

# Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide



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equity



7 STEPS TO ADVANCE AND EMBED RACE EQUITY  
AND INCLUSION WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION

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## About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates brighter futures for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, building paths to economic opportunity and transforming struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow.

## Acknowledgments

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# FOREWORD

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The mission of the Annie E. Casey Foundation is to make sure all kids in the United States have a bright future. The simple and tragic fact, borne out in the data we have gathered and in the stories of the communities in which we have worked for decades, is that children of color have a much steeper hill to climb toward that north star.

The U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse. By 2018, the majority of children in this country will be children of color. Given these changing demographics, we must act urgently. The price of letting any group fall behind, already unacceptably high, will get higher.

If we expect to help all children succeed, we must do more than closing gaps and pointing to disparities. All of our work must strive to achieve race equity, a state in which all children have the same opportunity to reach the potential we know they have.

Achieving the goal of race equity, of truly removing the fortified racial barriers our country has built over time, requires dedicated people using sophisticated tools to incorporate race equity and inclusion at every stage of their work for social change. The seven steps outlined in this new Action Guide represent an important advancement in those tools. Following these steps will help ensure that strategies to help children, families and communities are informed from the beginning by the knowledge and data on race that we know are critical to achieving results for a whole population.

Even for those who have worked on issues of race for years, these steps can feel uncomfortable, difficult and new. Those of us working for change know that embracing that discomfort, something Jim Casey called “constructive dissatisfaction,” is how we make things better. I look forward to the progress we can make together with the help of this guide.

**Patrick McCarthy**  
*President and CEO*  
*The Annie E. Casey Foundation*

# INTRODUCTION

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For more than a century, many foundations in the United States have been struggling with issues of race equity and inclusion. Even for foundations whose missions seem to transcend race or ethnic division or defy categorization, the systemic and structural barriers for people of color in our society have most certainly, and consistently, eaten away at the ability of foundations to be effective.

We at the Annie E. Casey Foundation have come to understand that we will never fully achieve the results we seek without incorporating a race equity and inclusion lens in every facet of our work. This understanding has prompted a shift in our thinking from identifying disparities that separate different types of children to creating equitable opportunities that help all children thrive.

Race holds a central place in our society's deepest and most persistent patterns of social inequities, exclusion and divisions. Racial disparities, discrimination and segregation are widespread and continue to undermine our nation's social fabric. Without equity, economic stratification and social instability will continue to increase and far too many families and children will continue to lag behind. Without inclusion, many are marginalized economically, politically and culturally, facing bias and barriers when seeking basic opportunities for security and advancement.

