

Avoiding Racial

Students experiencing racism can't wait for schools to move at their own pace and comfort level.

Paul Gorski

n schools committed to racial equity, educators who resist anti-racist measures should feel uneasy, isolated on the outskirts of their schools' institutional cultures. I mean this literally. The educators least invested in racial equity should wonder whether they belong. Sadly, research shows the inverse tends to be true in many schools, even when leaders claim equity commitments. Often, the educators most adamant about racial equity are cast to the margins of institutional culture. They are the ones feeling isolated, wondering whether they belong (Kohli, 2018; Picower, 2011). Colleagues call them troublemakers for naming what others refuse to name. Some are shushed or encouraged to adopt a color-blind perspective by equity-skittish leaders. They are accused of being too "political" simply for pointing out conditions that harm families of color. Educators of color who raise these concerns tend to face even greater hostility, as Kohli (2018) documented through the narratives of racial-justice-oriented teachers of color. They often are labelled "militant" or "angry" for telling the racial equity truth.

This is a failure of equity leadership.

A Racial Equity Reckoning

If the most emphatic racial equity advocates feel silenced and less central to institutional culture than their equityresistant colleagues, what we have from an equity point of view is a sick institution. Any meaningful accounting of racial inequities in schools must reckon with this reality. Is our commitment real? Why do emphatic equity advocates often face harsher repercussions for their advocacy than equity heeldraggers face for their inaction? Why is taking a strong, impassioned stand on racism interpreted as *deviant* while refusing to take a stand on racism is interpreted as *in a developmental process* (Mayorga & Picower, 2018)?

Are we driven by authentic desires for racial equity? Or are we content with rearranging inequities, hiding them behind multicultural arts fairs and diversity clubs (Au, 2017)?

The disturbing reality is, in my 20 years of experience working with schools and districts on matters of equity and justice, I've found that most initiatives and strategies that pass for "racial equity" efforts in schools pose less of a threat to racism than to the possibility of racial justice. Following Olsson's (1997) accounting of the detours white people follow to protect their privilege and avoid the messy work of racial justice, I call these initiatives and strategies *equity detours*.

The detours vary in scope and nefariousness but share a function: They create an illusion of progress toward

have in common is that they mask racial inequity. They relieve us of the responsibility to name and eliminate the ways racism operates in our schools (Ladson-Billings, 2017). Rather than being paths to equity, they are detours around it.

Four Racial Equity Detours

Described below are four racial equity detours commonly embraced in schools,¹ followed by equity principles that can help educators avoid these detours and build a more transformational racial equity approach.

1 Pacing-for-Privilege Detour

This detour underlies the other detours. It speaks to the situation described earlier, wherein an equity approach coddles the hesitancies of people with the least racial equity investment while punishing people with the most investment.

In too many schools, the pace of equity progress prioritizes the comfort and interests of people who have the least interest in that progress. Professional development in these schools appears designed to accommodate the feelings and fears of white educators in "difficult"

Equity Detours

equity while cementing, or even exacerbating, inequity. They can be more devastating than explicit racism because they do racism's work while consuming resources ostensibly earmarked for racial equity. They are the *anti-anti-racism*.

For example, people who study equity initiatives in schools have tracked educational leaders' tendencies, in the name of equity, either to implement deficit-oriented strategies, such as "grit" initiatives that obscure inequity (Kohn, 2014) or, worse, to build equity efforts around debunked approaches that create more inequity, like the "mindset of poverty." Some educational leaders inexplicably continue to embrace the "mindset of poverty" even though it reinforces racialized stereotypes (Redeaux, 2011)—and despite the fact that research clarified that *there is no such thing as a mindset of poverty* 50 years ago (Valentine, 1968).

What all these types of initiatives and frameworks



conversations about race rather than to advance equity for students of color (Swanson & Welton, 2018). A common "equity" PD framework in these contexts is *cultural competence*—an approach that provides a way to talk about "cultural differences" without having to name or confront racism (Gorski, 2016a; Pon, 2009). Cultural competence is important. But by itself it's no threat to racism.

