theorists and practitioners of positive youth development call attention to the varied skills and capacities young people need to make healthy and successful transitions to adulthood. Moreover, following the mantra that "young people grow up in communities, not programs," traditional community development efforts and youth development programs are now bringing their work into more deliberate alignment.[5] In addition, a renewed emphasis on supporting youth leadership and "civic participation" has created more formal and informal opportunities for youth to assume decision-making roles and authority in many programs.[6] Impressively, all of these shifts emerged in a political era of mounting hostility and antipathy towards youth in general, amidst what sociologist Mike Males has called "America's war on adolescents."[7]

Racial Justice as an Imperative of Youth Development

Although the positive youth development framework has transformed the field in important ways, relatively little attention has focused on how race and racism affect the economic and social outcomes for youth. Empirical research and first-hand narratives alike demonstrate that all of the outcomes central to the youth development field—educational preparedness, employment readiness, physical and emotional health, civic engagement and the like—rest, in part, on the country's enduring racial legacies.[8] The pub-

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5   The well documented impacts of the positive youth development paradigm are impressive. The examples range from efforts that engage youth in leadership roles to those that raise awareness about the economic roots of social dysfunction that narrow the possibilities for so many youth. For example, the Rheedlan Center's Harlem Kids Zone is an unprecedented initiative bringing youth development and community development efforts into every household in Central Harlem. The project exemplifies the growing interest in integrating these two fields of work. Neighborhood development efforts such as Albuquerque's Youth Development, Inc., Germantown Settlement in Philadelphia, and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston base their community revitalization strategies on youth mobilization and leadership development. Large-scale national youth development programs such as YouthBuild have restructured their programs and initiatives to reflect youth-driven participation and concerns. Some youth development foundations now fund progressive youth-led organizing groups, understanding "civic activism" as a key component within a wider youth development strategy.

6   For an explanation of this transformation and its benefits and limitations, see S. Ginwright and T. James, "From Assets to Agents of Change: Social Justice, Organizing, and Youth Development," *New Directions in Youth Development*, no. 96 (Winter 2002).

lic and private institutions most populated by young people—schools, entry level employers, the juvenile justice system—are sites of growing racial segregation and disparities.[9] Yet the last decade of work on positive youth development practices remains largely silent on the role of race in defining the circumstances facing young people.

At least two dynamics can explain this lack of focus. First, in spite of the emergent attention focused on the communities, environments, and contexts in which young people grow, youth development programs still overwhelmingly focus on the individual youth as the primary "unit of change." Thus, even the recent focus on "civic activism" as a central component of holistic youth development appears more concerned with its impact on individual participants than on social change. For example, the groundbreaking work on youth and identity development by the Youth Leadership Development Initiative (YLDI) focused primarily on the effectiveness of civic activism in reaching disengaged youth and in achieving specific outcomes for individual youth.[10] Despite excellent new work such as this, as well as the work of organizations highlighted in the YLDI report, the conclusions of a recent report by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change echoes the same conclusion:

With a few exceptions, contemporary youth initiatives generally derive from the premise that individual-, family-, and neighborhood-level incapacities and dysfunctions are principal barriers to successful transition from youth to productive adulthood. To the extent that the strategies we might loosely categorize as "functional" serve youth of color, a structural racism analysis suggests that while the capacities they emphasize are necessary, they may not be sufficient."

Moreover, with minimal resources to rely upon, even those youth workers and organizations with strong and proactive antiracist sympathies might decide, quite logically, that the most meaningful intervention they can make to lessen the effects of a racist society is to work with individual youth of color to overcome hardship.

A second constraint concerns the more fundamental difficulty in recognizing, questioning, and challenging the specific ideas, dynamics, and institutions that make racism such a powerful force in contemporary society. That is, while it may be relatively easy to document racial disparities, it is often much harder to describe how racism actually operates. This difficulty reflects a public discourse on racism that tends to consider "racist" only those observable acts authored by individuals with specific racist intentions. So while "hate crimes," racist speech, or other definable expressions of racism may meet this generation-old definition, a steep dropout rate in a high school populated only by Black and Brown students typically does not. More insidiously, while videotape of White police officers raining abuse on a young man of color might offend some anti-racist sensibilities, wide scale police sweeps premised on racial profiles but commissioned in the name of fighting "gang violence" may not.

7   Michael Males, *The Scapegoat Generation: America's War on Adolescents*, (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1996).

8   To choose one of many examples, university researchers in Boston and Chicago sent out nearly identical employment resumes with "White sounding" and "African-American sounding" names on them. They found that resumes with White-sounding names produced 50 percent more calls back from employers than those bearing an African-American sounding name. Their study concluded that a White-identified name was worth the equivalent of eight years of employment experience across a broad range of occupations. Countless other examples demonstrate how the possibilities for a young person to achieve happiness and wellness, in its myriad spiritual, material, physical, and psychological forms, are so often shaped by race and racism.

9   Michael Brown et al., *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

10 Healther Lewis-Charp et al., *Extending the Reach of Youth Development Through Civic Activism: Outcomes of the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative*, (Takoma: Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2003).

"Structural Racism" and "Racial Justice": More Than Just Words

Structural racism is a term that escapes easy definition, in part because the vocabulary we have to understand and explore questions of race and racism is limited. Growing use of the term "structural racism" reflects a need to describe and understand racism in the most accurate and comprehensive way possible.

For example, the idea of "institutional racism" has sometimes been narrowly interpreted to mean only the particular and legally rectifiable problems of a specific institution. In contrast, structural racism is meant to encompass the dynamics present across a broad range of institutions. Moreover, structural racism is intended to acknowledge the broad set of historically developed ideas, values, and morals that make racism seem natural, inevitable, and acceptable to the vast majority of the body politic. A structural racism framework helps us consider not only the agents of racial discrimination but also the dominant discourses that permit such discrimination to go unchallenged.

While several interpretations and definitions exist for structural racism, we use one offered by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change:

> Structural Racism refers to the way in which history, public policies, institutional practices, and cultural stereotypes and norms interact to maintain racial hierarchies and inequitable racial group outcomes.[12]

Thus, structural racism is a way to define the complex set of problems we are seeking to address.

The goal of addressing these problems is ultimately to eliminate structural racism – to achieve "racial equity" or "racial justice." Below are some useful definitions and clarifications regarding racial justice that have been developed by the Oakland-based Applied Research Center (ARC).[13] ARC asserts that:

- **Racial Justice** is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all. Equitable impacts and outcomes across race are the key indicators of racial justice.

- **Racial Justice is *not* the same as racial *diversity*.** There can be diversity without equity. Integration is certainly beneficial, but not sufficient to produce equity. For example, in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the integration of all public schools. Yet our schools remain highly unequal. Even fully and partially integrated schools experience racial "achievement gaps" and other disparities across race. A "**diversity**" focus primarily addresses the **symptoms** of racism—with the goal of minimizing racial tensions and maximizing people's ability to tolerate difference and get along. A "**racial justice** focus primarily addresses the **causes** of inequality and the **solutions and strategies** for producing equity.

