

Culturally Responsive Practice as an adventure in learning how to create Equity

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Culturally Responsive Evaluation is an essential competency of evaluators practicing *ethical* evaluation.



**2018 American Evaluation Conference
Cleveland, OH**

Nicole Robinson, jMilwaukee Evaluation!
Lamont Smith, Greater Milwaukee Foundation
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Accelerating the use of culturally responsive evaluation & racial equity: A collaboration between a local foundation and AEA affiliate

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American Evaluation Association Conference, Cleveland, Ohio

November 1, 2018

iMilwaukee Evaluation!

PIPELINE FOR EVALUATORS OF COLOR &
OTHER UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS **AEA**
AFFILIATE

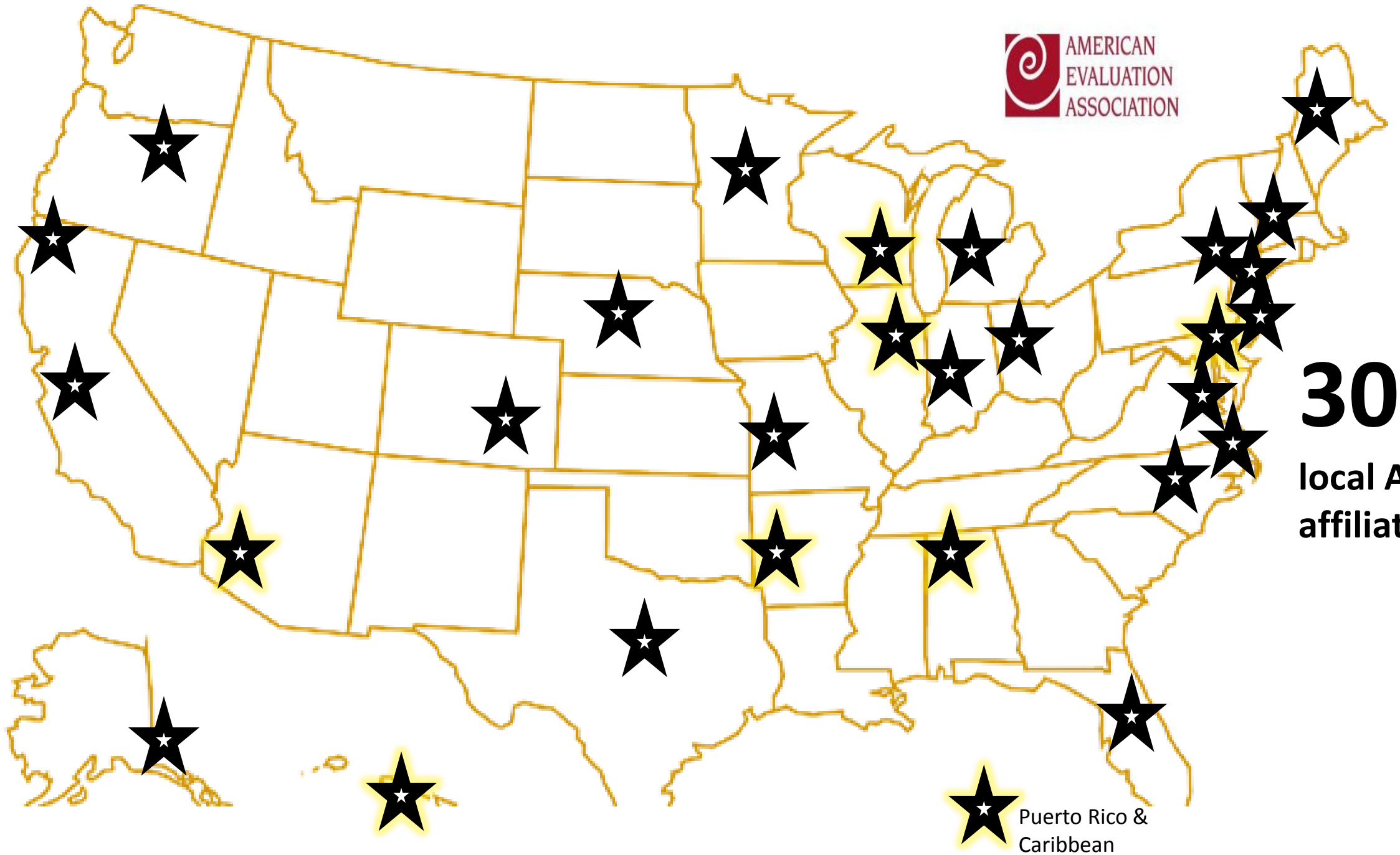


Greater Milwaukee
FOUNDATION
greater together

USING A RACIAL EQUITY LENS TO GUIDE PROGRAM EVALUATION

RACISM AND EVALUATION





30
local AEA
affiliates

Puerto Rico &
Caribbean

Context: Challenges

- **Lack of evaluators of color;** often discouraged, lowest paid
- **Brain drain**
- **Lack of mentors and elders,** isolated from peers
- Lack of local, affordable, and politically **relevant** capacity building opportunities

- Evaluators were not challenging root causes of the problems and **lacked skills to discuss racism, capitalism, white supremacy productively**
- **Distorted use of evidence-based** or data-driven; excludes certain types of knowledge and data and who can develop such knowledge
- Gatekeepers stomp progress

Some sectors are better than others

Social Justice

- Social Justice is a **process**, not an outcome, which (1) seeks **fair (re)distribution** of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; *aka power* (2) challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; (3) ^{Shifts power to} ~~empowers all~~ people to exercise **self-determination** and realize their full potential; (4) and builds **social solidarity** and community capacity for **collaborative action**.

--(UC Berkeley)"

Four Characteristics Defining Our Strategy

1. **People of color at the center** of strategy development
2. **Shift power by self-validation of our role as partners** to grantmakers not unpaid consultants
3. **Real change** and nothing less. How do we keep CRE from being watered down or co-opted?





GMF_Panel_Trailer - B3 REVISED

from MKEEvaluation



01:01



OCT 25, 2017

Milwaukee Evaluation! AEA Affiliate

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE GRANT-MAKING Practice and Evaluation

