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THEY JUST DON'T KNOW

New and pioneering approaches to tackling racial injustice in the education system



Photo by Diana Lempel

By Derek A. Bardowell
Churchill Fellow - 2014

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Contents

About the Author	4
Introduction	5
Purpose of the Fellowship	8
Case Studies	
Harlem Children's Zone	13
<i>Place-based / whole system approach</i>	
Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative / Boston	16
Promise Initiative	
<i>Place-based approach</i>	
People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's Undoing Racism workshop	18
<i>Training / community organising</i>	
The Calhoun School's Deconstructing Race Program	21
<i>Using film as an approach</i>	
Campaign for Black Male Achievement	24
<i>Philanthropic approach</i>	
American Promise	26
<i>Using film and parental engagement</i>	
Peace First	29
<i>Peace-making approach</i>	
Harlem RBI	31
<i>Sport for development approach</i>	
Color of Change	33
<i>Online organising</i>	
Race Forward	35
<i>Media campaigning</i>	
Conclusion	38
Recommendations	40
Bibliography	42
Acknowledgements	44
About the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship	44

About the Author

Derek Bardowell is a Winston Churchill Fellow (2014), an RSA Fellow, a trustee of Leap Confronting Conflict and a member of the Ashoka UK Venture Board. He began his career in journalism, serving as the Music Editor of The Voice newspaper, a researcher for BBC World Service on the Wrap Your Head Round Rap series, a critic for BBC radio and MTV, and a contributor to a variety of publications (Time Out, The Source, NME, The Fader) and the anthology Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture (Routledge, 2001). Derek moved into the youth/nonprofit sector, developing courses for HMP Wormwood Scrubs and Nacro, managing a journalism programme for Headliners and becoming a visiting tutor at Birkbeck College and London College of Fashion. He went on to become Director of Education at Stephen Lawrence Trust where he developed programmes with Imperial College, Central St. Martins and RIBA and served as an executive committee member of the Race in the Modern World Conference, (Goldsmiths, 2009). After the Stephen Lawrence Trust, Derek moved to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, where he led the strategic direction of its education and learning strand and oversaw the distribution of grants worth over £19 million. Derek currently contributes essays to The Weeklings. His essay Walking with Soulless Haste was featured in the anthology The Weeklings: Revolution No. 1 (The Weeklings, 2013).

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Introduction

When my parents moved from Manor Park, East London to Chigwell, Essex in 1987, I discovered for the first time a place where I could walk in a straight line without my senses being disturbed. No longer would sleeping bikes on the pavement, sirens, car beeps, soulless buildings with sharp edges, and all the haunted, hollow sounds of the inner city disturb me. Chigwell did not move as incessantly as Manor Park. Little to hear. Clear air. Country smells. Even when a violent wind blew, you didn't feel as if a blunt knife was scraping every inch of your face. It was peaceful. Sterile though. A place for older folks. No young people. No colour. I missed the rattling chime of kids playing out in the streets, the aroma of creamed coconut and cumin wafting out of houses. Missed the warmth of the neighbours, a neighbourhood that didn't necessarily understand me, but was familiar enough with my culture to embrace me. In Chigwell I felt like a stranger in a familiar land.

I quickly decided that I wanted to continue going to school in East Ham, on the borders of Barking. Didn't mind the journey, a mile walk to the nearest bus stop, 25 minute bus ride to Ilford, 15 minute bus ride to Barking, eight minute walk to school. All good. Needed familiarity more than I needed extra sleep, more than I needed light on the way home during winter.

Two weeks into my first term of school (I was in the fourth year/Year 10 at the time), I was strolling home via Manford Way, the main stretch between my house and my nearest bus stop. About ten minutes in length. Manford Way offered little in the way of engagement; an unwelcoming pub, a health centre, a large primary school, a rarely occupied park and a mix of multi-coloured flat roof houses (their gardens, which backed into the streets, protected by five feet high brick walls) and bland semis with driveways and sloping patches of green space separating the houses from the pavement. The stretch was about as colourful as a damp paving stone.

As I sauntered down the street, I encountered an old lady walking 15 or so yards ahead of me. She wore a grey or beige overcoat. Stiff. Coat looked like rigormortis had set in. She had a full set of grey hair and while not exactly frail, she shuffled awkwardly like someone trying to overtake a parent with a double buggy down a narrow path. I attributed the stammering nature of her walk to age. I felt her turn to gaze at me. Our eyes didn't meet. But she started to shuffle with greater haste.

She looked again. Felt it, but I was in a daze; often was during this stretch. Thinking no doubt about Eric B. & Rakim's *I Know You Got Soul*, a no-look Magic Johnson pass, a Sugar Ray Leonard bolo punch. Thinking about why my parents moved to the sticks. Understood why. They had been in Manor Park since '68. Manor Park had provided affordable housing, a black community, and a willing seller to a black family. Yet after 19 years, they'd had enough. Our house had been robbed, car broken into. The local post office had been held up while the local secondary school had a mobile police unit permanently stationed within its grounds due to persistent racially motivated violence.

The racist 'political' group the National Front brazenly recruited and leafleted outside my primary school gates. My parents craved a safer neighbourhood, a house with off street parking, a semi, a quiet life. They traded larger (house) for safer (neighbourhood), chaos for calm, brownness for whiteness.

Interrupted. My thoughts. The old lady had turned again. I noticed that she had started to walk even faster. Despite this, I had still been gaining on her. She turned and looked at me again. Our eyes met briefly this time. I smiled. She grimaced. Her looks were starting to unnerve me. I was only a few yards behind her now. Her shuffle transformed into a kind of hop, the type a runner descends into once they've pulled a muscle. Tried to ignore her. Told myself it wasn't me. Didn't want my head to drift too far into what she may have been thinking.

I approached cautiously. Five yards. Four yards. Three yards. If she needed help, I'd help. If not, I'd stroll past. She turned again. This time she looked directly at me. Alarmed. Fraught. I became paranoid. Couldn't figure out what was wrong with her. Well, I knew. Didn't want to believe.

I started to slow down. *This'll help*. Not slow enough. Then I decided to walk closer to the roadside, so when I'd overtake her, there would be enough distance between the two of us for her to feel safe. I'm two yards behind her now. She did not appear in any physical pain. I had been her pain. She feared being mugged. I feared she might accuse me of mugging her.

I started to look around. Felt like a criminal. Maybe I had been blowing this out of proportion. Maybe I would overtake her and this farce would end. By the time the old lady crossed a road, I was no longer behind her but to her side, about to overtake. Freedom. Free-doom. As she stepped onto the pavement she collapsed to the floor. Her crashing body sounded like a leather overcoat flung vigorously onto concrete. She rolled onto her back in an attempt I believe to start getting to her feet. I approached to help her up. 'Are you all right?' I asked. She lifted her hands in front of her face as if trying to protect herself from a punch. 'I'm not gonna hurt you, are you all right?' I held my arm out to help her up. She flinched, her arms protecting her face, eyes startled like a child confronted by a hostile dog. I withdrew my hand. 'Do you want me to help you?' I asked. She did not say a word.

Here I was, a near 6-foot black boy in ill-fitting school clothes standing over a frail woman, crumpled on the pavement. I saw this scene before I realised I was part of the scene.

Hold that thought.

Maybe she... Maybe you...

Hold it. The first thing you thought at the point the old lady fell, hold on to it.

This story, a true one, is not about victim versus villain, right versus wrong, good versus evil. Not that. Not about her, me. It's about the lens through which you have just witnessed this scene. A scene where – on the surface – everything points to the fact that an old white lady felt so threatened by a black boy, a perception of blackness, that she panicked herself into falling. *Maybe she...* I'll never know, you'll never know.

Go back to your lens for a second. What shaped your lens, the way in which you view life, more specifically, the way in which you view race? Your parents, the media, friends, your upbringing, education?

Do you hold the same political beliefs as your parents? Do you believe everything you see in the media, particularly things you may know little about? What was your conception of race growing up? What is the racial make-up of your nearest and dearest friends, you know, the ones you confide in? At school, what did you really learn about race, religion, immigration, Britain's social history in relation to these things?

I could have picked many more stories. From the blatant: being persistently stopped and searched by police for no reason, being spat at, called the 'N' word, almost having my throat slit, hiding out in the back of a car during a National Front rally. To the subtle: bus driver refusing to let me on the bus, shop keeper calling the cops on me, security guards following around stores, taxi drivers refusing to pick me up, being refused job interviews once interviewers saw my face, the uncomfortable stares, the microaggressions¹. Everyday occurrences. Not perpetrated by skinheads in Doc Martens, with tats, a scowl and a glare. We're talking bus stops, shops, trains, school, work. We're talking actions, body language, feeling othered², the conscious, the unconscious.

This is not about the old lady and me. It's about history and how it affects the way we behave, how we relate to one another, not brushing it under a rug as if it has no impact on the present. It's about the system, not individual incidents. Not about how the old lady felt, but why she might have felt the way she did. Her lens. Not about other inequalities. Not a Premiership league table of inequality, which is worst, what came first. Don't dilute, divert from the core issue of this paper, however uncomfortable. This paper is about power, who owns it, who controls it, controls what you see, what you hear, what you don't see, what they do not want you to hear. It's about who has access to power. About the unspoken, the unseen and not solely characterising racism through acts of extremity. It's about the racism you don't see, don't understand. It's about whether things are truly equal, not better, but equal. Better is not good enough. It's about solutions, what has been done, what can be done, who's doing it, how we can learn from it, how we can contribute to it. It's also about you, your lens, your power and stuff you just don't know.

¹Racial microaggressions are the brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities and denigrating messages sent to people of color by well-intentioned white people who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated. These messages may be sent verbally ("You speak good English."), nonverbally (clutching one's purse more tightly) or environmentally (symbols like the confederate flag or using American Indian mascots). Such communications are usually outside the level of conscious awareness of perpetrator' – Derald Wing Sue Ph.D. in *Microaggressions in Everyday Life* (October 2010).

² Being left out or being made to feel left out from a group.

Purpose of the Fellowship

It felt like a national holiday to me. The Black Cultural Archives opened its new building in Brixton on Thursday 24 July 2014 with a private view, a few speeches and later a concert in Windrush Square. Never before had I seen so many of my favourite public figures in one place. The launch featured, as performers or punters, Linton Kwesi Johnson, a man whose poetry (a selection of which was included in the Penguin Modern Classics series) eloquently summarised the black experience in Britain; Orange Prize winner Zadie Smith, whose debut novel *White Teeth* (Penguin, 2000) was included in *Time Magazine's* 100 Best English-language novels from 1923-2005; activist and educator Professor Gus John, the former Director of Education in Hackney and former coordinator of the Black Parents Movement and Stella Dadzie, founder member of the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) and co-author of the seminal *The Heart of the Race* (Virago, 1985), which won the 1985 Martin Luther King Award for Literature.

My former boss, Baroness (Doreen) Lawrence of Clarendon, whose tireless campaigning after the murder of her son, Stephen Lawrence, led to the McPherson Inquiry, which concluded that the Metropolitan Police was institutionally racist was present as was poet and author Benjamin Zephaniah, named as one of Britain's top 50 post-war writers by *The Times*. Also in attendance was rapper and activist Akala, Baroness Ros Howells and actor/playwright Kwame Kwei-Armah, the second Black-Briton to have a play staged in the West End (*Elmina's Kitchen*, 2005).

