

NLIHC's Training Institute Race, Culture, and Equity 101

2/26/2026

Agenda



Welcome & Intro

- Dee Ross, Tenant Leader Fellow, NLIHC
- Ramina Davidson, VP, Field Strategy & Innovation

Race, Culture, and Equity 101

- Gabrielle Ross, Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Sidney Betancourt, Manager of Inclusive Community Engagement

Next Steps

- Dee Ross, Tenant Leader Fellow, NLIHC

Welcome & Intro



Dee Ross

Tenant Leader Fellow

National Low Income Housing Coalition

Definitions



- **Racial Justice:** is a vision and transformation of society to eliminate racial hierarchies and advance collective liberation, where Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, in particular, have the dignity, resources, power, and self-determination to fully thrive.
- **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.
- **Diversity:** A variety of identities or characteristics. Diversity is a quantitative measure of representation.
- **Inclusion:** The measure of the quality of representation, such as full access, authentic representation, empowered participation, true belonging and power-sharing. Inclusion is a qualitative measure of representation and participation.
- **Equity:** Ensures that outcomes in the conditions of well-being are improved for marginalized groups, lifting outcomes for all. Equity is a measure of justice.

IDEAS: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, **Anti-Racism**, **Systems-Thinking**

- **Anti-Racism:** Actively working to dismantle policy, procedure, and structures that perpetuate inequality and harm – understanding that anti-blackness and racism are the root. Anti-Racism can be manifested through policy, programs, and other actions that lead to equity.
- **Systems-thinking:** The understanding that the systems and structures that people interact with and are influenced by produce consistently different housing, air quality, health, economic, and educational outcomes in different communities. This emphasizes the need to strategize on multiple fronts to change these outcomes.

NLIHC IDEAS – A Framework in Progress



- How is NLIHC engaging in IDEAS?
 - Internal Actions
 - Organizational Culture and Equity Evaluation
 - Fostering a culture of openness and collaboration
 - Establishing values and principles
 - External Actions
 - Engaging renters with lived experience meaningfully
 - Centering lived experience in our research, policy, advocacy, and community engagement
 - Engaging with NLIHC's State and Tribal Partner Network through the Racial Equity Working Group



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- How do you or your group engage in these tenets of DEI?

NLIHC
www.nlihc.org

What is Culture?

culture 1 of 2 noun

cul·ture 'kəl-çər

[Synonyms of culture >](#)

1 a : the beliefs, customs, arts, etc. of a particular social group, place, or time

| popular *culture*

| today's youth *culture*

| a study of Greek language and *culture*

| And there are so many nods to South Asian *culture* throughout the show.

– Radhika Seth

| These collections provide an excellent resource for finding a new interest and learning about American *culture* and history.

– James Lileks

b : a particular society that has its own characteristic features of everyday existence (as pastimes or a way of life)

| an ancient *culture*

| It's important to learn about other *cultures*.

| My art helps to broaden the definition of beauty, promoting inclusivity and celebrating the richness of African *cultures* and identities.

– Sarfo Emmanuel Annor, quoted in *Vogue*

c : the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization

Why is culture important to social justice work?

What are cultural shifts – what does it take to achieve them?

**Culture isn't just a definition.
It shapes what happens next.**

What we're taught

→ What we believe

→ How we treat people

→ What laws get passed

Cultural Activism

Cultural activism is the practice of using our shared ways of life → our stories, art, traditions, and daily routines → to encourage **positive change** in the world.



Cultural humility



- Cultural Competence vs. Cultural Humility
- Cultural humility allows for learning, instead of holding to and maintaining power
- Self-awareness goes hand in hand with cultural humility



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- How do you see the connection between race, justice, and culture? (long answer)

Building power in your community



Building power in your community is the practice of turning shared experiences → shared relationships → and shared struggles into organized action that creates real change.

It means realizing you are not alone → connecting with others who feel the same → and building something strong enough to **shift systems**.

Its neighbors becoming leaders → **voices becoming strategy** → and frustration becoming influence.

When we build power, we move from surviving the system → to shaping the system → to **leading the future**.

Cultural and Systems Level Change



- Racism
 - Individual vs. Systemic
- Structural racialization (aka structural racism)
 - "is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors" [John A. Powell, Deepening Our Understanding of Structural Marginalization, Poverty & Race, Vol. 22, No. 5, (September-October 2013)]
- To fully address cultural and systemic change, we must look at how interventions, systems, and other institutions are either contributing to positive or negative outcomes.
 - Housing, education, transportation, employment, healthcare, etc.

Examples of Building Power Across the Country



City	What Happened	Power Strategy Used	Impact
Minneapolis, MN	Renters organized and purchased their apartment building	Tenant association + collective negotiation + community financing	Renters became owners and decision-makers
Washington, D.C.	Tenants used TOPA law to buy their buildings	Policy leverage + organized tenants	Thousands of units converted to tenant-owned co-ops
Oakland, CA	Expansion of Community Land Trusts	Coalition building + land acquisition organizing	Permanent affordability & anti-displacement
Kansas City, MO	Passed a Tenants' Bill of Rights	Grassroots organizing + city council pressure	Stronger renter protections
New York City, NY	Tenant unions pushed statewide rent reforms	Building-level organizing + state advocacy	Expanded rent stabilization protections
Louisville, KY	Vacant hotels converted into permanent housing	Housing justice advocacy + public funding pressure	Increased housing access for unhoused residents

Conclusion and Resources

- <https://www.raceforward.org/what-racial-equity-0>
- <https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/principles-racially-equitable-policy-platforms>
- https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/AG-2025/1-18_A-Racial-Equity-Lens-Is-Critical-to-Housing.pdf
- https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/TCE_Star_WP_Training%20material%20Final%20Flint.pdf

Next Steps



- Stay tune for upcoming webinar announcements!!!
- For a full description of the Tenant and Resident Training Institute and to access past webinars, visit: <https://nlihc.org/training-institute>
- **For questions, please contact: dross@nlihc.org or ideas@nlihc.org**