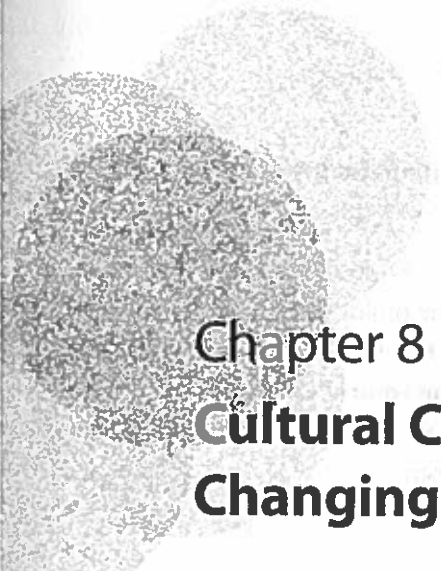




Chapter 8

Cultural Competency as Changing Institutions

If you've read this far, you most likely share our interest in disrupting historical patterns of inequity. This goes beyond changing personal beliefs and habits. It goes beyond being more inclusive in a nominal sense. Cultural competency tackles institutional practices to achieve social change.

Race and class differentiation have deep roots in human history. Thousands of years of "civilization" concentrated large population groups, refined work categories, cemented social hierarchies, and allocated privilege to certain groups.

There are many theories as to why the story played out in this way. Jared Diamond's book *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (later a public television series) offered one theory: Technology, sophisticated weapons, and immunity from certain diseases gave the conquerors an edge. This triple advantage allowed them to move across the globe while taking other peoples' land.⁶⁵ *Gold, Greed, and Genocide*, a report from Project Underground, tells the story from an indigenous perspective. It posits a different theory—that the domination of one group over others is motivated simply by a desire to have more.⁶⁶

It is often assumed that almost all humans want to rise as high as they can in a hierarchy. Yet in our multiethnic modern culture, the cues to what it takes to rise in the "pecking order" are sometimes confused, hidden, and—all too often—tied to heredity.

A great deal of emotional energy and personal resources are expended in the effort to advance in status. Most of us are willing to get education or skills training in preparation for working in privileged career categories. Failure to advance can lead to personal crisis. Often individuals will partner with others to work together to achieve group advancement. Failure or frustration of this

group effort can lead to debilitating or organization-destroying conflict, vicious political battles, or even wars.

Capacity building is advanced human skills work that continually raises questions: Will we only be the product of our biology and the suspicion of the outsider? Or will we resist that cultural training and become celebrants and artists directing our own lives and creating equity? Our answers to these questions must involve the issues of privilege, power, oppression, and systemic change. These are the main topics of this chapter.

Wake Up to Privilege

It would be a mistake to assume that exclusionary behavior is conscious. Often, neither the recipients of bias or privilege nor the targets of such biases are aware of the discrimination inherent in cultural structures. The evolution and integration of these cultural structures into everyday life proceeds at a glacial but steady pace. Generations are taught to accept and live with discriminations.

Privileged groups can have difficulty accepting that they have privilege because they never have to think about it. They find it difficult to even *comprehend* the concept of privilege since they have never experienced an alternative to it. Privilege is invisible and ubiquitous—the cultural sea in which they swim. Explaining privilege to these groups can feel like trying to explain the concept of dry land to a fish.

In her groundbreaking article of 1988, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh documented twenty-six examples of privilege that most White people enjoy without realizing it.⁶⁷ For example, “I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.” And, “I can be sure that if I need medical help, my race will not work against me.”

Privilege is manifest in many areas besides race. One can be privileged as a result of class, place of origin, language, body shape, and many other ways. Everyone has some point of privilege, even if we are targets of discrimination in other areas.

We were reminded of this during a Professional Development for Consultants training session.⁶⁸ One of the peer teams led us in an exercise to identify those places where we were privileged and those where we were not. Almost everyone in the room was a person of color. When we looked at categories other than

race and ethnicity (such as religion, education level, and economic status), people were able to identify many points of privilege.

One of our workshop participants gave an example: "I am a person of color of East Indian descent, and I have felt disadvantaged at times because of that. At the same time, today I am celebrating my ten-year wedding anniversary. I am keenly aware that being married is a privilege my LGBTQ friends and colleagues cannot access."