What I witnessed that day - the people, the culture, the history - was special because it reflected a broad conception of Black-Britishness, the depth of which is not taught in schools and rarely if ever told in the media. Mainstream conceptions of Black-Britishness remain scandalously narrow. Too often limited to slavery and colonialism (presented as a distant memory, a mistake the nation would rather forget), Windrush (a bittersweet part of British history), gangs (problematizing the black male youth) and October (our reward). Limited narrative. A claustrophobic feeling if you're black.

In seeing so many of these figures, many of whom I had worked with, worked for, interviewed, met, been lectured by, laughed with, admired from a distance and from close, I saw my history, my reality, my Britain, a broad spectrum, an honest reflection of a cultural and political influence far greater than the numbers of black people that populate the country.

For years black³ charitable organisations, social movements and voluntary action played a pivotal role in tackling inequality and providing a voice for its community, particularly in relation to education and youth. The sector provided supplementary schooling when mainstream education failed, they campaigned against police harassment and racially motivated violence, reduced social isolation, tried to get anti-racist pedagogy into teacher training, provided decent housing and health provision, supported new arrivals to settle, to understand their rights, access services;

³ 'Black was 'the political colour of opposition to racism' (Back, 1994: 3) and blackness was 'based on people's direct, first hand experience of racism ... and how they are treated by 'white' society, rather than what culturally distinct groups belong to' (Jeffers, 1991: 63). Lingayah, S. (2014) *Renewing Black Politics*. London: Commissioned by Voice4Change England.

they provided a political voice and created alternative media when the mainstream media presented a distorted picture of the black presence. Some were charities, others campaigns. Some were volunteer-led movements, others private businesses with a social purpose.

Black social movements in the UK can be traced back to 1773, when 300 black people supported two black men who were imprisoned in Bridewell for begging⁴. Pre World War I, there were a number of 'ethnic' associations set up in maritime industries and port cities⁵. It was not until after the Second World War, when people from the Caribbean were brought over to the United Kingdom to fill the labour shortage – resulting in immigrants doing jobs British folks no longer wanted to do, cheap labour in poor housing, grafting with little or no rights, and then high numbers of black kids being classified as 'educationally subnormal', mass discrimination with little or no support from the authorities - that the black charitable sector started to take shape. There needed to be a response to racism, poor housing, poor schooling, racial violence, dodgy landlords and colour bars.

The sector has been rich in terms of what it has achieved in forwarding race equality, but with little money, little power, driven often by policy, crisis or moral panics. The sector has therefore been largely reactive. Perhaps this is the nature of charity, but this is not a sustainable response, particularly if financially reliant on the very institutions they're so often campaigning against.

The other challenge is the charitable/voluntary sector in many ways reflects major inequalities present in other sectors: lack of diversity in governance or decision-making positions; colourblind⁶ approaches; lack of anti-racist training; deficit-based approaches; lack of long-term investment in race equality; over scrutiny of black leadership. The charitable sector is quick to point the finger at other institutions, however, does it look at itself in the mirror when it comes to its own practices around racial inequality?

A further problem exists, one that is far deeper and one that arguably defines race and racism in the UK. If America is impatient when it comes to matters of race then Britain is in denial. It's difficult to build a sustainable sector in a society that cannot admit it has a problem.

Having worked in charities since 1994, in particular in the education, race equality and youth development fields, I have witnessed the slow deterioration of the black charitable sector. There are many reasons for this. In recent years, the third sector has become more market-driven, which is difficult for charities tackling unpopular truths. The Government's Cohesion Guidance for Funders Consultation in May 2008 stated that funders 'should not automatically award grants to third sector activities organised on the basis of "single identities" (i.e. single ethnic, cultural or religious groups)'. Funding it suggested should be targeted towards integration, linking different groups. But what of those charities filling gaps in their communities for services inadequately supplied by the state? Coalition cuts have severely affected the race equality sector and the government has no clear-cut strategy around racial injustice. Getting adequate data around race has also become increasingly difficult, restricting the sector's policy influencing voice. The black or BME (Black minority ethnic) sector in response has

If America is impatient when it comes to matters of race then Britain is in denial. It's difficult to build a sustainable sector in a society that cannot admit it has a problem.

⁴Afridi, A. and Warmington, J. (2009) *The Pied Piper: The BME third sector and UK race relations policy*. Birmingham: brap, 14

⁵Lingayah, S. (2014) *Renewing Black Politics*. London: Commissioned by Voice4Change England.

⁶'Colorblindness [sic] is the racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. In a colorblind [sic] society, white people, who are unlikely to experience disadvantages due to race, can effectively ignore racism in American life, justify the current social order, and feel more comfortable with their relatively privileged standing in society (Fryberg, 2010). Most minorities, however, who regularly encounter difficulties due to race, experience colorblind ideologies quite differently. Colorblindness [sic] creates a society that denies their negative racial experiences, rejects their cultural heritage, and invalidates their unique perspectives' – Monnica T Williams PhD. On Dec 27, 2011 in *Culturally Speaking*, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/culturally-speaking/201112/colorblind-ideology-is-form-racism

[Job] candidates with ethnic sounding names had to apply twice as many times to get a job interview as their white counterparts with the same or similar qualifications.

lacked a coherent voice, failed to collaborate sufficiently and not diversified income early enough to offset government cuts.

The sector is weakening at a time when racism in its more subtle form is increasing. Black women experiencing domestic violence have to contact agencies 17 times before they get the help they need (in comparison to the general average of 11 times); the DWP's report *A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice in British cities* (October 2009) found that candidates with ethnic sounding names had to apply twice as many times to get a job interview as their white counterparts with the same or similar qualifications; black people are stopped and searched 28 times more by the police than their white counterparts and are also more likely to be excluded from school and detained under the mental health act. Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) recently reported that young black men are more likely to be unemployed than any other group of young people in London despite improved educational attainment for this group.

Racism exists in the UK, consciously and unconsciously, individually and institutionally. It's damaging. A curse, often a hidden curse. Research tells us that exposure to racial discrimination (from adverse childhood experiences and negative conceptions in the media to teacher bias and racist policing) lead to decreased self-efficacy, anger, poor health and lower levels of empathy, which leads to an increase in risk behaviours (i.e. drug use), aggression and increased risk of chronic illness⁷. Research tells us that implicit racial bias negatively affects the way teachers perceive black students and how the police respond to black suspects⁸. The Kirwan Institute's *State of the Science: Implicit Bias⁹ Review 2013* for example reported that in a test, police officers were quicker to shoot African-American suspects than white suspects. The officers also shot more African-Americans in error. Teachers equated a black walking style with lower academic standard. Negative media images can also be damaging for those with limited experience of or friendships with black people. 'Studies show that media images have the greatest impact on perceptions when viewers have less real-world experience with the topic; in other words, the "media world" can be mistaken for the real world, unless audiences have sufficient personal experience to counteract its effects'¹⁰.

Despite this, what I have found most disturbing during my time in the charitable sector is the lack of dialogue, lack of conversation, lack of debate among mainstream commentators about racial injustice. All too often I have sat in a room with influencers discussing educational inequality, and racism is rarely if ever mentioned as a factor. When mentioned, the conversation would quickly switch to the plight of white working class boys. I have viewed strategic documents about youth disadvantage and read research papers on youth unemployment that make no mention of racism as a barrier in the life chances of young people. Often when questioning influencers about race, their responses would point to things being better, class being the more fundamental factor or express the opinion that racism was not a major problem anymore, a case of a 'few rotten apples'. Despite the significant and long-term presence of black people in the UK, I found the genuine lack of understanding about barriers faced by this community in such forums startling. At times I wanted to hand them a copy of Peggy McIntosh's essay *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (1989), which provides a white perspective on how white advantage, like male advantage, is

⁷ Sanders-Phillips, K., Settles-Reaves, B., Walker, D., and Brownlow, J. (2009) Social Inequality and Racial Discrimination: Risk Factors for Health Disparities in Children of Color. Washington DC: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/124/Supplement_3/S176.full.html

⁸ Staats, C. and Patton, C. (2013) State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2013. Ohio: Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/docs/SOTS-Implicit_Bias.pdf

⁹ Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner – Kirwan Institute's State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2013, http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/docs/SOTS-Implicit_Bias.pdf

¹⁰ Topos Partnership and Kerschhagel, M. (October 2011) Opportunity for Black Men and Boys: Public Opinion, Media Depictions, and Media Consumption. New York: The Opportunity Agenda, www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/opportunity-agenda-20111201.pdf

kept strongly 'inculturated' in the United States. Britain is not much different.

I applied to the Fellowship to create a report that would start to open the dialogue about racial injustice in education. Going to the United States was a natural option. The race equality sector is far more established, with a greater level of stability, wealth and power, greater independence and some innovative approaches. During my travels to Boston and New York, I interviewed 16 people from or linked to 11 race equality organisations, academic institutions or nonprofits. Each interview covered similar themes, the needs they are addressing with their work, their methodology, the impact of their work, key challenges faced, key reasons behind their success and the most significant things they have learnt from being in the race equality field. In addition to this, I took part in a two-and-a-half day undoing racism workshop, observed two nonprofits at work and interviewed three students who had been through programmes featured in this paper. A full list of the people I met can be found in the acknowledgements section. Deskbound research prior to the study visit focused on three elements: a) the history and state of the BME charitable sector, b) racial inequality in the UK and c) innovative global practice in the field of racial injustice.

The report primarily focuses on anti-black racism as this has been an integral part of my work in the charitable sector for many years and the nature of the projects I visited predominantly catered to African-American users. While racial injustice in education remains the focus, this paper also addresses the needs of the race equality sector. For change to occur in education, the sector needs to be strong and sustainable. Given the number of high profile police shootings of young black males in the United States in 2014, many of the wider societal issues that affect the life chances of young people beyond the school gates are also considered. Not all of the organisations covered here are race equality charities. However, those that are included are here because they have proven effective at tackling racial discrimination. What follows is a series of short essays covering 10 approaches to tackling racial injustice in education (within and beyond the school gates) including place-based and whole-system approaches, community organising, peace-building, philanthropic, sport for development and online organising.

Unfortunately I did not get the opportunity to learn more about the African-American Genealogy and Genetics Curriculum Project at the Hutchins Center at Harvard University. The project intends to use genetic investigation and genealogical research to help young people learn about themselves and their heritage while stimulating young people to learn about social history, science, slavery and identity. It is currently in the early stages of curriculum design and actively fundraising towards future development. I also missed the opportunity to spend time with campaigners Dream Defenders, 'an uprising of communities in struggle shifting culture through transformational organizing [sic]'; Martha Diaz, whose Hip Hop Education Center [sic] aims to use hip hop pedagogy to increase pupil retention in schools; Border Crossers, which trains and equips educators to be racial justice leaders in schools and in their communities and Dr Christopher Emdin, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology at Teachers College, Columbia University and author of *Urban Science Education for the Hip Hop Generation* (Sense, 2010).

Finally, it should be noted that this paper is not suggesting that British charities should replicate the work featured in this report. The paper focuses on the learning from these projects while presenting a number of ideas and potential solutions that may strengthen the race equality and education sectors in the UK.