- **Racial Justice is *not* the same as *multi-culturalism*.** Culture is only one aspect of race. Another, even more significant aspect of race, is power. Race is a social construct that stems from differences in power—imbalances and abuses of power that underlie the categories of race and the culture of racism. Efforts to promote cultural awareness, sensitivity and inclusiveness are important steps towards, but are not the same as, racial justice. If one ignores the dynamics of power and simply treats race as a cultural phenomenon, racism will be perpetuated, even if things appear to be more multi-cultural.

- **Racial Justice is *not* simply *equality*.** Things can be equal, but still not fair. For example, schools with the highest concentrations of students of color, often have a disproportionate number of students who need subsidized meals, special education services and bilingual education services. These schools require more funding than schools that have more wealthy and White students. Rather than each school receives the same—or **equal**—funding, schools should receive fair—or **equitable**—funding, based on need.

Public understanding of racism reflects an aggressive campaign by conservative legal advocates and policymakers to rollback any public commitment to racial justice.[11] With weakened resistance from their traditional liberal adversaries, this strategy has made remarkable headway in convincing the broader public that racism is a benign matter of interpersonal relations and that only "race-neutral" approaches can effectively address trenchant social problems. Ironically, these efforts often evoke the sensibilities and language of the civil rights movement to preserve existing racial hierarchies and have succeeded in popularizing "colorblind" rhetoric and agenda. Racial justice activists find themselves increasingly marginalized and discredited, forced to prove to a skeptical public that racism still exists.

Indeed, one of the principal challenges to civil rights advocacy today is the struggle to define to the public what racism is, how it gets reproduced and perpetuated, and who benefits from it and who loses. For many youth development organizations, this means that only when an individual youth participant has been subject to an intentional incident of racial discrimination will the organization address their experiences as specifically racial.

New Thinking on Structural Racism
In the last decade, an emergent literature and series of theoretical debates have set out to develop a new analysis, language and conceptual vocabulary to reassert the primacy of racism in the era of "colorblindness." It attempts to account for the persistence of lasting racial privilege and inequality after both the legal architecture of explicit racial discrimination has been dismantled, as "racial attitudes" (as expressed through opinion surveys and public discourse) have become more liberal, and as supposedly race-neutral norms dominate public debates. In an effort to clarify and distinguish this emerging body of thought, we borrow the term "structural racism" to describe the ways that racial privilege is experienced in the United States today.

The Intersection of Structural Racism and Youth Development
Based on our findings, YRE contends that developing the intersection between structural racism and youth development can strengthen the understanding of structural racism by providing insight into how youth of color themselves understand, analyze, and respond to the concrete effects of structural racism in their everyday lives.

In doing so, the philanthropic sector can also build on the relationships, recognition, and resources of youth development organizations that are uniquely situated to make an invaluable racial justice contribution. For example, youth development organizations play a critical role in helping youth to analyze and comprehend the world around them at a critical stage in their development. Because racism is a central fact of life for all people in the U.S., (though experienced in vastly different ways) these groups can assist youth in understanding how their lives and opportunities are shaped by racism. Youth development organizations also serve as collective voices and advocates for the needs and interests of youth in many communities. Their moral authority and recognition can help call attention to the way racism shapes their lives. Finally, as publicly funded programs continue to be cut, private non-profits such as youth development organizations are some of the only institutions left that can challenge structural racism.

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11 For recent descriptions of the Right Wing strategy see Nikhil Aziz, "Colorblind: Whitewashing America," *The Public Eye*, no. 2 , vol. 16 (Summer 2002), available from www.publiceye.org/magazine/v16n2/Aziz.html. See also Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, *Banana Republicans: How the Right Wing is Turning America into a One-Party State*, (Penquin Group, Inc., 2004).

12 Lawrence, *Structural Racism and Community Revitalization*.

13 Applied Research Center, *Racial Justice Education and Action Manual*, (Oakland: Applied Research Center, Copyright 2002; revised July 2004).

II. What is the Youth and Racial Equity Project?

For 18 months, the **Youth and Racial Equity Project** (YRE) examined the ways that racism is currently understood and addressed in the fields of youth development and youth organizing, emphasizing promising racial justice strategies in these areas. YRE began with a special focus on the concept of structural racism: The history, public policies, institutional practices, and cultural stereotypes and norms that interact to maintain racial hierarchies and inequitable racial group outcomes.

With support of the Ford Foundation, the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) and *mosaic consulting* embarked on a study into the ways in which select community organizations are engaging youth in recognizing, questioning, and challenging the ideas, dynamics, and institutions that sustain racism as a powerful and enduring social force.

THE METHODOLOGY

Four primary research questions animated this project:

1. How do youth development organizations con-ceptualize and approach structural racism in their work?

2. Are there commonalities across these definitions and approaches?

3. What challenges do they face?

4. What can we learn from them?

To answer these questions, YRE proceeded in four primary phases:

1. Field Scan. We began the project with a scan of work taking place in the areas of youth develop-ment, allied youth, and youth organizing. We asked: If and how a racial equity framework was being used in these fields? The goal of this scan was to provide us with a general context within

which to explore actual programs and practices in further depth.

2. Convenings. Following this preliminary research, we convened a series of three regional gatherings in 2003: the first in Oakland, CA on September 12; the second in Chicago, IL on October 16; and the third in Atlanta, GA on December 8. In these meetings, we heard from more than 60 youth development and youth organizing practitioners, researchers, intermedi-aries, and funders. YRE also convened a meet-ing of 30 national youth development intermedi-aries in Washington, DC on March 18, 2004.

3. Organizational Interviews and Site Visits. Based on the findings from the regional convenings, YRE visited a number of organizations whose work could provide insights into the practices and ideas that organizations are developing to confront racism.

Because the research questions driving this project specifically concerned structural racism, we identi-fied groups broadly engaged in crafting youth devel-opment strategies that intentionally address some form of structural racism. Programs solely emphasiz-ing prejudice reduction, cross-cultural understand-ing, or diversity promotion were not considered.

The snowball sample of organizations identified was generated from a literature review, initial interviews with progressive funders and intermediaries, and personal contacts of the authors.

This report focuses on a sample of 16 organizations that demonstrated some focus on racism as a power-ful structural phenomenon. Because we strove to select a diverse and representative sample of groups based on geography, organizational size, programs, and constituency, not all groups with a structural racism orientation are featured in this report.

