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# PERSPECTIVES ON WORKING ACROSS THE SPECTRUM: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

As we move forward in this process of thinking about how we can work interdependently across the spectrum of approaches, we need to understand more about the barriers as well as the hopes of this work occurring in communities across the United States. NABRE invited several participants to share their thoughts, concerns and perspectives on some or all of the following questions:

- *Why do you think it is important that we work interdependently across the spectrum of methodologies?*
- *What will be the benefits? What will be the challenges? What are your hopes?*

**Tammy Bormann and Benjamin Butler**  
Facilitators of the How-To Forum

We entered the Forum experience with some trepidation about the willingness of organizations across the “spectrum of approaches” to challenge their own assumptions about the validity and necessity of alternative approaches to the work of this broadly defined field. To our surprise and delight, we found that Forum participants were willing to think broadly and creatively about ways that their seemingly disparate approaches could complement, support and inform one another.

In one striking example, participants were working on a case scenario that called for them to create a plan for organizational collaboration around a particular community problem. At one point, a member of the group stated that she didn’t believe her organization, based on its mission and approach, would have much to offer. In response,

another participant (whose organization’s commitments and priorities were likely to be perceived at the opposite end of the “spectrum”) suggested ways that her organization could make essential contributions to the community collaboration. Not only did he identify opportunities for unprecedented collaboration between organizations thought to be thoroughly unaligned, but he informed her thinking about the purpose and role of her own organization.

This incident was one of several similar ones that we observed during the formal and informal portions of the How-To Forum. We observed a spirit of inquiry and possibility. In fact, many Forum participants were willing to change their perceptions and beliefs about the work of other organizations once they began to engage with individuals representing approaches they had previously only heard or read about.

*Articulating a Common Goal.* The clearest challenge to effective collaboration among organizations in the racial reconciliation and racial justice movement is the articulation of a common goal. What is the movement seeking to achieve? This

question is fundamental to developing a strategy for collaboration along the spectrum of approaches to this work. It proved to be a difficult point of inquiry for participants in the How-To Forum, however. Their struggle came not from an unwill-

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ingness to seek a common outcome, but from a need to examine more carefully the interpretations, theories and principles that form the foundation of their specific approaches to the work.

#### **DEVELOPING A COMMON LEXICON.**

It is often noted in this movement that there are as many interpretations of the term racism as there are activists, educators and practitioners. Disparate interpretations and definitions continue to confound the internal dialogue. One often hears, “Well, what do you mean when you say racism?” Despite the exhaustive process of self-reflection and organizational analysis that participants engaged in prior to attending the Forum, they still struggled to decipher the meaning of commonly used terms in their dialogue with one another.

It is clear to us as facilitators and professionals in the community development and social justice fields that the lack of a commonly accepted lexicon is a significant hindrance to the achievement of racial reconciliation and social justice goals—however they might be articulated. In fact, without a clear sense of meaning and interpretation of key terms, organizations and individuals often find themselves at odds with one another because they perceive their goals to be divergent.

It is not uncommon to hear statements that relegate one approach to lesser importance than another: “You are about changing individuals and we’re about changing systems” or, alternatively, “You intellectualize the work and we personalize it.” The assumption behind these statements is that individuals and systems are unrelated to one another and that there is an inherent hierarchy in one approach

versus the other. Moreover, they reflect the struggle between the “head and heart” argument and the “structure and process” argument. Herein lies the destructive hierarchy of

racial reconciliation and racial justice work. Without dismantling the internal hierarchy about “real” work and learning to view the work as phases of personal growth, group empowerment and structural change, organizations will continue to miss important opportunities to expand, enhance and inform their own work by collaborating with others who approach the work differently.

#### **SELF-KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THEORIES AND ASSUMPTIONS.**

Before organizations can engage in a fruitful dialogue about a common lexicon, they must come to know themselves more fully. Participants in the How-To Forum spent significant time prior to the program meeting with their own colleagues to examine the theories, assumptions and principles that guide their particular approach to racial reconciliation and racial justice work. Many participants reported that it was the first time they had ever done this. As they sought to understand their own organizational motivations for approaching the work in a certain way, they learned to articulate these assumptions and theories to their colleagues in other organizations.

As we facilitated this internal/external education process during the Forum, it became apparent that the core of learning was right here. Before lexicon, before collective outcomes, before Principles for Collaboration must come thorough self- and mutual education. Forum participants needed more time to ask important and often taboo questions of organizations both like their own and unlike their own. In their evaluations and informal comments, participants asked for another chance to engage this dialogue to deepen the learning they began during the Forum.