Pursuing this line of thought reveals more examples of how we fall asleep to privilege, even with progressive programs. For example, providing veterans with access to educational, health, and financial benefits sounds like a just idea at first. After all, veterans risked their lives for our country. However, these benefits are distributed in ways that privilege White men: The GI bill was accompanied by admission denials at many schools for men of color, and women historically were not allowed to serve in combat. Yet veterans' benefits have become institutional privilege; they are not granted as the conscious act of a biased power broker.

A related concept is aversive racism, where people hold unconscious or subtle biases that are more detrimental to team performance than overt racism.⁶⁹

When different cultural norms are brought together in a work or organizational situation, cultural conflicts can rise to the surface and shine a spotlight on differences in privilege. "Oftentimes in these environments there are people who have the burden of explanation," says Makani Themba-Nixon, a seasoned activist, writer, and executive director of an organization that provides funding and technical assistance. "White folks don't have to explain themselves because almost every book or movie that you have to view explains them."

One reaction to awareness of one's own racial privilege is to equate being White with being an oppressor. In our research, "appropriate Whiteness" emerged as a way to shift the quality of relationships among nonprofit leaders and capacity builders and promote mutual respect. This point came up in the Southern United States among people who realize that cultural competency efforts exist within a larger backdrop of explicit White supremacy. In this environment, good intentions are met by simmering resentments over the need to continually address racism. A Southern capacity builder of color, who is active and well known in national circles, framed the dilemma in blunt terms:

One of the things that's going to hamper the project of cultural competency as it's done in a transracial or interracial way is that there's really

too little embryonic work done around appropriate Whiteness. There is a lot of work around the rejection of White supremacy, but not enough on constructing an appropriate European identity in a cultural way. People [are] not appreciating the positive aspects. Some people join the Klan because it is a group that talks about Whiteness in a positive way and affirms who they are rather than the group that's always talking about what's wrong with who they are.

The Privilege Continuum

While working with groups, I sometimes use a tool called the privilege continuum. I place a banner at one end of the room with the words *highly privileged* on it. At the other end of the room, I put another banner that says *underprivileged*. People place themselves along the continuum based on their sense of their own privilege in different situations.

For example, I asked employees of a university to spread themselves along the continuum as it related to their racial identity. As usually happened, skin color largely determined where people stood: people of African descent stood mostly at the lowest end of the spectrum, and European Americans stood at the higher ends.

However, one young African American man stood under the highly privileged banner. When I asked people to share, he said, "I'm very privileged as a Black man to be in graduate school." His point of reference was the larger African American community, not the institution.

We went through more categories, such as age, gender, and sexual identity. Some people moved back and forth a lot. A few hovered near one end or the other.

Finally, I asked people to place themselves based on their relationship to the university. The faculty stayed at the high end, while the staff almost ran each other down heading for the low end of the continuum. Students placed themselves all along the room. This was an enlightening moment. It was particularly important for the faculty to see how universally the staff felt marginalized.

During a conversation after the exercise, many people said that they felt uncomfortable while standing at the highly privileged end of the continuum. Generally, they didn't feel awkward *having* privilege. Yet it was chal-

lenging to acknowledge this fact openly and to have that act witnessed.

I invited the university community to explore where the greatest power rests within a community or organization. They decided that the people at the higher end of the privilege continuum—those with more power—are in a better position to change things.

Then the elephant came out! During a discussion, participants discovered that they are reluctant to extend privilege because they assume that they will lose something in the exchange. We ran straight into the notion of privilege and power as a zero-sum proposition: Your gain is my loss.

We followed up with role plays where people imagined extending privilege to everyone instead of shifting it from one segment of the group to another. To their surprise and delight, they discovered that, when they thought hard enough about it, they could always create strategies that allowed everyone to feel valued, empowered, and fully engaged.

During a workshop following the Alliance for Nonprofit Management conference in Los Angeles, I presented the privilege continuum exercise again. At the last minute, I added another category, asking people to place themselves along the continuum based on body size. The men had little trouble placing themselves. But it was stunning to watch a group of competent, beautiful women scramble while figuring out where to place themselves. They acted confused and off balance. It reminded me that sometimes we don't know what is at play in a room. What happens on the surface doesn't tell the whole story; more of the iceberg is underwater and invisible.