TABLE 1
Organizations Featured in this Report

ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION/MISSION STATEMENT	PARTICIPATION IN YRE
Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy & Leadership (AYPAL)	Oakland, CA	"To change the relationship of power between young people and policy makers by building and sustaining six ethnic and neighborhood based Youth Leadership Organizations that serve as the community organizing base for youth-identified and youth-run direct action campaigns for school reform and community improvement."	Interview
Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment	Greenville, SC	"To uplift working families by building a democratic and multicultural group that increases the power of working families to win fair treatment. Programs include: racism in public schools and youth organizing.	Atlanta convening
Californians for Justice	California: Oakland, San Jose, Long Beach	"A statewide grassroots organization working to empower communities that have been pushed to the margins of the political process."	Oakland convening
Center for Young Women's Development	San Francisco, CA	CYWD's mission is to empower and inspire young women who have been involved with the juvenile justice system and/or the underground street economy to create positive change in their lives and communities. CYWD is an organization run by young women, for young women. In our programs girls from the streets develop their skills and organize to build their power.	Oakland convening, interview/visit
Students 4 Justice	Denver, CO	One Nation Enlightened (O-N-E) is a direct action, youth organizing group that trains leaders and organizers to build a unique youth voice and the power to fight for social change. O-N-E has two youth organizing projects, Students 4 Justice and Streets United, to create youth-led solutions to institutionalized racism. O-N-E recruits and educates youth in our target high schools and neighborhoods, develops a strong youth-led voice for racial justice, identifies issues and campaigns to address needs, and uses direct action organizing to empower youth to fight for changes to systemic problems.	Chicago convening
Community Coalition	Los Angeles, CA	"Mission is to contribute towards transforming the social and economic conditions in South Los Angeles that foster addition, crime, violence and poverty, by building a community institution capable of involving thousands in creating, changing, and influencing public policy."	Oakland convening, interview
Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County, Inc./ Tunica Teens in Action	Tunica, MS	"An intergenerational group that organizes and educates the community in which it is rooted about issues of inequity and injustice … Tunica Teens in Action is the youth component formed in July 1999 by young people who realized they needed to develop their skills to help the community and themselves to succeed in a school system that his been on academic probation for over ten years." An affiliate of Southern Echo.	Atlanta convening, interview
El Pueblo	Raleigh, NC	"The Youth Leadership Program focuses El Pueblo Inc.'s mission of strengthening the Latino community on tomorrow's future Latino and Latina leaders. We strive to empower Latinos, ages 11-23, through advocacy, policy, leadership development, education, and promotion of cross-cultural understanding at the local, state, and national policy level."	Atlanta convening

ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION/MISSION STATEMENT	PARTICIPATION IN YRE
InnerCity Struggle/ United Students	Los Angeles, CA	"Dedicated to promoting social and economic justice for youth and families of Boyle Heights and the surrounding communities of East Los Angeles." Through its youth component ICS "trains youth as organizers and prepares them for higher education."	Oakland convening, interview
Leadership Excellence	Oakland, CA	"Leadership Excellence is committed to developing the next generation of leaders who possess the skills and desire to create social change in urban communities. Our mission is to educate African-American children and youth for personal and social change."	Oakland convening, interview/visit
North Carolina Lambda Youth Network	Durham, NC	"A statewide leadership and organizing network led by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and allied young people, ages 13 to 24. We develop young people as leaders and community organizers, while providing a space that affirms their identities. We recognize how our struggles as young people, people of color, and people of different abilities, sexualities, genders, and class backgrounds, are intimately connected."	Atlanta convening
The People's Institute/ Youth Agenda	New Orleans, LA	"Created to develop more analytical, culturally-rooted and effective community organizers." The People Institute Youth Agenda "identifies and mentors young anti-racist organizers in colleges and in the neighborhoods where The People's Institute does its work."	Atlanta convening
Southeast Regional Economic & Environmental Network	Durham, NC	"An inclusive, member-driven network of diverse worker, women and youth organizations that empowers and assists grassroots groups and activists to become more effective in their local organizing and collaborative efforts to understand and proactively respond to economic trends and policies that generate economic decline and social turmoil."	Atlanta convening, interview
Southwest Youth Collaborative/ Generation Y	Chicago, IL	"A youth-led activist organization sponsored by the Southwest Youth Collaborative … The mission of the Generation Y is to develop social change leadership, build grassroots power, and organize direct-action campaigns among teenagers, particularly low-income youth of color, on the southwest side of Chicago."	Chicago convening, interview/visit
Urban Underground	Milwaukee, WI	"An organization working for the educational an social advancement of youth. Through progressive initiatives we provide opportunities for youth to develop skills in personal and community leadership."	Chicago convening, interview/visit
Youth Together	Oakland, CA	"Formed in 1996 to fight violence and racism and improve our communities and schools. YT works with five multiracial student teams comprised of 250 youth from East Bay High Schools - Berkeley, Castlemont, Fremont Richmond/Kennedy, and Skyline. Focuses are 1) leadership development of young people, 2) promoting multiracial justice, peace, and unity, 3) student-led school change organizing campaigns, and 4) community collaboration and community building."	interview

Also, the depth and breadth of engagement with structural racism concepts varies widely among the 16 groups discussed. YRE's perception of an organization's structural racism focus was based on staff comments at YRE gatherings, written documents regarding the organization's work, follow up interviews with organization staff, and, when possible, a visit to the organization.

In addition to these 16 organizations, information on the work of five others is described in this report: Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals For Community Empowerment (FIERCE) (New York, NY), Hope Street Youth Development (Wichita, KS), Indianola Parent Student Group (Indianola, MS), Padres Unidos (Denver, CO), and Sisters in Action for Power (Portland, OR).

III. Findings

YRE's findings are drawn from all aspects of our investigation, centering on the 16 organizations that demonstrated some focus on structural racism. In our interaction with these organizations, we confirmed our belief that no simple understanding or formula for a structural racism framework exists. However, we also found that what did exist was under analyzed, limiting the potential for future development and replication. Recognizing the pitfalls of shoehorning diverse practices into a single, fixed framework, we nonetheless sought to identify common features that seem to combine together into a recognizable approach.

Overall YRE found that:

1. Practitioners lack support for addressing structural racism issues they face in their everyday work.

2. A keen analysis lies at the core of any structural racism approach.

3. Structural racism approaches are grounded in processes that engage youth in analytical and emotional exploration of racism.

4. Structural racism approaches often include a collective action component.

5. Developing a structural racism approach requires specific and intentional organizational investment.

These findings are discussed in further detail below.

1. Practitioners lack support for addressing structural racism issues they face in their everyday work.

Our preliminary scan of research and organizational descriptions produced by the leading national youth development, juvenile justice, and youth employment organizations suggested that racism and racial-ized outcomes received little explicit attention. But the local youth development and youth organizing practitioners we subsequently met with and visited told a dramatically different story. For their organizations, understanding and addressing racism was fundamental to their day-to-day youth development work and broader theory of change.[14]

In the scan, we found that despite a few notable exceptions, the analysis of racism appeared under-developed and not widely applied. For example:

▲ In the scan of information on national youth development organizations we found little explicit mention of issues of racism, and rarely any mention of data disaggregated by race or ethnicity.