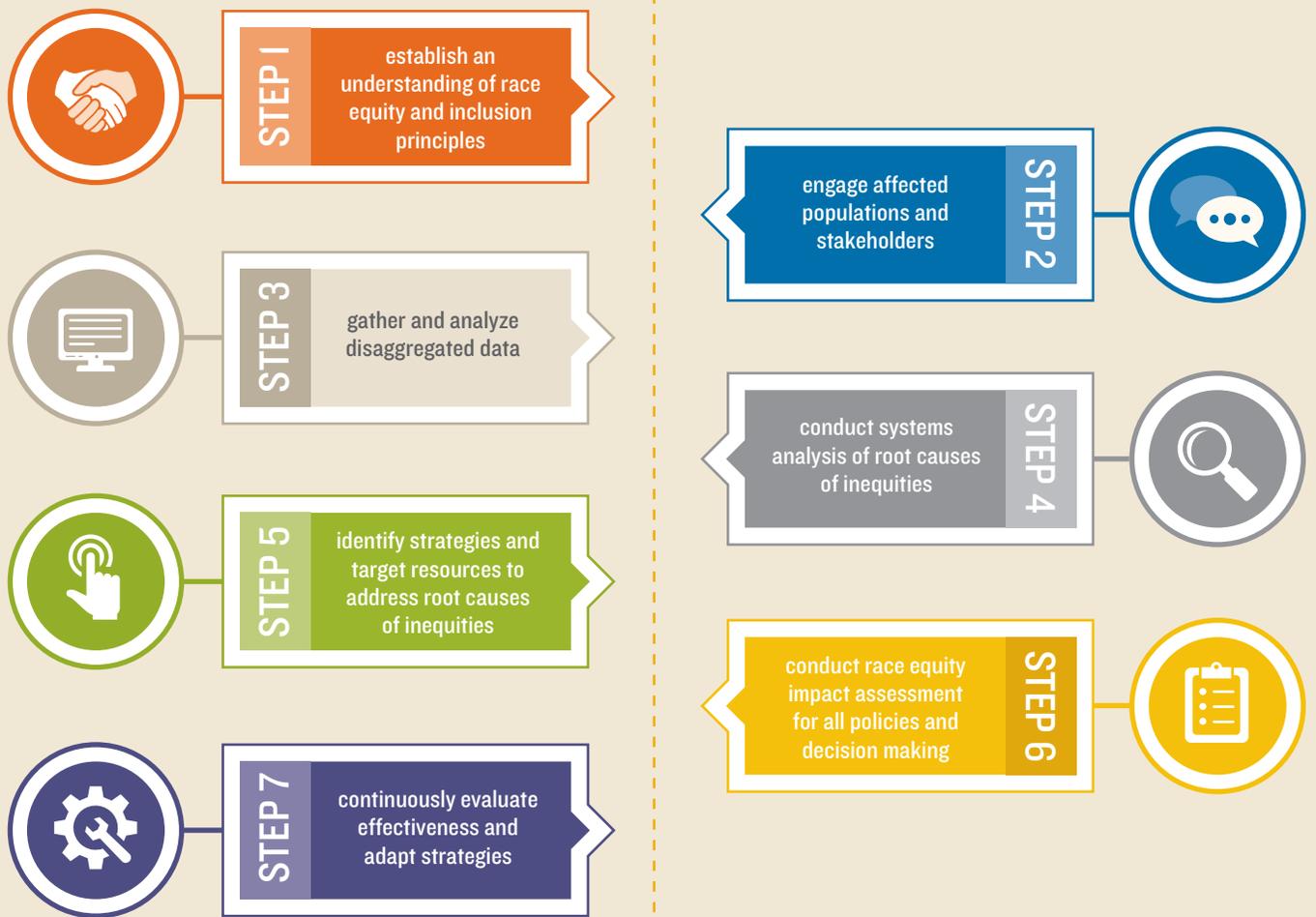
Race continues to play a defining role in one's life trajectory and outcomes. A complex system of racial bias and inequities is at play, deeply rooted in our country's history, culture and institutions. This system of racialization — which routinely confers advantage and disadvantage based on skin color and other characteristics — must be clearly understood, directly challenged and fundamentally transformed. If our nation is to live up to its democratic ideals — that all people are created equal and treated fairly — then racial equity and inclusion must be at the forefront of how we shape our institutions, policies and culture.

The purpose of this guide is to add to the resources already created by partners who have been working in this field by demonstrating how a race equity lens can be adopted by foundations or other organizations that work directly with systems, technical assistance providers and communities. Our aim is to provide key audiences with transferrable insights and tools that can help them understand what steps to take to make sure they are creating equitable opportunities for the populations they serve.

Additional tools and resources to help deepen understanding and mastery of each step are available at [racialequitytools.org](https://racialequitytools.org) and [storify.com/RJResourceguide](https://storify.com/RJResourceguide).

# 7 KEY STEPS

Advancing race equity and inclusion can sometimes seem daunting and often leaves many wondering how and where to start. The steps in this guide help to provide a clear frame for undertaking this important work.





## STEP 1

### ESTABLISH AN UNDERSTANDING OF RACE EQUITY AND INCLUSION PRINCIPLES

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Often, race-focused conversations derail because people are using the same terms in different ways. One of the challenges of communicating effectively about race is to move people from the narrow and individualized definition of racism to a more comprehensive and systemic awareness. To illuminate racism we need to “name it, frame it and explain it.”

Building a proactive framework for addressing issues of race begins with having a clear understanding and vision of racial equity and inclusion. It is not enough to be able to critique and react to race inequities. We also need to know how to create and proactively build racial equity. Establishing a shared language to present data, describe conditions and outcomes and identify root causes of inequities serves an important function. A common language creates a narrative that makes it easier to communicate the commitment to racial equity, both internally and externally, and it creates a platform for coordinated work toward equitable outcomes.