The heart of collaboration lies, we suggest, at the core of this conversation.

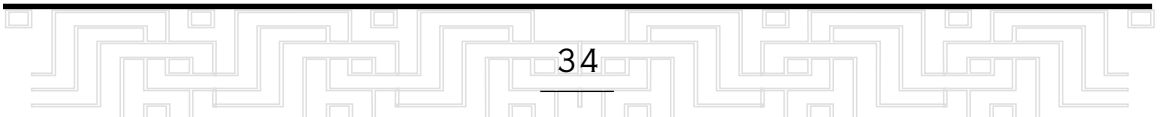
#### **IDENTIFYING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT.**

What does it mean to collaborate? What is appropriate organizational behavior in a collaborative relationship? What shared assumptions and

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These are questions we probed with some success during the How-To Forum but they too demand significantly more attention. We observed that while Forum participants were accustomed to establishing ground rules for engagement within their communities and educational programs, they found it more challenging to establish their own principles. They challenged themselves to identify issues on which they could all agree issues of fairness and appropriate behavior. In the end, we suggest, these Principles of Engagement will rest heavily upon the quality of dialogue that ensues around the issues of common lexicon, collective outcomes and meaningful self- and mutual education. When these issues become clear, the Principles of Engagement will emerge naturally and collaboratively.

Collaboration needs the one luxury that is most difficult to secure: time. Forum participants and others in this field need the unrestrained, unfettered time to engage these questions honestly, thoroughly, and thoughtfully.

People who toil in the field of racial reconciliation and racial justice often process their learning most effectively with words and image—they need time to explore, to probe, to seek understanding and to welcome inquiry. With sufficient time, capable facilitators, and an environment conducive to learning, we believe that organizations and the individuals who people them can make great strides toward establishing authentic collaborations—and the Principles to guide them—that are capable of achieving racial equity and racial justice in this country.

### **Ilana Shapiro**

#### **Alliance for Conflict Transformation**

The wide range of philosophies, practices, and goals of programs addressing racism in the U.S. reflect different analyses of the problem and recognize dif-

ferent starting points for change. Cooperation and coordination among these diverse programs offer important opportunities for developing multifaceted, comprehensive interventions, reaching a wider range of people and building a united movement for social change. Such cooperation, however, should be built upon a clear articulation and differentiation of the core theories, methods, and intended outcomes that shape practice. Such an analysis of programs, theories of practice, and change could highlight the complimentary dimensions of programs, identify conditions under which different approaches may be most useful, and promote reflective practice.

A comparative analysis reveals many overlapping and complimentary goals and methods across programs.<sup>39</sup> For example, all programs recognize that racism is a complex, deep-rooted, long-standing problem, yet all are relatively hopeful about creating personal, relational, and structural change. Sharing values about inclusion, participation, accountability, respect, and humanism, these programs help empower and inspire participants to change themselves and take leadership roles in changing their respective communities and organizations.

Even though practitioners and programs often have different priorities, perspectives, and experiences, and although they may draw upon dissimilar theories and processes, many cooperative efforts in U.S. communities already demonstrate how this diversity can be used constructively. Coordinating and sequencing inter-

ventions can make this possible. Most programs provide necessary, though not sufficient, efforts to address the complex and deep-rooted tensions among racial and ethnic groups. Cooperation and coordination among these intervention efforts pro-

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vides communities and organizations with a multi-dimensional analysis of racial conflict, and more comprehensive approaches to resolution. By providing opportunities for programs to initiate and shape these strategic alliances and collaborative activities themselves, coordination can transcend the limits of the individual components.

At times, however, the underlying assumptions of programs directly contradict or compete with each other. For example, programs differ in whether they believe the starting point for change is at the indi-

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vidual, intergroup, or structural level. Some suggest that transformed individuals should lead structural change to build more equitable and inclusive institutions and policies, while others

suggest that creating inclusive and equitable structures will lead to the transformation of individuals who live and work within them. Programs differ in their emphasis on cultural differences or power differentials as the source of conflict, and they have goals that are distinctly different such as justice, healing, tolerance, or reconciliation. Further, some highlight the commonalities shared by different racial groups, while others stress groups' differences, just as some programs focus on the specific dynamics of racism, while others address the common dynamics among many forms of oppression.