Recognize and Extend Privilege

It is essential that we recognize the points of privilege in our own life and work. Then we can better pay attention to how we engage with others who differ from us in these arenas. Further, we must remind ourselves that privilege has nothing to do with the inherent worth and dignity of a person. Privilege is not earned. Rather, it is usually artificially granted based on external circumstances.

The objective of this work is to extend privilege to everyone. Bringing historical processes into the light of understanding and choice allows capacity builders, executive directors, boards of directors, and nonprofit staff members—the next generation of leaders—to fully engage in creating a just society. Yet this is not easy to do. This confrontation can be disconcerting and uncomfortable for everyone, raising those instinctually xenophobic hairs on the backs of our neck. Target groups may adapt to the status quo and may not wish to confront deficits in privilege.

Our unconsciousness of privilege, and a resistance to recognize it, contribute to a “revolving door” phenomenon that makes it hard for nonprofit organizations to retain people of color. Interviewee Barbara Meyer, an innovator in the funding world who brings a progressive orientation, asked, “How many organizations have not been able to deal with race and class issues and [have] dissolved?” She goes on to say, “For me, there were painful times. I was the White woman with money in the room, and there were times when folks would want to go out to dinner and I didn’t get invited. It was because people had stuff they needed to talk about. To me, it’s about helping people of different race and class backgrounds to be in the room together; to make space for them to be able to say to each other, ‘Hey,’ rather than walk away. I had to learn and relearn how to *be present* and how to be an ally to people of color, even when it is personally difficult.”

When privilege is not extended equally to all parties, it often falls to those with less privilege to go the extra mile to create a measure of equilibrium. This is a necessary step along the journey. But I am always relieved when those with the most privilege in a situation take responsibility for managing their own discomfort and doing the hard work of engaging their own privilege. (Beth Applegate’s contribution to Part One of this book is a good example of that ownership.)

This process brings many challenges. If we see the whole enterprise of race and class analysis as a zero-sum game, where someone has to give up something so

that others can have it, then it's a losing proposition. There is also the common trap of the mainstream media that seeps into nonprofit programs: trying to understand what is "wrong" with certain communities and paternalistically trying to solve their problems.

For capacity builders, helping the privileged understand the work they need to do may mean working separately with such groups. Many people of color become exhausted by having to "teach" White people, year after year, to unlearn their biases. Yet, when the focus shifts to privileged groups taking responsibility, the process can be rewarding for all. Paul Kivel's book *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Social Justice* offers strategies and approaches to bring the focus to White people's institutions and actions and how these can be changed.⁷⁰

As capacity builders from any cultural background, we have a lot of power. Our position in relationship to our clients comes with a degree of privilege. We get to enter people's lives through an organizational or community setting where they share with us their most pressing concerns. All of us have different ways to remind ourselves that we are part of a larger system and that whatever privilege we have is there to support and benefit the whole.

Understand the Types of Power

Power is a word with many connotations, such as

- *Power over* something or someone: This includes power that comes with a job title or position, referred power that comes from connections to others, and expert power that comes from wisdom, knowledge, experience, and skills.
- *Institutional power* and *obstructive power* stems from the ability to coerce or block.
- *Personal power* stems from the charismatic personality of someone who gets things done.
- Power that generates action, much as an engine powers a machine: This involves *ideological power* coming from a compelling idea, vision, or analysis; *cultural power* resulting from the feeling of belonging; and *transcendent power* that comes from connection to a spiritual, natural, or historical force. Some refer to these as *power within*.
- Power that is relational but not dominant: An example is *co-powering*, which refers to individual leaders who work mindfully to support the power of

others through modeling, validating, and feedback. Another example is the energy generated by *collaborative power*—partnership with people in pairs, teams, organizations, communities, coalition, and movements.⁷¹

Sometimes, we are able to see power and name it as such. At other times we need culturally based capacity builders to help us. Sojeila Silva illustrates this fact:

I do financial management support with organizations. I've found a connection between a leader's relationship with money and the organization's culture regarding money and finances.

When I grew up, we had no extra money. Everyone knew how much we had and where it went. In organizations where more affluent people are in leadership, they often have guilt about their salaries, so they don't want to disclose finances to the rest of the organization. It translates into mistrust, which sometimes leaks into other areas beyond finances.

