

# King County Public Health HCHN Racial Caucusing Report 2019

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Dear Mr. Gilvar,

It is with great pleasure that the Racing to Equity Consulting Group (R2E) submits this Race Affinity Caucusing Report to the Health Care for the Homeless Network (HCHN) Administration Team. This report is designed to inform the Strategic Planning process at the April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Quarterly Provider Meeting in order to meaningfully, intentionally and strategically create a transformational plan to advance racial equity and social justice at HCHN.

Our collective and co-created vision for these Race Affinity Caucuses was to provide HCHN frontline staff with a holding space to begin interrupting internalized racist superiority and internalized racist oppression in a formalized manner at the HCHN. Our mission at R2E is to support clients, like King County Public Health Care for Homeless Network, in co-creating and co-designing a comprehensive approach to implement transformational and sustainable racial equity.

This report provides an overview of the three Race Affinity Caucuses held at different locations throughout King County, their format, questions posed, recommendations from participants on how to advance racial equity and social justice at HCHN and quotes from the evaluations of these professional and leadership development opportunities.

Our team, (Anita Garcia Morales, Marlon Brown, Tami Farber, Alan Preston and Bernardo Ruiz), has collaborated, advised and assisted organizations in forming racial equity teams, creating and implementing racial equity policies and procedures, developing curricula for ongoing systemic professional development, support in establishing racial equity teams as well as providing data analysis along with executive coaching. Combined, we have more than 30 years of experience leading, advising, and facilitating racial equity work.

We are grateful for the partnership with King County Public Health's Healthcare for the Homeless Network and look forward to supporting and furthering your efforts to build a more just, healthy and prosperous future for each and every person in the King County area.

Please let us know if you have any questions about this report by contacting me at (206) 930-6436 or at [Bernardo@r2esj.org](mailto:Bernardo@r2esj.org).

Respectfully,  
Bernardo Ruiz  
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## R2E VISION, MISSION & FOUNDATIONAL BELIEFS

### Vision

A world based on principles of racial equity and social justice where every human being is honored, valued and dignified. A world where race no longer determines one's socioeconomic, health, educational and professional outcomes and everyone has what they need to thrive.

### Mission

Our mission is to support a broad body of clients in co-creating and co-designing a comprehensive approach to implement transformational change strategies to create sustainable socially just outcomes for each and every person.

### Foundational Beliefs

- Oppression can be unlearned.
- Hurting, shaming and blaming are not effective tools for opening and changing minds.
- Experiencing cognitive dissonance and discomfort are essential components for learning.
- Increasing awareness of oneself is a strategy for change.
- It is not our fault, and we have a collective responsibility to change the status quo.
- Impact and outcomes matter more than intention.
- Listening is a form of action.
- Wounded people wound others.
- Strong relationships are the foundation of cultural competence.
- Challenging racism is everyone's work.

There are no quick fixes. It takes sustainable and ongoing efforts to transform systems. We believe that change is possible.

## Background

The Health Care for the Homeless Network of King County put out an RFP for providing a keynote address and facilitate a full day work session with the ten partners which comprise this Network at their annual gathering on October 9, 2018.

The focus of the annual gathering was on improving health care services for people experiencing homelessness through using a racial equity lens. At this important work session, we reviewed policies, practices, procedures and data from each organization as well as the Network as a whole in order to begin identifying the “WHY” for HCHN to intentionally, meaningfully and strategically lead for racial equity and social justice. A key focus area for this work session was to identify the difference between transformational and transactional leadership as well as between adaptive and technical solutions to implementing organizational change to positively impact the system to advance racial equity and social justice.

At this work session, participants also analyzed their organizational readiness to support the collective creation of a comprehensive plan of action to build structural racial equity throughout the Network. At the end of the work session, participants strongly expressed the need to come together to build the foundation for creating a racially equitable and Health Care for the Homeless Network.

This work session was difficult for some people of color as many of them did not feel safe to openly and honestly talk about their experiences of being recipients of racism and microaggressions within their organizations. At this session and subsequent meetings with the HCHN King County Administration Team, we discussed the need to provide a holding space for HCHN staff to begin or strengthen their adaptive leadership work, regardless of their authority positions. Adaptive leadership practices force people to reflectively question and redefine some aspects of their personal and professional identity and practices. Therefore, it was suggested that in order to move this important work forward in a powerful way, it was needed to create a courageous holding space for Racial Affinity Caucuses to take place in order to have adaptive conversations and better understand how to support the goal of advancing racial equity and social justice and becoming an antiracist Network.

