Activity #6: Examining The Soil
Cultural Racism

TREE of RACISM

FRUIT
INDIVIDUAL

TREE TRUNK
INSTITUTIONAL

FRUIT & BRANCHES
INTERPERSONAL

SOIL
CULTURAL
REPRESENTATIONS, MESSAGES, & STORIES CONVEYING THE IDEA THAT BEHAVIORS & VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH WHITE PEOPLE OR "WHITENESS" ARE AUTOMATICALLY "BETTER" OR MORE "NORMAL" THAN THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER RACIALLY DEFINED GROUPS.

ROOTS
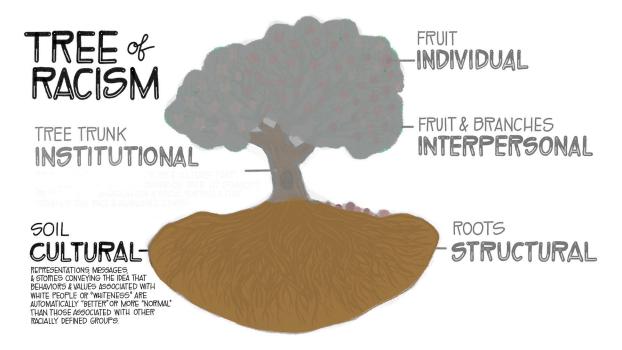**STRUCTURAL**

Purpose: This activity is meant to be an honest and reflective exercise with the goal of increasing your awareness of the manifestations of cultural racism in your organization; among your partner organizations; ecosystem stakeholders; and in your local, state, or regional context.

Time: This activity will take approximately 2.5 hours to complete.

Process:

1. **Getting Started** *(15 min.)*
   a. Designate one person to write down all the words that stand out to the team.
   b. As a team, review the graphic of the tree and read the definition of cultural racism.
   c. Team members are invited to call out words that stand out to them in the definition.
   d. Discuss why these words stood out to each of you.
   e. Review the responses and ask clarifying questions of each other if needed.
   f. After discussion is complete, move to the next phase in the process.

2. **Analyzing the Environment** *(60 min.)*
   a. Designate one person to capture responses and themes from the discussion.
   b. As a team, answer the following questions:
      i. What are the dominant narratives (stories) about people of color in your context?

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THE FRAMEWORK

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ii. How are youth and young people of color talked about in your career and education ecosystem (e.g., stereotyped, problematized, as assets, as liabilities)?

iii. How are unemployed and underemployed workers of color labeled in your career and education ecosystem (e.g., stereotyped, problematized, as assets, as liabilities)?

iv. Think about the words stakeholders in your ecosystem use to describe individuals experiencing unemployment. List those words and answer the following questions:

    1. Do these words/terms cause harm to the individuals they are describing?

    2. Do these words/terms reinforce stereotypes about the individuals they are describing?

    3. Were these words/terms chosen as descriptors by the individuals they are describing OR were they put upon the individuals they are describing?

    4. Are there partners/organizations who use coded language to describe people, communities, and problems?

v. Think about your grant applications. How do you describe the "problem or challenge" in your local context?

    1. How are people described?

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2. How is the systemic context described (if at all)?

3. [Review this article](#) and answer the questions at the end.

vi. In your grant applications, how is your organization and its services described (e.g., hero, savior, partner, ally)?

vii. Think about the "success stories" that your organization writes:
    1. How is the challenge described?

    2. How is "success" described? In whose words?

    3. Whose voice is centered in the story?

    4. Who's the hero in the story?

    5. In preparing for the story, how were participants prepared?

viii. In your conversations and discussions with ecosystem partners and stakeholders, is there an acknowledgment of systemic racism?

    1. If yes, what's the response of those you're in conversation with?

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2. If no, why not?

ix. Think about your website and literature. Are people of color represented?

1. If yes, how are they represented?

2. If not, why aren't they represented?

x. Take some time to review the collective responses to the questions.
xi. **ACTION:** As a team, map (or list) the key themes that surfaced through the responses to the questions. Discuss the similarities and differences.
xii. **ACTION:** Based on these responses, create a list of changes that need to be made in your ecosystem in order to address cultural racism.
xiii. Upon completion of the discussion, move to the next step in the process.

3. Exploring the Implications in Your Work *(30 min.)*
    a. Review the map (list) of key themes that surfaced during the group discussion in step 2.
    b. Discuss the implications of these themes on your work. Consider responding the following prompts:
        i. What do these themes tell us about how cultural racism is manifesting in our ecosystem?

        ii. What is our organization's commitment to addressing cultural racism in our ecosystem?

        iii. What is the work that we can do to address cultural racism in our ecosystem?

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iv. Who can we partner with to address cultural racism in our ecosystem?

v. If we engage in narrative change work, what concerns do we have?

vi. What support (if any) do we need in order to address the manifestation of cultural racism in our ecosystem?

c. **ACTION:** Based on your responses, identify three to five next steps that your organization is willing to take to address cultural racism in your organization and ecosystem. Consider using this action planning template to outline the action steps identified.

4. **Reflecting on the activity** *(15 min.)*
    a. As a team, reflect on this process. Consider the following prompts for your discussion:
        i. How did it feel to move through this process?

        ii. Did this activity reveal anything new to you?

        iii. Was this activity valuable to you/your work?

    b. Allow the team to reflect on any components of the process they find helpful.