

I am pleased to share Part II of my Guide for White Leaders. This series is my offering to organizational leaders who are aspiring allies and committed to personal and organizational transformation through race equity. This next set of 4 actions begins with a reflection of what I believe to be “universal truths” for centering Blackness, uplifting racial equity, and supporting liberation for all.

I lean now on one of those truths: anti-racism and pro-Blackness **≠ anti-whiteness and anti-people of color**, to call out anti-Asian, anti-Black, and ALL identity-based violence. We amplify liberation in calling out negative impacts from odious beliefs about race, gender identity, immigration status, faith, LGBTQ identities, and their many intersectionalities—such as Black transgender women.

Equity for, and solidarity among, Black, Indigenous, people of color, and other historically oppressed communities create safety and opportunity in an America that can fulfill its promise to us all.

With hope,
Tracey K. Allard

Director of Culture & Equity Strategies

While nerdlily surfing the internet one late evening, I stumbled across a seemingly random article about the “beauty” of mathematical equations.¹ HUH? Perhaps because of memories of my fretful high school struggle with AP Calculus, I felt intrigued—and then astonished—as parallels between the “simple, poetic truths” of mathematical formulas² and simple, poetic truths of anti-racism crystallized for me. I felt inspired to uplift what I see now as three “universal truths of racial equity,” emergent axioms from Black Lives Matter, and recent protests against race-based police brutality.³

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| TRUTH 1: | Black Lives Matter ≠ White and POC Lives Don't Matter |
| TRUTH 2: | Anti-Racism and Pro-Blackness ≠ Anti-Whiteness and Anti-POC |
| TRUTH 3: | All Lives Will Truly Matter (if and ONLY if) Black Lives Truly Matter |

These truths, perhaps, can help to elevate the beliefs and convictions that fuel inequity, and help to reduce derailment of the critical examination and transformation needed within ourselves, within our social change organizations, and within society writ large.⁴

Further illuminated for me:

- These truths also can serve as powerful apertures to soften and re-mold **rigid, erroneous history into a more accurate, substantiated revision**, help right-size racial equity understanding, and align right actions.
- **Naive expectations for change will fail** in this enhanced understanding. This is the hardest work most of us will undergo in our lifetimes. We must accept it as nonlinear and lifelong.
- Our capacity for change must be anchored in the reality that the messiest, hardest parts of the journey are crucial **derivatives of truth, repair, and recalibration**.

With these perspectives in mind, I offer the next set of Actions for Change (see Actions 1-3 [here](#)):

ACTION FOUR: Carry Your Load

Do YOUR work. It is not up to Black people, Latinx people, or even other white or Asian people to educate you (this document is an exception). Savala Trepczynski, Executive Director of the Center for Social Justice at UC Berkeley School of Law, shared in a recent [Time Magazine piece](#), “Until a critical mass of white people begin and continue the work of anti-racism with their own lives, then uprisings and protests will function more as expressions of black and brown pain than as inflection points in the culture. After all, black and brown people have been resisting, uprising, and protesting in this country for centuries. If that were enough, it would have worked already. The missing link is white people doing deep, honest, and ongoing inventories (and clean-up) of their own relationship to white supremacy.”⁵ [Whites for Racial Equity](#) offers an [“awareness activity”](#) to support the unlearning of racist conditioning to re-educate and re-condition with an anti-racist lens. This [shared doc](#) from the [Time’s Up Foundation](#) offers numerous resources for white people and parents to deepen anti-racism work. **(All Lives Will Truly Matter (if and ONLY if) Black Lives Truly Matter)**

What responsibility will you carry?