I help leaders see how their personal issues with money spill over into the organization. Everyone knows it, even when the leaders don't acknowledge it. It gets translated into secrecy. They might be subsidizing one program because it's a higher priority, but [they] don't acknowledge it. Or they keep salaries secret. So now, I just tell the leaders when I think they have distorted relationship with money.

Sojeila's story reminds me of ways that money has held power in my own life. When my grandparents had no money beyond necessities, everyone received just what they needed—nothing extra. And when there was a little disposable money, my grandparents talked about fairness and sharing equally with all. Yet we knew that they were actually more generous with their favorite grandchildren. It would have been better if this had been openly acknowledged.

"That's exactly what I'm talking about," says Sojeila. "If we could give your grandparents a financial report, they'd see the reality. That's what I do with organizations. I help them to see by putting it on paper how they are playing out their distorted relationships with money."

Cultural competency involves a deep level of honesty in digging for the facts. Sojeila reflected on this point: "I find it's about communication: What are the power relationships? Who is held accountable and for what? I pay attention to formal and informal relationships in doing that analysis. I gather financial

information from the past three to five years. Where they've been says a lot about where they are and where they are going."

Challenge Conventional Beliefs about Power

People in the most privileged positions often hold most tightly to the belief that their power is completely earned and deserved. Power brokers benefit by believing that poor people are poor because they do not have the drive or the intelligence to be rich. This cultural dynamic is highly resistant to analysis and change. It is difficult for people to accept that at least some of their power results from culturally allocated privilege based on membership in a favored race or class.

During World War II, women were brought into the workforce in massive numbers while men were off soldiering. Women, including those without a lot of education or training, often discovered they could do the work that the men left behind. Most learned right on the job. Yet after the war, many women were moved out of the workforce, and even now there are jobs filled almost exclusively by men.

Today we see massive failures among small businesses and significant public resources used to prop up corporations. Yet there remains a belief that the private sector is more efficient and effective than the public sector. This seldom-explored belief lingers because it is accepted by people with power. Similar prejudices about ethnic groups remain unexamined, and for the same reason.

For capacity builders in the nonprofit sector, this dynamic hits close to home. Foundations are in positions of power because they control needed resources. Yet those resources are allocated on the basis of a narrow range of views about why the world is the way that it is. Rarely do foundations challenge conventional viewpoints.

Exercise Power Deliberately

As demographics change, so do power dynamics. Although heterosexual White males dominate corporations and Congress, the faces of leadership and power are changing at other levels of the public, private, and third (nonprofit or community benefit) sectors. Unless the new faces are intentional about changing the status quo, however, institutional power can overwhelm them. If we expect it to overturn historical patterns, we must exercise personal power in deliberate ways.

I live in Oakland, California, where for more than a century the power brokers, including the city council, were White men. In the mid-1970s the council gained an African American majority. Yet few of the new leaders were intentional about doing business differently. They were so pleased with getting into power that they did not change many policies. The city power dynamics did not change much either. Developers still had their way and neighborhoods were largely overlooked.

As a result of the 2006 election, five women won Oakland council seats. During the campaign, we heard lots of promises about how different things would be if women were in the majority. Even today, it is hard to find evidence of the feminization of the council or its policies.

The need to engage on a deeper, systemic level is one area that distinguishes cultural competency from "diversity." A study from the Applied Research Center found that increased diversity in a foundation's program officers did not lead to increased funding for organizations led by people of color.⁷² Program officers reported that they were expected to represent their community *and* assimilate to mainstream foundation culture, making it harder to do their job.

A peer dialogue in Atlanta brought us this personal story:

I once sat on a funding committee making major grants to organizations. We noticed that no women of color organizations were receiving grants, and there were a majority of women of color making the decisions. Not only was there internalized oppression but double standards . . . the theory is that we get people of color in those power positions where they could determine people's fates, and the outcomes would be different.

Changing this dynamic requires strong leadership and a commitment from the top. In his keynote address to the Alliance for Nonprofit Management's 2005 Annual People of Color Gathering in Chicago, Ron McKinley reminded us to see the places where race, class, and power intersect with community development. He described these intersections as community resources, public policy, nonprofit capacity, and foundation resources. We often focus on one of these elements but rarely see them as integrated. Instead, we must pay attention to all of them and their implications for cultural competency in capacity building.