The hard truth is, racial equity cannot be achieved with an obsessive commitment to "meeting people where they are" when "where they are" is fraught with racial bias and privilege. Students, families, and educators experiencing racism cannot afford to wait for us to saunter toward a more serious racial equity vision. They cannot afford to wait, in particular, for all white educators to ease into racial equity commitments at a pace of our choosing while they suffer the consequences of our casualness.

In schools committed to equity, the time is *now*. We must prioritize equity over the comfort of equityreluctant educators. We move on racial justice first by honestly identifying and addressing all the ways racism operates in our schools, and then we bridge the equity hesitaters to our equity vision. We refuse to equivocate on racial justice. We find the will to implement, and hold one another accountable to, policy and practice changes *today*, rather than waiting for an elusive consensus.

When I make this argument to education leaders, they often emphasize the importance of staff buy-in. I appreciate consensus-based leadership—but not always when it comes to equity. The school-toprison pipeline is flowing (Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014). The hard truth is that racial equity cannot be achieved with an obsessive commitment to "meeting people where they are" when "where they are" is fraught with racial bias and privilege.

Students who are disproportionately targeted with assignment to special education, harsh applications of discipline policy, unengaging pedagogy, and the sorts of "school reform" initiatives that redistribute access up the privilege continuum don't need consensus. They need justice.

Start where we need to be: Equity is neither optional nor negotiable. This is who we are as a school; these are the values to which we will be held accountable. Our best resources in these efforts are equity-minded educators—the ones accustomed to the shushing. When we make them the center of our schools' and districts' institutional identities, we are primed for equity progress.

2 Poverty of Culture Detour

Culture is one important equity consideration. However, although racial identities may inform cultural identities, racial inequities aren't predominantly cultural misunderstandings. Racism is a tangled structural mess of power, oppression, and unjust distributions of access and opportunity. This mess cannot be resolved with greater cultural awareness alone.

I call this the *poverty of culture* detour in honor of Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006). In "It's Not the Culture of Poverty, It's the Poverty of Culture," she describes the hazards of adopting diversity frameworks built around vague notions of "culture." "[T]he problem of culture in teaching is not merely one of exclusion," she explains. "It is also one of overdetermination....[C]ulture is randomly and regularly used to explain everything... from school failure to problems with behavior management and discipline" (p. 104).

The result is that we too often attribute educational disparities to students' cultures. We cannot allow racism-infused misperceptions of their cultures to justify our failure to create racially just schools. Often, we interpret racial disparities in which students are suspended or expelled, for example, not as the result of racial bias, as research shows it primarily to be (Rudd, 2014), but as a cultural defect in communities of color. So we might attempt to solve these disparities by adjusting the behaviors, mindsets, or emotions of students of color rather than by adjusting educators' racial presumptions or schools' inequitable practices.

We cannot fix a problem we refuse to name. If our equity initiatives feature the word *culture* more than the word *racism*, we're probably off track. If we adopt an approach that obscures racism behind vague nomenclature like *cultural competence* or *the diverse kids*, we might be off track.

3 Deficit Ideology Detour If we spend any of our equity efforts attempting to "fix" students of color—fortifying their grittiness, modifying their mindsets, adjusting their emotions—we need a reaccounting, not only of our equity understandings, but also of our equity intentions. These strategies locate the source of educational outcome disparities within communities of color while often ignoring the role of racism—the clearest sign of *deficit ideology* (Gorski, 2016b).

We should be instinctively suspicious of popular educational approaches that often detour us around equity with a deficit approach. For example, presuming we can resolve racial inequities by simply teaching students of color to have grit is like presuming we can resolve climate change by teaching coastal communities to swim faster. It shifts the onus of responsibility away from schools and onto the very youth who are cheated out of equitable opportunity-and who, due to this cheating, often already tend to be quite resilient. It can obscure structural conditions with which marginalized communities contend. What good is grit against curricular erasure or inequitable school policy?