▲ In our scan of organizations addressing juvenile justice, public education, and youth employment, we found that racial disparities were generally acknowledged, but that the responses focused primarily on resolving interpersonal issues (e.g. cultural competency, reducing bias), decreasing opportunities for individual bias in institutional functioning, or developing general policies that were presumed to have a secondary impact on racial disparities. What programmatic work addressing racism did exist fell mostly in the juvenile justice and education fields, with few (if any) examples in the youth employment field.

▲ In youth organizing, we found more frequent references to institutional and structural racism, although few organizations identified "structural racism" as their primary focus.

Notable exceptions include the recent work of scholar activists Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota, who explicitly describe the impact of racism on African-American youth and the need to include

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14 Daniel HoSang, Julie Quiroz-Martínez, and Lori Villarosa, *Emerging Themes from the Youth and Racial Equity Project*, (Washington: Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, March 2004), Discussion Paper.

TABLE 2
Youth Development with a Structural Racism Framework:
Some Common Features

	TRADITIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT	YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WITH A STRUCTURAL RACISM FRAMEWORK
ANALYSIS of RACISM	Racism treated as either a minor or immutable factor in the development of youth, or ignored all together.	Racism recognized as an important factor influencing the life chances of youth and addressed explicitly and intentionally in most aspects of program work.
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	Focuses on individual achievement and success, typically ignoring structural forces.	Focuses on examining youth experience and emotion in context of racialized structures of power.
ACTION	Offers few action opportunities for youth or builds those opportunities around volunteerism and community service.	Offers opportunities for collective action responses to individual problems and leadership roles for youth.
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	No explicit political analysis of racism; organizational self-perception as "race neutral."	Organization prioritizes a shared anti-racist political analysis that influences program development and implementation.

a well-developed analysis of racism within a social justice approach to youth development.[15]

In contrast to the limited discussion of racism in the youth development and allied youth literature, YRE's conversations with practitioners suggest that issues of youth and racism are very present in their day-to-day work.

Through the YRE convenings we found that community organizations are often confronted with youth experiences of racism that jar their thinking and demand response. Some described the particular ways that youth experience racism and strategies they are developing to address it. As Carol Bishop of the Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment described during the YRE gathering in Atlanta:

I don't think anybody can understand what it is like to be ordered to lay on the floor with a police officer pointing a gun at them simply because they are Black and in a majority Black school. These are the fears that Black and Brown students live with daily. I think that because of these fears they are moving forward and changing things.

Soyun Park of Students 4 Justice in Denver, Colorado, voiced a similar view:

Race is not just theoretical. Youth are experts in racism … One young woman told us how she was the only Black woman in class of thirty. She was a senior. There was a situation where she felt verbally attacked by her teacher. So she

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15 Shawn Ginwright, and Julio Cammarota, "New Terrain in Youth Development: The Promise of a Social Justice Approach," *Social Justice*, no. 4, (December 2002).

asked the teacher to step outside to talk. I don't know if I would have been able to do that when I was that age.

Other practitioners spoke of the debilitating impact of structural realities on young people's perceived ability to make change. Arguing that immigration policy plays a specific and intentional role in the racial structuring of the United States, Marisol Jimenez of El Pueblo, Inc. in Raleigh, North Carolina, made the following comment:

I have youth in my program that graduated with honors from their schools. They have hours of community service that they have done on their own. When they get to the point when they want to apply to school, they can't go because to go for one year at NC State is twenty-eight thousand dollars and they don't qualify for grants or financial aid. So we have this entire community that is learning: go ahead and persevere, go ahead and get your honors degree and you know what, the way the law is now you're going to be working at Burger King anyway.

One California convening participant described how race shapes the experience of youth in the criminal justice system and how organizing efforts do not necessarily address the immediate needs of youth in the system.

You have Black and Brown kids in institutions where they are being trained to live their lives in a criminal justice system, and although there is a ton of organizing going on around this country about that, the bottom line is, right now there are hundreds of children in California, just sitting, waiting for placement and nobody's gonna take them. Why? Because they are 14 and they are Black. Or they're 15 and they are Latino. (Lateefah Simon, Center for Young Women's Development)

Practitioners also spoke of the need for new concepts and language that make it possible to describe and

understand young people's complex experiences with racism. "If you say 'racism' to a young person they're going to think about a person from one race not liking people from another race," commented Jeremy LaHoud of Generation Y in Chicago. "That's how the term is used in the media and the broader society."

Emannuelle Regis of Californians for Justice voiced a similar concern, describing how youth seeking to discuss racism face ridicule or derision.

We're running up against structures and institutions and systems [that say] "You guys shouldn't talk about racism. You're enforcing stereotypes …" They block that frame. They block the topic. They slam the students down when they go to talk about racism. They say "Why are you guys talking about all this racism? You really don't want to promote that. We really don't want to get that idea out to the other students." So they use terms to turn it around – like 'stereotyping' and 'individual responsibility'. That makes it more challenging.

One youth organizer suggested that every organization working with young people – not just youth organizing groups – has a role to play in addressing racism:

Even if a group is not doing collective direct action, youth need to know how different institutions function in order to survive day to day. Like in youth employment, they may tell you how to go to an interview. They may tell you "You can't dress like that, you can't act like that." But do they then tell them what the research shows about discrimination? It's like they're saying, "It's all on you." They're not telling them that there are institutional factors that determine whether they're going to succeed. (Jeremy Lahoud, Generation Y)

Lahoud's comment also suggests that even organizations that perceive themselves as "neutral" on the question of racism may in fact be perpetuating or

contributing to the challenges youth face.

Finally, in every discussion, interview, and site visit we held, practitioners voiced the need for funders to actively support youth development efforts to address racism from a structural perspective. In the words of one participant in the Midwest convening:

That's the difficulty that nonprofits have when they try to meet funders… You can't say what you really want to say; you can't say what you really want to do. That's a major problem … if it deals with race, they aren't backed at all.

Ultimately, our findings point to the underdevelopment of theory and strategy to assist practitioners with a significant set of challenges in their work.

2. A keen analysis lies at the core of any structural racism approach.

YRE sought out groups that viewed racism as a structural phenomenon, not a matter of bias as a more traditional view of racism would suggest. While each group had a particular view of their role in addressing racism, all shared a similar analysis that informed their work. As Lateefah Simon, who works with young women in the juvenile justice system succinctly states:

These girls have a huge lack of stability because of racism, what it's done economically in our communities … If our racial history had been different these children would not be in the situation they are in.

Luis Sanchez, director of the youth organizing group InnerCity Struggle, similarly described how his organization assists young people in placing their experience in the context of de facto race-based tracking.

One of the things we're talking about is de facto tracking happening in the schools, towards prison military and low-wage labor. We raise the question of who's being tracked for prison, low-wage labor, or college. We do research projects with an analysis of the student's experiences. Who's being tracked to college—wealth and poverty into the region. That way we put a racial lens to it.

Using different vocabulary and approaches, each group acknowledged, to varying degree, three defining features of racism:

▲ **History** – Present-day racism was built on a long history of racially distributed resources and racialized ideas that continue to shape our view of ourselves and others.

