



# Embedding Racial Equity in Policy

---

MARICELLA GARCIA

RACE EQUITY DIRECTOR FOR  
ADVOCACY



# AACF Racial Equity Statement

---

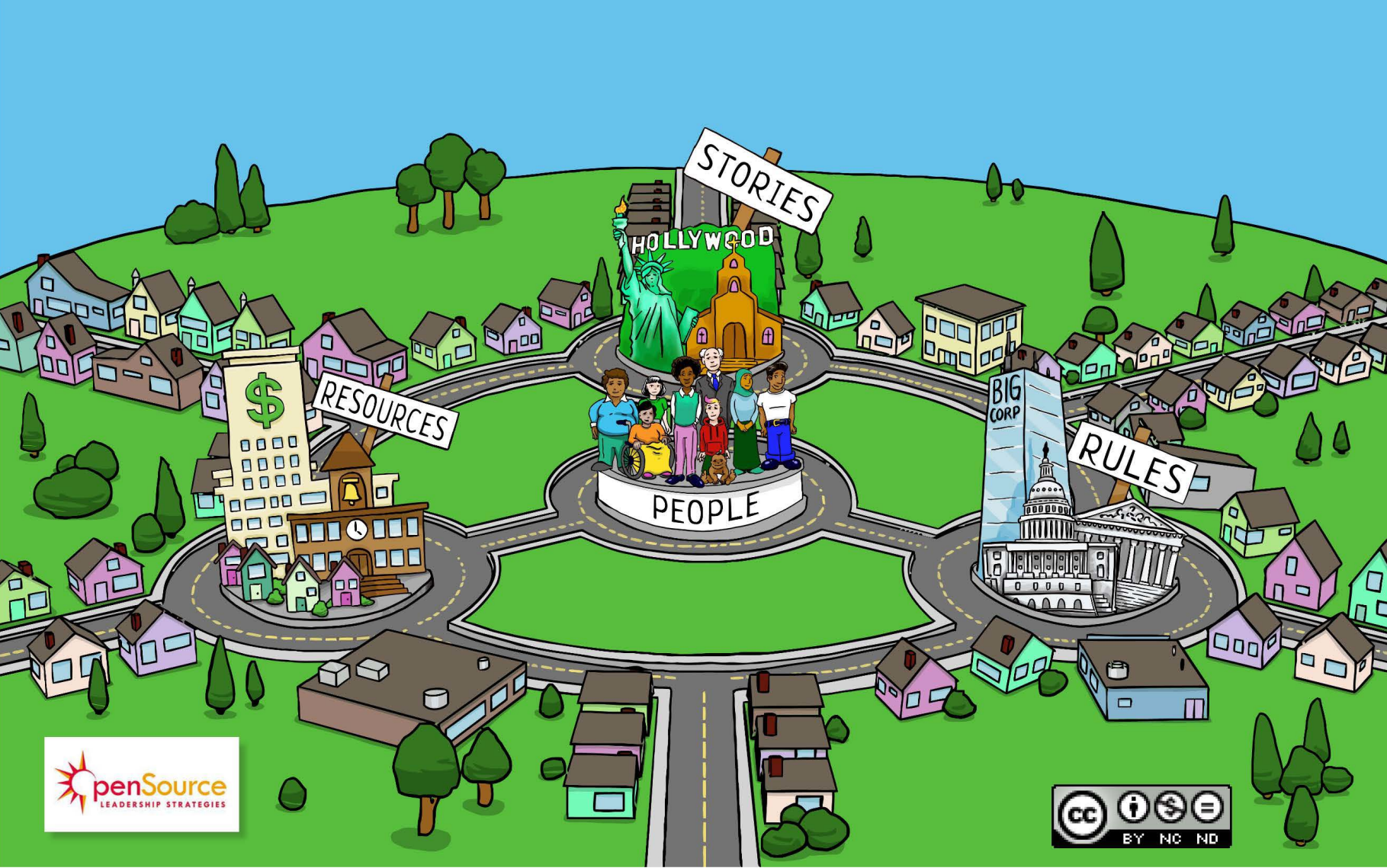
At AACF, our racial equity focus *aligns our mission and stated values with our organizational practices and programs*. We recognize that *structural inequity has been embedded in our national and state culture and policies and has had a lasting effect*, as seen today in disparities in children's outcomes across race and many other identities. AACF believes in intentionally *engaging diverse perspectives throughout our work*. We are committed to amplifying the voices and wisdom of those most directly affected by systemic oppression, with a *focus on building a more equitable and inclusive Arkansas* to truly serve every child and family.

