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welcome

to *Forum Focus*, a regular publication of the Forum for Youth Investment. *Forum Focus* is published five times a year as an insert in *Youth Today*. The Forum for Youth Investment is dedicated to changing the odds for children, youth and their families by sparking and supporting action to improve the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement in neighborhoods and across the nation.

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Acknowledging the Context of Youth's Lives

Industry. Identity. Intimacy. These are the three tasks that Erik Erikson, grandfather of developmental psychology, argues are the fundamental work of children, teens and young adults. It is overly simplistic, but not inaccurate, to suggest that schools are primarily concerned with the first task – ensuring that students develop the skills and habits needed to be productive learners and workers. Youth organizations, in contrast, often focus on the second two tasks – creating safe places where young people explore interests, hone talents, examine assumptions, navigate situations, understand relationship-building and build relationships.

Youth organizations have long prided themselves on their commitment to support individual growth and development. Increasingly, however, they are being challenged to ask whether this focus on individual development, while important, is sufficient to achieve the desired outcome – confident, competent, connected, committed youth – especially with young people for whom the personal and professional pathways to success are strewn with obstacles.

A decade ago, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development challenged “traditional” youth-serving organizations to up their commitment to disadvantaged youth and improve their reach to older teens. Five years ago, the Annie E. Casey Foundation began a one-foundation campaign to call for family-strengthening youth development, questioning the wisdom of “traditional” practices that minimized rather than reinforced the role of families as key supports in teens lives.

In another corner, the Youth Organizing Funders Group was started to support a new wave of grassroots youth organizations that, again, were challenging the credibility and effectiveness of “traditional” youth organizations in working with older youth in marginalized circumstances because of their inability to help young people understand, analyze and take action to change the larger contexts of their lives.

A future issue of *Forum Focus* will look at progress being made to engage and strengthen families. The last issue of *Forum Focus* explored the importance of youth activism as an approach for engaging older youth, summarizing new research findings that suggest youth activism is a powerful tool for increasing both personal development and collective engagement. In this issue, we continue to explore these dual themes as they relate to race and racism.

There is a common perception among policy makers, educators, social service professionals and funders that race and racism are increasingly less relevant in shaping individual outcomes. For example, foundation giving in this area is down, according to a recent study conducted by the Applied Research Center (ARC). In *Short Changed*, ARC reports that “grants to communities of color fell from a peak of nearly ten percent of all grants in 1998 to seven percent in 2001 — the lowest point in over a decade” and

that “the number of racial justice organizations within the top 50 recipients of civil rights and social action funding diminished from 15 in 1998 to 8 in 2001.”

But race and racism are far from irrelevant in the daily lives of youth of color, white youth and all youth who struggle with or benefit from internally or externally reinforced stereotypes and institutionalized policies and practices that lead to differential expectations and treatment. Young people need safe places to explore the personal impact of race and racism on their identity and choices, deepen their

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understanding of the historical and current realities, and determine individual and collective strategies for action.

Research available from the Innovation Center, Social Policy Research Associates and Youth Development Strategies, Inc. (see *Forum Focus*, May 2004) examined two

types of programs that have had success in reaching and retaining older, urban youth: programs that focus on civic activism and collective identity. Field research recently completed by the Youth and Racial Equity (YRE) Project, led by the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity in collaboration with mosaic consulting (summarized in the **research update**), suggests that both approaches may be critical to effective work with young people of color.

After documenting the strategies currently being used by programs and organizations that have taken combating structural racism on as an explicit goal, the YRE team suggests that a commitment to move these strategies from the margins into the mainstream of youth development could net:

- more deeply engaged young people (because experiences of racism are acknowledged);
- a deeper more significant impact on the life situations of youth of color (because individual and collective actions are taken);

- a significant contribution to the larger society (because racism is challenged); and
- a stronger youth development field (because policies and attitudes that contribute to the marginalization of youth or color are changed).

Their assessment of the challenges and the potential for the field is shared by Shawn Ginwright, professor of Sociology and Ethnic Studies at Santa Clara University (interviewed in **voices from the fields**), and demonstrated by the efforts of Urban Underground and Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy Leadership (AYPAL), profiled in **on the ground**.

The Forum would like to thank Lori Villarosa, executive director of the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, and Daniel HoSang and Julie Quiroz-Martinez, co-principals of mosaic consulting — who together form the leadership of the Youth and Racial Equity Project. Their ideas and writing were an invaluable part of this issue for *Forum Focus*.