These differences provide important opportunities for evaluating the relative validity of competing theories and the effectiveness of divergent methods in applied settings. They offer opportunities to refine and revise practice where core assumptions are unfounded, and improve both theory and practice for building more equitable and inclusive communities. Understanding and testing these different theories of practice and change also allows one to discover the conditions under each approach is most useful.

Finally, clarifying the core assumptions and philosophies guiding programs' intervention design also

promotes more reflective practice. This can help practitioners make more deliberate choices in matching their intervention strategies to their problem analyses and intended outcomes. Articulating programs' implicit assumptions enables practitioners to better reflect upon their theories of practice and change and fosters awareness about their active construction of interventions, the plurality of practice, and the variety of frames available to them. This may help practitioners move beyond interventions that are unconsciously based on what is most familiar to them, limited to their professional background, or founded on unexamined beliefs about prejudice, racial conflict, and racism.<sup>40</sup> Encouraging reflective practice helps interveners make conscious choices about their programs, even when such choices are confined by a host of practical concerns such as what participants will accept or allow and what is attractive to funders.

Working in demanding and competitive environments, race relations and racial justice practitioners rarely have opportunities to cooperate and learn from each others' efforts. Addressing racial and ethnic tensions within the shifting landscape of changing demographics and intergroup realignment requires fresh approaches that build upon existing promising practices and integrate a variety of approaches. Cooperation and coordination among approaches and methods to dismantle racism should build upon existing successes and foster sustained activities that interrupt the racial dynamics still dividing and damaging our communities. Coordination among programs must meet a dual challenge: respecting and maintaining each effort's unique perspective and contribution to the field while fostering agreement on broader long-term goals for social change.



**Khatib Waheed**  
**Aspen Institute Roundtable for**  
**Comprehensive Community Initiatives**

Working interdependently across the spectrum of modalities is important for several reasons. The first is that both individuals and organizations undoubtedly choose diverse pathways to enter into the discourse on race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and religion based upon a specific set of identified issues and conditions. Sometimes there is an appropriate alignment between the identified issues/concerns and the choice of modality selected. At other times there is not an appropriate alignment. In either case my belief is that the journey towards gaining deeper understanding of the range and depth of the various forms of oppression and discrimination is long, arduous and quite possibly lifelong.

No one modality is thoroughly sufficient of itself to support the successful completion of that journey. Instead they often build upon one another in complimentary ways. For example, the prejudice reduction theory of practice might hold a worldview that says, "The world is filled with wounded people who are doing the best that they can with the resources they have available to them. Once people understand their own oppression and are tied into a healthy network, they can act as agents of change." While the anti-racism theory of practice might hold a worldview that says, "The world is controlled by powerful systems with historically traceable roots. Once people are shown how they benefit from or are barred by those systems, they can work together to change those systems." One can begin to see how each of the two theories is a necessary part of the journey and that the two are complimentary to each other, yet neither is sufficient to complete the journey.

Furthermore, even when the two are combined they are not adequate or sufficient because there is no built-in strategy to manage the inevitable conflict that will and does occur between the worldviews and/or individuals. Nor is there a framework to

give structure to a strategy that might speak to some notion of further inclusion. As a follow-up, an even more integrated progression of the aforementioned effort might include some form of the following theories and practices:

- *Conflict management;*
- *Healing and reconciliation;*
- *Democracy building.*

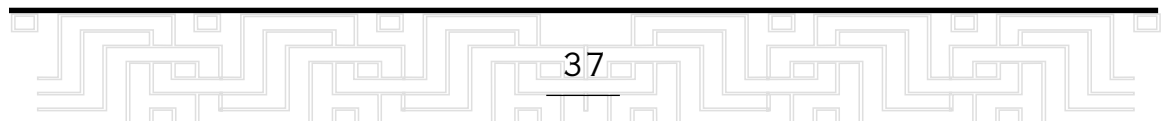
It is the comprehensive integration of these approaches, starting with the customer's initial interest and needs, that will provide the emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and structural support necessary to complete the personal and communal journey to social justice, equity, democracy building and the ending of oppression.