THEY JUST DON'T KNOW

New and pioneering approaches
to tackling racial injustice in the education system

By Derek A. Bardowell

Case Studies

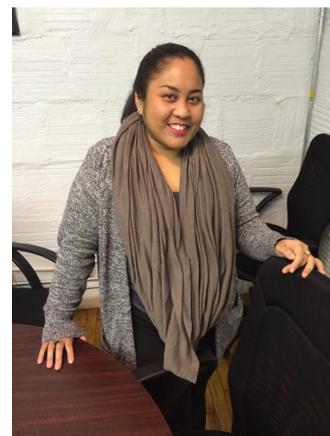
Harlem Children's Zone

I'm sure he had for a long time been aware of the pattern. High percentage of kids caught doing something wrong, deemed 'at risk' of doing something wrong, accused of doing something wrong, one of the three. Could be about knife crime, school exclusion, gang membership. Problem makes the news, moral panic ensues. Common problem, permanent glitch, temporary fixes, never fixed. A common problem the state, the authorities, the powers that be are embarrassed about. A problem they or a previous administration had likely created or previously ignored. So the authorities want to be seen to be doing something about it. Throw some money at it, a little pot, perhaps two, three years' worth. Loads of charities apply. Demand outweighs supply, they say.

Other funders follow. They need to be seen to be doing something too. Maybe a thousand kids engaged. Some find work, some gain qualifications and some are saved. Everybody pats each other on the back, the 'superhero' practitioners, the funders, the authorities. Money runs out. Priorities change. Interest wanes. Everything stays the same, except more charities are created, more young people are dependent, but the money has run out. Demand outweighs supply, they say. Problem not fixed. Did not stem the flow of blood. Just a temporary fix. A few years later, the problem is back in vogue, moral panic ensues, authorities embarrassed, you get the picture.

When Geoffrey Canada started working at the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families as Education Director in 1983 (later to become CEO in 1990), this was a dilemma he faced. He worked with young people at risk of exclusion, truants. Found he was not dealing with the core of their problems. Furthermore, short-term funding meant he could not build a sustainable model to tackle the root causes of young people's problems. Canada had been 'superman' operating in an area blighted by high numbers of children being born into poverty, to single parenthood with high rates of obesity. He didn't just want to address school exclusion, he knew young people needed more. They needed more than just superman.

Canada wanted to change the game. Disrupt the pattern. Wanted to develop a long-term intervention that would reverse the cycle of poverty, the result of years of discrimination and decay. Working with young people was just a start. He wanted to change the system that surrounds and influences them, young people's peers, their parents, their teachers, the wider community, the services. If he was going to improve young people's life chances through education by improving attainment, he knew he could not do so by divorcing educational inequality from social inequality. 'What happens in the classroom is affected by what happens outside the classroom,' says Rasuli Lewis, Director of the Harlem Children's Zone's Practitioners Institute. Developing the character of the community would be just as important as developing



Janet-Marie Lopez, Administrative Assistant/Community Liaison, Harlem Children's Zone

'What happens in the classroom is affected by what happens outside the classroom'



Rasuli Lewis

Harlem Children's Zone developed a coordinated programme of educational, social and medical services, serving children and young people from birth right through to adulthood. Cradle to career.

the character of young people.

There were a number of questions Canada had to address. One of his foremost questions was 'why are poor people poor? They are poor, this evidence suggested, not because of government aid, not because they are genetically flawed, and not because the system denies them opportunities, but because they lack certain specific skills'¹¹. That being the case, what then are the key problems faced by poor children and their families and what skills, what information, what services would be required to address these problems?

In collaboration with a number of experts, Canada created a whole-system approach to narrowing the black-white achievement gap in education. It was designed specifically for the Harlem community, taking history and the racial demographic into consideration and recognising the need for a long-term, comprehensive, place-based approach.

Canada started shopping the business plan in 1997. They said it couldn't be done, too ambitious, problem too big. A \$1 million donation from George Soros catalysed future investment. Canada started with the Baby College, a nine-week parenting programme in 2000. In 2002, Rheedlen changed its name to the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ).

HCZ developed a coordinated programme of educational, social and medical services, serving children and young people from birth right through to adulthood. Cradle to career. It aims to 'serve an entire neighbourhood comprehensively and at scale to create a "tipping point" and definitely shift the culture of the community'¹². 'The objective is to create a safety net woven so tightly that children in the neighborhood just can't slip through,' says Lewis.

HCZ was built on four core principles. First, it wanted to build and rebuild communities. Second, it wanted to create a pipeline of high quality services, 'to meet children wherever they were, whenever they needed us. Getting in early, very early and supporting them through their whole lives,' says Lewis. Three, scale. HCZ has slowly built to working in-depth with over 12,000 children and young people. At such a scale, suddenly youth problems that were once believed to be too big now appear to be solvable. Four, data, which informs its practice, its reporting, how it improves and ensures that it can reach every possible child.

Today, HCZ serves over 12,000 children (approximately 70% in the Zone) and over 12,000 adults in 97 blocks in Harlem through 24 educational, support and health services. This includes the Promise Academy Charter School (a school which serves nothing but water, food with no sugar or salt, using local produce/farms, a food policy teachers also have to adhere to), Harlem Gems Head Start (age 3-5 years), Community Pride community-building programme, tenant associations, one-to-one counselling, computer literacy, a foster care service; whatever the issue a child or young person may face, or indeed their families, there is a coordinated approach to identifying need and providing a service to address it.

HCZ currently operates on an annual budget of \$101 million. Over 950 HCZ young people have entered college, over 4,000 are getting one hour of exercise daily, 100% of Harlem Gems pre-kindergarten children were assessed as 'school-ready', 95% of high school seniors were accepted into college in 2013 and 4000+ parents have graduated

¹¹ Tough, P. (2009) *Whatever It Takes*. Mariner Books: New York, 36

¹² <http://hcz.org/about-us/history/>. Recovered February 2015.

from Baby College. It has also received a four-star rating for 12 consecutive years from Charity Navigator. HCZ is currently growing its endowment, targeting 25% of its operating costs through this route. At present, HCZ is 70% privately funded (35% high net worths, 35% from their board) and 30% public funded.

HCZ has also become a thought leader in place-based, whole-system approaches to tackling educational inequality. Indeed, it has played a fundamental role in shifting the paradigm in the nonprofit sector away from sole interventions. *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* described HCZ as ‘one of the most ambitious social experiments of our time’. President Obama declared HCZ as ‘a national model for breaking the cycle of poverty with proven success’. As a result, in 2010 the Obama Administration initiated the Promise Neighbourhood Program to replicate HCZ’s cradle to college to career approach in 20 cities. Thus far an estimated \$150 million has been pledged by United States Department of Education towards replication.

While it is true that HCZ was started and driven by a charismatic leader in Geoffrey Canada, a man who enticed practically a whole community, corporates, high net worth individuals and the government to buy into his vision, it was clear in speaking to Lewis that the vision is to build a community of leaders and not to wait for another superman to emerge.

‘We don’t think it’s our job to teach kids what to think,’ says Lewis. ‘We want them to know how to think. You’ve got to know how to solve problems. You’ve got to have a sense of self. You’ve got to have a sense of the challenge. You must give them [young people] much guidance and support but, in the end, the new generation will have to take this forward or it won’t go forward’.

To learn more, go to: www.hcz.org



Geoffrey Canada Community Centre

The vision is to build a community of leaders and not to wait for another superman to emerge.

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative / Boston Promise Initiative

'Development without displacement'.



Dudley Street

Thirty years ago, Dudley Street in Roxbury, Boston was desolate and poverty stricken, America's garbage can. Literally. It had become an illegal dumping ground for contractors and people from outside the community; so bad, kids would throw up on their way to school. Adults would hold their breath as they drove through the neighbourhood. Businesses and services started 'redlining' Dudley Street. Stopped investing, stopped hiring locals, charged more for their services. They disowned it, abused it.

Residents wanted out too. Homeowners with houses that had little or no value started burning them down for insurance. Fire a week. Virgin arsonists. Heat and sirens would regularly wake locals, frighten them, disturb them, force them to stare out their windows, prompting them to start looking for somewhere else to live. There were also many residents who wanted to stay and others who had no option but to stay. Some of those residents formed the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in 1984. DSNI fought for the rights of the neighbourhood, protested against those dumping waste, cleaned up the waste. And when the authorities finally decided to redevelop, to regenerate, and ignored the community while making these plans, DSNI protested. They organised themselves, hired planners, built partnerships and created a resident-led vision of what Dudley Street could be. DSNI formed a community land trust and the City adopted Dudley Street's plans. DSNI transformed a wasteland into a desirable location, gained ownership of its neighbourhood and with it gained political power.

DSNI's work centres on housing, workforce development and youth leadership. It prepares young people to be organisers and planners for the local neighbourhood. Joceline Fidalgo, who took me around Dudley Street and described the history of Roxbury, is an example of youth leadership in action. She grew up in Dudley Street and has joined the staff in a fundraising capacity. As a youngster, she started the Dudley Youth Council with her peers to empower youth and drive positive change in their neighbourhood. The DSNI model is very much about building leadership within the community. The community is the leader.

DSNI's Board comprises 34 people (elected every two years), which includes four people of Cape Verde heritage, four Latina, four white, four African-American, four youth, and members from local businesses and religious and housing institutions. These residents have the power to dictate what happens in their neighbourhood.

DSNI primarily serves the Dudley Triangle (where it owns its housing stock, 225 homes) and a surrounding area, which it calls the Dudley Village Campus. In total, it serves almost 25,000 residents, including close to 7,000 children and young people. Under its leadership, it has kept home ownership affordable, fought off gentrification and enabled residents to play an integral part in local development without being forced out. DSNI's slogan is 'development without displacement'.

Education however continues to be problematic in this region. Almost 75% of children and young people are still 'bussed' to schools outside Dudley Street. When Boston,

after much and often illegal resistance, finally decided to integrate its schools in 1974, it did so by 'bussing' black students from Roxbury out to predominantly white schools, much to the rage of many white parents and students. *The Soiling of Old Glory*, the Pulitzer Prize winning photograph by Stanley Forman, captures the racial tensions of the time and the resistance of white residents to integration. Forman's picture shows the moment a white student Joseph Rakes swings a flagpole with an American flag at black lawyer and civil rights activist Ted Landsmark. What 'bussing' failed to do is improve schools locally, a legacy that is felt in Roxbury to this day.

DSNI decided to apply for a Promise Neighborhood grant in order to develop a coordinated and community integrated approach to raising attainment in its local schools. It was awarded a five-year \$6 million grant in 2012 to deliver a tailored package of educational support like the Harlem Children's Zone. It will support schools and the local community to develop a culturally responsive educational offer that considers the needs of the community. True to its approach, it has consulted the community heavily and asked schools how DSNI with its resources can help them perform better. 'The end users of the system are the ones you should be empowering to make the changes,' says Sheena Collier, Executive Director of the Boston Promise Initiative.

DSNI is currently creating or enhancing parental engagement, school readiness, reading proficiency, community voice, youth leadership, jobs and community service, healthy foods and 21st Century technology programmes. Its culturally responsive education offer will focus on:

- Taking teachers on tours of the neighbourhood so they understand where their pupils are coming from, helping them grasp and respect the history of Roxbury
- Translation services
- Running a campaign called Caring Adults, where each pupil has a mentor they can identify with (from same cultural background)
- Supporting schools with teacher recruitment to help diversify their workforce.

DSNI has been successful at giving residents power, giving them a stake in housing and workforce development. It is now attempting to support children through to adulthood under the title 'Children born to learn, neighborhoods built to care'. What works in DSNI's favour is the fact that the Initiative will be driven by the local community. DSNI has for many years been the glue between the local neighbourhoods' services. Being 'the glue' will be fundamental to Boston Promise Initiative's approach to educational reform.