SHARLEN: NOTHING ABOUT US Without US.



So much to say, so little time

- Introduction to Greater Milwaukee Foundation
- Some reflections on why philanthropy is an important adopter of CRE.
- Some reflections on the challenges philanthropy faces participating in the equity conversation?
- What was the Foundation's path to incorporate CRE as a guiding practice to its Racial Equity Strategy?
- What can be learned from our experience?

Picture of an Evaluator



Reflections: Why philanthropy is an important adopter of CRE

- Community foundations perpetuate and deploy substantial financial resources – namely, and literally, community wealth
- Highly influential in local contexts
- Value-add beyond resources
 - A critical feedback loop to residents at-large and organizational partners
 - With sufficient will and leadership philanthropy has the ability to act and be responsive to a wide-range of issues and priorities
 - Philanthropy can drive practices

Reflections: challenges philanthropy faces when participating in equity conversations

Dr. Debrah Joy Perez while at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation shared these reflections during the 2017 Social Justice and Evaluation Conference:

- ✓ Unwillingness to admit challenges or failures
- ✓ Desire to claim attribution for success, rather than contribution
- ✓ Unwillingness to directly engage community/participants being served by program
- ✓ Overemphasis on performance indicators for accountability rather than community voices (qualitative data)
- ✓ Over valuing peer grant maker viewpoints
- ✓ Overspecialization of grant makers to specific field
- ✓ Unwillingness to demonstrate new practices, settling on replication of practices

Reflections *(con't.)*

Additional challenges can be found in the general way philanthropy does business.

- Operates from a position of utmost privilege. Philanthropy has the ability to act with nearly complete impunity, traditionally an “insiders” game.

About the Greater Milwaukee Foundation



- Second oldest Community Foundation in the country – first fund 1905
- \$850+ million endowment, regional footprint
- Grant \$40m to \$50m per year
 - \$35 to \$45m donor directed
 - \$5 to \$15m competitive grant making
- Rely on traditional approaches
 - Place-based
 - Collective Impact
 - Networks of peers and resource-brokers drive priorities
 - Emphasis on content expertise

Context at the Foundation when we began our CRE learning journey

Our executive leadership was driving the Board to formally adopt a Racial Equity agenda, and succeeded.