▲ **Hierarchy** – Racial categories and exclusions still determine the distribution of resources, power, and opportunity.

▲ **Infrastructure** – A broad range of policies and institutions sustain the history and hierarchy of present-day racism.

The difference between a structural understanding of racism and a "bias" view of racism sometimes emerged in the regional convenings. For example, when one group talked about trying to "do something" by sponsoring cross-cultural recreational activities, another group responded that "bowling is not the answer. There needs to be an explicit discussion on race." In another exchange, Soyun Park from Colorado's Students 4 Justice argued that youth "representation" in decision-making was not enough. "We can feel lucky that a particular young person is in a particular position, but what about other youth in leadership positions? We need to develop a common racial justice analysis among youth more generally."

The following chart summarizes the distinctions between a "racial bias framework" and a "structural racism framework" based on how each defines the origins of racism, its current dynamics, and the way racism functions in institutional settings.

TABLE 3
Different Frameworks/Different Approaches:
Racial Bias v. Structural Racism

RACIAL BIAS FRAMEWORK	STRUCTURAL RACISM FRAMEWORK
Origins of Racism: Racism stems from negative attitudes of dominant individual/group toward others, not from dominant group's preservation of inequitable distribution of resources. **Solution:** Focus on history of groups' positive contributions as way to build positive attitudes toward others and self.	**Origins of Racism:** Present-day racism is built on a long history of racially distributed resources. **Solution:** Understand and explore history to make sense of current inequities and to contextualize individual experiences.
Dynamics of Racism: Racial disparities are an unintended result of policies and practices. Negative attitudes toward others and self do not reflect actual inequities. **Solution:** Focus on insuring equal treatment within context of existing policies and practices and on "correcting" negative attitudes.	**Dynamics of Racism:** Racial hierarchies currently exist that continue to distribute resources based on race and shape our views of ourselves and others. **Solution:** Focus on understanding current racial distribution of resources and building politicized racial identities committed to ending racial inequity.
Scope of Racism: Some policies and institutions continue to be marred by negative racial attitudes and under-representation of people of color. **Solution:** Correct negative attitudes and increase representation of people of color.	**Scope of Racism:** A broad range of policies, practices, and ideas that support hierarchies of present-day racism. **Solution:** Analyze how policies, practices, and ideas perpetuate racism and develop intervention strategies specifically targeting them.

The groups we focused on view racism as a primary force affecting the life chances of young people of color and limiting opportunities for youth in general. In the words of Reggie Moore, of Urban Underground, in Milwaukee: "I don't think any group can take on community issues and not take on racial justice. It's part of our mission and the make up of our membership. It's not an option to ignore it."

Groups also described the need to acknowledge the ways different forms of oppression interact. Some, such as Paula Austin of North Carolina Lambda Youth Network in Durham, worried that without more explicit attention to these dynamics, youth can get caught in the same "oppression olympics" that can hinder coalition building among diverse adult groups.

Jeremy LaHoud of Generation Y in Chicago offered a glimpse of the types of workshops his group developed to deal directly with this conceptual and political challenge.

In our summer institute we did a session on the "web of oppressions." We had different colors of string representing different oppressions: Like red for gender, white for race. People were in groups in the middle of the room with a ring of people around the outside representing White men. Then we read off descriptions of different oppressive laws. For each law, the "White men" would pull the strings. Groups were squeezed and pushed and pulled in different ways depending on the oppression.

Clearly, as the understanding and response to racism evolves, it will need to do so as part of a larger analysis and strategy that recognizes the relationships among a complex set of social forces including gender, sexuality, geography, and class.

Despite the complexity of these dynamics, the groups we focused on shared the belief that racism –

as understood in combination with other social forces – must be addressed explicitly, rather than incidentally, in order to confront its effects. In these organizations, racism is not an issue relegated to a particular program. Instead, a racial justice framework infuses even the most traditional aspects of their youth development work. Still, each of these organizations is challenged by the broader unwillingness within contemporary society to acknowledge, understand, or address the reality of racism.

3. Structural racism approaches are grounded in processes that engage youth in analytic and emotional explorations of racism.

The core racial justice "practice" of these groups is the engagement of young people in critical examination of the root causes of the issues they face and solutions to the problems they experience. According to Dereca Blackmon of Leadership Excellence in Oakland:

We are a "listening organization" so our view of racism is really developed by the youth. We approach racism at all levels but focus on internalized racism. Our political education puts this in the context of institutional racism that we define as institutional power supporting White privilege… Our focus is on empowering youth to challenge the structures of racism and the internalization of those structures. It's not just "us versus them." We talk about their own choices and their own power. Our focus is on institutional racism and internalized racism.

Jeremy LaHoud agrees:

We're working with youth who go to schools that are predominantly [made up of] youth of color. They know there's schools out there that get more resources. They may have an interest in higher education and know that their schools aren't addressing their needs. They know through

Toward a Structural Racism Approach:
Math Leagues Build Skills and Challenge Structures

Indianola, MS. In the Delta of Mississippi, the Indianola Parent Student Group (IPSG) has battled a racially stratified education system that continues to subject students to corporeal punishment while failing to supply adequate facilities and materials to the majority of Black students. Operating from an inconspicuous two-room office in the heart of rural Sunflower County, the intergenerational group has compelled the local district to provide up-to-date science textbooks and new science labs and joined an effective statewide alliance seeking to overhaul the state's neo-segregationist educational structure.

But the IPSG was born out of and still sustains an innovative academic enrichment project, the Indianola Math Games League. Founded in 1994 the program quickly attracted an enthusiastic core of middle school students and their parents, and the Math Games League Tournament grew to involve hundreds of students. When a disapproving principle threatened to cancel the League and ban its sponsors from the school, students and parents successfully organized to preserve the pioneering program. This initial mobilization led to the formation of the IPSG a few years later, which still sponsors the Math Games League as a way to promote academic development while expanding their base of involved parents and students. The relationships developed through the Math Games League, in turn, have served as the basis for numerous collective action campaigns.

television or by going outside their community that there are schools in the suburbs that have those things. They know there are inequities. Our role is to ask questions.

Along with an intense focus on analysis, many groups expressed an urgent need to create opportunities for youth to process deep and painful emotions regarding racism. Alberto Retana of the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment in Los Angeles described the ongoing challenges this raises:

Our youth organizing group is not engaging the most disenfranchised youth… I think we have had a difficult time because we don't have enough of a healing piece… The healing piece I'm referring to is to create the space for he self-reflection to take place, for them to assess why they made those decisions and how they came to that.

As these comments would suggest, groups seeking to create opportunities for healing often described their approach as blending analysis with emotional exploration, viewing this intersection as critical for engaging youth who have been most pushed to the margins. For example, Leah Wise, executive director of Southeast Regional Economic Network in Raleigh described the need to engage youth outside the realm of "talk":

In working with young people there are big issues around self-esteem and critical thinking that reflect the racism in the public education system. You won't necessarily hear them say "our anti-racist agenda is this." We try to find ways of conveying ideas and information other than talk, talk, talk. In our youth organizing gathering we did the history of movement organizing in song. We had a "wellness" track that included drumming, dance, and massage.