'The bringing together of people across nonprofits and different sectors? I think that is powerful,' says Collier. 'When people across sectors are invested in something and really understand? The bringing together of partners is an art'.

To learn more, go to: www.dsni.org/boston-promise-initiative.



Sheena Collier

'Children born to learn, neighborhoods built to care'.

People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's Undoing Racism workshop

'If you're not aware of your power, you're an abuser'.

Racism, a condition that exists in the 'collective unconscious of the world'.

Couldn't sleep for three nights. Even after that, my sleep disturbed, the faintest noises sounded like banging. Tried writing about. Consulted my notes, threw the notes away. Couldn't quite describe the two-and-a-half days I spent taking part in the Undoing Racism workshop. Tried talking about it. Describing it. Fruitless. Just wanted everyone to be there, friends, family, work colleagues, anyone that knows me, knew me, wants to know the real me; to be there, a place where, black, white, Latino, young, old, male, female, 20+ people confronted their feelings and fears about racism. No hiding place, just a circle of strangers. Our closest ally, us, irrespective of racial politics. Confronting it together. Time to say what you got to say, the pain, the ignorance, the hate, nobody will scorn, point the finger, get personal. Say it so you can confront it, so you can do something about it; two-and-a-half days talking about an addiction, a mental illness called racism, a condition that exists in the 'collective unconscious of the world'. No time for whispering.

People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISB), founded by Ron Chisom and the late Dr. Jim Dunn, has been delivering the Undoing Racism workshop since 1980. Chisom learnt much of what he knew about community organising from the doyen of community organising Saul Alinsky. But Chisom saw a gap. He felt that organisers were taught about political analysis, about approaches to and techniques in organising. But they were not taught about racism, the history of it, the practices and the structures that reinforce it. 'Community organizer [sic] trainings usually focus on tactics and skills but giving organizers [sic] more skills without teaching them how to deal with racism was just making them more skilled racists,' said Chisom¹³.

Alongside Dunn, Chisom created the Undoing Racism workshop. It trains people to undo their own racism and from within their institutions. It's not a HR approach to racism, you know, diversity or inclusion training, a bit of paperwork, a few units, a tick box for your equal opps policy. No. The workshop helps participants to confront their assumptions and their biases, to prevent them from consciously or unconsciously reinforcing racist values in their practices. Regular follow-up support meetings are held for participants to help their learning, to provide a safe space and to ensure that they do not slip into old and unhelpful patterns of unconscious racist behaviour.

PISB describes racism in the following way: 'Race prejudice + Power = Racism'. Race is a social construct. Not real. Doesn't exist. Fake. Race by PISB's definition is 'a specious classification of humans being created at a time of colonization [sic] by Europeans and European Americans, later known as white, placing themselves as the model of humanity and the height of human achievement for the purpose of establishing and maintaining social status, privilege and power'. A system created by white people for white people at a time when racism was legal. Prejudice is prejudging, having an idea before you have the experience. Power – legitimate (legal) access to and collective control of systems sanctioned by the state. An 'ism' is an ideology, a belief system.



Ron Chisom and Derek Bardowell

¹³ <http://usa.ashoka.org/print/2720>. Recovered June 2013.

'Death of what we thought was the truth.'

History, the legacy of racism and the way in which this plays out in society today are methodically covered in PISB's workshop. It also tackles among other things:

- The history of individual, institutional and cultural racism, how racial hierarchy and slavery had been justified and validated scientifically and legally.
- The practice of gatekeeping, those with power to stop others from attaining power. Colourblind approaches, diverting conversations away from race. It addresses our role as gatekeepers, ensuring that we are aware that we should be accountable to the people we are servicing, not just our bosses.
- Internalised racial superiority – denial of or being defensive about racism, distancing from racist individuals, ahistorical, entitlement, paternalism, shaming, thin-skin, appropriation of black culture, appropriated oppression (where whites become the victims).
- Internalised racial oppression - feelings of inferiority, denial of racism, code switching or acting typically white, competition with fellow blacks, colourism (preferential treatment of lighter skinned blacks), self-doubt, exaggerated visibility (outlandish behaviour, rage).

PISB has trained over 500,000 people, from social workers to educators, from health practitioners to community organisers. Its work has spawned numerous movements across the United States, including the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) based in New York and founded by Sandra Bernabei, a Liberation Psychotherapist and President of the National Association of Social Workers-NYC Chapter. I attended a workshop led by Anti-Racist Alliance and one of their regular meetings. ARA has worked with over 8,000 social workers and other professionals alone and organises over 20 meetings a month attended by practitioners intent on undoing racism in their institutions. The Deconstructing Race curriculum being developed by The Calhoun School, New York and featured later in this report also had its origins in PISB's training.

PISB's focus on unconscious racism has also been pioneering. It has been highlighting the impact of unconscious bias for many years as well as how racism contaminates every institution, from the education system (limited curriculum, silencing history, no anti-racist teacher training, high numbers of black pupils excluded) to the media (negative images on television, lack of representation, demonising the poor, particularly those from ethnic backgrounds).

'Who's throwing the babies in the river?'

Funny isn't it. Funny how most charitable activities are geared towards 'fixing' the poor. Yet the people who make the decisions about who receives the money to 'fix' the poor are often from the same background as those in power. What would happen if the sector had more organisations addressing power and privilege? Root causes? Would they receive money? We can talk about poverty, work on helping the needy get employment, get training. But you cannot alleviate poverty until you address power and privilege.

This is PISB's starting point. It's not about the baby, it's about the people who throw the baby in the river. The advantaged, the over served, high income, the elite. PISB also targets us. Yeah, you. Yeah, me. About our power too. We all play a role in reinforcing



Sandra Bernabei

‘Racism was invented in the fabric of our nation and we’re having a hell of a time getting it out’.

the status quo. PISB teaches participants to think structurally not individually, to think about your own institutions as a starting point, to see where these inequalities are reinforced.

‘This country [America] values individualism, they speak of the individualism of it, so “catch the racist, catch the Ku Klux Klan” [and] what that does is keep us crazy,’ says Bernabei. ‘So [we’re] always looking for the racist but we’re not doing the work of institutional equity. You could take every racist you know, put them in a rocket ship, ship them out and the system will remain the same. That’s why you have President Obama and it just doesn’t matter, every constituency behaves the same way. Racism was invented in the fabric of our nation and we’re having a hell of a time getting it out’.

‘Numbing of the consciousness’.

So why do we still ignore it? Why are people so afraid to rock the boat? Fear of disruption, fear of dismantling? Is it about intolerance of others’ views? Pain? Avoiding conflict? *Who am I to disrupt? The problem is too big? Shouldn’t a leader have a certain type of personality? We can’t force everyone to change, can we? Can we?*

The underlying themes of PISB’s workshops are a love for humanity and the fact that racism hurts and controls black people, advantages whites (opportunities, resources) and damages everyone, whether willing or unwilling participants. ‘This is undoing racism 101,’ says Bernabei. The workshop prompts thoughts on race and racism and how to become an actor, irrespective of perspective. What part do you play? Are you an extra reinforcing the system or an actor trying to change the system? Are you doing more harm than good? Can you honestly say that your decision-making with regard to race is in no way stained, uncontaminated? Is hitting your KPIs [key performance indicators] more important than challenging your assumptions, tackling implicit bias?

The regular meetings after PISB’s workshops are important in helping reinforce the values of the training. The workshops are the start of the journey. It is not there to empower people; it is there to undo disempowerment, to help participants get an intrinsic sense of their own power, which enables them to use power constructively to affect change. Another message was clear through the training. Blacks in America may have race prejudice but they do not have the power to act it out in a systemic way. Nothing will change unless white people are an integral part of the journey because they have the power to do something about it. PISB is not advocating for white people to lead that change. But they need to be a part of it. If white people do nothing, nothing will change. A sorrowful message indeed, but perhaps a unifying one.

To learn more, go to: www.pisab.org or www.antiracistalliance.com.

The Calhoun School's Deconstructing Race Program

David Alpert, a teacher at The Calhoun School, New York took part in the Undoing Racism workshop in 2007. He participated at a time when a teacher at The Calhoun - who was striving for a curriculum that would provide a more accurate portrayal of African-American history - was teaching his son. Due to New York's booming housing market, and an inability to afford the upper west side, Alpert and his family had also just relocated to a predominantly black neighbourhood. He wanted to know more, he wanted to do more.

Alpert set up a youth-based project as a part of The Calhoun School's Deconstructing Race Program [sic]. The first piece of the project took 12 teenagers over an academic year through a series of workshops and conversations (including Undoing Racism) that addressed race and white privilege. These workshops and conversations were filmed, documenting how these young individuals confronted racism. The film is called *I'm Not Racist... Am I?*

'The initiative's goal is to transform the conversation about race, racism and white privilege in this country and expose the myth of color-blindness [sic] in a society that, for many, espouses a post-racial mantra,' says Alpert.

I'm Not Racist ... Am I? follows Anna, adopted from Korea by white parents who said that if she never had a mirror, she would think she was white. Martha, part of a White family in predominantly black Harlem, who at times wishes she were black. Black teen Kahleek, who says that people breathe differently as he nears them on the subway. There's Abby, of mixed heritage, who spends most of her time with the white side of her family and feels uncomfortable talking about race. Then there's Sacha, from the affluent upper west side, who's desperate to speak up when his white peers use the 'N' Word, but doesn't know how.

There's also the story of Farah Taslima (now a student at Columbia University). Born in Bangladesh, she grew up in New York surrounded predominantly by white children. She didn't fit in, but couldn't explain why. As Taslima grew older, she spent more time with ethnic kids because of the similarities in background - being a minority, economic hardship, strict upbringing, being given similar messages from parents that you have to work three times as hard as your white counterparts to succeed. She could relate. Still there were many differences culturally, which meant that Taslima, a minority within a minority, struggled to fit in there too. Caught between three cultures, Deconstructing Race enabled her to attain the language to deal with race-related situations that she had before swept under the carpet.

Deconstructing Race challenges each participant's relationship with their peers, their families and themselves. The film *I'm Not Racist ... Am I?* shows conversations many of us are too afraid to have. Conversations we have in safe spaces or whisper in public. There's guilt, tears and anger as young people aim to find a clearer understanding of racism and their role in trying to address it. 'The process needs to give kids the tools to feel safe talking about race, to transform the silent conversation,' says Alpert.



David Alpert

‘[I] Put them [white students] in situations that will help them understand a lot of these issues that we [black, Asian, Latino] are dealing with are very much experienced based. If you’re not in it you don’t understand it, you don’t know.’



Farah Taslima

In the film, the 12 teens participated in several workshops: they played the American Dream board game, which helps people gain a better understanding of how a person’s race can influence everyday interactions; the ‘N’ Word, a tense discussion, designed and facilitated by Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.; affinity group meetings and several facilitated dialogues, which helped young people learn how to talk about race and a Beat Making Lab, where songwriting helped to address race in the media and how popular culture influences their views on it.

Taslima is a clear example of a participant who has taken her learning and applied it to her everyday experiences at Columbia. ‘[I] Put them [white students] in situations that will help them understand a lot of these issues that we are dealing with [which] are very much experienced based. If you’re not in it you don’t understand it, you don’t know,’ says Taslima. ‘There was this one guy and a lot of us were talking to him about this issue and he just didn’t believe in white privilege and after a point he felt ganged up on because it was all of us minorities talking to him and I was like, “yeah you feel this way, I feel like this everyday, every damn day”. Putting someone in that position helps them understand I think, as difficult as it is’.