Ultimately we minimize power differences by recognizing that they exist and by responding with intentional action. This calls for critical thinking, political

analysis, and a strong measure of empathy. When we “get it” that we are all connected, we are more likely to see the differentials and to eliminate them, no matter what the cost. Change comes when power differentials are addressed and rectified.

Notice and Name the Various Forms of Oppression

It is important to notice and name oppression when we see it. This includes internalized oppression, which occurs when people who are targets of a dominant worldview take on the assumptions embedded in that worldview. For example, people of color might work hard to eliminate all vestiges of their first (non-English) language. They might chemically process their hair to eliminate curls. Some go as far as skin lighteners and cosmetic surgery that reshapes the nose or eyes.

When someone accepts a negative categorization, the results can be harmful and deeply disturbing: poor job performance, inability to work on teams, and more. This is unhealthy for individuals, organizations, and communities.

In the nonprofit world, we have seen funders fuel this phenomenon by looking for the “greatest needs.” Nonprofits often respond by describing communities from a deficit perspective, trying to prove that their constituent group is more disadvantaged than others. In this way we have seen a wedge drawn between immigrant rights and racial justice, reinforcing rigid racial hierarchies.⁷³ This is deadly to social change.

As capacity builders, we ask ourselves: What does my internalized oppression look like? How am I dealing with it? How can I engage this particular

Dealing with Power Differentials

Dealing with power differences in an honest and open way is key in community building and creating justice. Some strategies include

- Orient new members sufficiently so there is less tension between “insiders” and “outsiders.” Often those who come late to the table miss the opportunity to know each other and the rest of the group.
- Use ground rules. Those developed by the group as a whole are most effective in generating ownership of the process.
- Reach out to people with less power. Invite voices that have not been heard and groups that have not been at the table.
- Make your process accessible to those whose power you want to increase. If necessary, change the meeting time and place. Provide transportation, child care, and even stipends. Those with power tend to be paid for their participation in community building; those without power usually are not.

person, organization, or community to address its own internalized oppression? What are the strategies they need to develop for dealing effectively with internalized oppression?

Our work is to create space so that communities can notice and name internalized oppression. The organizational and community rewards that can erupt are sometimes phenomenal. When privilege and internalized oppression are openly addressed, people may experience a burst of creativity. Energy that had been bottled up is released to good use and greater enjoyment. I compare it to what left-handed people would feel if they suddenly entered a world where chairs, tools, and door knobs were designed specifically for them. Life would suddenly become easier as they entered this new world of privilege. The energy that had gone into coping with everyday obstacles could now be channeled into creating social change.

Examine Systems and Structures

Another principle that guides our work is a commitment to examining structures of oppression. It is not unusual for a group of wonderful and well-intended people to unconsciously participate in racist institutions. If we analyze only individual behaviors, we miss the larger framework, one that transcends individual attitudes and their manifestation.

How Language Intersects with Power

In any setting where multiple languages are spoken, there are power differentials. Sojeila Silva, from the Northern California Community Loan Fund, tells this story:

Usually, all meetings are carried on in English, with some translation to and from Spanish; the union members sit on one side of the table, owners on the other. Owners have formal education; union members are phenomenal leaders and are largely informally educated. Owners don't listen, refuse to negotiate; workers walk out. Eventually contracts get signed.

My approach: I mixed people up around the room, did team-building exercises, and matched the lead union person with the lead owner. We gave everyone two matches and told them they could talk only as long as the match was burning and couldn't talk more than

twice. Everyone spoke in their first language, and we translated it for the nonspeakers. They agreed to *all* go through conflict resolution training, based on a plan we created together in that room. There's been no walkout since then (six years ago). They have more real relationships.

Frank Lopez is an experienced capacity builder based in a Texas community bordering on Mexico. When leading a nonprofit organization, he insisted that staff members consider linguistic issues carefully. This priority applied to meetings, to program publications, and even to the issue of whether to publish board bylaws and minutes in English. Key questions to ask are: What will be most useful for keeping an organization well grounded in its mission? What will keep constituents engaged? What will keep the work sustained and effective?

In her contribution to Part One of this book, Beth Applegate captures the tension between personal behavior and institutional racism: "Understanding the systemic nature of White supremacy affirms that I can be the subject of discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. Being a White lesbian raises my awareness of oppression."