The challenges posed by YRE and others need to be read as part of a call to action, rather than an indictment for past inactions. “Traditional” youth organizations are rising to the challenge of reaching an older more diverse population of young people. This commitment, not surprisingly, brings new demands for front-line staff, program directors, boards and funders.

We hope this issue of *Forum Focus* can be used as part of an ongoing effort to generate dialogue within the field about the roles and responsibilities of youth organizations in addressing structural racism. The sobering accounts of the limited progress made 50 years after the Brown versus Board of Education decision reminds us that the goals are still real and the solutions complex. Again, the only viable strategies are ones that involve young people as critical agents in addressing the structural challenges while ensuring that young people have the individual supports they need. ■

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research update RACIAL JUSTICE AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

What opportunities and obstacles do the allied youth fields face in addressing structural racism? How explicitly are youth development practitioners working with young people to reverse the currents of structural racism in which they navigate? How can existing models that have responded to some of these challenges be replicated and popularized? What role might funders and other intermediaries play in promoting these efforts? Since early 2003, the Youth and Racial Equity Project (YRE) of the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE), funded by the Ford and Mott foundations, has studied “youth development with a racial justice focus” to address these questions. YRE uses an emerging analysis of racism as a “structural” phenomenon that reflects a long history of racially-distributed resources, an entrenched racial hierarchy that shapes our views of ourselves and others, and a broad range of policies and institutions that reinforce and reflect both.

PRE, working in partnership with mosaic consulting co-principals, Julie Quiroz-Martinez and Daniel HoSang, approached this critical issue by conducting three phases of field research to map the existing environment and identify ways for the allied youth fields to make racial equity a priority. They gathered information from organizations, programs and the literature; held regional convenings with practitioners, intermediaries and funders; and conducted organizational interviews and site visits.

Research and first-hand narratives show that youth of color are likely to experience racial discrimination and bias from institution-level forces, including education, employment, health and juvenile justice. Acknowledging that racial equity is a significant concern among young people and that, for the most part, youth development approaches to racial justice are underdeveloped, the YRE asserts that youth-focused racial equity objectives and outcomes need to emerge in ways that engage young people in structural analysis and action.

YRE points to a general trend over the last quarter century, even among those working primarily with youth of color, to view race and racism as less and less significant in shaping developmental outcomes. The project also acknowledges a sec-

TABLE 1: COMPARING TRADITIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WITH ANTI-RACIST YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Traditional Youth Development	Anti-Racist Youth Development	Emerging Examples
Focuses on individual achievement and success, typically ignoring structural forces.	Offers an analysis of the racialized structures of power faced by youth and engages them in solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring and other skills-development programs that incorporate a structural racism curriculum. • Projects where youth apply a structural racism analysis in researching and take action on issues in their school or community. • Ongoing, structured opportunities for youth to explore and heal from the emotional damage of racism. • An intensive staff development process with a focus on structural racism issues, analysis, curriculum and approaches.
Racism treated as either a minor or immutable factor in the development of youth, or often ignored all together.	Racism recognized as an important factor influencing the life chances of youth and is addressed explicitly and intentionally in most aspects of program work.	<p>Challenges and Tensions of Anti-Racist Youth Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underdeveloped analysis of structural racism in broader society; lack of tools and resources based on analysis. • Striking an effective balance between providing individual support and promoting youth leadership in social change. • Combining anti-racist political analysis with other factors and social forces (such as gender, sexuality, geography and class).
Offers few action opportunities for youth or builds those opportunities around volunteerism and civic engagement.	Offers opportunities for collective action responses to individual problems and leadership roles for youth.	
Staff may operate from disparate political analysis.	Organization prioritizes a shared and evolving anti-racist political analyses that influences program development and implementation.	

Table adapted from *Changing the Rules of the Game* (forthcoming).

ond trend: support for the development of individual strengths and competencies for children and youth to “beat the odds” without sustained efforts to develop complementary competencies, such as political analysis and collective responses to harmful societal forces, at the macro “change the odds” level. YRE compares and contrasts the two approaches and uses the term “anti-racist youth development” for principles and practices that emphasize both growth at a personal level and transformation at a structural level. In sharing the voices of practitioners, who are admittedly still struggling themselves to determine the most effective practices, YRE emphasizes that these are emerging approaches needing greater support to both deepen and broaden the reach.