Lateefah Simon described the innovative ways that Center for Young Women's Development blends

supportive healing with provocative analysis.

We work with girls who come into the juvenile justice system mostly because of prostitution or drug sales. This is a group of young people who people don't really believe can be engaged in the youth movement … Racism is always there. People want to tell their story. We ask them to tell their story through a "social biography," to put their experience in its historical, social, economic, and political context. We tell them, "Your story is a lot more layered than you think." We ask them, "Who was president when that was going on? You may not know but we need to find that out." Then they get to a point where they say, "I understand this now."

Simon's comments also suggest a delicate balance exists between supporting youth in their healing and challenging youth to become responsible leaders in their community. As Millie Cleveland, a former program director with Youth Together in Oakland observed:

[If youth] have a substitute teacher and didn't want to go to class for five days because of it, you can't just validate their frustration without also confronting their opportunism. Don't just let them come to your [non-profit] office and sit around for those days. At least urge them to confront the principal and demand an alternative solution than being stuck in class with nothing to do.

There is a tension between getting them to take responsibility and validating some of their frustration. If you're going to be objective—have an all-sided analysis—you still have to discuss what behavior is appropriate. No one wants to discuss the behavior of different racial groups that contributes to disunity. People don't want to talk about it. There's a fear to address those kinds of issues.

Ultimately, the YRE findings were consistent with those of the Youth Leadership Development

Toward a Structural Racism Approach:
Emotional Catharsis that Leads to Insight

Oakland, California. "Youth have no place to talk about how racism has impacted them," says Dereca Blackmon, director of Leadership Excellence in Oakland. "Racism is just a 'fact' that is not discussed. There may be a meeting on a specific incident in the community, but there is really no forum to talk about how racism has impacted youth in general." For this reason, Leadership Excellence has made the analytical and emotional processing of racism a core part of all its work.

Leadership Excellence (LE) was founded 15 years ago with a mission of providing grassroots community organizing and leadership skills to African-American children and youth. "We focus on empowering youth to challenge the structures of racism and the internalization of those structures," says Blackmon. LE maintains a succinct but pointed definition of racism in the United States as "institutional power supporting White privilege."

According to Blackmon, "There is a lack of a community outlet for healing from internalized oppression. This means that young people will either lash out or become complacent. The most likely thing that will happen is disengagement from racist institutions like schools and police. So we really target the most disengaged youth, in systems like foster care and probation."

The centerpiece of Leadership Excellence's program is a six-day "personal change" retreat called Camp Akili. Held on a beautiful university campus hours away from Oakland, Camp Akili serves as the "real entry into the agency" for 60-70 African-American young people aged 14 to18.

At Camp Akili, an entire day is devoted to exploring racism, laying the groundwork for a week that covers other intense issues like sexism and violence. Each day's curriculum is designed to focus on "theory" in the morning and "experience" in the afternoon. In this case, the experience is a full-blown re-enactment of the Middle Passage of the African slave trade, with participants marched with blindfolds, crowded into holding bins, and sold on auction blocks – all while enduring jarring taunts and threats balanced by whispers of ancestral comfort and inspiration. After it's all over, the young people participate in a supportive group discussion of what they saw, felt, and thought during the exercise, and how it relates to the morning's discussion of racism.

The Middle Passage re-enactment is designed to be cathartic, to dig deep into the history and emotions of racism that African-American youth carry with them, often in fiercely repressed suffering. While Blackmon believes LE needs to "push ourselves to be more involved in organizing campaigns," she quickly asserts that the biggest need of disengaged youth is "a community that is safe, skilled, and strong enough to support the change process." Blackmon also distinguishes LE's experiential curriculum from more traditional political education that focuses solely on analysis.

Initiative, which concluded that these "identity support practices"

> *...lead to a more affirmed and more balanced sense of ethnic, racial, and/or sexual identity. Our findings illustrate that identity can be supported through replicable practices, such as: the active engagement of community adults as mentors; celebration of culture and identity through art, dance, spirituality, and other forms of expression; critical education on the history of ethnic, racial, and/or sexual identity groups; workshops on issues of power and oppression; and support groups.*[16]

Based on extensive research, the YLDI concluded that such "identity-support practices are associated with an increased perception among youth that the program's activities are safe, interesting, and challenging."

However, as youth development and youth organizing practitioners and thinkers engage in this dialogue, much more thinking, experimentation, and reflection must be directed toward the question of how to strike an effective balance between providing individual support and promoting youth leadership in social change.

4. Structural racism approaches often include a collective action component.

Because racism affects people as a group and not just individually, anti-racist approaches must also operate at the collective level. Groups working with youth and focusing on racism include collective action as a part of their program models. This collective action may take different forms – such as community action projects or organizing campaigns – depending on the orientation and strategy of the organization. For example, Reggie Moore of Milwaukee's Urban Underground (UU) describes how racism informs the way young people in UU's

after school leadership development program shape their community action projects.

> *The selection of civic participation projects is based on the personal connection or experience youth have with an issue based on their race. We have focused on Black voter turn out, police-involved shootings, police in schools, and teen homeless, all looking through a racial lens.*

Invariably, this collective action involves a highly developed participatory process of issue identification that acknowledges young people's collective experience of racism. As Luis Sanchez of InnerCity Struggle in Los Angeles describes, his organization moved intentionally from traditional youth development practices to collective action based on critical thinking.

> *We take youth development to the next level by looking at problems and solutions like immigrant rights and racial justice, and education and militarization. We developed questions and a survey process of 1,000 students at each school based on a racial justice lens.*

Even groups such as Leadership Excellence in Oakland, who focus on leadership development and identity support as their main purpose, nonetheless structure their program to ensure that a young person ground her/his individual experience in a group reflection process and in an analysis that focuses on group-experienced racial dynamics.

Regardless of the type of organization, without "going to the next level," engagement of young people is unlikely to prepare them to think and act in ways that challenge structural racism. And, while some groups' work will always remain squarely outside the realm of organizing, there is much to be learned from youth organizing. Among the dozens of examples of youth organizing efforts across the country, consider:

▲ Californians for Justice, a statewide organization addressing racial justice in public education, successfully organized to prevent the implementa-

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16 Lewis-Charp, *Extending the Reach of Youth Development Through Civic Activism: Outcomes of the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative.*

Toward a Structural Racism Approach:
Integrating Youth Organizing with Individual Support

Los Angeles, California. In Los Angeles, United Students (US) is finding innovative ways to provide desperately needed support to young people while building the critical thinking and action skills they need to navigate and ultimately change the structures that shape their lives.

US is a five-year-old youth development and organizing project based in the East Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights, sponsored by InnerCity Struggle, an organization which had historically focused on community development. US's impressive victories include winning funding for two new schools in East Los Angeles, the inclusion of new ethnic studies courses in the curriculum, an alternative tardy policy based on a system of progressive discipline, the hiring of several new college counselors, and limits on military recruiting on high school campuses.