As somebody who attended school having experienced the childhood trauma of sexual abuse and often found myself being punished for the implications of that abuse, I find the growing interest in mindfulness and trauma-informed practices compelling. But too often, these practices are adopted as though they are racial equity initiatives. In some cases, we offer students of color coping mechanisms rather than correcting in-school conditions-like inequitable policy or racially tinged tracking practices-that exacerbate racism's traumas. Our best strategy for minimizing the impact of racism is to eliminate racism. Traumainformed practices as implemented

in most schools don't do that.

Before we follow the deficit ideology detour, we should ask ourselves some questions. In whose image is school policy and institutional culture crafted? Which students have the most access to higher-order pedagogies, relevant curricula, and a full range of course options? Which students face grinding inequities in and out of school? What do traumainformed practices look like for students whose primary source of trauma is the racism they experience *at school*?

Equity initiatives should focus on eliminating conditions that marginalize students—never on fixing students of color. If we cannot describe how our efforts are eliminating those conditions, it's time for an equity overhaul.

4 Celebrating Diversity Detour

Recently, while visiting a colleague's classroom to facilitate a conversation about race and poverty, I asked a group of African American and Latinx 10th grade students about their school's upcoming Diverse Friends Day. For one lunch period, they would be forcibly integrated, coerced into celebrating diversity by sitting with classmates racially or ethnically different from themselves—classmates with whom some of them normally wouldn't socialize.

"They mean well, but this activity is racist," Pam shared.²

"I don't know about racist," Tariq responded, "but I don't want to do it."

José added, "A lot of the white students don't like us. I don't want to be forced to hang out with them."

I asked Pam to elaborate on her observation that Diverse Friends Day is racist. "There's a lot of racism in this school," she insisted. She wondered how disturbing her lunch—the only time she could relax in a predominantly white school was going to change that. "I think Diverse Friends Day is for white people," she concluded.

Is she wrong? I don't think so, especially in the absence of more serious racial equity efforts, which these students agreed were missing from their school. In my experience, many "celebrating diversity" initiatives are crafted to help white students learn about diversity—not *racism*, but *diversity*—in ways that will be most comfortable for them.

In some cases, students of color are used essentially as props for the gentle diversity education of white students through activities like Diverse Friends Day. This allows white people to opt out of considering racial justice while deriving social and cultural benefits from diversity awareness. It creates the illusion of diversity appreciation while entrenching inequity.

Requiring students of color to participate in these diversity spectacles while failing to attend adequately to inequity can be exploitive. Pam, Tariq, and José didn't need to share lunch with white students to learn about difference, much less how racism operated around them. They developed these insights as a matter of survival. White educators were asking them to celebrate a diversity in which their experiences were invisible. This is one way white privilege persists even in the context of diversity efforts.

Five Principles of Equity Literacy

At this point, I presume readers are thinking, "So what *should* equity efforts look like?" I'm cautious about addressing this sort of question. It may signify a common impulse in education to grasp for simple strategies to address challenges that are more about ideology and will than strategy. I encourage us to think, instead, about principles that can guide our equity actions.

Here are five *equity literacy* principles (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015) that can help us avoid equity detours and maximize the impact of our equity efforts.

1 Direct Confrontation Principle

The path to racial equity requires direct confrontations with racial inequity—with racism. We start, again, by asking, "How is racism operating here?"

Gather the racial equity advocates in your school, district, and consequences for students of color if applied by educators who harbor racial bias even if they aren't intending to be racist? What do you need to change about that policy, or about the racial ideologies in your school or district, to make it equitable?

2 Redistribution Principle

Equity involves redistributing access and opportunity at the most basic institutional level. This includes material access to things like learning materials, technology, healthy food, and even healthcare. It also includes nonmaterial access to higher-order pedagogies, relatable curricula, and equity-conscious teachers.