The YRE conversations identified several important strategies that youth organizations are currently using to address racism:

confronting racism directly: being intentional and explicit in working against institutionalized racism by teaching history, building awareness and providing opportunities to discuss race, racism and its implications;

engaging youth in analyzing structural racism: working with youth to develop solutions and examine root causes by connecting personal experiences of inequity with

the related underlying systemic forces, for example, counseling young men about how to diffuse tense interactions with police and holding discussions about the roots of police abuse in some communities; **offering opportunities for group action against racism:** encouraging and supporting collective action by developing community action projects and campaigns; **creating processes for racial identity development and healing from internalized racism:** supporting the individual exploration and healing that comes from self-reflection, recognizing the importance of culture, and offering opportunities to assess personal decision making; and **building common racial justice analysis among program staff and volunteers:** ensuring that staff have a shared vision about racial equity by cultivating an environment in which staff maintain a racial justice movement focus in common and a collective understanding of the role of racism in young people’s lives.

Together, these themes present opportunities for acting on the shifts in thinking and practice needed to confront structural racism. The summary and conclusions from this project will be published in a final report called *Changing the Rules of the Game: Youth Development and Structural Racism*, which will be available this fall. Authored by Quiroz-Martinez, HoSang and Lori Villarosa, the report presents the findings of this work, highlights the voices of participants, offers a primer of key terms commonly used in discussions of structural racism and a

framework, shown in Table 1, that compares traditional youth development and racial equity practices and the challenges for the different approaches. Through the YRE project, researchers and practitioners have issued the call to funders and to one another to engage in or increase “support for youth development work confronting racism from an institutional/structural perspective.” ■

“I don’t think anybody can understand what it is like to be laid on the floor with an officer pointing a gun at them, simply because they . . . are in a black school. These are fears that students live with. I think the fears are why they are moving forward and changing things.”

— Participant in a YRE regional gathering

“If you say ‘racism’ to a young person, they’re going to think about a person from one race not liking people from another race. That’s how the term is used in the media and broader society.”

— Participant in a YRE regional gathering

“The sticking point that keeps youth coming back to our organization is that relationship to the community that is still around that racial identity . . . I know it’s true with the youth we work with, that the action of positive self-identity is a building mat.”

— Participant in a YRE regional gathering

on the ground PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

DANIEL HO SANG, JULIE QUIROZ-MARTÍNEZ AND LORI VILLAROSA

for some working in the field of youth development, the realities of young people's experience with racism demand that they remain engaged in an honest and creative search for real solutions. Bucking powerful trends in popular thought and public policy, and operating with few guides and even fewer resources, they are seeking to engage youth in recognizing, questioning and challenging the ideas, dynamics and institutions that keep the racialized "rules of the game" the way they are. They are struggling to develop ideas and practices based on an emerging understanding of racism as a structural phenomenon that reflects a long history of racially-distributed resources, an entrenched racial hierarchy that shapes our views of ourselves and others, and a broad range of policies and institutions that reinforce and reflect both.

In this context, the Youth and Racial Equity Project (YRE) sought to examine the thinking and practices — however partial or evolving — of organizations committed to working with youth to understand and challenge the structure of racism. The following two examples illustrate the multi-layered approaches these

organizations are beginning to craft.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin:

Urban Underground is a four-year-old youth leadership development organization working primarily with African-American young people. For African-American co-founder Reggie Moore, who attended the YRE gathering in Chicago, finding ways to deal with racism "was not really a choice. I don't think any group can take on community issues and not take on racial justice. It's part of our mission and make up. It's not an option to ignore it." Putting this into practice means "our selection of civic participation projects is based on the personal connection or experience youth have with an issue based on their race. We have focused on black voter turn-out, police-involved shootings, police in schools, and teen homeless, all looking through a racial lens."

According to 18-year-old participant Jovan Goodman, "I used to just think what politicians said made sense." But, when the local sheriff argued that he could tell "by looking" who was a young person skipping school and who was a young person from an affluent (white) high school, "Urban Underground broke it

down. They asked us how he could determine who someone was." According to Goodman, Urban Underground is successful because they "ask you questions, then present you with information. And, we never just talked — we talked, then acted." "Before, I just thought things were equal," concludes Goodman. "Now I'm informed. I know more how to change situations."

Oakland, California: Since 1998, Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL) has coordinated six distinct but interconnected youth leadership groups, each housed at a community organization providing services to a particular Asian ethnic group. AYPAL blends youth art/cultural work with youth leadership and youth organizing.