The second reason for working interdependently across the spectrum of modalities is that this provides an additional opportunity to work towards greater inclusion and democracy at both the provider and customer levels. The larger and better-funded organizations tend to access more of the training and technical assistance work within a particular community. Meanwhile, the smaller and lesser-known organizations tend to remain locked out of many opportunities to work and to share their skills, knowledge and experience. Both tend to try to do more than they are really capable of doing, often mixing their theories and practices in order to better market themselves, while in reality they often lack the staff, theoretical knowl-

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The third reason for working interdependently across the spectrum of modalities is to build the capacity among anti-racism trainers and technical assistance providers to engage neighborhood leaders, residents, and parents of children and families of color residing in impoverished neighborhoods to better address the impact that race and race relations have on their outcomes. Currently there is little or no deliberate activity occurring across the country to bridge the gap between the anti-racism training and technical assistance providers and those who are engaged in community building. Nor is there much evidence of large-scale anti-racism training and technical assistance being provided directly in the neighborhoods with the residents of color impacted by poverty and

racism. In large measure, the market has determined where the work of anti-racism trainers and technical assistance providers apply their skills and expertise. Clearly there are few neighborhoods in poverty possessing the financial ability to hire these trainers and providers.

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There are numerous challenges associated with this important effort. One of the more fundamental challenges is to determine how to generate and sustain additional support (public will) and resources that will facilitate building the overall capacity among trainers and technical assistance providers engaged in one or more of the various modalities (i.e. prejudice reduction; anti-racism; and conflict resolution) at the national and local levels in order to:

- *Raise the awareness among a critical mass of trainers and technical assistance providers regarding the need for and benefits of working*

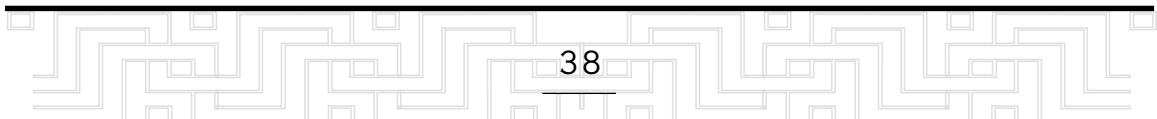
*more interdependently and addressing the turf issues;*

- *Raise the awareness among foundations and among federal, state and local funders of the need for them to work interdependently across the various programs, projects, and initiatives in order to improve outcomes for children and families of color in poverty;*
- *Continue the mapping of the field to identify willing partners and best-practice models;*
- *Link partners familiar with applied research and evaluation to local and national issues, indicators, and outcome measurements; and*
- *Engage neighborhood leaders, residents, parents and youth in more place-based training and technical assistance opportunities that are connected to the places where they live and play.*

Essentially, my hope is that NABRE will receive favorable responses from the field as well as the necessary resource and financial support from funders to move this very important agenda forward. Additionally, my hope is that my aforementioned responses are plausible, doable, and measurable and are shared by others in the field. Lastly, but most importantly, my hope is that our joint efforts (through NABRE, Aspen, and many others) will contribute significantly towards making a positive impact upon the **United States'** political, economic, social and cultural landscape in ways that improve the conditions of well being for children and families of color and those who are living in poverty.

**Ruben Lizardo**  
**California Tomorrow**

With firsthand experience contending with the myriad challenges and complexities that are inherent in collaborations involving diverse interests and communities, I do believe organizations and leaders working to improve race relations and address structural inequality in the U.S. should consider working interdependently in communities. As pio-





neering efforts within this emerging field are refined and strengthened, a rational argument for such collaboration emerges. If successful, collaboration across the spectrum of methodologies in this field promises benefits and advances that are both strategic (related to strengthened methods and models) and practical (opportunities to put our vision and values into practice and achieve improved outcomes of program objectives).

On the methodological level, although there are numerous approaches within this field (e.g. diversity training, conflict resolution, community organizing, and etc.), the experiences of the last 25 years of diversity efforts have resulted in the development and refinement of two clear strands of work—one aimed at changing individuals and one aimed at changing institutions—that are achieving success. At the same time, proponents and practitioners of these various approaches have discovered the limits of their respective efforts along with their successes.

For example, organizations like California Tomorrow which seek to bring about systemic change, are finding that systems do not change simply because a policy change is mandated from above (through internally driven reform) or secured from below (through policy advocacy and/or organizing). Indeed, since institutions are inventions of human vision, will, and action, they cannot change without change at the individual level. Despite this basic reality, a majority of the organizations that work to achieve change shy away from strategies that have proven effective in helping individuals alter their personal values, beliefs and practices.