ACTION FIVE: Recalibrate

Look beyond yourself and your own personal needs. The cumulative advantages you have match the cumulative disadvantages Black people have. Take an eagle’s view to understand the shifts required to recalibrate and close the gap to achieve a more fair and equitable society—and then start with you and your organization. Work through feelings of anxiety, anger, and resentment that your sphere of advantage may shrink. As your organization does its work, be fully aware when you find yourself thinking, “What about me?” Realize that you might have become accustomed to having your strengths amplified and your gaps overlooked simply because you are white. In working authentically to become anti-racist, you may feel a sense of loss. And gain. Focus on how you benefit from doing this work rather than on how you might lose⁶.

(Black Lives Matter ≠ White and POC Lives Don't Matter)

ACTION SIX: Be Honest & Buckle Up

Understand, accept, and state publicly that you (probably) are not yet an ally. And that you are doing the work needed to become one.

You are not an ally if you:

- Only do the work in sessions organized for you
- Never check-in with the people who are most harmed from racism, including the people who work with you and those your organization serves
- Constantly center your ego, perspective, needs, and experience
- Never ask the people you want to be an ally to what allyship looks like
- Have to be reminded over and over again to check your white cultural norms

You might be becoming an ally if you:

- Never ever believe that you are actually an ally. Because the road is long and filled with lots of bumps and bruises.
- Have your feelings hurt, cry, feel resentful, confused, angry—and still do the work.
- Push yourself to deep realizations about how you really do support racist behaviors and perspective and structures and systems. Yes, YOU. Yes, even within the field of social justice. Yes, most definitely within the social sector.

Paul Kivel’s [“Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies Adapted from Uprooting Racism”](#)⁷ offers suggestions for action and supports White people can offer.

(Anti-Racism and Pro-Blackness ≠ Anti-Whiteness and Anti-POC)

ACTION SEVEN: Embrace Your Failures!

Don't run away in the face of setbacks and mistakes. Admit them, correct them, make amends. AND hold yourself accountable for continuing to take risks and be vulnerable. You can find tips on how to bounce back from causing unintentional harm [here](#). To learn about ways in which you might unintentionally be causing harm through microaggressions and subtle acts of exclusion, Derald Wing Sue’s [Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life](#) spotlights ways in which unintentional and intentional discriminatory words, thoughts, and actions demean identity and negate experiential reality⁸. In [Subtle Acts of Exclusion: How to Understand, Identify, and Stop Microaggressions](#), Tiffany Jana and Michael Barran provide tools and tips for addressing and correcting exaggerated stereotypes, backhanded compliments, unfounded assumptions, and other more subtle acts that normalize exclusion in the workplace⁹.

(All Lives Will Truly Matter (if and ONLY if) Black Lives Truly Matter)

If you hold power as a White CEO, Board member, Funder, or other major decision-maker, ALSO:

1. **Internally, and then publicly, commit to racial equity as an organizational priority:**embrace racial equity as a must-have, not a nice-to-have, and expect your funders, board, partners, staff to work toward the same. In [“The Role of Senior Leaders in Building a Race Equity Culture,”](#) Kerrien Suarez, Director of Equity in the Center, shares that building an organizational culture that embraces racial equity requires senior leaders to “set the tone and drive the progress of the work.”¹⁰ Social justice is not something that takes place “out there somewhere.” It’s right here, with you, right now. The Time’s Up Foundation also offers advice on how to go beyond statements of support to [root out racially inequitable practices](#), policies, and norms within your organization (sign up to download the full Guide to Equity & Inclusion During Crisis).
2. **Seek to understand** what you don’t know and identify your individual, team, and organizational blind spots. Ask yourself and others:
 - Do I understand the historical context for why my organization exists and why there may be stark differences in who leads and makes organizational decisions and community served?
 - How do I cause harm, unwittingly or wittingly?
 - Am I listening to the people who can best inform my understanding of what’s working and what’s not in terms of racial equity? (hint: do not just ask that one Black friend).
 - Have I asked about and internalized what I don’t know about how I am showing up in this work and what I must do better?
 - Am I primed to lead and influence in this work? With partners? Board? Staff? Other key stakeholders? If not, what must I do differently in each case?
 - What haven’t I done to move racial equity forward in my organization? What’s holding me back? What am I afraid of?
 - How can I resolve any tensions between what I intend to achieve and what I am actually comfortable doing?
 - Who do I tend to feel most comfortable talking to about issues of racial equity? Why? What needs to change?
 - Am I consistently and courageously setting, expressing, and modeling racial equity as a value in my work?

