Race-Grounded Reciprocity Manifesto

For individuals and organizations cultivating inter-racial partnerships in the nonprofit sector

We write this manifesto as folks from different racial and ethnic identities who are executive leaders working in partnership with predominantly Black, Brown, Indigenous Students of Color.

I, Janiece Mackey, am a Black female executive director of Young Aspiring Americans for Social and Political Activism (YAASPA).

I, Vanessa Roberts, am a biracial Black female executive director of Project VOYCE (Voices of Youth Creating Equity).

I, Solicia Lopez, am a Xicana Indigenous female director of Student Voice and Leadership at Denver Public Schools.

I, Sam Battan, am a white male executive director of the Colorado Youth Congress.

As we have navigated our leadership, we have engaged in radical honesty (Williams, 2016) to center the racialized ways we experience our ecosystem and how that translates to our youth constituencies. Furthermore, we have leveraged our positionality in ways that reflect dignity at the center of our partnership with each other and youth. We have come together to write this Race-Grounded Reciprocity Manifesto as a declaration of our vision to be in partnership in ways that center the dignity and validation of Black, Brown, and Indigenous leadership. We are not conduits to a youth's performance of activism while having the values of our leadership and youth constituencies dismissed. Hence, we will not partner with organizations and individuals who do not interrogate and reflect upon their positionalities.

Reciprocity is indicative of interdependence and relationship building grounded in trust. Reciprocal practices establish serious obligations based on the assumption of *confianza* (mutual trust), "which is reestablished or confirmed with each exchange and leads to the development of long-term relationships" (González et al, 2006, p. 74). Reciprocity rejects transactional and extractive practices. We will opt out of partnerships that surface a white savior complex and engage in performative allyship. Thus, rather than simply meeting with Black, Brown and Indigenous students and leaders of color to extract knowledge, we ask you to make a commitment to making Black Lives Matter in the nonprofit ecosystem and be mindful of the emotional labor that is constantly taken particularly from women of color in the nonprofit ecosystem. To further extend the notion of reciprocity, we must ground race. To situate a Race-Grounded (Mackey, 2020) context signifies the prerequisite of centering race as a bridge toward creating a dignifying experience and partnership with minoritized individuals and communities.

Race-Grounded Reciprocity reflects a cognizance of the racialized civic, emotional, intellectual, and physical labor that Black Brown Indigenous People of Color (BBIPOC) (Salazar, personal communication, 2020) leaders and youth engage in while navigating the nonprofit ecosystem; labor that is often invisibilized. We desire to make the racialized experiences that are often invisibilized visible to navigate through the healthy tensions of building partnerships. While we adhere to multiple critical theories of race based upon our varying racial and ethnic identities, we situate the following desired acknowledgements within critical race theory. Critical race theory intentionally centers race and the racialized lived experiences of minoritized individuals and communities. The centering of race and racism should lead individuals and organizations toward differential actions based upon one's racial identities and positionalities. The following utilizes Matsuda's (1993) critical race theory framework, but we specify the lens to the nonprofit sector. We envision individuals and organizational partners to acknowledge and act upon the following:

1) Racism is endemic to philanthropy and the nonprofit ecosystem.

2) WE, regardless of racial identities, do not experience the nonprofit and philanthropic ecosystem through neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy, but rather in differing racialized ways.

3) Race and racism have and continue to contribute to OUR contextual/historical analyses and experiences of group advantage and disadvantage.

4) WE must recognize and value experiential knowledge and leadership of Black, Brown, Indigenous People of Color (BBIPOC) (Salazar, personal communication, 2020).

5) Race and racism exists across all sectors from education to the nonprofit sector whether desired or acknowledged.

6) The purpose of centering race is to work toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of a wider goal of eliminating all oppression (Matsuda, 1993, p. 6).

The aforementioned acknowledgements are necessary ingredients for transformative inter-racial partnerships to not simply exist, but to thrive. The action required to engage in Race-Grounded Reciprocity is rooted in one's positionality. Positionality is indicative of how we are positioned based upon our identities, but also how we choose to orient ourselves based upon that positioning. What often is looked upon as a method toward engaging with minoritized communities is asking them to come to a table that was set up without them in mind. Solely looking through the prism of representation is indicative of compositional diversity. The culture of the partnership matters and must be rooted in the aforementioned acknowledgements and lens of understanding. There must be a shift away from partnership building at the expense of Black,

Brown and Indigenous bodies, minds, and souls of color. There must be intentional shifts to partner in ways that are dignifying for folks who are minoritized.

"Critical hope… requires that we must be painfully honest about the realities of current...conditions... while at the same time building networks that challenge these conditions" (Stovall, 2013, p. 34). We call upon folks to refuse false empathy as a form of reflection and action (Mackey et al., 2020) and instead sit in the tensions of our positionalites based upon our varying identities to be most impactful and effective. Navigating the tensions around positionality is critical to foster transformative and healing praxis (hooks, 1994) within inter-racial partnerships.

We encourage individuals and organizations to consider this Race-Grounded Reciprocity Manifesto when cultivating inter-racial partnerships.

Suggested Readings

Ginwright, S. (2018). The future of healing: Shifting from trauma informed care to healing centered engagement. *Occasional Paper*, *25*.

Gooden, S. T. (2015). *Race and social equity: A nervous area of government*. Routledge.

Heckler, N. (2017). Publicly desired color-blindness: Whiteness as a realized public value. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, *39*(3), 175-192.

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Kirshner, B., & Ginwright, S. (2012). Youth organizing as a developmental context for African American and Latino adolescents. *Child Development Perspectives*, *6*(3), 288-294.

Lopez-Littleton, V., Blessett, B., & Burr, J. (2018). Advancing social justice and racial equity in the public sector. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, *24*(4), 449-468.

Mackey, J., & McCandless, S.A. (2020). Social equity in public administration: A primer. In D. Slagle and A. Williams (Eds.), *Public Affairs Practicum*. Birkdale Publishers.

Mackey, J., Starke, A, Heckler, N. (2020). From false empathy to honest engagement: Bridging the gap between cultural diversity and social equity. In D. Slagle and A. Williams (Eds.). *Public Affairs Practicum*. Birkdale Publishers.

Starke, A. M., Heckler, N., & Mackey, J. (2018). Administrative racism: Public administration education and race. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, *24*(4), 469-489.

Tuitt, F., Haynes, C., & Stewart, S. (2018). Transforming the classroom at traditionally White institutions to make Black lives matter. *To Improve the Academy*, *37*(1), 63-76.

Zion, S., Allen, C. D., & Jean, C. (2015). Enacting a critical pedagogy, influencing teachers' sociopolitical development. *The Urban Review*, *47*(5), 914-933.

References

González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Routledge.

Hooks, B. (2014). *Teaching to transgress*. Routledge.

Mackey, J. Z. (2020). *Black Finesse Amidst the Political Science Paradigm: A Race-Grounded Phenomenology* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Denver).

Stovall, D. (2013). Against the politics of desperation: Educational justice, critical race theory, and Chicago school reform. *Critical Studies in Education, 54*(1), 33-43.

Williams, B. (2016). Radical honesty: Truth-telling as pedagogy for working through shame in academic spaces. In F. Tuitt, C. Haynes, and S. Stewart (Eds.), *Race, equity, and the learning environment: The global relevance of critical and inclusive pedagogies in higher education* (pp. 71-82). Stylus Publishing.