When asked to describe AYPAL's approach to racism, Director John Fong tells a simple story of how youth of color do not experience racism simply as the biased attitudes of certain individuals, but as a racialized set of power dynamics upheld by policies and institutions. During an AYPAL workshop, youth were asked to describe instances when they were victimized by people of other races.

Over and over, youth cited examples involving police. As one young person commented, "We can handle it when other people try to mess with us. But what can you do when the other person is a cop?" According to Fong, AYPAL youth tackle racism through analyzing the racial dimensions of public policies and demanding changes in them. For example, AYPAL has led successful campaigns seeking ethnic studies programs and just treatment of students in public schools, as well as the creation of after school programs in local recreation centers. AYPAL also encourages young people to apply an understanding of racism in the running of the program. "Instead of just doing '-ism' workshops, we ask the youth to come up with anti-racist governing policies among themselves," says Fong. They start 'checking' each other in a way that is effective for the person being checked and for the person doing the checking." Ultimately, Fong believes AYPAL has successfully blended youth development and youth organizing into a commitment to "youth ownership" where the learning and experience of young people remains as important as "the win." ■

voices from the fields

FORUM INTERVIEW WITH **SHAWN A. GINWRIGHT**

Shawn A. Ginwright, assistant professor of Sociology and Ethnic Studies at Santa Clara University, is a noteworthy advocate for transforming and enriching communities to better support the lives of young people of color. His work includes developing a social justice youth development framework that examines the most effective strategies for supporting the needs of neglected youth populations and co-founding Leadership Excellence, an innovative youth development agency in Oakland, California. In this interview, Ginwright explores the influence of structural racism on youth development, public policy and society's perception of young people of color.

Q: *What does it mean to view youth development through a lens of institutional/structural racism? How do you communicate its relevance?*

Viewing youth development through the lens of structural racism means developing an understanding of the racial barriers to healthy development. When you examine youth development for young people of color in poor communities, you have to understand that these communities are also shaped by such things as racial discrimination, racism in schools and police brutality. All of those issues have implications on how youth navigate their way

through these communities. When youth development organizations examine structural racism, they scrutinize policies, attitudes and programmatic strategies that are informed by race and limit the opportunities for young people in community settings.

Much of your work is focused on the social justice youth development framework (SJYD). Can you tell us why you developed it?

Social justice youth development (see Table 2) came out of my work here in Oakland and being dissatisfied with existing youth development frameworks that were not addressing

issues youth of color struggle with, such as their identity, violence and poverty. Because of my background in education, I was aware that the education field had dealt with issues of inequality, racism and structural inequality and identity in complex ways. The framework was the result of an effort to bridge some of the concepts articulated in education, but had not yet been applied in the youth development field.

Why is SJYD so essential when working with youth of color in particular?

One of the assumptions that this framework introduces is that young people experience the world differently, based on their identities. If you don't agree with that, then the framework won't hold up. I believe that if you're a young woman, if you're African American or Latino, if you're gay or lesbian, or rich or poor,

you have different experiences in the world. To that extent, we need to complicate and expand on this

When you examine youth development for young people of color in poor communities, you have to understand that these communities are also shaped by such things as racial discrimination, racism in schools and police brutality.

generic category of "youth" and add complexity by looking at the relationship between those identities.

If this is to happen, it will require youth development workers and policy makers to ask certain questions: What does it mean to

be a gay, Latino or an African-American youth in this city or program? What does it look like? How are we responding to these particular needs? The SJYD makes explicit the role of identity and connects it to tangible programmatic strategies. It's explicit and intentional about people addressing the role of identity in youth development work.

How can youth development organizations replicate the successes of SJYD? How can this framework

TABLE 2: PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES AND OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Principle	Practice	Potential Outcomes
Analyzing power in social relationships	Reflecting about power in one's life	Youth transforming public and private institutions by sharing power with adults
Making identity central	Critiquing stereotypes regarding one's identity	Awareness of how sociopolitical forces influence identity
Promoting systemic social change	Working to end social inequality (e.g., racism, sexism)	Developing a sense of purpose, empathy for the struggle of others and optimism about social change
Encouraging collective action	Involving oneself in collective action and strategies that challenge/transform local and national systems	Building capacity to change personal community and social conditions
Embracing youth culture	Celebrating youth culture in organizational culture	Authentic youth engagement, youth-led/run organizations

Table adapted from Ginwright & James (2002).

help people working with youth come to understand the contextual factors that youth are facing in order to better serve them?

