

WEBINAR Q&A: DISCUSSION AND AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

WITH DR. VIJAYA HOGAN, STEPHANIE CAMPBELL, AYANNA EGGLESTON AND AMY ZAPATA

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does equity and justice become woven into the fabric of what you and your organization strive to be in both processes and outcomes? How is that sustained?

Stephanie: It is a long road to integrate equity and justice into the fabric of your organization. I suggest starting small within your team and division where you have the most control to work collaboratively with colleagues to identify opportunities to integrate equity and accountability measures. Suggestions to sustain these efforts include regular accountability check-ins, continuous shared racial justice learnings, and community/self-care.

Vijaya: Equity needs to become a part of the DNA of every organization. It should show up in every decision, every plan, every rule, every action, etc. The question is, how does an organization get to this state of being? It usually starts with one or more champions. As Stephanie states above, you start where you can, with whom you have to work with. However, “doing equity” will no doubt require something more from the entire organization. This could be funding, time for training, rule or policy changes, etc. As such, the whole institution eventually needs to develop a capacity to work through an equity lens. It is not enough for just a team to be equity proficient, although this is a good place to start. That team and the equity champions need to also work to push the entire organization into a mode of developing its capacity to do equity. Then, once the organization is on that path, they need to begin to push their network partners to get on that path as well.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does community accountability look like/mean to you? How does this factor into your efforts to accelerate the practice of antiracism and equity building within your own teams or organizations?

Stephanie: Community accountability to me looks like fostering a culture of calling in. The reality is mistakes will be made because we are swimming in white supremacy culture. What's most important is how you respond and move forward. I think it is important not to accelerate anti-racism work - this is a system that was intentionally built and maintained for 400 years. Trust the process.

Ayanna: Community accountability looks like empowerment, accountability and change. For me it is cultivating change from the ground up. Grassroots to government and in between. I think it is so important for people to know and understand that what impacts one community impacts all communities. Sometimes I see such disconnect. People feel when it comes to equity, how does that involve me, I push numbers. It involves all of us. We have to stop waiting until something affects us to speak. We have to become intentionally aware of inequities and disparities. That is a personal and professional responsibility. To be antiracist to me, is simply to identify bias, educate yourself and others and use your influence to cultivate change. People get so caught on the antiracist part. I hear instant defenses of not being racist. For me, if I can get you to see an issue and follow it to the root and then see where your influence lies...that provides opportunity to impact families generationally, extending life in relation to health equity. Extending life and enhancing life's quality... for entire families... If that's not important, what is.

Vijaya: It is not possible to be accountable to community if they are not involved in the organization's anti-racism process. Organizations that serve the community need to understand the context, histories, needs, etc. of the communities they serve and understand the various ways that racism shows up for them to make appropriate decisions regarding community well being. Doing this requires having consistent dialogue with community. This dialogue should not be a one-off that happens just before a grant is due; it should be a consistent part of organizational work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Thinking about the deep roots of racism within people and systems, as well as the presence of complex political forces, how do you select avenues where you can get traction and cultivate more champions?

Stephanie: I consider the following when selecting avenues: is this an area where I have full decision-making power? what are the possible unintended outcomes of this decision? will this address historic/structural racism? The answers to these questions help me determine whether avenue is the best to move the work forward. The cultivation of champions will happen as you build relationships and create a shared understanding of racial justice. It is critical that champions are self-motivated and supporting each other. This work is hard and can be emotionally taxing.

Vijaya: I agree with Stephanie that building relationships is key to developing champions. The more people in your organization are exposed to the humanity and culture of the people they serve, they develop a connection that cannot be broken. Gail Christopher calls this developing “hearts and minds”. I think developing hearts and minds is a prerequisite for antiracism work to take hold. And before developing hearts and minds, some other basic groundwork needs to be laid to ensure threat response is not activated. This can set your efforts back. Also, self selected champions don’t automatically know what to do and they need to be supported in developing their own equity capacity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do you know you are on the right track, i.e. mindful of and acting upon the full range of factors that are contributing to inequity or prioritizing equity as a transformative organizational goal?