# Equity vs. Equality: Why Does It Matter?

---

- Racial Equity is a process of *eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone*. It is the *intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color*. In relation to race, equity is achieved when all people—especially people of color that have historically been oppressed and marginalized—are the “owners, planners and decision-makers in the systems that govern their lives and are provided the infrastructure needed to thrive.” *Through racial equity, the needs of each community, group or individual are met and everyone benefits from a more just, equitable system.*
- Racial Equality, in contrast, aims to ensure that *everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives*. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but *it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things.*

# How Do We Think About How Racism is Operating in Policy?



## How is Structural Racism Operating?

What is the cumulative **history** of advantage and disadvantage?

---

What **stories** are being told or assumed? Who determines them? Whose humanity do they elevate and who do they degrade?

What **rules** are in place? Who do they benefit and who do they burden?

How are **resources** designed, distributed, and controlled? Whose needs and wants do they meet and privilege?

What **people** are directly impacted and what is their voice? Who has authority or influence, and what actions are they taking?

## How can Racial Equity Take Root?

What can we learn from **history** about how to make sustainable change?

---

What **stories** would more accurately convey and support the full humanity of all people?

What **rules** would be fair to everyone and right past wrongs?

How could **resources** be available, accessible, and relevant to the needs of the people who need them the most?

How could **people** with authority and influence be more reflective of and accountable to those who are directly impacted?

## How is Structural Racism Operating in Affordable Housing?

---

What **stories** are being told or assumed? Who determines them? Whose humanity do they elevate and who do they degrade?

Public Housing was developed after the Great Depression to help "deserving poor" and that discrimination carries forward to today. "Deserving poor" who should receive help are those White families that follow the heteronormative, CIS White, Male definition of family.

What **rules** are in place? Who do they benefit and who do they burden?

We have to strictly monitor who gets public housing because BIPOC people are lazy and likely to abuse the system. This benefits White families and Burdens BIPOC Families. This over-policing of Black bodies goes back to slavery.

How are **resources** designed, distributed, and controlled? Whose needs and wants do they meet and privilege?

BIPOC folx have fewer resources to be homeowners. They are more likely than White households to be extremely low-income renters and disproportionately struggle to pay rent. This is due in part to persistent discrimination in the job market where BIPOC folx still make less than their White counterparts.

What **people** are directly impacted and what is their voice? Who has authority or influence, and what actions are they taking?

BIPOC folx don't have a voice and as a result they are most likely to be funneled into housing that does not meet basic standards. White folx are disproportionately represented in positions of power such as case workers and they decide who gets what benefits.

## How can Racial Equity Take Root Around Affordable Housing?

---

What **stories** would more accurately convey and support the full humanity of all people?

Housing is a fundamental right and everyone regardless of race is entitled to safe, quality, affordable housing. More importantly we should prioritize those groups including BIPOC folx who have been historically excluded from receiving these benefits.

What **rules** would be fair to everyone and right past wrongs?

Residents should be trusted and given autonomy over their home. They should be able to report issues in their housing without fear of retribution. Landlords should be monitored closely to ensure they are providing safe, quality, affordable housing and responding to resident's concerns.

How could **resources** be available, accessible, and relevant to the needs of the people who need them the most?

Government agencies at all levels can create more equitable distribution of resources by engaging the BIPOC residents who are living in public housing. They have unique knowledge brought by their lived experiences and giving them to have a meaningful opportunity to voice their perspectives, concerns, and recommendations can unearth issues the agency is unaware of and reveal better strategies to meet the actual needs of community members.

How could **people** with authority and influence be more reflective of and accountable to those who are directly impacted?

Building inclusive community engagement practices requires that we listen to all voices and put additional weight to BIPOC voices that have typically been excluded from these conversations and whose lived experience can help agencies identify ways to consciously engage these communities on an ongoing basis.

# Remember – Equity is Journey

---

- How does equity change?
- What other questions should we ask?
  - Is this policy an equity issue that disproportionately affects communities of color and/or other historically excluded groups? For example, people who have been excluded due to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, language, immigration status, and/or other status.
  - If successful, will it improve the lives of children in general or specifically improve the lives of kids in marginalized groups impacted by intersecting identities such as race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, etc.

Questions?