- “Diversified” staff through intentional hiring
- Established Racial Equity core learning module for all staff, included Racial Equity learning into staff performance measurement

The question became how do we operationalize the Racial Equity agenda?

Landmarks of our CRE learning journey

- The Foundation participated in AEA learning starting in 2015
 - Webinar series (2015)
 - Social Justice and Evaluation Conferences
- We engaged in self-directed learning – deep literature review of foundational theories particularly around sociology of culture
- We demonstrated practice by participating in AEA Graduate Evaluation Diversity Internship (GEDI to support access to broader set of perspectives in evaluation practice)
- We built institutional knowledge through internal briefs and presentations that documented the learning over time and accessible created reference material

Landmarks of our CRE learning journey *(con't.)*

We used functional activities of Foundation to introduce CRE concepts to the staff

Strategic Process was driving toward a People and Place strategy, “Culturally Responsive Practice” was added to truly give the work and equity lens.

We sought Board buy-in via the strategic process

We communicated our partnership

The early impact of CRE is best exemplified in the response to updating our competitive grant application.

Long-standing application questions

Who, what, where(s), what evidence-base, how will you measure, etc...

Applying CRE to the Foundation grant application

How is this project directly informed by the people you think will benefit from it?

To what extent does the evidence-based strategy consider the cultural context of the people you intend to serve?

Where are we now?

Three years after initiating the learning journey we have a commitment to do internal and external CRE focused capacity building and technical assistance.

- We've experimented with **functional changes** to how we administer grants, the most successful is in the competitive grant application.
- We are exploring facilitated **internal learning using CRE** grounded approaches within our Community of Practice
- We designated resources within a fund to **support external capacity building** activities with high potential nonprofits, and hopefully for-profit companies

Key Take-Aways

- It's a challenging discussion, it's going to take time to engage certain stakeholders and partners.
- Don't be afraid to reach out, and reach out again.
- Don't get bogged down by trying to rely on metrics and performance measures to define equity approaches – data-driven is the new evidence-based.
- Don't presume people are opposed to CRE just because they don't initially understand it.
- Some parts of the journey will be incremental.

(I'm still working on getting the measurement question in the grant application modified)

What is Culturally Responsive Practice?

Culturally Responsive Practice is an approach that challenges practitioners and decision-makers to understand the cultural context of the people with whom they interact, and to co-create a set of effective and appropriate activities that reflect needs and values relevant to the people subject to those interactions.

‘Being sensitive and responsive to the culture of the [population] and the cultural environment in which the programs exist...’

- Stafford Hood
Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment (CREA)
University of Illinois – Urbana - Champagne

Culturally Responsive Practice calls us to focus on how we are doing our work, not just what we are doing.

Why is Cultural Responsive Practice Important?

Cultural Responsiveness comes to the fore when practitioners and decision-makers are engaging communities that have a different culture than their own.

- Donna Mertens, The Hand Book of Social Research Ethics, Transformative Research and Ethics

We want to be aware of whose perspective we prioritize.

Who's observations or ideas matter more practitioners or the communities' residents?

We want to be accurate.

Practitioner perspectives are often limited to their personal frame of reference or that of their peers, and often have limited insight into possible unseen or "alternative explanations" for conditions.

We want to be Transformative.

We must seek to understand how societal structures influence our work, and how those structures reinforce the societal conditions we seek to improve.

Where we can, we have an imperative to challenge the Status Quo.

We've talked about Race, but what is Culture?

Set of beliefs, norms, types of communication, customs and other practical observances shared in common by a group of people.

Material Culture

Matter of Taste – Food, Music, Personal Style...

Non-material (Hidden Culture)

Matter of Practice – Beliefs, Traditions, Values, Social Norms, Sensibilities...

Culture in Society as a qualifier for Social Acceptance and Privilege

Culture varies within racial groups

We must be aware that sharing racial identity with a person does not mean that culture is shared, or that *cultural competence* should be presumed.

What is Culturally Responsive Practice?

CRP brings us closer to overcoming the social barriers to *authentic* Inclusion.

Culturally Responsiveness Practice (CRP) examines the ways that *cultural context* affects the way people experience society.