The information from the three Race Affinity Caucuses (1/29/19 King County Chinook Building, 2/20/19 Renton Technical College, and 3/4/19 Tukwila Community Center) will inform and support the HCHN Quarterly Meeting on Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup> in beginning to develop a strategic plan of action with clear accountability metrics and objectives to focus on ensuring and achieving racial equity throughout the Network.

## Race Caucusing Agenda Sample

### **Health Care for the Homeless Network**

401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1000  
Seattle, WA 98104

**206-263-8422** Fax 206-205-6236

TTY Relay: 711

[www.kingcounty.gov/health](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health)



**General Race Caucusing Agenda  
HCHN Equity and Social Justice Caucusing  
January 29, 2019  
1:30-5:30PM  
King County Chinook, Room 123**

*\* Activities facilitated by Bernardo Ruiz Consulting and Associates*

### **MEETING AGENDA**

- **Context for Racial Affinity Caucusing and Community Norms** 1:30-2:10  
*Bernardo Ruiz, John Gilvar, Rekha Ravindran*
- **Racial Affinity Caucuses** 2:10-4:10  
*Bernardo Ruiz, Anita Morales, Marlon Brown, Tami Farber, Alan Preston*
- **Break** 4:10-4:30
- **Bringing Groups Together** 4:30-5:10  
*Bernardo Ruiz*
  - Individual reflection
  - Group sharing
- **Writing reflection, next steps, and closing** 5:10-5:20  
*Bernardo Ruiz, John Gilvar, Rekha Ravindran*

## **Race Caucusing Objectives:**

Interrupt Internal Racist Superiority (IRS)

Interrupt Internal Racist Oppression (IRO)

### **People of color participate in affinity caucus in order to:**

Provide a safe space for people of color to talk about and address experiences of racism

Talk about racism and how it affects people of color without having to explain it to white people

Gain tools to talk about racism

Create an alternative power base for people of color

Build relationships

Provide a space to address how internalized racism and internalized inferiority can hold people of color and racial justice work back

### **White people participate in affinity caucusing in order to:**

Work through guilt, shame & other barriers that hold white people back from engaging in race conversations and doing racial justice work

Ask questions and explore ideas that help white people learn about racism without having to learn at the expense of people of color

Hold each other accountable for actions and behaviors

Build relationships

Gain tools to talk about racism, white supremacy and privilege

Remind white people that work needs to be done to dismantle racism every day

## People of Color Affinity Group Questions:

- What is something you have stopped/started doing to minimize the negative impact of your internalized oppression/inferiority in your work place?
- Who in your life makes it difficult to speak up/out and how/why?
- How are you intentionally decolonizing your mind?
- Where in your life do you continue to support institutionalized racism even though you are aware of your actions? Why?
- Why is it important to understand the intra-/inter-ethnic bias and prejudice we exhibit among POC in your work place?
- What are your thoughts about Non-Black POC (NB-POC) and Black issues and concerns?

## White Affinity Group Questions:

- Check in: How are you feeling about being in the caucus and/or is there anything you want to share that came up during the framing?
- What norms of White Supremacy Culture do you see present at your institution or within the network? (Provided an article by Tema Okun on White Supremacy Culture as pre-reading)
- How have you, as a white person, internalized racial superiority and how has that shown up in your work and at the Network?

The following notes were gleaned from the three racial identity caucuses facilitated Anita Garcia Morales, Marlon Brown, Bernardo Ruiz (People of Color Caucus) Tami Farber and Alan Preston (White People Caucus), from the Racing to Equity Consulting Group in which we partner with the King County HCHN Administrative team to set up the context for this important work.

The caucuses occurred in January, February and March at different locations throughout King County (1/29/19 King County Chinook Building, 2/20/19 Renton Technical College, and 3/4/19 Tukwila Community Center). All three Caucuses followed a very similar, and almost identical, format that included a check-in about how people were feeling about being in caucus space, reflections on their organization's anti-racism journey, and thoughtful exploration of how they contributed to advancing racial equity or perpetuating racism in their organizations. These Race Affinity Caucuses also provided an opportunity for frontline staff to reflect about what they and what the Health Care for the Homeless Network could do collectively to advance racial equity and social justice to become an anti-racist consortium.