The idea here is to intimately examine how institutional policies

Although racial identities inform cultural identities, race is not culture. Racial inequities aren't predominantly cultural misunderstandings.

community and map the ways—big and small, implicit and explicit—that racial inequities persist. Examine policy, curricula, and discipline practices. If you struggle to identify how racism is operating, invest time to learn how to do it. When I work with educational leaders committed to acquiring an equity lens, I find simple prompts like these can provide opportunities for meaningful practice:

• What is one practice in your school that focuses on fixing students of color rather than fixing the conditions that marginalize them? How can you reshape that practice for racial equity?

• What policy might have harsher

and practices provide some students more access and opportunity than others. It may mean re-examining how school practices are crafted in relation to students' lived experiences and whether institutional policy and culture are responsive to the interests of the most marginalized students.

For example, as we examine behavior policies, we might ask ourselves whether we're cognizant of the depth of racial bias associated with how educators tend to interpret behavior and dole out behavior referrals.

Policy handbooks are another good place to start. Study your school's policies line by line. Might any perpetuate racial inequity—like a dress code policy banning items associated with specific racial groups or assessment practices that could mask racial bias? Work with the equity advocates in your school and community to revise those policies and practices *right now*. Then attend to dynamics of institutional culture that resulted in the existence of biased policies to begin with.

3 Prioritization Principle

The only way to redistribute access and opportunity is to prioritize the interests of students of color. Every policy and practice decision should be filtered through this lens: How will this policy impact families of color? How will it improve conditions for students of color? Remember that, in inequitable contexts, equalityattending equally to everybody's interests—reproduces inequity. For example, we know that students of color are disproportionately tracked out of "upper-track" classes (Leonardo & Grubb, 2018) and that on average, students in "lower-track" classes have less access to engaging pedagogy and more exposure to control-oriented teaching practices. And because we also know these disparities are driven significantly by racial bias in referral and assessment processes (Faulkner et al., 2014), a racial equity commitment should lead us to abandon traditional tracking methods. We can prioritize the interests of students of color by trading what we perceive as the equality and efficiency of those methods—efficiency for whom? we might ask-for a process that eliminates the influence of racism.

Equity Ideology Principle Equity is a lens and an ideological commitment. No strategy can help us cultivate equitable schools if we're unwilling to understand how racism operates. Professional development opportunities related to equity should emphasize the ideological work required to more deeply understand the dynamics of racism in society and schools. Then we can draw on those deeper understandings to build our practical approach for eliminating racism.

5 #FixInjusticeNotKids Principle

Effective equity efforts focus not on fixing students of color, but on eliminating racist conditions. If we find ourselves, in the name of equity, adopting initiatives meant to improve educational outcomes by adjusting mindsets or cultures in students of color, it's time to reconsider our efforts.

Do We Have the Will?

Implementing a transformative racial equity commitment is difficult, especially if we face significant resistance. Of course, it's not more difficult than navigating racism, which many students, families, and educators of color endure. I cling to hope that most of us want racial equity. The question for those of us who find the detours alluring is whether we have the will to align our actions with our philosophies. My hope is that, by considering the detours and principles discussed here, we can find ways to strengthen our equity efforts and create schools that deliver on the basic ideals of equity and justice.

¹This is not an exhaustive list, but gives a few examples.

²All student names are pseudonyms.

References

Annamma, S., Morrison, D., & Jackson, D. (2014). Disproportionality fills the gaps: Connections between achievement, discipline and special education in the school-to-prison pipeline. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 5(1).

- Au, W. (2017). When multicultural education is not enough. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 19(3), 147–150.
- Faulkner, V. N., Stiff, L. V., Marshall, P. L., Nietfeld, J., & Crossland, C. L. (2014). Race and teacher evaluations as predictors of algebra placement. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 45(3), 288–311.
- Gorski, P. (2016a). Rethinking the role of "culture" in educational equity: From cultural competence to equity literacy. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 18(4), 221–226.
- Gorski, P. (2016b). Poverty and the ideology imperative: A call to unhook from deficit and grit ideology and to strive for structural ideology in teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42, 378–386.
- Gorski, P., & Swalwell, K. (2015). Equity literacy for all. *Educational Leadership*, 72(6), 34–40.
- Kohli, R. (2018). Behind school doors: The impact of hostile racial climates on urban teachers of color. *Urban Education*, 53(3), 307–333.
- Kohn, A. (2014). Grit? A skeptical look at the latest educational fad. *Independent School*.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). It's not the culture of poverty, it's the poverty of culture: The problem with teacher

GUIDING QUESTIONS

> Do you think your school or district engages in any equity detours? How might you reexamine such initiatives in light of Gorski's equity literacy principles?