Stephanie: I believe when you encounter resistance that is a sign you are on the right road. See response to question one.

Vijaya: See “Hogan, V., Rowley, D. L., White, S. B., & Faustin, Y. (2018). **Dimensionality and R4P: A Health Equity Framework for Research Planning and Evaluation in African American Populations. Maternal and child health journal**” for 5 factors that need to be considered to achieve equity. Equity does not respond to any one magic bullet. There are several dimensions to it and they ALL have to be addressed to achieve equity. When your approach to rulemaking, policy making, program development, implementation, evaluation and research consider these 5 factors, you are well on the way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does allyship or co-conspiratorship look like at the individual, relational, and systems levels?

Stephanie: This is a complex question and important for us to consider in racial justice work. Dr. Bettina Love describes allyship and co-conspirator via this [link](#) (minute 37:20-43:07). I suggest showing this clip and discussing with your colleagues as a starting place. In public health on systems level we need to consider who to partner with to move the needle forward.

Vijaya: The concept of “allyship” suggests this is a struggle and a responsibility that only benefits people of color and the oppressed, that it is the main responsibility of people of color to fix, and that we need to recruit others to help. I never liked that term. Racism is an issue that cuts to the very fiber of our humanity and national credibility as a democracy, and it affects everyone, either directly, indirectly, or karmic-ly (sp?). Therefore we all have a responsibility to fix it. Sounds sort of like a mask mandate during a pandemic, right?

How do you define (and practice) self, team, and community care in the context of racial justice leadership?

Stephanie: It is an ongoing struggle. I try to integrate meditations into our team meetings and remind folks to take days off.

Vijaya: Good question. Again, it is not good for the brunt of the work to fall on a few champions in an organization. This is a place where the organization as a whole should be providing protection to the champions. However, I realize this is a developmental process and some people find themselves in this position. Failing organizational support, funding agencies need to REQUIRE (real) equity for receipt of funds, thus forcing all agencies to protect the work and those who do it. Failing that, meditation is a good way to maintain your center. It may also help to identify champions at higher levels in peer organizations who can provide cover and support and advocate to your bosses for an increased level of support. Peer pressure can be helpful at the leadership level.

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

Where would Reproductive Justice fit on the "words matter" list?

Vijaya: With racial justice—it is a philosophy that guides. Necessary to achieve equity but other things are necessary.

RJ is very relevant to racial equity in health. I think reproductive justice is a philosophy and not necessarily a method. Racial equity in health does require some data analysis to understand unique risk profiles and needs and that is not necessarily a part of RJ.

How do you determine where people are in the learning process?

Vijaya: We are working on a self assessment of racial equity capacity (SAMREC). Stay tuned.

Your comments on "doing equity" within institutional change also applies to patient and family engagement. As a champion how do we achieve real institutional change? Very difficult to engage a lot of our leaders.

Amy: Regarding institutional change - I think it starts like any other change. Just get started with cultivating learning and curiosity within your sphere of influence. See also **The Practice of Adaptive Leadership (Heifetz)**.

Vijaya: This is something I have been thinking about recently. I think as part of equity capacity building, champions need skills in crucial conversations and other skills that help them to bring leadership along.

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

How do we encourage our stakeholders to share their lived experiences and what they are seeing in their own communities so we can better advocate for changes to address their needs?

Amy: Others on the panel have more experience than I, but I think that we need to integrate the perspective of those with lived experience in all that we do, vs. just for “special occasions” such as needs assessments. Think about the work you normally do - what are the analyses you produce, the data you already collect, the meetings you hold, the boards your section supports... the things you normally do... and consider, are there ways you can use those platforms to elevate the voices and perspectives that are needed.

Vijaya: Ask relevant questions, enter into dialogue and not one-way data collection/inquiry, develop relationships rather than helicopter in to community when you want something.