Some 40 schools, a police department and three companies have screened the documentary, which is always accompanied by facilitated workshops. Alpert wants to design a supportive training programme around the documentary to facilitate further learning of those who watch it. While walking around The Calhoun School, Alpert emphasised the importance of the documentary being used responsibly and his desire to see this type of work more widely available in schools. He told me about Ron Lester Whyte’s article *Why We Need Mandatory Anti-Racist Education on the Black Girl Dangerous* blog site, which points to the steps taken to end anti-Semitism in Germany post World War II. This included honest explanations of the crimes committed by the SS, excluding teachers associated with the Nazis and a media campaign¹⁴. Perhaps such radical educational reform is required in the US.

Alpert and the filmmakers also worked with an organisation called Border Crossers, which provides professional development and resources in structural racism and injustice to schools in New York. According to Border Crossers’ website ‘as infants, children recognize [sic] racial differences among adults¹⁵. By age four, American children group people by race over gender and other identifiers¹⁶. By the time they enter kindergarten, children express an explicit white bias¹⁷. Despite the fact that research consistently shows that taking a “colorblind” or “colormute” approach does not yield race-neutral opinions in children¹⁸, teachers do not receive adequate training or support in how to address these issues with young children’.

It is therefore no surprise that Alpert wants to ensure that the film and accompanying workshop becomes a programme adopted by schools. He is currently raising funds, which will support the curriculum to be designed by the School of Social Work and Teachers College at Columbia University. The programme intends to shift conversations in the documentary into conversations in the classroom and eventually into content in the curriculum, so more young people can talk openly about race.

‘I learnt how to talk about these issues with different types of people and how to speak up,’ says Taslima. ‘I am perfectly fine with saying, “I don’t like that word”. That was

¹⁴ Whyte, R. (2014). *Why We Need Mandatory Anti-Racist Education*. Black Girl Dangerous. <http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2014/10/need-mandatory-anti-racist-education/>

¹⁵ Katz, Phyllis A. (2003). Racists or tolerant multiculturalists? How do they begin? *American Psychologist*, 58(11), 897-909.

¹⁶ Winkler, Erin (2009). Children are not colorblind: how young children learn race. *PACE*, 3(3).

¹⁷ Clark, Kenneth B. and Clark, Mamie K. (1939). The development of consciousness of self and the emergence of racial identification in Negro preschool children. *Journal of Social Psychology*, S.P.S.S.I. Bulletin, 10, 591-599. Study replicated by CNN’s Anderson Cooper 360.

¹⁸ Bronson, Po and Ashley Merryman. (4 Sep 2009) “See Baby Discriminate.” *Newsweek Magazine*.

hard before. Before it was like, “who am I to say anything to you?” At the end of each session they would say “you’re doing this for a reason, you have to advocate, no one else is going to speak up”. After doing this I feel a lot more comfortable and feel much more educated to feel comfortable to speak about it’.

To learn more, go to: www.calhoun.org/dr

Campaign for Black Male Achievement



Rashid Shabazz, Vice President of Communications, Campaign for Black Male Achievement

‘We pathologize [sic] the canary and then we say, well we have to fix the canary, as if the solution is to outfit that little canary with a pint-sized gas-mask so that it can withstand the toxic atmosphere in the mines. And my argument is, heed the canary. It is signaling us that we are not doing much good for the society focusing simply on fixing the canary. We have to fix the atmosphere in the mines.’

In 2006, a New York Times front-page story, *Plight Deepens for Black Men, Studies Warn* by Erik Eckholm highlighted and articulated a conversation that had been prominent among African American people within the philanthropic sector for many years. The article, which brought to light the multiple disadvantages faced by black men in America, ignited the interest of George Soros, founder of Open Society Foundations. The Campaign for Black Male Achievement, an Open Society creation, was born in 2008, led by Campaign Manager Shawn Dove.

Dove immediately started canvassing the views of those who worked to benefit black boys to decide where the Campaign should go. He awarded some initial grants and started to define the areas in which it could have the most impact. Dove used American civil rights theorist Lani Guinier’s comparison of black men as ‘canaries in the mine’ as a symbolic term for the Campaign. Miners used to carry caged canaries into the mines with them. If dangerous gases leaked in the mines, it would kill the canary before it would get to miners.

‘We pathologize [sic] the canary,’ said Guinier. ‘And then we say, well we have to fix the canary, as if the solution is to outfit that little canary with a pint-sized gas-mask so that it can withstand the toxic atmosphere in the mines. And my argument is, heed the canary. It is signaling us that we are not doing much good for the society focusing simply on fixing the canary. We have to fix the atmosphere in the mines.’

While it had been common for many within the US philanthropic sector to believe they were ‘investing’ in black men by simply funding criminal justice programmes and gang prevention initiatives, the Campaign set out to change the narrative. It set out to shift the narrative from ‘fitting a pint-sized gas-mask on the canary’ to fixing ‘the atmosphere in the mines’.

The Campaign focused on four areas:

- Educational equity – closing the achievement gap, professional development, youth development, ensuring that black boys have the opportunity to excel
- Workforce development – equipping young people with 21st century skills and jobs, creating job opportunities, investing in best practice
- Strengthening family structures – responsible fatherhood, supporting single mothers and LGBTQ parents raising black males, supporting low-income families
- Building the Black Male Achievement brand – using strategic communications, arts and culture to keep issues at the centre of policy, practice and philanthropic discourse. Bringing more money into this sector, leadership development, developing the evidence base, capacity building, research and transforming the narrative around black men/boys.

In 2010, Soros and the US Programs Board agreed to scale up the work of the Campaign and take off the three-year time limit. What was a three-year \$15 million project, The Campaign presented a five-year scale up plan for \$87 million focused on building the field of Black Male Achievement.

¹⁹ www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sats/interviews/guinier.html. Recovered November 2014.

Among the Campaign's many initiatives are its Fellowship (in partnership with Echoing Green), driving social entrepreneurship in the Black Male Achievement field; Black Male Re-Imagine (with American Values Institute), which supports advertisers, the media and entertainment executives to engage with advocates in nonprofits to change the narrative around black men; Los Angeles Black Worker Center, a vehicle to create more work opportunities for black men and a highly replicable model; a bank of research such as Opportunity Agenda's Media Representation and the Impact on the Lives of Black Men and Boys, which highlighted the prominence of negative portrayals of black men in the media and how the constant reinforcement leads to 'real world' impacts, such as low self esteem and whites associating black males with negative words and implicit racism, which manifest in less attention from doctors, harsher sentences and a lower likelihood of being hired.

Despite its relative youth, the Campaign has already had a major impact. Its branding - Black Male Achievement - has become the name of what is now a recognised and defined field in the US philanthropic sector. Its investment in African-American Male Achievement departments in California has been mainstreamed, with a number of districts now creating their own departments solely aimed at improving the outcomes for black boys. The Campaign partnered with Bloomberg Philanthropies to deliver the \$120 million Young Men's Initiative, creating opportunities for black and Latino 18-24-year-olds in New York. After the Trayvon Martin case, President Obama referenced the Campaign's work. The work of the Campaign along with the California Endowment have been hugely influential in President Obama's My Brother's Keeper policy, which encourages communities to develop and implement a cradle-to-college-to-career strategy.

The Campaign for Black Male Achievement moved away from Open Society Foundations in February 2015, creating its own separate endowed social enterprise. The focus will remain on changing the life outcomes of Black men and boys. Open Society has provided seed investment of \$10 million, and the Campaign has secured pledges from other foundations. Dove and Shabazz are currently fundraising with the aim of grant-giving - initially - around \$2million a year, capacity building, seed funding, providing strategic investments and rapid response funding for emerging issues. The Campaign's work has very much just begun.

'It's a question about what can we [the philanthropic sector] be doing better to support NGOs and create the environment for them to thrive,' says Rashid Shabazz, the Campaign's Vice President of Communications. 'We need to invest in their structural and leadership development. One thing they (nonprofits) can do better is collaborate more. There needs to be opportunities to step back and reflect, being less territorial, being more transparent and accountable to themselves about the measures of what they see as success'.

'It's a question about what can we [the philanthropic sector] be doing better to support NGOs and create the environment for them to thrive.'

To learn more, go to: www.blackmaleachievement.org

American Promise



Michele Stephenson and Joe Brewster

Got twisted. *American Promise*, a documentary by married couple Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson, modelled on the *7UP* series, was meant to follow five children (including their son Idris) as they went through the private school system. You know, growing up, seeing how they navigate their way round education, how they mature, develop their attitudes, their identity. Narrative changed. As they followed their son and his friend over 12 years, the story became one of two black boys battling a corrosive education system that had slowly been chipping away at their sense of self.

As they filmed the slow, often subtle racism experienced by their son, Brewster and Stephenson had to turn the camera on themselves. Only way they could tell a painful story. A story of a black middle class family who had done everything the system had asked of them. Brewster, a Harvard and Stanford trained Social Psychiatrist; Stephenson a Columbia Law School graduate and Human Rights Attorney. They co-founded the Rada Film Group, scooped numerous awards too. They lived in a nice neighbourhood, got their kids privately educated. Surely this must reduce the impact, the possibility of racism, huh?

Pain. Could see it in Joe's and Michèle's eyes as they talked about their ongoing battle with the education system, one many black parents face, from teachers' low expectations of black pupils to their assumptions about the level of involvement in the home, the microaggressions, seeing their kids treated more harshly than their childrens' white peers, the implicit assumptions about black boys; the minor, the major, the minor incidences that prevent a student becoming a major, the minor that becomes a major problem. Hard to evidence. Only hard evidence is your child, how it effects them as they buy into the feeling that they may not be academically able. As they buy into the feeling that they maybe a problem, an outsider. Who would have thought that school could be more a risk factor than a protective factor?

American Promise won the Special Jury Prize for Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking at the Sundance Film Festival and the Grand Jury Prize at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. Brewster and Stephenson have since toured tirelessly, even making an appearance at the United Nations in Geneva. The film resonated widely in a way that an academic study would struggle. 'There is something about the craft of storytelling that allows the audience to identify and you build a bridge throughout. But how do you maximize that emotion once it's there?' says Stephenson. 'It's about being visual and personal,' says Brewster. 'It could be a two minute short, or an eight minute piece. The reality is every third sector organisation is looking for a narrative voice, storytelling where the main characters are accessible and transparent and vulnerable. That disarms your audience and that level of honesty allows them to connect with the issue'.

The documentary was just a start. Brewster and Stephenson transformed the film into a movement. They launched the Advance the Promise Tour in August 2014, providing workshops to educators, parents and youth with the aim of closing the black male achievement gap. Working with a number of specialists, they have developed a number of evidence-based initiatives, which are now being delivered nationally. Among them, Promise Clubs, local support groups for parents to help them become better advocates for their sons. There are now over 100 throughout the United States. They have

developed a four-module curriculum called Fulfilling the American Promise, using the film to develop cultural sensitivity and awareness among teachers. Brewster and Stephenson have developed the Promise Tracker an interactive app, giving parents tips, tricks and habits to support their children academically while their book *Promises Kept: Raising Black Boys to Succeed in School and in Life* (Spiegel & Grau, 2014) provides practical and innovative solutions for parents of black children.