## **King County Health Care for the Homeless Network Notes from the People of Color Racial Identity Caucuses**

### **People of Color Caucus Feedback 1/29/09**

- The Health Care for the Homeless Network needs to seriously work on normalizing conversations about racial identity development with all of its partners. We all need to develop a culture in which people of color represent their whole being and identity at work
- Develop and implement an equity tool to examine inequities and advance racial equity at a systemic level
- Within each of our organizations in HCHN we need to develop a welcoming space for People of Color in both staff and people whom we serve
- It would be great for HCHN to establish protocols and to provide support to our organizations on how to normalize the conversation about racial equity and interrupt microaggressions at work for both staff and patients in a similar way that we are doing it at this caucus which builds collective ownership and relationships
- We strongly encourage our White colleagues within the Network to work on their own internalized superiority to eliminate oppression and racism in HCHN



- Supervisors also need to participate in this important work to advance racial equity at HCHN
- Every time the Network meets, it needs to be acknowledged that we are on Native land
- How can we start developing spaces to have conversations about colonization and decolonization?
- It is important that HCHN provides a series of trainings and tools on how to interrupt microaggressions and the work place
- The narrative of superiority within our organizations and network need to change to a narrative of belonging
- Leadership must participate in this work to advance and structuralize racial equity within the Network. We can create policies and procedures to systemically advance racial equity
- HCHN needs to develop a strategic plan to advance racial equity with clear goals and objectives and accountability measures for leadership and staff to ensure racial equity
- We are recommending that all of the HCHN staff takes the Implicit Bias Test from Harvard's Project Implicit
- Something that we have noticed is that the Network and its organizations is creating invisible but real walls for People of Color to be recruited, hired, supported at work and promoted. We need to take formal steps to dismantle these walls
- The current way in which funding is allocated perpetuates inequities and systems of oppression. HCHN can make it a requirement for each organization to present a clear and goal oriented strategic plan to advance racial equity in order to receive funds

### **People of Color Caucus Feedback 2/20/19**

- Within HCHN there is preferential treatment for providers that are not People of Color
- The intake questionnaires for the people we serve are not culturally responsive. Assessments are biased
- The ways in which we count people of color within the Network do not provide us with the right data to offer programs and services that meet their specific needs
- I am inviting HCHN to provide a space for leaders and staff of color at our meetings to speak up or speak out
- People of Color do not speak up at meetings for fear of retribution, fear of not being promoted, fear of being disciplined and fear of not being given a great letter of reference if they decide to leave
- HCHN is placing a great deal of emphasis on the opioid epidemic, which is mostly affecting white people; however, it is not focused on supporting

People of Color who are chemically dependent on something other than opioids

- It would be great to ensure that within HCHN people of color are encouraged and able to speak their truth without fear of being negatively targeted or punished
- The current culture at HCHN is punitive towards People of Color and organizations
- If it is truly HCHN's goal to serve each and every person experiencing homelessness and advance racial equity, its culture needs to change to honor People of Color opinions and suggestions
- Creating a cross-organizational racial equity team at HCHN is a proven way to advance racial equity
- HCHN Administrative Team could establish protocols to evaluate grants/money through services provided using a racial equity lens
- An HCHN racial equity team could help establish protocols and conduct Equity Audits within our organizations
- Regularly hire/contract with People of Color to do trainings/work sessions with upper management and frontline staff together
- Establishing a HCHN Racial Equity Team would really help in creating policies and practices to advance racial equity network wide

### **People of Color Caucus Feedback 3/4/19**

- Creating a specific strategic plan with goals on creating policy and mandate racial equity trainings would be beneficial to develop a shared equity analysis to honor the experiences of frontline People of Color and be open to other/different perspectives
- Currently most if not all of the leadership within our organizations and Network is white and are making decisions based on implicit biases
- An Equity Team must be established with the task of developing a policy to provide more leadership opportunities for People of Color to attain leadership positions such as supervisors and managers
- I highly recommend people in leadership positions to participate in racial caucusing
- We as a Network need to address secondary trauma that People of Color are experiencing at our organizations
- HCHN funding must be tied to anti-racist work plans for each of the organizations within the Network
- Creating a Racial Equity Team to guide policy development and a strategic plan to ensure racial equity and intentionally build culturally responsive relationships with staff and patients is crucial for our work
- Advancing racial equity and social justice is very hard work and an arduous journey not a destination. This work is work that must be

supported with the appropriate leadership and financial resources as well as time to be sustained consistently.