Meanwhile, organizations that do seek to bring about changes at the individual level are finding that system-level values and practices assert a pervasive influence over individual beliefs and behaviors. The best of such organizations teach their program participants to recognize the institutional values and practices that undergird individual biases and prejudices, individual acts of discrimination and harm, or the inter-group conflicts they

seek to ameliorate. Those organizations are also finding that although they may succeed with individual participants, those participants must still find ways to operate within institutions whose values are often antithetical to their new outlooks. Despite this reality, most organizations tend to provide participants with strategies and tools primarily designed to assimilate and sustain changes in individual beliefs and behavior.

Although there are obvious benefits of pooling resources to simultaneously support both individual and institutional change, to date very few collaborations between organizations with successful track records have taken place. I believe that this is because inter-organizational collaboration, like any other social endeavor involving diverse constituencies, is easier said than done. Most of our organizations are made up of individuals with strong beliefs and convictions, who have as much trouble learning to “appreciate” other perspectives and “work” with diverse approaches as the communities we work with on these same matters.

Meanwhile, the communities we live in, work with, or serve are faced with myriad opportunities and challenges stemming from dramatic demographic changes amidst equally fundamental political and economic transitions. An example of this is a community I have worked – Watts in Los Angeles. Formerly a majority African American community, Watts is now majority Latino, with both groups struggling to overcome myriad challenges associated with persistent and pervasive poverty. Struggling to keep pace with exponential increases of demand on their resources and services, the leadership of

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Watts' major public, private, and community institutions have had little opportunity to reform their internal systems to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse client/constituency base. Meanwhile, African-American and Latino youth and adults are expected to learn ways to communicate, relate to, and collaborate with one another as neighbors, classmates, parents, consumers, and leaders.

Although the media has a tendency to focus on Watts when tension, conflict, and violence occur, each day leaders and residents of Watts are coming together to find ways to work together for the betterment of their community. Watts' indigenous leaders are engaged in: training, leadership development, cultural exchanges, conflict resolution, community organizing, externally driven policy reform, internally driven organizational/institutional reform, and plain old "getting to know your neighbor" type of activities. Those remarkable civic and grassroots leaders deserve strong and sustained support. If it is to be effective, that support must be as complex and multidimensional as the dynamics that are being tackled by the local leaders in Watts.

For reasons of practical application, I believe that this collaborative work should take place in specific places with specific community leadership that chooses to collaborate with two or three organizations. In the case of my organization, I believe our capacity to assist school, city, non-profit organizational, and community leaders who seek to improve educational outcomes for youth and adults would be greatly enhanced through collaboration with intermediary organizations with proven track records in the following areas:

- *Developing sustainable diversity training models to build the capacity of individuals to learn to work cooperatively with others in order to address systemic inequality in their neighborhood and workplaces;*
- *Developing and sustaining a variety of community conflict resolution models for moving individuals and groups from conflict to collective*

*action to address root causes of intergroup competition and conflict;*

- *Developing the organizational leadership and infrastructure to engage youth and community leaders in a range of community action and organizing efforts; and*
- *Developing accessible and effective approaches to building the viable organizational infrastructure needed to sustain community-building work for the long haul.*

To this mix California Tomorrow would be adding our experience, strategies, and tools for building peer learning networks and coaching and facilitating organizational and institutional change around diversity and equity issues. Because our approach to both levels of work is grounded within a structural inequality analysis, of course we would want to work with organizations that also seek to address structural inequality.

We would also need to devote serious attention to determining which communities and organizations are ready to commit to the process of collaboration:

- *learning how to work on concrete matters while dealing with the need to tend to the building of a collaborative;*
- *learning how to agree on the end product while learning how to experiment with the ways to get there;*
- *learning how to give and accept critical feedback (personal and organizational); and*
- *finding ways to fund our efforts collaboratively and to integrate one another's work into our core fundraising strategies (i.e., to share our outcome agendas).*

Given the urgent realities facing so many of our communities, I would hope that any such collaboration would be based on the potential of helping community and civic leaders to improve race relations through strategies that seek to undo structural



inequality. In concrete terms, I would look for evidence of strengthened capacities to build mutually beneficial relationships and sustain effective collaborations; and on the other hand, evidence that the new relationships and collaborations are beginning to make some headway in dealing with underlying structural inequalities.