Much of American Promise's work is geared towards addressing systemic racism, strengthening parental voice and providing targeted support at the earliest stages of childrens' educational experience.

'We want to defeat the sense of isolation because then you personalise the experience and we want to penetrate through that because then you want to understand that there is a systemic thing going on but that you're not disempowered by it. So it's about seeing the systemic but having the tools to combat it or minimise the effect on your children,' says Stephenson.

In highlighting the tools and the practices Black parents use to support their children through the education system, Brewster and Stephenson are highlighting some of the many strategies black parents have employed traditionally to ease the negative effects of racial discrimination [sic] in school. Ming-Te Wang's and James P. Huguley's study Parental Racial Socialization [sic] as a Moderator of the Effects of Racial Discrimination on Educational Success Among African American Adolescents demonstrated that positive racial messages to children by parents (pride, history, tradition) can reduce the effect of teacher discrimination on attainment and educational aspirations. It can also lessen the effect of peer discrimination on their grades.

Brewster and Stephenson are also strong advocates of Growth Mindset as a teaching methodology for educators. The concept, developed by psychologist Carol Dweck focuses on the distinction between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. According to Dweck, 'in a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort.

'In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment²⁰'. Growth mindset can be taught and by emphasising hard work and practice, 'failure' (or what has traditionally been viewed as failure within the education system) can catalyse opportunities for growth, opportunities to counter stereotypes

Brewster and Stephenson are introducing these methodologies, these questions, these matters into schools, recognising that there's no point addressing these issue within families if educational institutions are not meeting them some of the way. Stephenson acknowledges that this can be uncomfortable for some schools. 'We're not going to get to the next level without being uncomfortable with one another and having the conversations about that discomfort,' she says.

Conversations about white privilege are uncomfortable. Acknowledging the degree to which one is benefitting from the system because of the colour of one's skin is

'It's about seeing the systemic but having the tools to combat it or minimise the effect on your children.'

²⁰ <http://edglossary.org/growth-mindset/>. Recovered April 2015.

True equality means that 'black people in this country have the right to be as mediocre as white people. Not that individual black people will be as excellent, or more excellent, than other white people'.

uncomfortable. But these inequalities exist. Perhaps the narrative needs to change. Perhaps traditional ways of measuring equality – for example, the percentage of black people in employment – are faulty signs of progress.

True equality, said Ta-Nehisi Coates, who authored the superb essay *The Case for Reparations* for *The Atlantic*, means that 'black people in this country have the right to be as mediocre as white people. Not that individual black people will be as excellent, or more excellent, than other white people'²¹.

To learn more, go to: www.americanpromise.org.

²¹ http://www.cjr.org/feature/ta-nehisi_coates_defines_a_new.php?page=all. Recovered February 2015.

Peace First

Philadelphia, PA - On his first day at school in South Philadelphia, having recently arrived from China, a then 15-year-old Wei Chen was greeted by a punch to the back of his head. Sucker punched. Part of the school's culture though. That's what kids did in that school. Asian students were bullied, harassed, abused, beaten down. They complained. Teachers ignored. Wei told me of an incident where a young Asian lad had been thumped by a fellow student. Wei turned to seek help from a teacher. He knew the teachers witnessed the incident because he caught them laughing about it.

Bronx, NY - How do you feel when you've been marginalised? Have no voice. You see injustice everyday, racism, sexism, yet such isms are so ingrained within the culture of your school, it is rarely acknowledged, status quo reinforced. Little things – teacher always asks the boys to carry the boxes out of the classroom instead of the girls. Big things – girls (black, brown) lacking self-worth, fed negative images, feeling devalued, no place to turn, no safe space in school to talk. They get some social and emotional learning, but what about ethnicity, identity, race, gender; what about positive images? When such topics are addressed, they are often delivered using a colourblind approach, ignoring racial inequalities that disadvantage black and Latina women.

Wei Chen had had enough. Things had to change. He didn't want to victimise the bullies though. The kid who 'clocked' him on the back of the head wasn't the problem. Wei thought the bullies, who were African-American, were as much the victims as him. This system did not challenge the culture of racial violence and injustice. Wei organised an eight-day walkout with 100 other students. Systemic negligence would no longer be tolerated. The boycott attracted attention, highlighted the persistent inequalities, embarrassed the school. Wei's campaign resulted in the school hiring a new principal, adopting new policies and new training for staff. Wei also filed and won a civil rights complaint with the Pennsylvania Department of Justice, stating that schools are responsible for protecting pupils against racial violence. This has been adopted in a number of states.

Amanda Matos had had enough. Understanding the challenges of growing up experiencing racism and sexism, Matos started WomanHOOD (Helping Others Overcome Discrimination). Matos' programme enables high school girls to find a safe space to discuss and learn about ethnicity, identity, feminism, intersectionality and body image. WomanHOOD then empowers participants to deliver social action projects, to spread the movement, to empower young women to feel comfortable talking about and addressing issues that were once uncomfortable.

Wei Chen and Amanda Matos were both winners of the Peace First Prize, a kind of Nobel Peace Prize for young people. The Prize celebrates young changemakers, well, young system changers; young people whose peacemaking activism exemplifies the values of charitable organisation Peace First. To accompany their award, Wei and Matos received a \$50,000 two-year investment. This will give them a wage while they develop their ideas. As young people who symbolise Peace First's ideology, the award has swiftly become an extension of founder Eric Dawson's model. 'Movements require stories about what is possible and leaders who embody those stories,' he says. 'Through the Prize we are engaging the public in narratives about what youth peacemaking looks



Wei Chen & Amanda Matos

'Movements require stories about what is possible and leaders who embody those stories. Through the Prize we are engaging the public in narratives about what youth peacemaking looks like and our Fellows serve as embodiments'



Eric Dawson

‘The majority of movements we have studied have been led or, more often, powered by young people. But I would say this is generally true around innovation too, both in the creation, but even more often in the adoption and spread.’

like and our Fellows serve as embodiments’.

Peace First was also started by a young changemaker. Dawson founded the organisation as a teenage student while at Harvard in 1992. Peace First builds children and young people’s peacemaking skills and their empathy; it teaches conflict resolution skills, encourages civic engagement, addresses gender, culture and identity, and develops young people’s social and emotional skills. It has trained over 40,000 pupils. In many schools, the programme is an integral part of the curriculum, delivered over a 10-year period. Peace First’s methodology focuses on strengthening relationships and experiential learning. While it is not a race specific organisation, Dawson’s model acknowledges the extent to which violence is entrenched in deeper, more fundamental societal problems such as racism and homophobia. Hence why he wanted to work with young people early, at a point where he could have the most impact, work with them over a long period of time, engage all the key players in their lives and indeed the school culture in which they grow into. Dawson also wanted to embed teaching peace in schools to the point where it would become as important as maths and English. The curriculum is fun and speaks to young people’s personal experiences, ingredients which has made it so successful. ‘It is an engaging, constructivist curriculum, meaning students get to see themselves in it and co-create their own learning,’ says Dawson.

Dawson, whose parents were evaluation specialists, which meant he was designing logic models during his school holidays, has had Peace First rigorously evaluated. Analysis from Harvard and Fordham among others has demonstrated a 70% reduction in racial/ethnic tensions, 50% fewer weapons being brought to school, 60% decrease in disruptive incidences in partner schools, 36% decrease in physical aggression, 41% fewer verbal altercations, 81% of students feeling they can walk away from a fight without feeling like a coward. Peace First’s whole-school approach to peacemaking - which insists upon senior leadership ‘buy in’ and 85% of teachers being trained in peacemaking methodology - has also been successfully mainstreamed in a number of schools across the United States.

Dawson very much views young people as changemakers who can create more peaceful societies. Indeed, while many grant funders continue to invest in leadership programmes (often veiled employability initiatives), social action projects (too rarely tackling systemic issues) or academic research (often ineffective at changing policy in schools), Peace First has created a programme and indeed a public face (the awards) that highlight the power of young people to lead system change. Indeed, if there is to be radical reform in education, it will likely be led by young people

‘The majority of movements we have studied have been led or, more often, powered by young people,’ says Dawson. ‘But I would say this is generally true around innovation too, both in the creation, but even more often in the adoption and spread. You can’t have innovation that no one uses!’

To learn more, go to: www.peacefirst.org.

Harlem RBI²²

So what's a kid to do? School finishes at 3pm, a time when most working parents are not yet home. After-school provision is little more than a holding shop. Summer holidays are two months long and kids are in school around 50% of the year. Time. Too much of it. Nothing to fill it. And this in a neighbourhood (East Harlem) which has been suffering from high rates of teen pregnancy and STDs, households living under the poverty line, where close to 60% of pupils are not finishing school. The region also has the second highest rate of substantiated abuse and neglect cases in New York City. Time and deprivation, bad combination.

Harlem RBI was started in 1991 with the aim of using baseball to fill these gaps. In 1997, under the leadership of Richard Berlin, it evolved into a programme with a stricter academic focus accompanying the baseball activities, providing year-long (not just baseball season) support.

Children and young people first participate in Harlem RBI's summer programme and then they get the option of entering one of RBI's 40 teams. Children start as young as five and for those on RBI's teams, there is an option of staying within the programme through to college. Team members receive an all-round package of age-appropriate support, which includes college readiness, counselling, sexual health sessions and social and emotional development. Baseball coaches are trained using a positive youth development framework (structured responses, how to deal with errors, tone, explicit instructions) and counsellors are embedded within the team, so young people need not feel stigmatised when seeking help. Coaches do not coach simply to win, but focus on the positive elements of peer interaction and learning as well as developing a sense of belonging.

Speaking to Rachel Cytron, Associate Executive Director of Harlem RBI, she felt that baseball has two major attributes that support youth development: a batting average of .300 is considered good in baseball but ultimately it still means that the batter is failing most of the time. So the process enables young people to deal with failure. Secondly, unlike most team sports, no one player can dominate in baseball, everyone gets a turn to bat and to field. Harlem RBI also found that baseball resonates with older men who saw the value in it growing up. It's America's first sport. As such, Harlem RBI has always attracted sponsorship for its teams from individual donors.

Harlem RBI's after-school and summer school programmes currently serve 1,000 children and young people annually, teaching participants values based on teamwork, respect, diversity, promise, effort, integrity and fun. Its programmes help participants to be physically and mentally healthy, to avoid risky behaviors, graduate from school and be, according to RBI, 'confident, competent and caring members of their communities'.

When I visited, it was clear that it had taken time to develop the intervention into the successful programme it is today. Sport is often dismissed as ineffective. The narrative around the value of sport is all too often centred around participation. But there has for many years been a number of charities that have evidenced sport as a vehicle for social change and personal development. The cultural power of sport is attractive,



Rachel Cytron

²² RBI is a baseball term meaning Runs Batted In

and it is effective at engaging and retaining young people in a way other interventions struggle. It's sticky. Kids stay. Above and beyond the obvious health advantages, the better sporting initiatives use the field of play to cultivate healthy and positive peer relationships, create a safe environment and feature strong coach-pupil relationships, key ingredients to developing social and emotional skills.

Harlem RBI remains among the foremost charities in this field. And it is continuing to grow. It is about to open a DREAM charter school, which will take a 'whole-child' approach (incorporating parental engagement, health and wellness and the arts) to working with children, combined with Harlem RBI's after-school and summer programmes. Harlem RBI has also expanded into the South Bronx and it is currently scoping expansion to other regions across the US.