Organizing is central to United Students. At the same time, US coordinates a Learning Academy, which takes out-of-school youth between 15 and 18 referred by various county agencies and provides academic and personal support to them. Funded by contracts with Los Angeles county, the program meets its contractual obligations with the county at a rate higher than many youth development groups that lack an organizing component, and most of the students go on to get their GED or return to school.

"In our Learning Academy literacy program, we are intentional about our anti-racist curriculum," says Luis Sanchez, InnerCity Struggle director. "We feel [racism] is a major factor in preventing young people from succeeding, and that we have to talk about it directly."

"Since our ultimate goal is to get them to think about education as a positive and empowering thing," says Sanchez, "our curriculum structures around addressing racism within their own personal experience. We talk about immigration and their families coming here. We use writing exercises and talk about their personal experience. These are kids in contact with the justice system. We want them to take on aspects of education that they have rejected; to personally empower them so they can go back to school."

"We believe their experience needs to be legitimized and that rarely happens in schools. Maybe a counselor might exist to talk to them, but usually doesn't legitimize their writing etc.– what they've gone through. Eventually, they become facilitators for the next couple of sessions."

Toward a Structural Racism Approach:
Asking Questions that Reveal Structural Issues

Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Urban Underground (UU) is a four-year-old youth leadership development organization working primarily with African-American young people. "You can change your life. We can change the world," is UU's motto, reflecting their commitment to developing the "personal and community leadership" of young people.

Urban Underground is led by its two African-American co-founders who have infused the organization with their view of racism as a critical factor in the lives of young people, as well as their skill at engaging youth in critical dialogue.

The core of Urban Underground's work is the Youth Empowerment Program that engages youth 13-18 in weekly after school sessions. Here, youth learn about community issues and develop "personal development plans" for building their skills and guiding them into the future. As part of the program, participants develop community action projects to address particular issues of concern to youth, such as voter registration, youth homelessness, or police harassment. According to co-founder Reggie Moore, "regardless of the particular issue we're working on through the community action project, racism is always a factor."

Urban Underground also runs the Student Action Center that provides training and coordination for a network of school-based student organizers. In 2005, UU plans to hold its first Freedom Summer Camp to provide an intensive opportunity for youth to learn the history of "social, economic, and racial justice movements in Milwaukee and the United States."

Eighteen-year-old Jovan Goodman, a graduate of the Youth Empowerment Program, explains, "I used to just think what politicians said made sense." But, when the local sheriff argued that he could tell 'by looking' who was a young person skipping school and who was a young person from an affluent White high school, "Urban Underground broke it down. They asked us how he could determine who someone was." According to Goodman, Urban Underground is successful because they "ask you questions, and then present you with information. And, we never just talked – we talked, then acted … Before I just thought things were equal," concludes Goodman. Now I'm informed. I know more how to change situations."

tion of a mandatory high school exit exam that would have denied a high school diploma to tens of thousands of students of color who had successfully met all other graduation requirements.

▲ Sisters in Action for Power, a Portland youth-led led community group that took reports of sexual harassment experienced by young women of color and turned it into an impressive organizing campaign to force the school district to develop specific measures to end sexual harassment in Portland public schools. The group has now turned its attention to an analysis of the racial and gender justice dimensions of the gentrification and public housing crisis besetting the city.

▲ Padres Unidos and Students 4 Justice in Denver, whose youth members have launched a long-term campaign to address racial profiling and tracking in this multiracial school district. The students have organized against racially biased disciplinary policy, heavy-handed school security, and inadequate curriculum and facilities issues.

▲ Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals For Community Empowerment (FIERCE), a youth-led group in New York City that has led a two-year effort to ensure that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth of color and homeless youth are not displaced by redevelopment projects targeting areas of Greenwich Village.

These examples not only illustrate the work of groups which develop campaigns with a racial justice lens, but perhaps most importantly, do so through a participatory process in which youth research, respond to, and ultimately reframe issues that affect their lives.

5. Developing a structural racism approach requires specific and intentional organizational investment.

One of the most time- and resource-consuming aspects of maintaining a racial justice focus is the need to develop a shared political and racial justice analysis among staff and volunteers. As Alberto Retana of the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment in Los Angeles describes:

[This] work competes for time and we have to find time for everything, including staff development. This past year we decided to do two weeks of political education for staff.

Other convening participants echoed this challenge. For example, Paula Austin of North Carolina Lambda Youth Network spoke of the extensive work the organization had done trying to develop curriculum that reflected their complex and nuanced understanding of racism.

Traditionally, youth development groups might place the highest value on individual areas of professional expertise of their staff, such as case management, substance abuse counseling, and academic guidance. By contrast, youth development with a racial justice focus might prioritize a set of racial justice competencies such as analysis, ability to engage young people in critical thinking, and skill in developing innovative curriculum (for which there are far fewer resources). Prioritizing a structural racism perspective also affects an organization's staff recruitment, as Jeremy Lahoud of Generation Y in Chicago explains:

Our staff bring a racial justice movement perspective. We don't come here just wanting to develop youth individually.

A key resource to youth development and youth organizing groups appears to be national and regional intermediaries who can offer materials and training grounded in a well-developed racial justice analysis. For example, Generation Y staff have participated in the Racial Justice Institute of the Applied Research Center, a "seminar for racial

Toward a Structural Racism Approach:
Youth Leadership with an Intergenerational Commitment

Tunica County, MS. Deep in the heart of rural Mississippi, community-wide organizing around lasting racial inequities gave birth to Tunica Teens in Action. "Here in the Mississippi Delta, race is an intimate part of everything that occurs," observes Melvin Young, director of Concerned Citizens of Tunica County, where Tunica Teens is based. "Tunica County is 71 percent African American. But there is only one incorporated area and it is all White. And we have two school systems: public schools for Black kids and private schools for White kids. All our work focuses on race and racism."

Young people have played a key role in Concerned Citizens since it was founded in 1993 to challenge the lack of resources for education of Black youth. One of Concerned Citizens' most impressive efforts began in 1995 when the African-American community began organizing against a proposal to build a new public school in the center of an expensive housing development. Black community members were out-raged that the proposed location of the school would implicitly exclude Black students and that urgently needed resources for existing all-Black public schools were being channeled toward prosperous White communities. Ultimately, the proposal was defeat-ed, demonstrating a newfound power and energy among African Americans in Tunica.

With three young people on the board, Concerned Citizens embraced an intergenera-tional commitment right from the start. But youth board members themselves began to push for a commitment beyond representation. Young recalls that "they told us 'We need a way to build our skills and knowledge.' " From there, Tunica Teens evolved to help youth collectively develop their own skills and experience while remaining active members of Concerned Citizens.