Organizations can start by not only closely examining context, but also asking: What is impeding young people's healthy development in this particular context? I've used the term "oppressive forces," which denotes a young person's exposure to violence and poverty, their lack of involvement in after-school programs, etc. If organizations understand the context, it makes the process richer. Organizations need to be clear and intentional about addressing it. Understanding and transforming oppressive forces are two different things.

Secondly, SJYD allows organizations to articulate and develop strategies for embracing youth as they challenge and transform these conditions. Not all organizations know how to organize young people. But even if you're running a sports program, it's important to form relationships with organizations that do social justice work.

Third, the SJYD emphasizes the relationship between identity development and community problem solving. For example, in Washington State I worked with a program serving homeless youth who, before they came to this program, were hesitant to organize. They didn't want teach-

ers or friends to know their circumstances. The program allowed them to be more empowered about their condition. Young people demanded that the school open up the showers at night and provide hot meals in the morning. Because of their identity, they were able to organize and ask for things that gave them a better quality of life.

Organizations are often overwhelmed with competing frameworks and ideologies. What do you say to youth organizations who might suggest that intentionally addressing this issue and integrating racially equitable themes into their daily practices will make their work more challenging or beyond the scope of their mission?

I think it's a broader issue. Organizations need to step out of programs and look at societal-level issues. In a democratic society, we have to ask ourselves the question: How does our work contribute to a more equitable society? If organizations can't answer that question, it makes it even more essential to examine issues of racial equity. This task is more challenging if the program focus is music or sports, but it's important. Whether you're explicit or implicit about this issue, you're still reproducing racial inequality or challenging it.

Do youth development organizations need to build alliances with

other fields (youth organizing, community building, social justice, etc.)? How can these alliances seek racial equity and create better systems for youth?

Organizations can work together, collaborate and build strategic alliances, in what I call "organic collaborations" — meaning collaborations where people work together and there is no money at stake. Relationships between organizations develop out of a particular need.

When you talk about achieving racial equity, it's important for organizations to do some internal housekeeping first. For organizations that are multiracial or largely white-serving communities of color, I'd encourage and challenge them to ask: How do you prepare your staff to address issues of racial diversity and racial equity? Do you just assume

that because they are good youth development practitioners from Ivy League schools, they are prepared to address racial inequality?

I encourage organizations to have conversations about achieving racial equity and practice it within their own organizations. When organizations are more holistic in dealing with employees, it translates into bet-

ter work and engagement with young people. What we are really talking about is having a "world view," getting people to think about these issues on a broader level and to realize that it's not an "A,B,C step 1, 2, 3" set of practices. It's really a shift of how you view young people in your work.

How does larger society's perception of youth of color influence public policy implications for youth?

Our perception of young people of color in North America has evolved in the last 20 years from preparing youth for civil society to viewing them as threats to civil society. Being a youth of color and poor are perceived as ingredients for a category of criminal. Public policy reflects this and, as a result, has focused on two concepts: control and containment.

There is a strong relationship between public policy and larger society's perception. Largely, we want to shelter larger civil society from this part of society. Public policy says that tougher laws, greater punishments and longer sentences of incarceration will make our society safer.

Kids are facing incarcerations and less supports/options in schools and communities. What needs to happen

Our perception of young people of color in North America has evolved in the last 20 years from preparing youth for civil society to viewing them as threats to civil society.

is a shift. Karen Pittman and other's work has shifted this notion of seeing young people as problems to seeing young people as possibilities.

Now we need to make another shift to not just seeing them as possibilities, but also civic problem

solvers. That will require a shift of the world view of young people of color. Once we make that shift in our world view, we'll see an equal response in public policy.

Some suggest that the impact of race has declined significantly in America in recent years. How would you respond to that perception?

There is one way to answer this and say, race still matters. We can point to the evidence that points to gross racial inequalities in our society. For example, this is the anniversary of the Brown decision and everyone is asking, have we progressed since Brown or haven't we? And people are going to say yes, in some ways and in other ways we've gone back.

One way is to point to the gross inequalities in society that are largely based around race. For folks that are saying no, we've solved the problem since Brown (e.g., we've ended segregation, we've ended Jim Crow). I'd challenge that and say one would need to look at various forms of racial disparities that still exist. ■

key resources STRUCTURAL RACISM

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