**Paul Marcus**  
**Community Change, Inc.**

When we look at the abolition movement in the class I co-teach at Boston College, “The History and Development of Racism in the U.S.,” we do an exercise in which we post on the wall around the room a number of ways people were involved in the movement. These include things like education, writing/speaking, politics, revolution, forming alternative communities, moral suasion, working in the legal system and many more. We then ask students to choose what they would do if they had been a part of the abolition movement. Knowing that it is often a difficult choice, we ask the students to choose only one area. As they stand in groups in front of the signs, we ask them why they made their choices. Very quickly, they begin to see connections between the different areas and they soon realize that movements are not monolithic. They are interconnected webs of people and groups working for a similar end.

The abolition of enslavement was certainly a clear and definable goal. This is not the case today. There is not a clear and definable focus as there was for the abolition movement or the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s. Today, many of us are clear that the “ism” part of racism implies that we live in a society that is structured and organized on race and that this structure benefits whites at the expense of people of color leading to gross inequities. However, since the majority of whites and some people of color believe that race is no longer a significant issue and that we have solved the “race problem,” building a movement for racial and economic justice is more difficult.

This is also true as we look across the spectrum of methodologies of people and groups working for racial justice. Is it possible for organizations that focus on managing diversity in corporations to work with those who understand racism as oppression and believe that white dominated institutions need to be dismantled? Will a stand taken by one organization be considered too “radical” by others who are concerned that such a stand will have a negative influence on their funders? Can we talk with one another? If we do, will we really hear each other?

Let me be clear about where I stand. This land we call “America” has always been diverse. It was prior to the arrival of the first Europeans and continues to be so today. For me, the issue is not about “managing diversity,” it is about equity. Racism is not something people do, it is a system in which one group, whites, are advantaged, at the expense of all other groups. For any real change to occur, I believe that we need to abolish this cultural, institutional, and individual system of advantage.

I also believe that there is no one way to do this. Like any movement, it will involve many approaches across the spectrum of methodologies. It is necessary to work both on behavior and attitudes together. While we can pass legislation and laws to effect behavioral changes, ultimately we need a change in our fundamental attitudes about race, dealing with the internalized superiority of whites and the internalized inferiority of people of color.

There is much to be learned from the myriad of people working for racial justice in this country. If we have any hope of building a meaningful and effective movement for racial and economic justice, we need to be talking with and learning from each other. For me, movement building involves

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community building. The NABRE How-To Forum created the space where people working with groups across a spectrum of approaches could come together to listen to and learn from each other.

When I left Boston to come to the forum, I was curious, but not sure if it would be a worthwhile use of time. Unfortunately, organizations doing this work very often stake out claims of having the “right” analysis. This can prevent us from really hearing about and understanding the work done by other groups. Also, while I understand the importance of power and collaboration, I also know that true collaboration takes a tremendous amount of work and can sometimes move small non-profits further from their goals rather than advancing them.

These types of dialogues are important – now more than ever. As I look around Boston and the country, I believe that there is a groundswell of a movement building. This past April, 1500 people showed up for a conference on White Privilege at a small college in Iowa. A week later, 500 people attended a conference on Whiteness organized by a student at Hampshire College. Keep in mind that for many years there has been a great deal of resistance (mostly by whites) to any discussion of the topic of white privilege. A multi-racial group representing a number of Boston non-profits has been meeting to explore ways in which we can collaborate in our work and build an antiracist movement in Boston. Also notable is the planning group for the 2003 White Anti-Racists’ Convention. In November, 50 people from across the country will attend the White Anti-Racist Leadership Conference in New Orleans to plan for the 2003 convention.

It is exciting to see more and more whites taking leadership, responsibility and action, but we must do so being accountable to and taking leadership from people of color. The hope and hazards of the movement I am seeing rest on the commitment of white anti-racists to insist on accountability to communities of color and a commitment to transparency and non-defensive listening and self-monitoring.

To be committed to anti-racism work and the creation of a just society means understanding that the work is long-term and multigenerational. Progress is sometimes incremental, and we often do not see the immediate results of our work. Given this, it is heartening to feel this sense of a groundswell of more and more whites moving beyond the limited understanding of racism as prejudice based on race to a broader systemic understanding.

We need to continue to reach out and find each other in order to build this strong interconnected, interdependent web that we can call a movement. With its national scope, NABRE is uniquely positioned to be a catalyst in this process.