> Do you agree with Gorski's point that schools "must prioritize equity over the comfort of reluctant educators"? What would this mean in your school or district? education. Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 37(2), 104–109.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2017). 'Makes me wanna holler': Refuting the 'culture of poverty' discourse in urban schooling. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 673(1), 80–90.
- Leonardo, Z., & Grubb, W. N. (2018). Education and racism: A primer on issues and dilemmas. New York: Routledge.
- Mayorga, E., & Picower, B. (2018). Active solidarity: Centering the demands and vision of the Black Lives Matter movement in teacher education. *Urban Education*, 53(2), 212–230.
- Olsson, J. (1997). Detour-spotting for white anti-racists: A tool for change. *Cultural Bridges to Justice*.
- Picower, B. (2011). Resisting compliance: Learning to teach for social justice in a neoliberal context. *Teachers College Record*, 113(5), 1105–1134.
- Pon, G. (2009). Cultural competency as new racism: An ontology of forgetting. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 20(1), 59–71.
- Redeaux, M. (2011). The culture of poverty reloaded. *Monthly Review*, 63(3), 96–102.
- Rudd, T. (2014). Racial disproportionality in school discipline: Implicit bias is heavily implicated. Columbus, OH: Kirwan Institute.
- Swanson, J., & Welton, A. (2018). When good intentions only go so far: White principals leading conversations about race. *Urban Education* [online].
- Valentine, C. (1968). *Culture and poverty: Critique and counter-proposal*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Paul Gorski (gorski@edchange. org) is the founder of the Equity Literacy Institute (equityliteracy.org) and EdChange. He helps educators across the United States and internationally strengthen their equity and justice efforts and is author, coauthor, or coeditor of more than 10 books, including *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty* (Teachers College Press, 2013) and *Case Studies on Diversity and Social Justice Education* (Routledge, 2013).

HOME VISITOR SELF-REFLECTION

CATEGORY	Description/Standard	+	\checkmark	-
RELATIONSHIPS Does your program promote and engage in positive adult and child relationships?	Program sets a tone that encourages positive relationships between adults and children, which are essential for children's sense of personal responsibility and for fostering their capacity for self-regulation, interactions and academic mastery.			
CURRICULUM How is your program including cultural and language diversity?	The program implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and that promotes cultural diversity, learning and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive.			
ASSESSMENT OF CHILD PROGRESS Parent have an understanding of the developmental assessment process.	The program uses formal assessment approaches to provide information on children's learning and development. Providing written documentation to the family in multiple languages. Explaining development using cultural appropriate examples.			
PROMOTION OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS	The program promotes the nutrition and health of children and protects children and staff from illness.			
STAFF COMPETENCIES, PREPARATION, AND SUPPORT	The program employs and supports a teaching and administrative staff that have the qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and cultural interests.			
FAMILIES	The program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child's family to foster children's development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.			
COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS	The program establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children's communities to support the achievement of program goals.			
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	The program has a safe and healthful environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments. The environment includes facilities, equipment, and materials to facilitate child and staff learning and development.			
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	The program effectively implements policies, procedures, and systems that support stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences.			

Reflect on how your program provides high quality programs and services to your families, include your cultural lens to examine the categories. Select for (+) excellent (\checkmark) fair and (-) needs improvement.