## King County Health Care for the Homeless Network Notes from White Racial Identity Caucuses

### Common Observations of Participants:

- Some problematic behaviors in the workplace (such as workaholism, over importance of individualism, perfectionism etc.) stem from an established culture of “whiteness”, and the institutionalization of those behaviors is detrimental for all employees.
- We default to pressures of time and productivity, and in the process, we devalue relationships which are crucial for advancing racial equity and social justice.
- Both Race Affinity Caucuses, People of Color and White people, identified that the current status quo at HCHN provides an opportunity for White people to perpetuate their lack of awareness and action to advance racial equity which reinforces of racism and oppression.
- Not knowing what to say or being so afraid of saying the wrong thing often leads to our being unwilling to say anything at all.
- More focused professional development to build our capacity to effectively engage in courageous conversations about race is needed Network wide.
- The need to establish a Network Racial Equity Policy that is followed by every organization is crucial to advance racial equity in systemic way.
- Creating a cross-organization Racial Equity Team will support the proposed Racial Equity policy implementation and the advancement of racial equity in a systemic and structural manner.
- Those of us with more power acknowledged that we sometimes remain silent to preserve that power. Among those of us with less power, we have an illusion of powerlessness in our organizations, even though we have a great deal of power due to our identities.
- People have a lot of pain around the power imbalances due to race and class while working with clients.
- Difficulty balancing resource and values in the work space, in regards to decisions about time, staffing, compensation, professional development, and other aspects that may need their priority adjusted if we were to prioritize racial equity.
- Being unwilling to push limits or speak out due to office politics or a desire for upwards mobility. This practice doesn't often affect White staff as much, but has rippling effects to our coworkers, clients, and communities of color.

## What will you do personally to help move your organization towards being an anti-racist organization?

- Educate ourselves on what is going on within our organizations and communities. It's not the responsibility of people of color to explain things to us.
- Interject when patients are making racist comments.
  - Finding a way to balance the need to say something with the need to be non-alienating/othering/threatening, and without derailing the conversation.
- Look for opportunities to improve referrals from and outreach to communities of color.
- Vocalize inappropriate and racist behavior and policies in ours and other organizations we interact with.
- Work personally on legal and legislative action to end racist policies and practices
- Push to kick start community advocacy boards which are representative of the communities we serve.
- Bring up the racial line divide of health disparities to leadership.
- Engage supervisors and directors of agencies in conversations about racial equity.

### General Overview from Facilitators:

- About 85% of the participants identified as female.
- People were very engaged throughout the whole caucus and receptive to the work, even though only a few in each caucus had prior experience in racial caucusing.
- The organizations that represent the HCHN seem to be in different places in their anti-racism journeys.
- As facilitators, we found it challenging to find a balance between creating a space for people to do personal work around confronting internalized racial superiority and internalized racist oppression and the external goal of coming away with concrete actionable feedback for the anti-racism goals of the network as a whole.
- Moreover, it was difficult to address Internalized Racist Superiority (IRS) because not everyone had a shared definition of racism nor were people familiar with the terms and their manifestations in their workplace.
- Participants voiced at every caucus session that they really hoped these race caucusing offerings were not “one-off” experiences and that there would be ongoing opportunities to deepen racial equity work in the Network in a systemic way.

## Conclusion: How can HCHN support your organization in working towards advancing racial equity and social justice in a sustainable manner?

