

# Talking About Race with White People

2:05-3:20



Increasing Capacity &  
Building Connections:  
**Bridging to the Future**



# Race and Racism

- “Race is a fiction we must never accept. Race is a fact we must never forget.”
  - Robert Jensen
- Racecraft
- Race is relevant because racism is relevant

# Talking About Race, Racism, and Racial Disparities with White People



Increasing Capacity &  
Building Connections:  
Bridging to the Future



## Talking about Race with Jesse Dirkman

- Data Analyst at Institute for Community Alliances
  - HMIS lead in 13 states
- Volunteer facilitator with Madison, WI Institutes for the Healing of Racism
  - Founded by Nathan Rutstein, Reginald Newkirk, Cherry Steinwender and others
  - Madison chapter started by Richard Davis
  - 10 week courses
- Presentation will be a combination of tips and tricks, as well as modelling ways to talk about race and racism with white people.
- Credit: Kids Forward at 2018 YWCA Racial Justice Summit in Madison, WI



# Disclaimers

- Speaking from the “I” perspective
- I’m still learning, not an expert



# Framing is Important

## 2016 Annual Report - Homelessness in Wisconsin

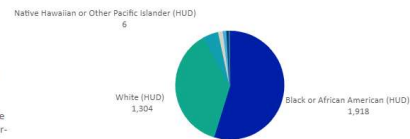


### Exploring the Data

Are People of Color Under-Represented in any Project Types?

#### Instructions:

1. Select a Region
2. Compare Race in "All Project Types" to other project types.
3. Look at the sizes of the pie slices. Is anyone over-represented?



#### Make Selections Below

Select a Local Homeless Service Region (CoC)

None

Select a Project Type

All Project Types



# Framing is Important

## Racial Disparities

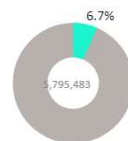
1 out of 46 Black or African American Wisconsinites experienced homelessness in 2017

1 out of 454 White, non-Hispanic or Latino/a Wisconsinites experienced homelessness in 2017

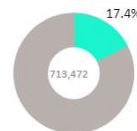
"This is no accident; it is the result of centuries of structural racism that have excluded historically oppressed people—particularly Black and Native Americans—from equal access to housing, community supports, and opportunities for economic mobility."

*SPARC Phase One Findings, Center for Social Innovation*

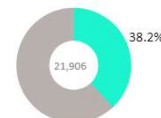
Wisconsin Population



Wisconsin Poverty Population



Wisconsin Homeless Population



Black or African American Wisconsinites are 10.3 times as likely to experience homelessness



# Framing is Important

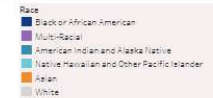


## Why do these disparities exist?

Watch Marc Dones (Center for Social Innovation) discuss the history of housing segregation in America and how it has led to the disparities that we see today.

### Racial Disparities in Homelessness

Do all race and ethnicity groups experience homelessness at the same rate?



General Population by Race: **Alaska Balance of State**



U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and American Community Survey, 2017

Homeless at a Point in Time by Race



2018 January Point in Time Count Submission to HUD

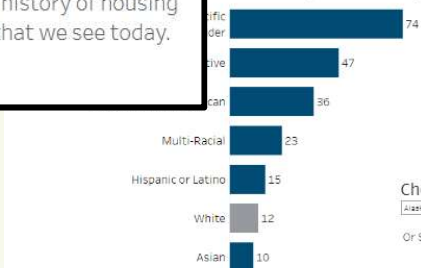
General Population by Ethnicity: **Alaska Balance of State**



by Ethnicity



10,000 residents (hover for detail)



Choose Another CoC

Alaska Balance of State

Or Select New State





# Framing is Important

- Racially Restrictive Covenants
- Redlining
- Housing Shortage
- Housing Discrimination



## Housing Discrimination

[Prairie State Legal Video](#)



Source



# Framing is Important

- Framing
  - Presentation impacts how people process info, what they do with it
  - Systems approach frame v. individualist frame
  - If we let people draw their own conclusions, they might connect the wrong dots



# Framing is Important

- Framing for your audience
  - Government Leaders
  - CoC Leadership
  - CoC Membership Organizations
  - Folks experiencing homelessness
- “When black lives matter, all lives will matter in America.” – Alicia Garza



# Avoid Perpetuating Stereotypes



# Representation and Inclusion

- Engage with people of color experiencing homelessness
- Ask folks to share their stories
- Ask permission to share their stories
- Pay attention to SPARC!



# White Fragility

- White people become highly fragile in conversations about race.

“The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable - the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses...These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy.”



## **White Fragility in Action: Feelings**

- Singled out
- Attacked
- Silenced
- Shamed
- Guilty
- Accused
- Insulted
- Judged
- Angry
- Scared
- Outraged



## **White Fragility in Action: Behaviors**

- Crying
- Physically leaving
- Emotionally withdrawing
- Arguing
- Denying
- Focusing on intentions
- Seeking absolution
- Avoiding





## **White Fragility in Action: Claims**

- “I know people of color”
- “The real oppression is class [or gender, or anything other than race]”
- “Some people find offense where there is none.”
- “You’re being racist against me.”
- “The problem is your tone.”



# White Fragility in Action: Assumptions

- “I am a good person, I can’t be racist”
- “Racism can only be intentional; my not having intended racism cancels out the impact of my behavior”



# White Fragility in Action: Functions

- Close of self-reflection
- Maintain white solidarity
- Take race off the table
- Protect a limited worldview
- Hijack the conversation



## Why Does this Happen?

- Assumptions
  - Racism is bad
  - Only bad people are racist
  - Racism is/must be intentional
  - Acknowledging race is not polite/bad
  - White isn't a race
- Good/Bad binary
- Intent/Impact
- Guilt



## “Nice” White People

“In my experience, white people who believe they are safe often prove dangerous when that identity is challenged.

“This is in part because most white people believe that they are good and the true racists are easy to spot....

“I don’t know where this belief comes from, but I do know it has consequences. When you believe niceness disproves the presence of racism, it’s easy to start believing bigotry is rare, and that the label *racist* should be applied only to mean-spirited, intentional acts of discrimination.”

- Austin Channing Brown, “I’m Still Here”



## Nice White People

“To continue reproducing racial inequality, the system only needs white people to be really nice and carry on, smile at people of color, be friendly across race, and go to lunch together on occasion. I am not saying you shouldn’t be nice. I suppose it’s better than being mean. But niceness is not courageous. Niceness will not get racism on the table and will not keep it on the table when everyone wants it off. In fact, bringing racism to white people’s attention is often seen as *not* nice, and being perceived as not nice triggers white fragility”

- Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility”



## Best Practices: Presenting Data on Racial Disparities

- Make sure images don't reinforce stereotypes
- If you talk about disparities, make sure you talk about the history!
- Expect to encounter white fragility
- If you are white: expect to *experience* white fragility
- Find allies and work with them



## Be Prepared

- Learn more about the history of housing discrimination in the United States
- Read “White Fragility” or watch Robin DiAngelo videos
- Work on your own biases





# What does Equity look like?

## In our CoC

- Rates of entry into perm. housing match rates of homelessness
- CE assessment tools assess folks of all races accurately
- Demographics of homeless population match demographics of general population



# Contact

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