People find it hard to talk about race without feeling blame, shame, guilt and grievances — which do little to move us forward. When engaging others in this very difficult conversation, try to shift the conversation to one focused on

causes, effects, systems and solutions. Use the basic elements of effective issue framing to make the case by articulating:

- Shared values at stake
- The problem
- The cause
- The solution
- The action needed

These elements help to create a complete frame that is clear, concise, compelling and convincing. Use personal stories to illustrate systemic patterns and familiar elements (characters, setting, action and conflict) to make your story memorable. Always project positive and widely shared values such as fairness, equity, inclusion, unity and dignity.

The following are definitions of core concepts that can help groups develop a shared language for race equity and inclusion.

## CORE CONCEPTS

**Equity** is defined as “the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair.”<sup>1</sup> The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. It is helpful to think of equity as not simply a desired state of affairs or a lofty value. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

**Systematic equity** is a complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a robust system and dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits and outcomes.

**Inclusion** is the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.<sup>2</sup> More than simply diversity and numerical representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.

**Racial justice** is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.<sup>3</sup> All people are able to achieve their full potential in life, regardless of race, ethnicity or the community in which they live. Racial justice — or **racial equity** — goes beyond “anti-racism.” It’s not just about what we are against, but also what we are for. A “racial justice” framework can move us from a reactive posture to a more powerful, proactive and even preventative approach.

**Race** is a socially constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features (phenotypes) such as skin color and on ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories. The ideology of race has become embedded in our

identities, institutions and culture and is used as a basis for discrimination and domination.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of **racism** is widely thought of as simply personal prejudice, but in fact, it is a complex system of racial hierarchies and inequities.

At the micro level of racism, or individual level, are internalized and interpersonal racism. At the macro level of racism, we look beyond the individuals to the broader dynamics, including institutional and structural racism.

**Internalized racism** describes the private racial beliefs held by and within individuals. The way we absorb social messages about race and adopt them as personal beliefs, biases and prejudices are all within the realm of internalized racism. For people of color, **internalized oppression** can involve believing in negative messages about oneself or one’s racial group. For white people, **internalized privilege** can involve feeling a sense of superiority and entitlement, or holding negative beliefs about people of color.

**Interpersonal racism** is how our private beliefs about race become public when we interact with others. When we act upon our prejudices or unconscious bias — whether intentionally, visibly, verbally or not — we engage in interpersonal racism. Interpersonal racism also can be willful and overt, taking the form of bigotry, hate speech or racial violence.

**Institutional racism** is racial inequity within institutions and systems of power, such as places of employment, government agencies and social services. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment and

inequitable opportunities and outcomes. A school system that concentrates people of color in the most overcrowded and under-resourced schools with the least qualified teachers compared to the educational opportunities of white students is an example of institutional racism.

**Structural racism (or structural racialization)** is the racial bias across institutions and society. It describes the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.<sup>5</sup> Since the word “racism” often is understood as a conscious belief, “racialization” may be a better way to describe a process that does not require intentionality. Race equity expert John A. Powell writes: “‘Racialization’ connotes a process rather than a static event. It underscores the fluid and dynamic nature of race... ‘Structural racialization’ is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors.”<sup>6</sup>

**Systemic racialization** describes a dynamic system that produces and replicates racial ideologies, identities and inequities. Systemic racialization is the well-institutionalized pattern of discrimination that cuts across major political, economic and social organizations in a society. Public attention to racism is generally focused on the symptoms (such as a racist slur by an individual) rather than the system of racial inequality.

Like two sides of the same coin, **racial privilege** describes race-based advantages and preferential treatment based on skin color, while **racial oppression** refers to race-based disadvantages, discrimination and exploitation based on skin color.



EQUALITY VS. EQUITY

**Equity** involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. **Equality**, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things.



## STEP 2

### ENGAGE AFFECTED POPULATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

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#### Stakeholder Analysis Guide

The following questions can help ensure you have a powerful mix of stakeholders to help leverage change.