It is easy to miss the larger institutional framework. For example, one seasoned group of capacity builders involved in a race, class, and power workshop came to this conclusion:

Clearly, approaches to addressing issues of race, class, and power must focus on the people involved, honoring their human dignity, and creating processes and norms that support full, broad-based participation. These principles and values are essential for the work of capacity building in a manner that addresses differences of race, class, and power. Moreover, since so much of the work involves helping rooms full of people find ways to listen to one another, learn from one another's perspectives, and determine how to move forward together in the face of differences, a focus on listening, interpersonal interactions, and group dynamics is warranted.⁷⁴

Few of this group's comments focused on the issues of difference and power at the level of organizations, institutions, or systems. This might be explained, in part, by the way we asked the questions. Yet the results are consistent with a pattern that the workshop organizers have observed in the field as a whole.

A point that's repeated in a wide range of publications about racism in the nonprofit sector is well stated by John A. Powell:

[T]he patterns for racial inequality have been set. Persistent racial disparities are not dependent upon racial animus or ill will; this is why they are termed "structural." This is the racism that is built into all of our structures; it is the status quo, and will only be undone in a lasting way when structures are reformed. . . . [R]acism in motion stays in motion unless forces counteract it.⁷⁵

According to Powell, nonprofits can counteract racism through a variety of measures aimed at equity, particularly in community economic development and education.

In an interview with Leroy Moore, a disability advocate of color, we learned about the frustrations capacity builders encounter when they ask organizations to address structural racism. Here is a story that he shares:

With a nonprofit organization, we did a hands-on event/experience. Without telling the agency that we were doing it, we sent in two people [as testers]—one being Caucasian and the other one African American. Of course, we found that the African American person came out as soon as he went in; he was sent away without help. The Caucasian came out like about a half hour later having received services and resources and everything.

We wrote it up and we gave it to the agency. And they were very, very closed off about the results at first, but they came through and they saw that . . . they didn't have it [a process to make treatment equitable]. So it was: are you going to deal with this or not? Because of that they had a little town hall meeting to be more inclusive, but although I was excited about the town hall, I just didn't think it really went deeply on how to become inclusive.

Power and privilege are in the underlying framework that leads to structural racism. Our original research did not delve directly into structural racism, but our interviews and literature review uncovered important insights for capacity builders. Frank Lopez, a Texas-based leader of a capacity-building organization, with Latino ancestry and a previous career in law, shared a story from his own experience as a law school professor:

It was clear that the White faculty there had a perception of people of color, both students and faculty, unless they were part of the same-thinking group, that was negative. I arrived as new faculty at the law school. While I was on the admissions committee, I discovered that there was a systemic problem that guaranteed that 80 percent [of applicants being accepted] would always be White. I raised the issue; when I did that, they took me off admissions. That was my fall from the club.

Juan Cruz asked some provocative questions about cultural grounding and how it reaches beyond individual practice to the institutional:

By me being curious, open to them, not making assumptions about them, I am embodying cultural competency. Can institutions reflect that kind of behavior? I don't know; are they constitutionally set up to be open to people who are not like them? As people and institutions get together, are they calcified? Everybody be like the building: There are only certain ways to come in and out!

Looking for Structural Racism

Capacity builders can raise courageous questions about how structural racism plays out in an organization. Following are examples that relate to two crucial aspects of nonprofit operations.

Volunteer management

- How are volunteers recruited? Where are ads placed? In what languages?
- Who does recruitment? Are they trained in cultural competency? Language skills?
- How are volunteers being used? What kinds of roles and opportunities are available?
- What are the demographics of the volunteers? What are the demographics broken down by roles of volunteers?
- Do all volunteers have advancement and development opportunities?
- Do volunteers provide input for decision making?
- Is there feedback on services and programs?
- Are volunteers serving on the organization's board?
- Are "VIP volunteers" treated differently than other volunteers?
- Can volunteers become board members?
- How are volunteers spoken of? (For example, what volunteers do is sometimes described as "magical." No, it's the application of hard work.)
- Are volunteers recognized and honored in a community way?
- Are community leaders being developed? Is the community putting its demands on the table, or is the community accepting the oppression of being excluded?
- How do volunteers talk about what they do?