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To my surprise, I returned from the conference energized and inspired to continue this work on a national level and to replicate this process on a local level. During the two days, organizations with similar approaches met. We shared our perspectives with the larger group composed of representatives using different approaches and finally, working across approaches, looked at a real-life scenario to explore how we could collaborate. Through this process we learned that in many instances we could collaborate directly. We also discovered the importance in having this discussion. Having a better sense of what each organization did, made us aware of places where we had common ground for collaboration or coalition building. It also allowed us to be able to share the workload. We discovered the importance of being intentional about taking the time to have this discussion.



### **Yoke-Sim Gunaratne** **Cultural Diversity Resources**

Many of us know well the controversy and ongoing debate over the effectiveness of diversity training versus dismantling racism. Critics of diversity training complain that it is “soft” and “fluffy”, that it is superficial and does not change institutionalized, systemic racism. Dismantling racism, they say, truly examines racism as the prejudice-plus-power which rests with the white folks. Hence developing an anti-racist identity for an organization is necessary to achieve meaningful change. Critics of anti-racism question not only how but whether we can dismantle racist institutions. Don’t we have to work with individuals with power? And don’t we need to start with diversity training to increase awareness and understanding?

Cultural Diversity Resources has taken the approach of customizing training to meet individual or organizational needs. We may focus first on diversity training to prepare individuals who have not been exposed and who are not ready to take on dismantling racism training. Providing dismantling racism to such individuals who are both defensive and feel threatened with this type of training is like forcing a baby to run before it can even walk. Training should be customized and sensitized to meet different needs. After some diversity training, individuals are encouraged and referred to experienced trainers on dismantling racism. The training program should be seen as a continuum, with diversity training at one end moving towards dismantling racism as the ultimate goal at the other end. Diversity and dismantling racism trainers need to work in collaboration as partners to achieve a more equitable and just system.

Many nonprofit organizations develop programs and services as one way to reduce racial and social inequality. The aim of such services is to provide basic needs and services for economically and socially disadvantaged individuals. Our organization provides community interpreter services to refugees with limited English proficiency. This helps to increase accessibility, awareness and understanding of the public and social services from which they would otherwise be excluded or underserved. Other

programs provide advocacy to avoid eviction, educate on tenancy rights and responsibilities, help to find jobs or upgrade jobs, or improve personal and/or professional skills through workshops. These services are all needed by individuals before they can engage more actively in changing laws or organizing for change.

The cycle of poverty has to be broken before individuals can be physically, socially and mentally ready to engage in helping others. However, we are also aware of the need to support the efforts of those who are trying to change laws and processes that work against developing a more just and equitable society.

There are activists who feel strongly that the focus should be advocacy to change laws, and community organizing to challenge the establishment. There is definitely a place and need for these activities. However, social justice has to be done in the context of collaboration, cooperation, and/or confrontation when needed depending on each case scenario. Just as one size does not fit all, so one approach or solution does not fit all.

Organizations and individuals who provide services to the underprivileged and those who advocate for more active challenges to the establishment need to get together to discuss strategies that will be mutually beneficial in meeting their goals. For example, those who are disadvantaged should be exposed and trained on community organizing techniques and understanding the politics of power as they work to improve themselves. The work towards racial and social justice should tap into different strategies and approaches, bringing together all those who are involved for a good fit to solve the problems at hand.

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*After some diversity training, individuals are encouraged and referred to experienced trainers on dismantling racism. The training program should be seen as a continuum, with diversity training at one end moving towards dismantling racism as the ultimate goal at the other end. Diversity and dismantling racism trainers need to work in collaboration as partners to achieve a more equitable and just system.*

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**Michael Paige**  
**Intercultural Communication Institute**

The short answer as to why it is important that we work interdependently across the spectrum of methodologies is that we will be able to do our work more effectively and have a greater impact on society. Consider that a wealth of knowledge and experience has been gained over the past 20 years by a variety of organizations and many individuals regarding the achievement of a more equitable society; better intergroup relations (especially race relations); the reduction of racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice, discrimination and oppression; taking greater advantage of our

The scenario exercise that involved us in discussing what our respective approaches would bring to solving a particular community problem was a very useful exercise in practicing the art of cooperation, idea sharing, and strategizing across organizations. It also modeled a process of interdependent practice that is all too often lacking. It was also a frustrating activity in that there was far too little time to express our views, particularly where those viewpoints were not yet well known.

Ultimately, working interdependently, at least on certain projects, will give our organizations the chance to expand their perspectives, use their models and approaches in new areas and with new audiences, reexamine their philosophical assumptions, frame their work in new ways, and find perhaps even more creative solutions to the vexing problems we are facing. For example, the experiences gained from community development activities might have important implications for corporate human resources professionals working with diversity training programs.