1. Who is most adversely affected by the issue being addressed? Who faces racial barriers or bias, or exclusion from power, related to this issue?
2. How are people of different racial groups differently situated or affected by this issue?
3. Ideally, what would the racial composition of the leadership look like?
4. In what ways are stakeholders most affected by the issue already involved in addressing it? How can these efforts be supported and expanded?
5. What are ways stakeholders adversely affected by the issue can be further engaged?
6. How can diverse communities and leaders be engaged from the outset so they have a real opportunity to shape the solutions and strategies?
7. How can community engagement be inclusive, representative and authentic?
8. How will stakeholders exercise real leadership and power?
9. Who can be allies and supporters and how can they be engaged?
10. Who needs to be recruited or invited to join the effort to address this issue? Who will approach them? How? When? What will they be asked to do to get involved?

One of the impacts of systemic racialization is the exclusion of people of color from many avenues of decision making, civic participation and power. People of color, the most direct stakeholders in the elimination of racism and those with the most first-hand experiences with its effects, must have a role in social-change efforts along with whites. Strive to engage stakeholders who have active and authentic connections to their respective communities. It is important to ensure meaningful participation, voice and ownership. The sooner you can engage a diverse mix of stakeholders, the sooner you will be able to move from talk to action in creating equitable opportunities for the communities you seek to serve.

There is a difference between stakeholder engagement and empowerment. Engagement may simply involve getting input or limited participation. Empowerment involves taking leadership, making decisions and designing solutions and strategies at every phase of social-change efforts. A community-organizing model led by people of color and focused on building power can be a particularly important strategy for advancing racial justice.

Invest time in learning about the needs of the populations you are serving. Spend time understanding what other stakeholders are doing, examining what is working and then sharing the knowledge. This can help inform your work and allows early buy-in and support from the stakeholders and communities that you are serving. The sooner you can engage a diverse mix of stakeholders, the better. It is harder to bring new communities in once an organization has established its agenda, strategy and leadership. You can use a stakeholder analysis to assess whom you need on board to build a powerful mix of people to leverage change.



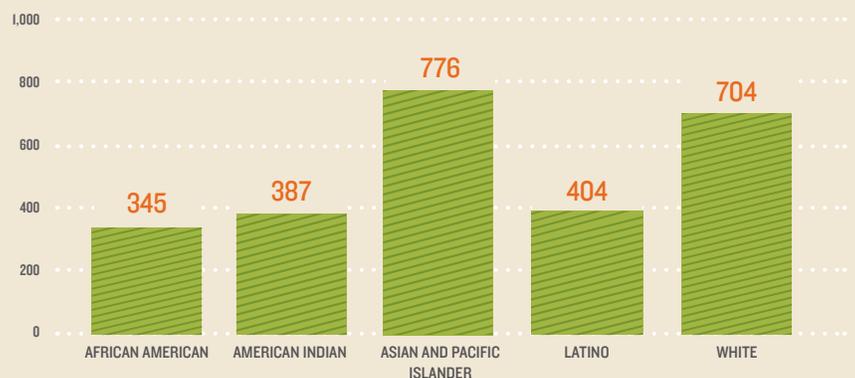
## STEP 3

### GATHER AND ANALYZE DISAGGREGATED DATA

Advancing race equity for the populations that we serve requires data. Typically, data are reported for whole populations or as aggregates. However, data in all focus areas of organizations and systems should be broken apart by race, gender and other demographic variables whenever the data are available. The collection, analysis and use of race and ethnicity data should be an integral part of the continuing improvement efforts, quality assurance, supervision and accountability processes of every organization and public system. If used both internally and with key contractual partners, these data can become an analytic tool to manage and effectively allocate resources necessary to help children and their families thrive. In addition, working with affected populations, it is critical to design a set of research questions that will help to identify the type of data needed. Too often during this step there is a tendency to work with the data that are available and not give as much attention to data that are needed but not readily available. Engaging stakeholders early on can help to determine what data should be included.

National Race for Results Index Scores

Disaggregated data should be broken apart by race, gender and other demographic variables. This graph is an example of disaggregating data by race.



NOTE: Racial and Hispanic origin categories are mutually exclusive.



## STEP 4

### CONDUCT SYSTEMS ANALYSIS OF ROOT CAUSES OF INEQUITIES

#### Systems Analysis Guide

You can use the questions below to guide you through a basic systems analysis. They address key elements of systemic racialization, including history, culture, interconnected institutions and policies and racial ideologies. Examining how racism interacts with other systems of privilege, oppression and power — such as gender and economic inequality — is another important facet of conducting a systems analysis.