CRP is also concerned with the interactions between people of different cultures given their social, political and economic status. The interpersonal dynamic created when individuals of different cultures interact is referred to as *positionality*.

Positionality becomes consequential particularly when there is a structural difference in authority or social status between the cultures in the social or organizational context where they interact.

CRP attempts to reconcile *positionality* by taking into account what cultural preferences are implicitly given *merit, value* and *significance*, and requires decision-makers and practitioners to *recognize*, and in many cases give *preference* to, the cultural perspective that is deemphasized or subjugated by the dominant culture.^{1 2}

Cultural Responsive Practice calls us to be aware of our social position, or *positionality*, with attention to the cultural context of people who are different than us, especially when social privilege afforded to the dominant culture can be used to affect those without social privilege.

¹ Frierson, Henry T., Stafford Hood, and Gerunda B. Hughes. *A Guide to Conducting Culturally Responsive Evaluations*. Working paper. N.p.: National Science Foundation, 2002.

² Milner, H. R. *Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen*. *Educational Researcher*, vol. 36, no. 7, Jan. 2007, pp. 388–400., doi:10.3102/0013189x07309471.

Why might Culture Responsiveness be an important factor in a Racial Equity Strategy?

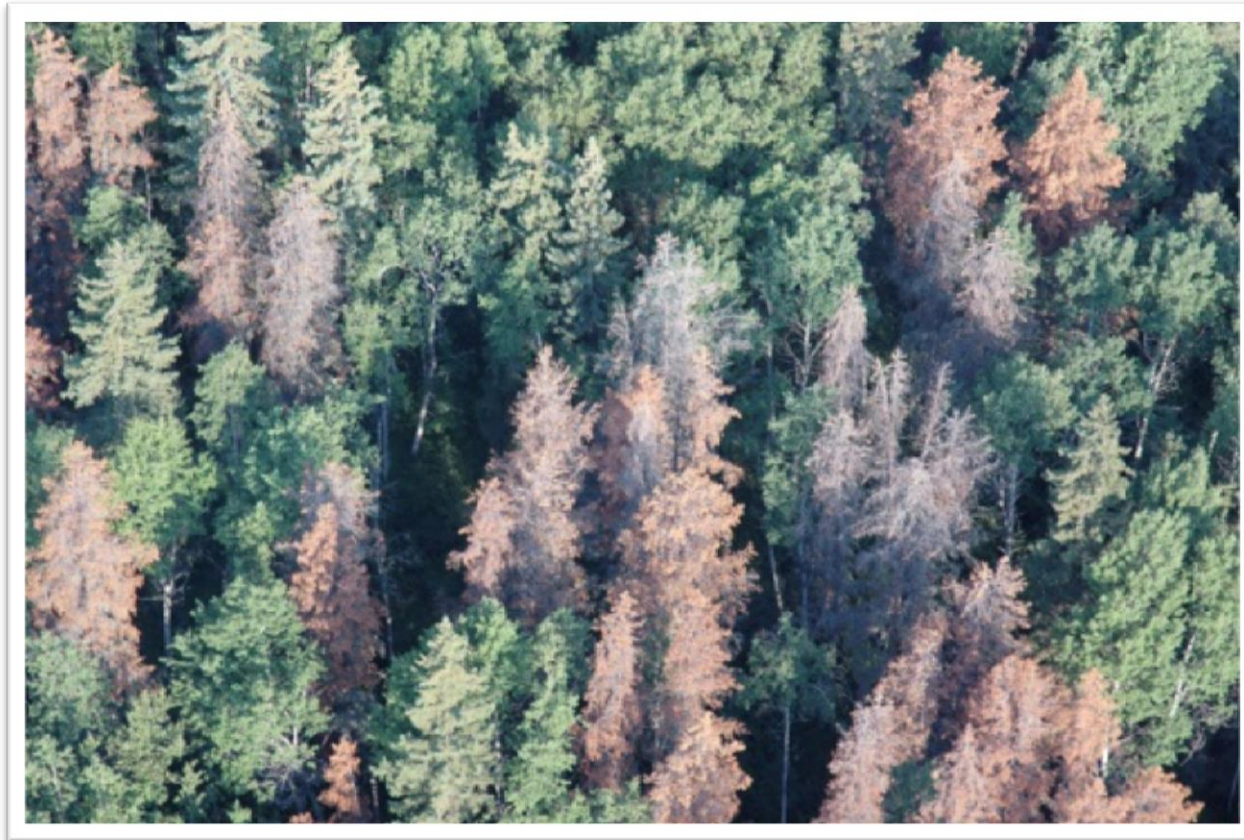
We want to have a complete picture of the conditions we are trying to influence.