Racism as a Toxic Stressor: What can Home Visitors do About it? PCA Illinois Statewide Virtual Conference

COST OF RACISM IN THE US PER YEAR [SOURCE]

DEATH RATES [SOURCE]

This comes in the form of: >>> Bias against workers >> Wage discrimination >> Hiring discrimination >> Discrimination based on price >> Services discrimination >> Discrete usage discrimination >> Capital investment discrimination



OF ACTIVE "HATE GROUPS" IN THE US [SOURCE]



These groups include

. >> Ku Klux Klan >> Black Separatists >> Racist Skinheads >> White Nationals

le:	
>>	Neo-Nazis
>>	Neo-Confederates
>>	Christian Identity
	Anti-LGBT

(Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered)

IN SCHOOLS [SOURCE]

15.8

Of students reported experiencing race-based bullying or harassment.

In students, research has found significant associations between:



JOB SEARCHING [SOURCE]

One U.S. study found that job resumes with traditionally white-sounding names, when compared to traditionally Black names, received

50% MORE CALLBACKS

More likely than white men to be killed

Chance of dying at the hands of police.

More likely to be killed than white women.

More likely to be killed than white men.



HATE CRIMES PER YEAR [SOURCE]



PROJECTED GROWTH

BETWEEN 2040 — 2050

The U.S. will become a majority "minority" country. [SOURCE]

ONLY

HEALTH CARE [SOURCE]

2013 — 2017

% of Patients Receiving Lesser Quality Health Care than White Patients



Black Patients

Native American Patients

EFFECTS OF RACISI



Of white adults say that the long-term growth in racial and ethnic diversity is a good thing for the country. [SOURCE]





Hispanic Patients



Racial (In)Equity

WHY is it important?

WHAT is racial equity?



The statistical portrait of the US population broken out by race reveals persistent disparities between people of color and white people in almost every indicator





everyone gets the same size box, yet they still don't have a view of the game.

Equality promotes fairness by giving everyone the same thing, one box. BUT, it can only work if everyone starts from the same place.

In the picture on the right, each person gets enough boxes to give them a view of the game. We must first ensure EQUITY, everyone with a view of the same. It's about making sure people get access to the same opportunities in a society that has created barriers to participation based on race.

Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares.

HOW can we change this?



Equity = fairness



If we see one fish floating face up we might wonder what was wrong with the fish, but if we see all the fish floating face up, maybe we should begin to wonder what is wrong with the water.



- Learn more: go.unc.edu/RacialEquity
- Attend a racial equity workshop
- Pay attention to what is going on in your community - attend board meetings and talk with elected officials
- Read!

Morgan, J. D., De Marco. A. C., Ayankoya, B., LaForett, D. R., Franco, X., Morgan. W., & FPG's Race, Culture, and Ethnicity Committee. (2017, June). Racial (In)Equity: An Infographic. Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Preschool Enrollment

Racial Inequities in Preschool Discipline

Black students, especially boys are disproportionately more likely than their white peers to face multiple suspensions from preschool.



Multiple suspensions

Disproportionate preschool suspensions are the result of adult behaviors.

- They arise from **implicit racial biases** which impact teacher expectations (Gilliam et al., 2016).
- Preschool suspensions contribute to **loss of vital school time** that contributes to the achievement gap and can begin students on a negative school trajectory (Losen, et al., 2015).
- Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as **10 times more likely** to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not (Lamont et al., 2013; Petraset al., 2011).

Morgan, W., Ayankoya, B., De Marco. A. C., Morgan, J. D., LaForett, D. R., Franco, X., Morgan. W., & FPG's Race, Culture, and Ethnicity Committee. (2017, September). Racial Inequities in Preschool Discipline: An Infographic. Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Available at: <a href="http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.u

FPG RACE Committee: go.unc.edu/RacialEquity



Housing



Banking



Institutional racism

Education

Institutional racism is distinguished from the explicit attitudes or racial bias of individuals by the existence of systematic policies or laws and practices that provide differential access to goods, services and opportunities of society by race. Institutional racism results in data showing racial gaps across every system. For children and families it affects where they live, the quality of the education they receive, their income, types of food they have access to, their exposure to pollutants, whether they have access to clean air, clean water or adequate medical treatment, and the types of interactions they have with the criminal justice system.