1. What are the racial inequities, barriers or negative outcomes involved in the problem being examined? Who is burdened most and who benefits most?
2. What institutions are involved? What unfair policies and/or practices are involved?
3. What social conditions or determinants contribute to the problem (such as poverty, housing segregation, education)?
4. What other compounding dynamics are involved (such as income or gender inequities)?
5. What cultural norms, myths or popular ideas justify or maintain the problem?
6. How did things get this way and what are some of the cumulative impacts?
7. What are the key causes or contributing factors?
8. What solutions or interventions could eliminate the inequities?
9. What can be learned from prior efforts to solve the problem or change the system?
10. What strategies could result in systemic change and advance equitable solutions?

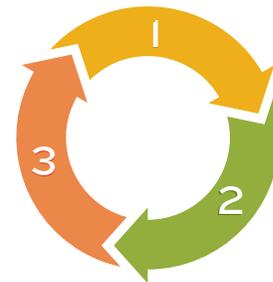
It is easy to get overwhelmed by the magnitude of systemic racism and all of its daily manifestations. Examining the root causes of differential outcomes takes into account the convergence of race, place, class and history. This type of analysis often yields a structural perspective that focuses on policies and practices that may unintentionally (and in earlier times, intentionally) reproduce racial inequities. To effectively challenge systemic racialization, we need to analyze systems in order to make informed and strategic decisions about how to interrupt and change inequitable patterns. A systems analysis, or structural racism analysis, helps us look at problems holistically, by considering the context and compounding dynamics, to uncover root causes and possible solutions.

Systems are composed of an organized array of interdependent and interacting components. Systems are generally self-perpetuating, self-correcting and constantly changing. To understand a system and its outcomes, look beyond the individual parts to see how different parts are interacting in the overall arrangements.<sup>7</sup> Systems can be transformed by finding high leverage points that can induce and reinforce

ongoing change. While actions and gains are followed by reactions and retrenchments, these can be anticipated and counteracted with thoughtful planning.

A systems analysis is designed to:

#### 1. Identify root causes and contributing factors



2. Surface possible strategies and solutions for addressing the problems

3. Help discern among the options generated which strategies and solutions can leverage desired changes and make transformative systemic impacts



## STEP 5

### IDENTIFY STRATEGIES AND TARGET RESOURCES TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES OF INEQUITIES

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After conducting a systems analysis to identify the root causes of inequities, you can then begin to surface possible strategies and solutions for addressing the problems. Through thoughtful planning and engagement of key stakeholders and partners, you will create ways to shift your investments and resources to move solutions forward that can have transformative impacts on systems and communities.

Organizations and systems should target programs, resources, investments and strategies to those groups of people who are being left behind and to those who need them most. Ideal strategies and investments promote and advance increased opportunities and decrease disparities simultaneously. Racially equitable solutions and policy proposals have an explicit goal of eliminating racial disparities and increasing racial equity. It is tempting to use proxies such as socioeconomic status or place, but race requires specific, distinct and sufficient attention.

Reflect positive and shared values in your proposed solution — such as fairness, justice, equity, inclusion, dignity and unity. Proposed racially equitable solutions need to be

concrete and viable. Effective racial equity strategies should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. Be sure your proposal includes realistic mechanisms to attain, sustain and expand success through sufficient funding, staffing, documentation, public reporting, accountability mechanisms and evaluation.

Conscious consideration of racial equity during planning and decision making helps counteract implicit or unconscious bias and prevent negative racial impacts.

#### A Guide to Developing Racially Equitable Solutions

The following questions can help ensure that targeted strategies and investments yield the greatest impact for children, families and communities of color.

1. What racial disparities do you want to eliminate, reduce or prevent?
2. What groups most adversely affected by the current problem do you want to benefit?
3. How can those most adversely affected by the issue be actively involved in solving it?
4. What is a specific change in policy that could help produce more equitable outcomes?
5. How will your proposed solution address root causes and advance systemic change?
6. What change do you ideally want (not just what you would settle for)?
7. What positive principles or shared values are reflected in this proposed reform?
8. Does the proposal have clear goals, plans and timetables for implementation, with sufficient funding, staffing, public reporting, accountability and evaluation?
9. Who can be allies and supporters and how can they be engaged?