Board activity

- Does the board reflect the community it represents?
- When does the board meet? Who can attend at that time? (People earning hourly wages may be financially penalized for leaving work during business hours.)
- Are child care and food provided at board meetings?
- Does the board membership include consumers of the organization's services?
- Does the board only use Robert's Rules of Order or a process for decision making that works more effectively in non-Western cultures?
- Are board members chosen based only on the technical skills and formal education or other criteria (such as ability to speak clients' language, leadership skills recognized within their communities, cross-cultural effectiveness, and shared experience with clients)?
- Are board members chosen only for their "diversity quotient"?
- Does the board specifically recognize its accountability to the community members, viewing them as the stakeholders of the corporation?
- Do historical factors or current practices make potential board members from "other" communities feel less welcome?
- When "others" are recruited and their attendance drops off, do board members check for policies and practice that may drive people away? Do board members assume a lack of interest or simply dismiss the question (*We invite them, but they don't show up.*)?
- Do we check in with "others" who leave the board with an exit interview that invites them to explore structural racism with us?

Note: A tool based on the above questions is included in the Resource E. See Strategies for Dealing with Internalized Oppression and Structural Racism on page 199.

Match Individual Change with Institutional Change

Some programs designed to engage the emotional aspects of cross-cultural relationships focus on diversity for its own sake. These programs are mostly designed to promote changes in personal behavior. They generally do not look at organizational and community systems. Other interventions designed to support organizations and communities, such as planning processes and assessments, do so without paying attention to culture. Only when we combine the two can we move toward real social change.

In culturally competent capacity building, this moves us beyond personal behavior change to systems change. We work on several layers at the same time. During strategic planning, we pay attention to how systems reinforce or break down patterns of racism and oppression. We move beyond a zero-sum approach and come from a perspective of abundance. Privilege is extended to everyone, not simply moved from one group to another.

The goal is to create a just and equitable society that develops enough resources for everyone. And the path to this ultimate goal may include compensatory realignment—granting privilege to people who have been historically underprivileged. However, this is a short-term strategy, not a permanent solution. In the best processes, this helps us take our work beyond the realm of personal behaviors and begin moving it to structural change that in the end benefits everyone.

Cynthia Parker, a colleague who reviewed an early draft of this book, notes the importance of stakeholder analysis. The challenge for capacity builders, she says, is to identify and bring the full range of stakeholders into planning and decision making. Stakeholder analysis, like power analysis, requires significant investment. As the analysis takes shape, however, it becomes easier to minimize power differences; everyone knows where everyone else stands. When we invite all the voices to the table and see accommodations as a path to justice, we move closer to breaking through structural racism.

Cynthia elaborates on this point:

Related issues include making space for traditionally less influential or less organized groups to come together and explore their thinking apart from the broader collaborative. Sometimes you have to do work outside and alongside the collaboration to make sure the playing field is as level as possible—from simple things like prepping young people

who are participating in adult decision-making bodies to creating caucuses and opportunities for people to “explore their own stuff” alongside a multi-stakeholder process.

Beyond having everyone at the table to ensure equity, we need to ensure that their voices are heard and respected. In turn, this means that all parties have to be informed about each other and the existing power dynamics.

Examples of organizations that successfully address institutional racism are few and far between. However, we did find some. One foundation took intentional steps to change its board of direc-

Building Capacity for Advocacy: Eight Key Principles

One key component to creating a just society is advocacy. A working group from the People of Color Affinity Group (POC), part of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management, looked at cultural competency in building advocacy. Group members drew from their own experiences as well as path-breaking work from several sources. One is the article “Building Capacity for Policy Change: The Racial Justice Lens” by Makani Themba-Nixon, a national nonprofit executive. Another source is research conducted and disseminated by PolicyLink in the 2003 report *Leadership for Policy Change: Strengthening Communities of Color through Leadership Development*.⁷⁷

Advocacy Working Group members Margo Bailey, Gita Gulati-Partee, Sida Ly-Xiong, Brigitte Rouson, and Daryl Thompson drafted the following principles that were presented and affirmed at an annual POC gathering.

Why do we need these principles?

One key function of the POC is to be a voice for truth, all the truth, recognizing that truth is plural, multifaceted, and sometimes paradoxical. With these principles, we are naming some truths. Specifically, we are acknowledging that advocacy capacity building is not always done in a culturally competent way, thus limiting its social change impact. We also recognize the historic lack of investment in building the capacity of POC-led organizations and in advocacy efforts that fully engage people of color as leaders. Yet advocacy efforts in and related to communities of color continue to have great value and make important contributions to their communities.

