

# Racial **Equity** Institute

**Our approach and our services**

**October 2022**

[www.racialequityinstitute.org](http://www.racialequityinstitute.org)

## Overview of the Racial Equity Institute

The Racial Equity Institute (REI) is an alliance of trainers and organizers, established in 2007, that is committed to bringing awareness and analysis to the root causes of racial disparities and disproportionality to create racially equitable organizations and systems. Even fifty years after significant civil rights' gains, the impact of race continues to shape the outcomes of all institutions. REI trainers and organizers help organizations develop tools and processes to challenge patterns of institutional power and to grow institutional equity. Our approach has a movement orientation, always focused on organizing toward institutional change with equitable and just outcomes for people of color. We recognize many intersecting oppressions, but our belief is that racism is the glue that connects all oppressions, and thus our focus is on racism and the injustices that stem from racialized history and belief systems that are reflected in American culture and institutions.

Our *theory of change* is based on the following five assumptions and observations:

1. Racial inequity in the United States looks the same across systems.
2. Systems contribute significantly to disparities.
3. Systemic interventions and training can work to change thinking, reduce disparities, and improve outcomes for all populations.
4. We have powerful racial narratives in this country that have not changed, even as laws and policies have changed. Dismantling racism requires changing persistent racial narratives.
5. Change requires long-term commitment.

## REI's Services

The Racial Equity Institute's approach focuses on racism as an institutional and systemic manifestation that does not require the intention of individuals. We see institutionalized racism as the root cause of disparate social and economic outcomes and believe that effective interventions must address the social systems themselves. This theory is articulated and clarified in Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's analysis of "racialized social systems" ("Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation," *American Sociological Review*, 1997). Bringing an institutional analysis and many years of experience, we believe that the goal of dismantling institutional racism and organizational reform cannot be achieved with short-term training or consultation. Understanding and dismantling institutional racism requires a consistent and committed effort that includes developing leadership, processes, and tools to support the work.

We see ourselves as organizers who advocate a movement approach to institutional change as described by Parker Palmer in his well-known piece, "Divided No More: A Movement Approach to Educational Reform" (*Change Magazine*, 1992, <http://www.couragerenewal.org/parker/writings/divided-no-more/>). Because our training is designed to bring an analysis that supports institutional transformation, our approach is different from that of traditional organizational consultants. We believe visions of change can grow and become real when organizations create structures for their racial equity work that allow for accountability and responsibility outside of the limits of their present roles and relationships. It is our belief that organizing is central to organizational transformation. Individual problems, when put in an organizing context, can be translated into shared issues. Addressing shared issues creates openings for meaningful change. A movement approach creates countervailing structures in the form of caucuses and a core group, sometimes called the Equity Team, to hold the work of transformation. It recognizes the

interconnectedness of all institutions and the organizations that compose them. It relies on collective wisdom, returning power to communities served, and on on-going reflection and evaluation.

We begin our work with training designed to build knowledge and a strong analytical framework regarding race and racism in American culture and social structures. We use this framework to train and guide institutions as they develop capacity and processes to better understand and transform the culture and practices within their own organization that have allowed racism to persist and thrive.

The Racial Equity Institute's phased approach typically includes several workshops followed by consulting and coaching for organizational change. Components of our process include the following coursework.

### **Understanding Racial Inequity: A Groundwater Approach**

An interactive presentation on the nature and impact of structural racism and what it looks like across institutions. We examine narratives around racial disproportionality and make use of compelling research data to illustrate the systemic nature of racism and the fallacy of typical explanations like poverty, education, social class, individual behavior, or cultural attributes that often get associated with particular racial groups. Before addressing racial inequity or perceived acts of discrimination or oppression it is critical to understand what institutional racism looks like and the devastating impact it wields on our nation's people, economy and social institutions.

The Groundwater Approach teaches how to use data to measure the systemic impact of racism and to track institutional change. Once grounded in what the problem of structural racism is, *and what it isn't*, participants are ready to move to Phase I training that introduces an analysis of how and why racism was created and how it has been embedded and maintained within and across America's institutions.

Some organizations use the Groundwater as a first training, and others may use it later in the process to focus on the use of data as an organizing tool, focusing on data in their own institution, community, or state. Some organizations bypass the Groundwater and start with Phase I, which is the foundation of our training and organizing strategy.

#### **Logistics:**

- Half day presentation (3 hours) with several breaks
- The virtual Groundwater Presentation is conducted via Zoom, and participant count is capped at a firm 100 per presentation for maximum engagement. Only one participant per registration. Multiple people cannot share a screen.
- REI will send the Zoom links to the training host 3-5 days before the training date.

#### **Phase I Workshop:**

Foundational Training in Historical and Institutional Racism Workshop philosophy and focus. Even those who are concerned about racial disparities in all American systems and institutions are challenged in their understanding of how racism remains alive and well, advantaging some while harming others. REI's two-day Phase I training is designed to develop the capacity of participants to understand racism in its institutional and structural forms. Moving the focus from individual bigotry and bias, the Racial Equity Institute's Phase I Workshop presents an historical, cultural, structural, and institutional analysis of racism. With a clear understanding of how institutions, systems, and culture are producing unjust and

inequitable outcomes, participants are better equipped to work for change. Phase I builds the capacity of participants to identify the root causes of disparity and establish goals and strategies based on that deeper understanding. Participants develop an analysis of institutional racism that helps their organization develop a common understanding of the problem and a common language to address it. This paradigm-shifting experience redefines issues of equity as they manifest in systems and institutions today and the attendant actions of individuals who seek to address them. The Phase I Workshop is the foundation of our training and organizing strategy.

**Logistics:**

- This virtual workshop is 2 full days (8hrs/day) with many small breaks and a full lunch break.
- The virtual Phase 1 is conducted via Zoom.
- The participant count is capped at a firm 35 with a minimum of 15 for maximum engagement. Only one participant per registration. Multiple people cannot share a screen.
- REI will send the Zoom links to the training host 3-5 days before the training date.

**Youth Workshop**

The Racial Equity Institute provides a two-day Racial Equity Leadership Institute for Youth for high school students to raise awareness of the role of young people in a movement for systems transformation and social justice. This workshop parallels the Phase I workshop but includes more videos and interactive exercises designed to educate about how racialized history, institutions and bias impact contemporary culture and experience and, most importantly, how young people can organize to create an equitable world.

**Logistics:**

- This virtual workshop is 2 days (5hrs/day) with many small breaks and a full lunch break.
- The virtual Phase 1 is conducted via Zoom.
- The participant count is capped at a firm 35 with a minimum of 15 for maximum engagement. Only one participant per registration. Multiple people cannot share a screen.
- REI will send the Zoom links to the training host 3-5 days before the training date.

**In-Person Services**

REI continues to book virtual services. If you are interested in an in-person service, please indicate this in the notes section of the Appointments Plus platform. REI is working to accommodate in-person requests in 2023 based on the location, and availability of trainers given of our current virtual schedule with at least a 3-month advanced request. Travel and accommodation costs will be added to the base cost of the service and will be specific to your location.

Check our website: [www.racialequityinstitute.org](http://www.racialequityinstitute.org) for additional offerings in 2023.

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