Morgan, J. D., De Marco. A. C., LaForett, D. R., Oh, S., Ayankoya, B., Morgan. W., Franco, X., & FPG's Race, Culture, and Ethnicity Committee. (2018, May). What Racism Looks Like: An Infographic. Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Available at: http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/other-resources/What%20Racism%20Looks%20Like.pdf

What Racism Looks Like

Both Ryan and Jamal graduated from high school and went on to attend and graduate from very good, statefunded universities. However, because he was forced to take out student loans, Jamal was left with significant debt that made it more difficult for him to start accumulate wealth in adulthood. Even though Jamal and Ryan graduated with similar GPAs with majors in engineering, Ryan secured a job interview almost immediately from a friend of the family while Jamal did not get nearly as many call backs. Studies show that you are 50% less likely to get a job interview if your application has a black-sounding name (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). In addition, Jamal earns substantially less than Ryan (Chetty et. al, 2018) and will likely run into the same difficulties his family faced in buying a home and earning equity which will increase the likelihood that his children will be raised in the same type of neighborhood that he grew up in, thus repeating the cycle.



Meet Ryan and Jamal.

Meet Ryan and Jamal. They are both 8 years old. Their lives and the lives of their families are powerfully shaped by the communities in which they live (Sampson, 2011) and the institutions with which they interact. Institutional racism has influenced the lives of both boys, giving Ryan a host of opportunities and privileges while creating significant disadvantages for Jamal.

Housing & Wealth-building.

Although both Jamal and Ryan's parents earn similar incomes and manage their finances well, because of public and private

housing-discrimination practices (ex. redlining, real estate steering, restrictive covenants), Jamal's family lives in a high poverty neighborhood, like many African Americans. Jamal's family was one of the numerous middle class minority families targeted for a predatory, high-interest loan during the mortgage crisis. As a result, they lost their family home which wiped out decades of financial growth, setting them back almost an entire generation (Burd-Sharps, & Rasch, 2015). They currently rent an apartment that they share with Jamal's grandmother. Ryan's family was also hit during the mortgage crisis but they were able to rely on financial support from Ryan's grandfather to soften the blow. Ryan's grandfather took advantage of the GI Bill, which paid for his education and gave him a government guaranteed housing loan to buy a home in a fastgrowing suburb. As a result, Ryan's grandparents were able to save money and used the equity in their home to give Ryan's family a down payment for a new home. This reflects the national pattern: 72% of White families own homes compared to 42% of Black families (US Census, 2018). For 2016, the median wealth for black families was \$17,600 and for white families was \$171,000 (Federal Reserve Board, 2017).

Public Health.

Because housing discrimination limits the areas in which Jamal's family can reside, he lives in a neighborhood where housing stock is deteriorating. The poor housing quality worsens Jamal's asthma, causing school absences and expensive trips to the emergency room. Faced with high crime rates, dilapidated housing stock, and the stress and marginalization of poverty, residents of very poor neighborhoods demonstrate a higher incidence of poor physical and mental health outcomes, like asthma, depression, diabetes, and heart ailments. (Kneebone & Holmes, 2016)

Education & Criminal Justice.

Ryan attends a top-ranked school where most of the students come from high income families, Jamal on the other hand attends his chronically underfunded poor-performing neighborhood school which has fewer resources, less experienced teachers, and higher dropout rates. Jamal's favorite subjects are science and math but unlike Ryan's more affluent high school, Jamal will not have access to the full range of math, science and college preparatory courses at his school. Despite his strong interest in academics, high achievement on standardized tests, Jamal's teacher does not refer him to be screened for the gifted and talented program. Instead, he is more likely to be subjected to harsh disciplinary policies, including excessive suspensions, expulsions, and arrests that would make him miss valuable school time.

The cycle continues...

For more information: <u>http://go.unc.edu/RacialEquity</u>