We want to make sure we are working to co-create a reality that the members of our communities value.

We want to make our strategies sustainable, for that the communities we work in must embrace them as their own.

Compel vs. Co-create

What can we say about the condition of the forest from this perspective?



We know that there are some trees affected, but by what specifically?

Is anyone on the ground working on the trees? What do we know about the ecosystem below the tree canopy?

If we plan to stay at this vantage point, how can we support activity that contributes to the ecosystem at the ground level?

What are some of the ways Cultural Responsive Practice can be used?

Structuring Performance Measurement and Evaluation

Annie E. Casey is an early adopter and proliferator of Results-Based Accountability has shifted its practice by recommending that RBA users co-select success measures with the communities they are working in.

Conducting Culturally Responsive Evaluations

Shifting evaluation focus from Accountability to Learning

We want to understand better how the outcomes were accomplished

Facilitating ways for community members to be more deeply engaged in the work

Going beyond listening

Creating structures and mechanisms for individuals who we are seeking to help to participate in the decision-making, implementation and evaluation of our strategies.

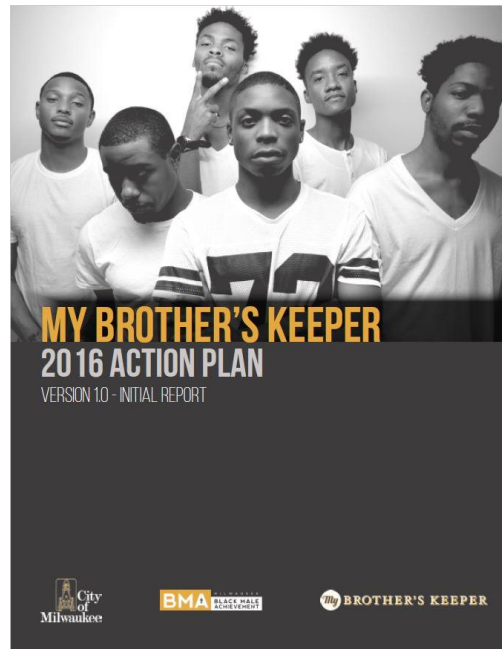
What does Culturally Responsive Practice look like?



Let's examine this photo, what are some of the dominant culture norms being challenged?

Are there ways that the activities depicted here might not be as culturally responsive as they could?

What does Culturally Responsive Practice look like?



Milwaukee's response to President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Challenge (MBK) employed a Culturally Responsive approach.

The MBK Challenge asked communities to develop a coalition and set activities that would improve outcomes for boys and men of color (BMOC).

Milwaukee's MBK Plan was informed by a broad stakeholder and community engagement process that identified goals and priorities from the perspective of boys and men of color (BMOC).

Milwaukee's MBK Plan centered its logic model on new scholarly evidence that proved that establishing and maintaining BMOC *Dignity* is an "unseen" and culturally relevant factor affecting the performance of programs and initiative strategies directed at BMOC.

What does Culturally Responsive Practice look like? ³

DIGNITY AS OUR GUIDE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND THEORY OF CHANGE

We want our city's institutions to develop a demonstrated track-record of serving you in ways that recognize, cultivate, and preserve you, and that recognize, cultivate, and preserve your families' and communities' rights to full inclusion in our city. Simply put: **we want you to live a life of dignity.** In a world where people in positions of power often take matters of dignity for granted, treating you with dignity requires that we work with intention. Placing your dignity in the front and center of our work serves as a continual reminder of your rights and potential. A clear focus on you also provides a compass for how we work with and on behalf of you.