ABOUT CRE

For more than 40 years, CRE has prepared leaders and strengthened organizations to drive social change. As a nonprofit consulting firm, we provide the strategies and tools needed to build equitable and sustainable, high-performing organizations, working with 500 nonprofits, foundations, and government agencies each year.

Our team comprises dynamic, diverse, mission-aligned thought-partners, deeply invested in advancing social change. Because current and historical racial inequities drive outcomes across all issues that are core to CRE’s mission—to reduce poverty, promote equity and increase opportunity—we lead with an unapologetic commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization and dismantling anti-Blackness. As such, we incorporate a racial equity lens in all of our internal work and external client engagements to ensure that we are truly delivering on our promise.

We maintain this commitment—especially in times of crisis and uncertainty—from a shared understanding that:

- Reinforcement and modeling of racial equity from the inside-out allows our team to authentically and credibly **contribute** to our racial equity commitments.
- Ongoing, anti-racist practice ensures that CRE can authentically and credibly **manifest our mission**.
- Equity-centered field leadership helps build the sector’s capacity to authentically and credibly **embrace and integrate** racial equity and anti-racism approaches.

CRE’S VISION OF RACIAL EQUITY:

- Racial equity and anti-racism are, by design, universally endorsed and deeply embedded into the very fabric of our societal DNA...
- In the U.S. and beyond, racism and anti-Blackness have been uprooted as drivers of “deservedness” in how people live, work, study, play, earn, achieve, love...
- The dignity and humanity of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) are recognized, valued, uplifted...
- The social sector holds a deep unwavering trust of BIPOC leaders, built on alignment between the *message* of equity and the *act* of equity. And boards, funders, leadership and decision-makers are represented by, and deeply united with, the communities they serve...
- All social justice organizations credibly live out anti-racist values by engaging in continual internal examination and practice, coupled with a conscious undoing of racist and anti-Black policies, beliefs, and behaviors...
- ALL organizations that hope for social change first hold themselves and their stakeholders accountable for sustaining a racially just society—a *society in which all communities thrive equally; a society in which Black, Indigenous and POC communities are given a path and supports for restorative, generational repair and healing; a society in which truly, all lives matter*.

1 [The 11 Most Beautiful Mathematical Equations](#). Clara Moskowitz
2 E.g., the fundamental theorem of calculus, and the formula of Special Relativity. (I told you it was a nerdy evening!!)
3 Bonus: to learn about just one of many Black mathematicians who significantly contributed to U.S. advancement, read Katherine Johnson’s NASA biography [here](#).
4 I do not include Indigenous lives here because to honor the truth of our country’s history, Indigenous lives must always first be centered and uplifted. A few resources for learning: [Partnership With Native Americans: An Indigenous People’s History of the United States](#). Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. [The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story Of Indian Enslavement In America](#). Andres Resendez.
5 Savala Trepczynski. [“Black and Brown People Have Been Protesting for Centuries. It’s White People Who Are Responsible for What Happens Next.”](#) Time Magazine. June 1, 2020.
6 Resharing Peggy McIntosh’s 1988 seminal essay, [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) as a refresher.
7 See also: [Uprooting Racism, 4th Edition. How White People Can Work for Racial Justice](#). PaulKivel.com
8 [Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life](#). Derald Wing Sue, PhD. 2010
9 [Subtle Acts of Exclusion: How to Understand, Identify, and Stop Microaggressions](#). Tiffany Jana and Michael Barran. 2020.
10 [The Role of Senior Leaders in Building a Race Equity Culture](#). Kerrien Suarez. [Equity in the Center](#), a project of ProInspire. 2008.