- Tie HCHN grant money to racial equity work plans and outcomes within each organization. Many of our organizations' leadership aren't currently considering or thinking of this work, but if it is tied to something they are motivated by -- like money -- this important work would likely be done consistently.
  - Require leadership to regularly participate in HCHN equity and social justice professional development, rather than allowing them to just send direct service staff
  - Including racial equity plans and policies in the accreditation processes for clinics to receive HCHN funds
  - Develop some form of internal accountability into organizations and to advance racial equity at HCHN
  - Create a cross-organizational HCHN Racial Equity Team to advance racial equity and social justice coherently throughout the Network
  - Develop explicit standards for racial equity work at all levels and organizations at HCHN
  - Consider including racial equity goals in supervisors' evaluations
- Work on developing policies and a work plans to advance racial equity and social justice help dismantle racist roadblocks we may encounter in serving people of color.
- Help in developing policies around recruiting, hiring and retention of employees of color and provide opportunities for upward mobility into leadership positions.
- Develop a set of common standards for racial equity across the Network.
- Develop meaningful mechanisms to solicit input from staff and clients, specially clients of color.
- Don't allow class be proxy for race.

## Feedback from Attendees on the Racial Affinity Caucusing Formal Survey

“The depth of the dialogue was refreshing, which is a testament to both the facilitation skills and the need for spaces like this to exist.”

“This experience was truly eye opening for me. I learned so much and look forward to many more sessions.”

“This was an introspective, enlightening and inspirational day. Hearing from one another was real and educational”

Fascinating and exciting, but still somewhat intellectual. It felt great to talk about race issues at my agency at long last!

“Emotionally stirring, informational, reflection based. Despite my criticisms, and also perhaps because of them, the caucus was a valuable experience and I would like participate again.”

“I don't really know how it will impact future planning. I hope people will begin to think about race more and the role that this plays in our lives and workplaces. I think it would be very beneficial to include more caucuses, and to help inspire individual organizations to take [talk] about race more.”

“With focused facilitation and well supported implementation, this could be a strong tool for change.”

“It will help HCHN make more educated decisions and help to make our agencies more effective for ALL!”

“I found the caucusing very helpful. It was good to hear from other people of color about their experiences in this work. It was also good to hear from an Asian woman in the group who was able to identify she benefits from the positive racial narrative of her group and how she recently became aware of this. There were also perspectives from people who were born in the US and people who were not. There was a common theme in the group around the way people of color are treated at work and how black people specifically are treated worse which was identified by other non-black people of color. The conversation was very rich.”

“I feel this is a very valuable tool to get honest feedback. The facilitators were great at holding the room and making sure everyone's voice was heard. The

caucusing can bring out the small details and cultural value which are missed in data gathering and add a qualitative lens to the discussion.”

“I believe caucusing is extremely important and an innovative method to get marginalized and oppressed people’s input in important decision-making processes.”

“Would like to see HCHN fund people to attend the People’s Institute UIR training, place more pressure on organizations in network to focus on racial equity- would appreciate HCHN admin team reaching out to senior leaders at each org about this.”

“It was good to be re-energized/held accountable again to how I engage racial equity in my life and work”

“It was interesting and positive experience.”

“1st time attending, good experience but not enough time.”

“Very difficult, challenging, but impactful (uncomfortable as well)”

“Increased empathy and impact in our work with clients - particularly clients of color.”

“insightful.”

“HCHN can lead non-profits by requiring and basing funding on evidence of shared decision making with clients and all levels of staff.”

“waste of time, too strong an element of self-criticism for staff who have little power to influence service delivery.”

“Overall good experience, good food, well organized, majority white people.”

“Improving inclusivity of people of color, empowerment, improving the work environment for people of color, holding white people in the workplace accountable and white structure.”

“Made me feel empowered like my voice as a person of color matters, got to do some more teaching to white people.”

“Very informative. I felt comfortable expressing myself.”

“My hope is at least one white person takes the initiative to step forward and follow thru with racial equity goals/understanding POC. We all need to overcome/face our fears.”

“Understanding that these inequities are profound and pervasive, Snohomish County has a unique opportunity to integrate and operationalize racial equity policies, practices and procedures across multiple sectors.”

“Very informative and engaging - provides a safe space to do group introspective thinking.”

“I hope it will meaningfully help us have racial equity at the center of our work.”

Thoughtful, probing discussion. Positive. Sage but embraced and encouraged moving to discomfort.

**Thank you again for this opportunity to be with this amazing group of leaders! It was truly an honor. Let's continue working together!**