You may wonder why we are choosing to focus on you. Here is the answer

BECAUSE IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO. YOU MATTER. YOUR LIFE MATTERS. YOUR SAFETY MATTERS. YOU ARE IMPORTANT. WE VALUE YOUR PRESENCE. WE VALUE YOUR DETERMINATION, CREATIVITY, AND COURAGE. WE VALUE YOUR MINDS, THOUGHTS, HOPES, AND DREAMS. WE VALUE YOUR BODIES AND BODILY SAFETY. WE NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF DEMONSTRATING HOW MUCH WE VALUE YOU. WE NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB AT SUPPORTING YOU.

11

OUR COMMITMENT TO TREATING YOU WITH DIGNITY

We will treat you with dignity. You do not deserve to be stuck in life. You do not deserve to be humiliated, degraded, or unduly harmed. Ever. No matter your state or condition, you deserve to be treated humanely. You deserve more opportunities to be your best self. We will not consider our efforts successful until and unless you can say with certainty that our city and the institutions within it serve you in ways that recognize, cultivate, and preserve your dignity. Nothing less than your full inclusion in the economic, social, cultural, and political life that our city offers is acceptable.

WHAT IS DIGNITY?

Dignity is a complex idea. But in its simplest terms, *dignity* is about your value as a human being. Dignity is your inherent value as a human being who has the right to live in this society and world free of intimidation, insecurity, violence, and humiliation. To ensure your value as a human being is honored and that you can move through the world treated with and acting with dignity, we must reduce and eliminate experiences that chip away at your sense of self-value. The priorities we developed are intended to systematically reduce negative or humiliating experiences while enhancing and cultivating positive ones. Local researchers developed the dignity-based approach by conducting a qualitative needs assessment of BMOC service providers in the Milwaukee region³. The findings of that research informed how we developed this plan. It will also guide our work moving forward. Dignity-based approaches to working with boys and men of color are based on the following assumptions:



1. First, boys and young men of color are human beings and should be treated as such. Boys and youth in particular are wellsprings of potential and are worthy of being treated with dignity.
2. Second, boys and men of color are disproportionately vulnerable to humiliation and mistreatment across all areas of their lives. These social facts are well-documented⁴.
3. Third, society's governing bodies and institutions systematically strip away at boys and young men of color's sense of dignity from birth throughout life. These instances of humiliation and degradation are experienced at the societal, institutional, and interpersonal levels.
4. Fourth, governing bodies and institutions have the power to create conditions whereby boys and men of color can improve their own lives. This is a matter of extending resources and fostering political will to act in the interest of boys and men of color.

³ Irby, D. J. (30 June 2015). Dignity-based Black Male Achievement work: What it is and why it matters for our boys and men of color. Shaping a cooperative vision for Boys and Men of Color Research Project Update Report. Research Center for Urban Education Leadership Development, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. WI.

⁴ Wolfers, J., Leonhardt, D. & Quataly, K. (20 April 2015). 1.5 Million Missing Black Men. New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/04/20/upshot/missing-black-men.html?_r=0

12

³Irby, Decotaeu, Liston, M., et al. *Dignity-Based BMOC work: What it is and Why it matters for Our Boy's and Men of Color*. Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015.

Contemplating a Dignity-Focused Approach to Racial Equity

In your personal opinion, what conveys or endows dignity, consideration and respect?

In what ways can you adopt a Dignity-Focused approach to your personal and public life?

How do we become more Culturally Responsive? A few starting points:

The path toward Culturally Responsive Evaluation ethos is one that can be considered a path toward *Equity in action*.

1. **Developing Self-Awareness** – Understanding your own cultural privileges, “blind spots”, and “blank spots”
2. **Developing Awareness of Others** – Understanding cultural contexts of people and communities that are disempowered and/or have experienced inequity, and how they understand you.
3. **Embracing a broader and shared vision of success with communities we seek to help** - Going beyond “effective practices” to pursuing “effective and *appropriate* practices”, in other words seeking ways to achieve the desired result that considers how that person being helped might achieve those results given their existing knowledge and cultural frame of reference.
4. **Cultivating mutual acknowledgement of shared authority between the decision-maker and the people decision-makers seek to help** – Going beyond seeking input and adopting mechanism for shared control of who decides action and who determines how successful those actions are.

Discussion?

Thank You!

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