The benefits could be new, more powerful approaches to social change, organizational development, and personal change consistent with a movement toward a more equitable society. The challenges to such cooperative endeavors will be many. First, practitioners have worked very hard for many years to establish themselves, develop credible organizations, acquire their expertise through years of trial and error, and eventually find their niches. Having carved out some turf, it is difficult sometimes to work interdependently with organizations that may not share your assumptions or fully understand your approaches. And does cooperation mean compromise of fundamental principles? If we think the answer is yes, we may not want to cooperate. There is also a certain amount of distrust of others' goals and intentions that can accompany cooperative ventures, and the standards we apply to our partners may be so stringent as to make joint ventures impossible.

At a minimum, I hope that NABRE will be a mechanism for information sharing and for helping organi-

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diversity; and promoting the intercultural competencies that enable us to participate more effectively in a pluralistic society. The problem is that these organizations and individuals have not been communicating with each other sufficiently well so as to be constantly learning from their respective experiences.

The richness of the experience and knowledge base acquired by the participating organizations was made abundantly clear at the NABRE How-To Forum. It also seemed that there were important gaps in the amount of understanding our organizations had of each other's work. In the case of our own Intercultural Communication Institute, for example, we found that others have only limited familiarity with the intercultural theory and pedagogical frames of reference that guide our efforts. An important case in point is Milton Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (1993) and its application to large-scale organizational change as well as personal transformation. I imagine that there are many such stories of valuable sharing – explaining oneself and learning from others – that have come from Forum participants.



zations come together to work on particular problems. I also hope NABRE will be a voice in the U.S. for social justice, equality, and cultural pluralism.

**Taquiena Boston**  
**Unitarian Universalist Association**

The goal of the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA) Journey Toward Wholeness initiative is to transform our association of congregations into an anti-oppressive, anti-racist multicultural faith community. We view the process of transformation as developmental for institutions as well as individuals. Our experience working with congregations in this effort has taught us that institutions are at varying levels of readiness to engage anti-oppression and anti-racism work, which requires having diverse paths or stepping-off points on this journey of transformation.

Recognizing that organizations as well as individuals evolve through a succession of stages in internalizing awareness, identity, processes, and practices that reflect anti-oppression values, the Journey Toward Wholeness uses an organizational continuum to help our congregations identify their present stage or status. This continuum to becoming an "anti-racist, anti-oppressive multicultural" institution includes lists of resources for each stage, which congregations can use to further their transformation.

The resources we identify include those provided by the UUA and those provided by other organizations committed to institutional transformation as well as personal transformation. No one institution has all the expertise or resources necessary to assist individuals and organizations in making such change. Collaboration makes available to organizations working to dismantle racism and other forms of oppression an array of resources – expertise, consulting and training, curricula, etc., – to offer their constituents while deepening their own resources in their own area of expertise. In addition, mutuality in the collaboration allows organizations to learn from one another.

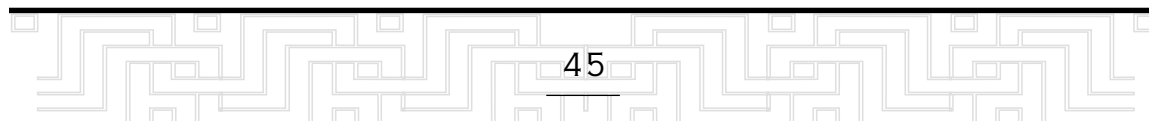
If the collaboration is to be truly transformative, the organizations engaged in it must reflect on how the resources and work of each complement one another. Groups need to go beyond simply listing the resources of various organizations for their constituents. They also need to have first-hand experience in using those resources, and they need to reflect together on how their tools, techniques and philosophies can support each others' work.

One of the learnings I took away from NABRE's How-To Forum was the understanding that despite difference in emphasis – individual/personal, building community and leadership development, systemic and institutional change – all the groups embrace the goal of transforming institutions and systems. This is the common goal that links our efforts. The recognition that individuals and organizations are at varying stages of readiness to engage the work makes it imperative that there be many paths or stepping-off points to reach that common goal. No one organization can do it all. We need each other. ●

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**Notes**

39. *Shapiro*, Mapping Theories of Practice and Change.
40. *Donald A. Schön*, The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action (New York: Basic Books, 1983).