Tunica Teens now offers young people a range of structured opportunities to build their skills and knowledge as they take collective action to educate and organize their community. Five youth interns make up the core membership of Tunica Teens, spending 10 to 20 hours per week developing educational retreats and cultural events that draw in hundreds of young people. Youth develop cultural events to commemorate Black History Month, Juneteenth, Harvest, and Kwanza, as well as related trainings that provide information and skills building in social change. Through the retreats, youth travel outside the community to Civil Rights-era sites or historically Black colleges. Youth members work together to take the lead in all aspects of this work, including planning, fundraising, implementation, and evaluation.

The work of Tunica Teens has helped strengthen and expand the role of youth in the board and membership of Concerned Citizens. The 11-member board of directors currently includes 5 youth members and an overall age representation from 14 to 55. According to Young, "we have an intergenerational model where adults share their experiences with youth and youth share their experiences with adults. To impact systemic racism in the Delta you need that kind of sustainability."

Toward a Structural Racism Approach:
Blending Youth Campaigns with a Racial Justice Lens

Oakland, California. Since 1998, Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL) has coordinated six distinct but interconnected youth leadership groups, each housed at a community organization providing services to a particular Asian ethnic group. AYPAL blends youth art/cultural work with youth leadership and youth organizing.

When asked to describe AYPAL's approach to racism, Director John Fong tells a simple story of how youth of color do not experience racism simply as the biased attitudes of certain individuals, but in the racist outcomes resulting from seemingly "race-neutral" policies and institutions. During an AYPAL workshop, youth were asked to describe instances when they were victimized by people of other races. Over and over, youth cited examples involving police. As one young person commented, "We can handle it when other people try to mess with us. But what can you do when the other person is a cop?"

According to Fong, AYPAL youth tackle racism through analyzing the racial dimensions of public policies and demanding changes in them. AYPAL works with youth to take their immediate experience and think through the larger dynamics and structures they represent. For example, conditions of public school bathrooms are a major topic among youth, yet AYPAL has never conducted a campaign targeted specifically around this issue. As Fong explains, "A dirty bathroom is an entry point to a larger analysis in which other issues are identified. Youth end up with a campaign focused on unfair treatment with a structural racism orientation." Such campaigns include successful efforts to seek ethnic studies programs and just treatment of students in public schools, as well as creation of after school programs in local recreation centers.

AYPAL also encourages young people to apply an understanding of racism in the running of the program. "Instead of just doing '-ism' workshops, we ask the youth to come up with anti-racist governing policies among themselves," says Fong. They start 'checking' each other in a way that is effective for the person being checked and for the person doing the checking."   Ultimately, Fong believes AYPAL has successfully blended youth development and youth organizing into a commitment to "youth ownership" where the learning and experience of young people with the capacity to create institutional change remains as important as "the win."

justice activists and intellectuals" that focuses on documenting, exposing, and challenging structural racism, and developing equity-based public policies. A broad range of groups have participated in trainings provided by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, including the Freedom School:

Freedom School is basically a summer school program that talks about slavery, racism, and leadership, and needing to stick together. It is a multi-cultural organization and it is all run by youth. It started with adults teaching youth from ages 18-20 about racism. After four years, we said, "Let the youth run it. Let youth get more involved."

Others described membership in regional networks, such as Southern Echo. For example, Tunica Teens

in Action is affiliated with Southern Echo's Mississippi Education Working Group (MEWG), a collaboration of groups focused on organizing, leadership and organizational development, and training. As MEWG's describes itself:

MEWG delegates have agreed that racism is about domination and control, not hate, and that racism is at the core of the resistance by the White community to the creation of first-rate public schools in those areas of the state where Black students are in the majority in the public school system.

The opportunities provided by these intermediaries were seen as important in shaping and sustaining groups' racial justice capacity.

IV. Recommendations

Youth development organizations can play an important role in a broader democratic movement for racial justice. Funders are crucial to this effort, both in supporting organizations doing racial justice work and in creating opportunities for the youth development field to engage with the ideas and implications of a structural racism lens.

Both funders and the youth development organizations they support must creatively balance an important tension. On the one hand, because racism is a complex and resilient phenomenon, advances can often be cyclical, with gains in one arena offset by losses in another. For example, one challenge to the movement to desegregate schools has been the persistence of segregation within housing and employment, which directly affects the structure of public education; all of these arenas are mutually dependent. Funding is often categorical, but racism is not.

On the other hand, funders and practitioners should not feel compelled to focus on every dimension of the problem. With greater analysis, funders can still focus on a narrow area while contributing ideas and resources to a larger strategy that recognizes the interconnected forms of racism that are at play in broader structures.

Broad recommendations for funders:

1. REFLECT. Examine your institution's assumptions about why racial disparities still exist and consider how structural racism fits within the institution's broader theory of change. Within many general institutional approaches, there are myriad opportunities to support work that challenges those disparities as a means for improving the life possibilities for all youth.

2. LISTEN. Create opportunities to hear directly from those affected by racism as you develop your strategies or identify grants. While most funders already seek out voices from the field, we note that many practitioners interviewed for this report voiced discomfort about having candid discussions about racism with funders. Providing clear openings for grantees and prospective grantees to discuss their views on racial justice can help alleviate this unease.

3. SUPPORT. Increase support for racial justice capacity building among organizations working with youth. We emphasize capacity here because even organizations committed to addressing racism in their youth development work face a host of ongoing challenges and tensions. If they believe funders will expect fully developed competence and expertise with little evidence of failure, they may be reluctant to seek the support they need to advance to the next stage of the work.

4. FACILITATE LEARNING. Because there needs to be greater learning on multiple fronts, funders should support exchange and collaboration among youth organizations seeking to define and apply a structural racism perspective. Funder education activities that increase the knowledge and capacity of foundations to build and sustain structural racism programming are also important.

In addition to these broader recommendations, there are other immediate and relatively specific steps that can be taken to build on existing research and practice, and to meet the challenges addressed throughout this report.

1. RESEARCH. A growing number of scholars across several disciplines are conducting research that examines how young people themselves experience, define and respond to structural racism. Support for this work, which includes case studies of the ways in which youth organizing and youth development are applying a structural racism perspective, is critical to better understand the ongoing needs of this emerging field.

2. CURRICULA. Presently, much of the innovative curriculum used by youth development organizations to understand and engage structural racism remains with the organizations that produced it. Compiling and circulating inventive curricula and materials currently being used by organizations working with youth could help many organizations strengthen or begin this work.

3. TRAINING. Growing numbers of intermediary and training organizations are providing support and assistance for youth organizations to develop competencies in defining and applying a structural racism perspective. Support to these organizations should be expanded in tandem with support for local organizations

4. ASSESSMENT. More discussion is needed about different ways to measure success, recognizing that a structural racism approach will produce different outcomes. Given the realities and depth of racism in our society, youth programs could not be expected to produce immediately measurable outcomes on racial disparities. However, it is certainly possibly to measure the level of movement, awareness building, and action by youth toward racial justice, in combination with traditional measures of positive youth development.

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