How do we use these principles?

The working group intentionally chose not to create a template of policy agendas, as we recognize that communities and the organizations and leaders who serve them must drive their own agendas. Rather, we offer these principles to help communities of color achieve their own advocacy agendas, whatever they may be. Further, we hope that these principles not only build our collective knowledge base and advance the advocacy field but also catalyze other efforts to define and articulate culturally competent capacity building—for example, culturally competent fundraising.

Culturally competent capacity builders

1. Believe in the inherent right of people of color to drive their own policy agendas and recognize that lasting social change requires capacity building at three levels: individual leaders, organizations, and constituencies.
2. Meet people where they are, develop multiple strategies to help them achieve their own policy goals, and recognize that a variety of organizational structures can successfully integrate advocacy efforts. All policy discussions to benefit all communities require the voices and perspectives of people of color.
3. Employ a racial justice and systems lens to organizational development and advocacy. With a landscape perspective as described by Makani Themba-Nixon, we look beyond culture to a contextual analysis that includes changing structures and building power to achieve social change.

tors to reflect the grassroots constituencies it was funding. This foundation also listened when grassroots leaders urged the creation of an entirely new organization to be fully owned by the grantee community. That foundation created a plan for turning over its assets to that new entity, over time and with technical support. The result was the Southern Partners Fund. (See Janice Gow Petty's book *Cultural Diversity in Fundraising* for a detailed treatment of the impact of culture on funding.)⁷⁶

I worked with an organization committed to becoming a genuine multiracial organization with shared leadership, including promoting leadership development of people of color. One of their strategies was to create caucuses—one

4. Draw out and build upon the myriad strengths and assets of people of color that can be applied in the advocacy arena. These strengths and assets include
 - A history of resistance and courage
 - An inclination toward inclusivity and real stakeholder involvement
 - An ability to facilitate bottom-up engagement
 - Two-ness: the ability to operate in the majority culture and one's own
 - Adaptive capacity that comes from being bilingual or bicultural
5. Help people of color confront and dismantle internalized oppression and address the complex dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression within and between communities of color. This must be done even as we must continue to expose the barriers that exist for people of color with majority-led organizations. Without this internal analysis and attention, efforts for social change will replicate the oppressive aspects of the dominant culture.
6. Help nonprofits move beyond the tendency to diversify by including only one or two people of color in their leadership. This assumes that all people of color share a uniform advocacy experience or policy perspective, and it creates an unfair, limiting, and potentially tokenizing experience. We must help nonprofits expand their own understanding and leadership pool while also building the capacity of people of color to say *no* to these types of situations.
7. Help organizations work together to build their collective capacity to identify, develop, and better connect people of color to the advocacy work of nonprofits. Collective capacity building could include, for example, shared board recruitment and development with an advocacy focus. As capacity builders, we have the unique opportunity to see trends across organizations and the community. These trends include recurring challenges as well as untapped resources.
8. Pay attention to developing the following skills needed for effective advocacy:
 - Mentoring and succession planning helps to actively identify and cultivate potential leaders.
 - Access, collect, analyze, and use quantitative and qualitative data to support advocacy positions. Advocates of color need to be comfortable talking numbers as well as putting faces and stories to those numbers.
 - Create win-win collaborations by knowing your own competitive advantage as well as the benefits of the relationship.
 - Work across traditional political boundaries. In the advocacy arena, there are no permanent enemies and no permanent friends.

for people of color staff and one for White staff. After a year, each caucus gave an update. I was struck by the results: The White people focused on changes in their individual behavior, while the people of color focused on the need for systemic changes. Both aspects need attention from everyone.

It takes an investment of both time and money to create accountability for producing sustainable, long-term, systemic change. However, a growing contingent of funders, fund-raisers, and nonprofit leaders are committed at this deeper level. They understand that paying attention to culture adds a new dimension to their processes and are willing to make the additional investment.

Embracing Cultural Competency

*A Roadmap
for Nonprofit
Capacity Builders*

Patricia St.Onge *Lead Author*

Contributing Authors:

Part One: Beth Applegate
Vicki Asakura
Monika K. Moss
Alfredo Vergara-Lobo

Part Three: Brigitte Rouson



FIELDSTONE
ALLIANCE

SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA

2009