RBI has built a solid evidence base to highlight the importance of sport in youth development. Some 99% of Harlem RBI's youth avoid teen parenthood, 97% graduate from high school, 93% of its seniors are accepted into college, 99% avoid summer learning loss, 98% of families agree that teachers at DREAM give their child regular and helpful feedback and 97% of families are satisfied with the response they get when they contact the school.

Cytron believes that the key to RBI's success lies in the fact that it is 'heavily relational'. She added, 'RBI keeps cohorts together for a long period of time and it is a positive peer group. The positive culture of peers and adult is key. In addition, we don't give up on them. We outlast them. They can give up on us, but we don't give up on them'.

'RBI keeps cohorts together for a long period of time and it is a positive peer group. The positive culture of peers and adult is key.'

To learn more, go to: www.harlemrbi.org.

Color of Change

Color of Change strengthens black America's political voice through online organising. Founded in September 2005 after Hurricane Katrina, it supports its members to make the government more accountable and responsive to issues of concern to black America.

'There lacked an organisation that could quickly capture the energy of these racial justice moments that continue to happen, Katrina being one of them, where it was a failure by the government to adequately respond,' says Executive Director Rashad Robinson. 'This is how I think about building power; there is cultural presence and there is cultural power. Black people in this country have a level of cultural presence in music, popular culture but often times even with a black president, not necessarily the cultural power to drive something to fruition. The feminist movement has a level of cultural presence, but not the cultural power. The gay rights movement had cultural presence in the nineties, but now they have cultural power that makes those in power feel like they have to be accountable. The gap was black people were present in a multitude of spaces, but when it was time to deliver on something, there wasn't necessarily the power there to do it and that was the reason for Color of Change and also the theory of change behind the tactic that we use.'

The base for all its work is its million-plus membership, who drive and support its campaigns. 'We believe in people power,' says Robinson. 'Technology, the work on social media and online is a tactic to capture the energy of people. Because we are working to make democracy work, you have to start with people, you have to start with holding those in power accountable to people, making them feel like there will be repercussions. Culturally, emotionally you have to identify moments that are happening in the world for people and then "on-ramp" them to be part of something that changes something systemically. We turn moments into movements, popular culture moments, racial justice tragedies as "on-ramps" towards building the type of power that moves you from being present to powerful.'

'We couldn't create Ferguson³³. But because we are creative and nimble and smart and we already had a set of strategic demands that we already wanted, then you leverage this moment to "on-ramp" people onto these demands, not trying to turn a tragedy into something bigger. You're taking a tragedy that's already happening and you're trying to find some systemic opportunity to create change. Make progress out of pain. Our biggest moments pick us. We are effective at telling stories, identifying what's happening and being quick enough not to gripe about it three months after the fact. We're in real time, trying to channel people's anger and frustration into something that is a movement.'

Color of Change recognises that younger people nowadays tend to respond to things on social media, sharing a link, Tweeting, debating on Facebook but then they move on. *We've done our bit, let it out, shown our frustration to our friends, our family, the world.* What does this achieve? Another issue emerges, and the cycle begins again, another re-tweet, another quote sent. Achieves what? No solution. No sustained action. More vexed people having vexed conversations. Feelings expressed, but to what end?

Color of Change pairs the moment with an action, with something to do. It moves

There is cultural presence and there is cultural power. Black people in this country [United States] have a level of cultural presence in music, popular culture but often times even with a black president, not necessarily the cultural power to drive something to fruition.'

³³ Ferguson relates to the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by white police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. Brown, unarmed and allegedly with his hands in the air was shot multiple times by Wilson. The grand jury decided not to indict Wilson, which sparked protests and unrest across the United States.



Rashad Robinson

people through different levels of engagement, from online comments to signing a petition, to making phone calls, to donating money, to attending rallies to feeling like its their campaign. When a mass of people are behind an issue, Robinson will then go to foundations and donors and say, 'well we've got these people who are willing to give five dollars on pay day, what are you willing to do?'

Its theory of change is based on four core principles:

- Deep research to back its campaigns
- Strategic insight and 'walking' members through the political process
- A media strategy; staying on message and holding others to account
- Organised constituency, telling a story that is counter to the mainstream narrative.

Color of Change is perhaps best known for its campaign against the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). It had started campaigning against ALEC in 2011 for what it viewed as ALEC's role in suppressing the African-American vote. Early in 2012, 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was pursued and shot dead by George Zimmerman. Martin, a black teen, wearing a hoodie and armed with a packet of Skittles, iced tea and a mobile phone, was perceived as a threat by Zimmerman. 'In a culture that inundates us with images of black men as criminal, we are continually reminded that something as simple as walking home from the corner store can draw unwanted attention that puts our very lives in danger. Black Americans face racial animosity every day, and far too often that animosity turns violent,' says Robinson. However, Zimmerman was eventually found not guilty of second-degree murder and manslaughter. The case however exposed Florida's Stand Your Ground law, a policy that ALEC had been fundamental in spreading. In response, Color of Change ramped up its campaign for ALEC's corporate investors to divest from the organisation.

Color of Change highlighted ALEC's historic involvement in policies that disadvantaged black and Latino people. It also shifted the emphasis from the individual act (Zimmerman shooting the unarmed Martin) to the policy (Stand Your Ground). Color of Change targeted ALEC's 15 most recognisable corporate partners and gathered 500,000 signatures to back up its campaign. A number of corporates divested, including Coca-Cola, Kraft Foods, McDonalds and Wendy's. It was reported in The Guardian (3 December 2012) that ALEC lost close to 400 state legislators from its membership and over 60 corporations, while its income took a significant tumble. Equally important, it alerted the public to ALEC's actions, which now means it is under constant scrutiny.

Color of Change's approach serves three aims: 'illustrating concrete harm while not using grandiose language, building common ground, elaborating on this and avoiding opponent's terminology and frames'²⁴. It does not however push an ideology.

'The ideology comes through in our solution,' says Robinson. 'We are certainly pushing a progressive agenda to solve a wide range of social ills. If we're telling the Government to protect the social safety net, there's a policy there that comes with that. If we're pushing back at certain attempts to suppress the vote or expanding early voting, there's policy there. What we're not doing is racial theory. We're not African American 101 class. We're trying to build strong and powerful campaigns that get the type of people that we can move up the ladder of engagement to win victories. I don't necessarily need to know if people understand every single detail of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade'.

To learn more, go to: www.colorofchange.org.

²⁴ Apollon, D., Keheler, T., Medeiros, J., Ortega, N., Sebastian, J., Sen, R. (January 2014) Moving The Race Conversation Forward: Racial Discourse Change in Practice Part 1 and Part 2. New York: Race Forward, 21

Race Forward

It took Race Forward a few years to find its place. To find a position where it could have the most impact. While it had been since 1981 a respected racial justice think tank, it decided in the late-noughties to change its approach. To change from producing reports, research, ideas and data for activists, influencers and policy makers, all the fairly traditional think-tank stuff. It made three major changes. First it decided to target a younger audience, secondly its media presence became the core method through which it would deliver its messages and three, it shifted away from being policy driven to an organisation that tried to change the racial discourse, therefore helping the lobbyists, the think-tanks and the campaigners to gain some traction.

Race Forward ‘popularises’ racial justice. While it stays true to thorough research and data, Race Forward deliver its work through beautifully crafted stories, attractive visual design and with enough references to popular culture to interest those who lie on the periphery of political engagement, as well as the influencers and activists.

‘You won’t change the popular discussion without it,’ says Rinku Sen, Executive Director of Race Forward. ‘If we make our product so that they are accessible to young people, then the older people will come along. But if we make our product so they mostly relate to older people, the young people will not come along. It forces you to speak to their lived experience and talk in a language they understand. It’s a real intellectual challenge to leave jargon behind. It’s the metaphors and images that bring people in. We’re not opposed to lectures, but you cannot lecture people all the time and expect to have a growing movement. It’s not going to happen’.

Race Forward aims to influence the mainstream debate around race through its publication Colorlines, its Facing Race Conference (the largest multi-racial conference in America), case studies, reports, consultancy and training. Importantly, it also provides a vision of what racial justice looks like, which it defines as the ‘systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone’²⁵.

Race Forward’s work very much focuses on systemic-level racism²⁶, recognising that this is an often ignored, poorly defined and barely a acknowledged element in mainstream racial discourse.

‘As long as the debate about racism is entirely focused on individual intention “you are racist, no I’m not” then you can’t have any institutional discussion,’ says Sen. ‘You can’t have any discussion about policy, it’s all a cycle of accusation and defense and while we recognise the accusation as often justified and the defense as often not, it just wasn’t getting us anywhere. To us [this] just wasn’t a sophisticated enough way of addressing racism.

‘I think the biggest challenge facing us is that when racism takes on more subtle forms, when it isn’t explicit maybe when it isn’t intentional. Connecting the individual lived experience to the institutional realities, to the rules, to the policies, to the system that is

‘I think the biggest challenge facing us is that when racism takes on more subtle forms, when it isn’t explicit maybe when it isn’t intentional. Connecting the individual lived experience to the institutional realities, to the rules, to the policies, to the system, that is our essential 21st Century challenge. The 20th Century challenge was making explicit, outright, intentional, individual racism outlawed. When they happen, people know how they’re meant to deal with it whereas when these other things happen, how to tell that story when there isn’t a clear racism to point to, it’s very hard, but it’s not impossible’.

²⁵ Apollon, D., Keheler, T., Medeiros, J., Ortega, N., Sebastian, J., Sen, R. (January 2014) Moving The Race Conversation Forward: Racial Discourse Change in Practice Part 1 and Part 2. New York: Race Forward, 1

²⁶ ‘Systemic-level racism: Institutional Racism occurs within institutions and systems of power. It is the unfair policies and discriminatory practices of particular institutions (schools, work-places, etc.) that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people. Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they reinforce racial inequalities. Structural Racism is racial bias among institutions and across society. It involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors including the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color’ – Race Forward.

our essential 21st Century challenge. The 20th Century challenge was making explicit, outright, intentional, individual racism outlawed. When they happen, people know how they're meant to deal with it whereas when these other things happen, how to tell that story when there isn't a clear racism to point to, it's very hard, but it's not impossible'.

Race Forward's approach has proven effective. Its Drop the i Word campaign for example influenced mainstream media and journalists to stop using the term 'illegal' when referring to out-of-status immigrants. 'The use of the i-word exemplified problematic discourse practices: condemning through coded language, silencing history, and emphasising intent rather than impact. First, the i-word itself is a race code, almost exclusively evoking images of Latinos. Second, people argued that the i-word was racially neutral and legally accurate, which is a distortion of the historical context in which the term has been used. Lastly, users said that because they didn't intend to discriminate by using the word, they could ignore its impact'.

'When you bring up an issue, the decision-maker may say "we didn't intend to be offensive or racially biased," says Sen. 'What we are likely to say is "we appreciate that you did not intend to, that makes a difference but now we need to consider the impact of the policy, action or statement". You have data on the impact and you have stories on the impact and you use that to get the person who would otherwise be defensive and redirect them towards the solutions. If they start questioning the solutions and the impact, then you can go back to questioning their intentions. But we start by essentially assuming good intent and focusing on impact'.

Race Forward targeted Associated Press given its place as the standard of journalistic style in the US. It also wanted to generate debate about the i-word in the mainstream media. Race Forward's campaign mobilised black and Latino immigrants and unified them in a web-based hub, it generated debate among journalists and applied pressure from colleagues and consumers on targeted outlets. The campaign was supplemented by artistic interventions and by organising within the immigrant-rights movement. Associated Press ended up dropping the term 'illegal immigrant' from its stylebook. Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Chicago Tribune and USA Today, among other publications, decided to drop the i-word too.