## STEP 6

### CONDUCT RACE EQUITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR ALL POLICIES AND DECISION MAKING

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#### Race Equity Impact Assessment

These questions can help you begin your race equity impact assessment.

1. Are all racial and ethnic groups that are affected by the policy, practice or decision at the table?
2. How will the proposed policy, practice or decision affect each group?
3. How will the proposed policy, practice or decision be perceived by each group?
4. Does the policy, practice or decision worsen or ignore existing disparities?
5. Based on the above responses, what revisions are needed in the policy, practice or decision under discussion?

A racial equity impact assessment is a systematic examination of how a proposed action or decision will likely affect different racial and ethnic groups.

It is a useful tool for assessing the actual or anticipated effect of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans and budgetary decisions. The racial equity impact assessment can be a vital tool to reduce, eliminate and prevent racial discrimination and inequities and prevent institutional racism.

Racial equity impact assessments are best conducted during the decision-making process, prior to enacting new proposals. They can be used to inform decisions in a way very similar to environmental impact statements, fiscal impact reports and workplace risk assessments. Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation have developed racial equity impact assessment toolkits to help policymakers, organizations, communities and advocates assess equity and remedy longstanding inequities.<sup>8</sup>



## STEP 7

### CONTINUOUSLY EVALUATE EFFECTIVENESS AND ADAPT STRATEGIES

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Implementing investment strategies that promote policy change, system reform and program delivery are critical to removing barriers and increasing equitable opportunities to populations served. It is also important to consistently assess whether investments are accomplishing stated racial equity goals. Organizations and systems should be assessing equity progress at every turn and on an ongoing basis. Setting goals for the equity outcomes you are seeking, tracking results, measuring progress and implementing needed course adjustments are critical to effectively doing this work.



## CONCLUSION

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A lot of work to address issues of race focuses on remedying racial discrimination and inequities after they have occurred. Those racial inequities that often get addressed tend to be small in comparison to those that are not. Meanwhile, new manifestations of racism continue to emerge and outpace our mechanisms and capacities to solve them. Legislative bodies and the courts are rolling back key legal remedies and civil rights, increasingly embracing color blindness — the willful denial and avoidance of race that prevents racism from being acknowledged. If we are to get ahead of the curve, we need to focus more energy on a preventative strategy — stopping the racial inequities before they occur.

understanding of the most important principles and using your terms to tell the story. Identify the right stakeholders and affected populations to join you at the table. Examine disaggregated data, conduct systems analyses and design effective strategies. Measure the racial impact of your plan. Evaluate and adapt your strategies over time.

Everyone can be a race equity and inclusion leader and champion. Start right where you are with the people around you and use these seven steps to advance and embed race equity and inclusion within your organization.

### Racial Justice

Racial justice can be used synonymously with racial equity. Notice, too, that racial justice is a systemic concept. Just as the production and replication of racism must be understood as a system to grasp its full meaning and impacts, racial justice also entails the systematic advancement and sustaining of equity. It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity.

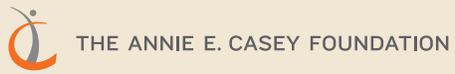
To do this, it is not enough for racial justice advocates to call out institutional racism. Racial justice advocacy today must be focused on preventing racism by institutionalizing racial equity.

Though it may sound daunting, institutionalizing racial equity and preventing institutional racism can be done. Like anything else, it takes practice, partnering, learning and leadership. You can adopt, prioritize, incentivize and model equitable and inclusive practices in your own work — giving you the experience, expertise and credibility to help others do the same. Start by developing a common

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> The Free Dictionary is a website that is comprised of a collection of dictionaries by subject including medical and legal together with free and subscription encyclopedias, in 10 languages ([www.thefreedictionary.com/equity](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/equity)).
- <sup>2</sup> The Free Dictionary is a website that is comprised of a collection of dictionaries by subject including medical and legal together with free and subscription encyclopedias, in 10 languages ([www.thefreedictionary.com/inclusion](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/inclusion)).
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- <sup>6</sup> powell, j. a. (2013, September/October). Deepening our understanding of structural marginalization. *Poverty & Race*, 22(5).
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