Race Forward achieved impact in part by mobilising support from different sectors. 'Social justice or social change requires an eco system of different kinds of organisations and constituencies doing different things and those things have to include the political, the economic and the cultural,' says Sen. 'Any social change project, whether it's on class, race or gender or sexuality has to have those three elements; those are functional elements. It also has to have a spectrum of thought from radical to conservative or radical to liberal, maybe. It is not in our interest to cut off the conservative and the radical ends because you won't actually end up with the in-between. You need that spectrum of voices... I have not seen one [campaign] where there has been a narrow change strategy and it won and it didn't engage people to the left and right of it. With our Drop the i Word campaign, we had to debate everybody. How else are people going to get access to our ideas?'

For Race Forward, a big part of addressing less emotive racism is understanding the decision-makers (liberal or conservative) it is trying to influence and developing appropriate strategies to engage with them.

'Any social change project, whether it's on class, race or gender or sexuality has to have those three elements [political, economic, cultural]. It also has to have a spectrum of thought from radical to conservative or radical to liberal, maybe. It is not in our interest to cut off the conservative and the radical ends because you won't actually end up with the in-between. You need that spectrum of voices ... I have not seen one [campaign] where there has been a narrow change strategy and it won'.

'Is this a person who is ideologically opposed to addressing race? Deeply, fundamentally opposed?' says Sen. 'Is this a person who could be convinced? Is this a person who just doesn't know any better? The people who are ideologically opposed, you have to out organise them, you have to get all the whites and elites of colour [and] beat them in the debate. The second group is usually comprised of people who kind of have a hint that race is a factor and it should be addressed but believe that you can't win on race, you can only win on class or you can only win on gender. And I haven't seen a whole lot of evidence that we're winning on class either, so now we're just losing on those fronts too. And we're losing by keeping off an enormous constituency that wants to talk about race. We have a really strong track record of predominantly white organisations that transformed themselves racially and won more. So we tell lots of winning strategy stories. The third who just doesn't know any better we try to expose them [to it]. So one of those people will come to our conference and they really know that race is a problem, they just have no idea how to enter. The white people among them have few friends of colour. All those three people have few friends of colour I have found'.



Rinku Sen

Another of Race Forward's challenges is addressing the false conception that young people nowadays do not see race, that they're colourblind and desegregated, which Sen describes as 'greatly exaggerated'. She adds, 'They [young people] might have a different racial experience to their parents and grandparents, but they still have a racial experience. Once we started digging into what is that racial experience what we found was that there was a perception gap and we also found that a lot of young people did recognise that racism operates through institutions, through rules, through policies, but they didn't have any language. What they had was that individualised language, "this is racist, this is not. That behavior is racist, that thinking is racist," that's all they had. So they didn't have a way to understand or talk about a system like education or criminal justice that on the face is racially neutral. There is no law that says we're just going to try and throw black people into prison, it's not written into any of our laws and you can find a lot of fairly good people in the criminal justice system, nevertheless the system churns out these deep and dramatic and undeniable racial disparities that could not just be all because certain communities are criminally oriented. So young people had no way to explain that'.

Race Forward understands the importance of young people's voice in racial justice debates. So it endeavors to entertain as well as engage. A bold move for an organisation that has academic rigour and analysis underpinning its work. But a successful move. 'Colorlines does far more cultural coverage than it ever did in print,' says Sen. 'It is true that hundreds and thousands of people come to our site looking for the latest Beyoncé whatever and we made a decision to be okay with that. Even if a fraction of them read the next article, which is about how racial segregation happens in the music industry, then that's a fraction that had no path towards that discussion of racial segregation that now does'.

To learn more, go to: www.raceforward.org.

Conclusion

Social change takes time. Many of the organisations featured had to go through significant change before truly formulating their theories of change, developing evidence and diversifying their income streams. I found that the majority of these organisations used online communications and/or storytelling to message evidence, research and data. Most of these organisations were comfortable being ‘disruptive’ and practically all of them emphasised the need to focus on systemic change, the importance of collaboration and the value of creating safe spaces for uncomfortable conversations.

The scale and history of black America appeared to be the main difference between the US and UK’s race equality sectors. In the United States, there are more black people, more black businesses and more ‘rooted’ communities; there is a more established dialogue about race, more funders comfortable with addressing race - born from a longer, deeper presence in the country. With that came a greater mainstream presence, a more experienced voluntary sector (with powerhouse national black charities), more African-Americans in decision-making positions, a firmer theoretical and evidence-based backdrop in the race equality sector and some economic power. That in turn created a thread, a spine, a platform from which the race equality sector could build a level of sustainability and enough time to step-change. The thread also afforded each of these organisations enough time to be proactive/innovative and to create a pipeline through which new and emerging leaders could emerge. A younger generation to keep the spirit, the ethos, the dynamics and the learning from the older generation alive, but to also challenge, redefine, adjust and innovate according to the context of their times. A thread. If Britain’s charitable sector reflects the inequalities of society, then the race equality sector reflects the political disconnect that exists between young and old within the black community.

That said, there are a number of organisations and people within and outside the race equality sector in the UK who could play a major role in redefining the sector and politically reconnecting the younger generation to the older generation. This includes Ashoka Fellow Ruth Ibegbuna, founder of youth leadership charity RECLAIM, which is cultivating young activists/changemakers; Farzana Khan who leads art activism project SHAKE!; documentary film-maker and activist Samantha Asumadu, founder of campaigning website Media Diversified; Stop Watch, a campaigning coalition addressing excess and disproportionate stop and search; democratic funders the Edge Fund; Maslaha, which tackles social issues that disproportionately affect the Muslim community; Powerlist Foundation, which is developing tomorrow’s leaders; The Social Innovation Partnership, founded and led by Stephen Bediako, which has been central in helping charities understand their impact as well as Simon Woolley, Director of Operation Black Vote; Omar Khan, Director of Runnymede Trust; Paul Reid, Director of Black Cultural Archives and journalist and former Councillor Lester Holloway.

Not-for-profits with a strong track record of good practice (directly or indirectly tackling racial injustice) include Simon Education (supplementary schooling), Inquest (providing free advice to people bereaved by a death in custody), Bigga Fish (youth engagement), Communities Empowerment Network (school exclusions), Working With Men (fatherhood development), Ethnic Youth Support Trust (challenging far right extremism) and Leap Confronting Conflict (conflict resolution), of which I am a trustee.

In addition, you have Nicola Rollock, Deputy Director of Centre for Research in Race & Education at University of Birmingham and co-author of *The Colour of Class: educational strategies of the Black middle classes* (Routledge, 2014); Raja Miah of Manchester Creative School (and Co-founder of Peacemaker); Nusrat Faizullah, who is developing a culturally responsive curriculum based on Vicky Colbert's Escuela Nueva model; Sanjiv Lingayah, a Clore Fellow who is challenging whether the term 'Black' is still relevant; Carlene Firmin MBE, who leads the MsUnderstood Partnership and whose work delves into the intersectionality of gender inequality and racial discrimination; John Jackson, a Senior Advisor at movement creators Purpose, who is an expert campaigner, coalition builder and lobbyist, and former Councillor Rania Khan, a fervent voice on equality and feminism. This is by no means a comprehensive list of activists, academics and campaigners, merely a few names and organisations in or associated with the charitable sector who could be vital in shaping the narrative around racial justice.

The race equality sector needs to be resurrected of that there is no doubt. The sector is fragmented. However, if there's one thing I learnt in the United States, it's that a lot can be achieved with a clear vision, ambition and a wide array of expertise. It will not be achieved within the traditional race equality sector alone. It will require voices from outside the sector as well as support from the wider charitable sector (by this I mean the more mainstream charities and the funders, those who hold sufficient power). The race equality sector has a lot to address from within, namely to develop some coherence born from deep consultation, collaboration and being proactive instead of reactive. The focus should be on solutions not just problems. Partnerships should be broad enough to engage influencers from a multitude of different angles.

The wider charitable sector also needs to look in the mirror. The absence of Black and Asian voices around decision-making tables, in forums, in mainstream debate and strategies, and the absence of discussion about racism, its omission as a factor in barriers to, say, social mobility is, to use Rinku Sen's phrase, "intellectually corrupt". There's no excuse for this, unless there is a belief that racism no longer exists in the United Kingdom. If your organisation holds the belief that racism still exists, do you have a policy, an approach or a strategy for tackling it? Is your organisation, in terms of governance, staff training and leadership equipped to fully address racial injustice? If the answer is no to the above questions, then one must question whether the larger charities or funders can legitimately contribute to systemic change when it comes to racial injustice.

Recommendations

Race equality sector

1. The sector needs to cultivate a more coherent voice and create a vision of what racial justice will look like. In doing so, it needs to engage a broad cross section of partners/sectors, ensure that young people are at the forefront and use online communications and storytelling in messaging.
2. Leaders within the sector need to build a business case (to independent trusts and foundations and/or high net-worths) for developing an independent endowed funding body, which would act as the key institution for knowledge sharing, best practice, evidence, research, capacity building and grant-giving in the field of race equality. Such an institution could provide the sustained and independent investment required for this sector.
3. The sector needs to be united in consistently and collectively directing its narrative and messaging towards the impact of systemic racism.
4. Service delivery organisations in the sector should be driven less by crisis and moral panic and instead focus on developing preventative or early intervention programmes tackling the root causes of racial injustice.
5. The black community should direct its energy and support to charities and voluntary groups that cultivate young people's voices. With regard to racial inequality in education, young people will drive radical reform. Investing time and resource in young people or organisations that develop without diluting young people's voice would be far more productive than waiting for the next charismatic leader to arrive.
6. Anti-racist training is required across the charitable and education sectors to tackle explicit and implicit racial bias. NGOs such as People's Institute for Survival and Beyond have demonstrated that it is possible to tackle racism 'head on' by creating safe spaces for uncomfortable conversations.

Funders

7. Independent trusts and foundations and large charities (in particular) should develop long-term strategies towards tackling racial injustice. Strategies should not be time-limited or programmatic but embedded within their approaches. Larger charities could also provide incubation opportunities for race equality specialists while funders should not restrict its 'offer' solely to service delivery. Capacity building, campaigning, research and evaluation funds are crucial to sufficiently strengthening the sector.

8. Providers of training to social entrepreneurs and early stage social ventures should deliver more targeted support to people/initiatives tackling long-term, structural inequalities. Such opportunities also need to be opened out to campaign organisations tackling unpopular truths.
9. Education funders need to invest more funding into culturally tailored initiatives (i.e. culturally responsive education, positive racial socialisation) to build a bank of evidence regarding effective approaches to raising the attainment of BME pupils.
10. The funding sector needs to be more creative in its grant-making to organisations tackling persistent inequalities where immediate 'wins' are not probable. This could include longer-term funding agreements, more contributions to core costs, unrestricted grants, funding towards research and development and towards rapid response.
11. Funders and large charities need to explore their practices and governance to assess whether they are legitimately equipped with the expertise, diversity and policies to tackle racial injustice in their programming.
12. Trusts and foundations should incubate race equality funding initiatives (led by experts within the field) then seed fund its transition to being an independent and endowed enterprise. This is perhaps the most sustainable way of supporting the race equality sector's independence voice.

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