



## Premise of this Learning Lab

The scope of our conversation presumes the following is true (in no particular order). If you have questions, concerns, or disagreements to share, please raise them *beforehand* with Michael Durham at [mdurham@nhchc.org](mailto:mdurham@nhchc.org), 571-335-0066.

- Homelessness is a symptom of racism.
- The core of racism in the United States is white supremacy. A broader concept than just white nationalist groups, white supremacy is an ideology that positions whiteness as superior.
- That Black and Indigenous people are the two most overrepresented groups in the homeless population is no coincidence; it is the legacy of slavery and genocide.
- Racism is a white problem, which is to say that it is the responsibility of white people to dismantle white supremacy, not the burden of people of color.
- Racism is inherent to whiteness; in a sense, white people are inevitably racist. But they can choose to be anti-racist.
- All of us have individual prejudices, but white people and people of color have different work to do in the movement for racial justice. For people of color, the task at hand is to understand how racism is internalized and institutionalized. For white people, it is to unceasingly educate themselves on the historical and present-day systemic oppression of people of color and how their own lives are complicit.
- The work against white supremacy benefits everyone, including white people. None of us are free until all of us are free.
- If you are a white person who has experienced homelessness, your experience is valid and tragic. We all bear the responsibility for our society's failure to ensure your human rights. But it is also true that your race was at least a neutral factor in your experience of homelessness.
- If approaches to ending homelessness that purport to be race-neutral favor white people, the way forward means services should be racially explicit. Advocates for equity and inclusion (usually people of color) are always pressed to show the ROI for such initiatives, but white people seldom must justify the failing status quo.
- Even self-described progressive service organizations will be complicit in white supremacy if they are not consciously resisting it. As agencies serving people without homes, a recognition of the racial inequity in the reality of homelessness requires that we center racial justice in the work to end homelessness.
- Conversations on racism in mixed-race groups can be triggering and difficult. White people often take umbrage at perceived accusations of personal racism. It is often the case, in fact, that white liberals believe themselves to be immune to these criticisms, especially as human services professionals. For people of color, racism is not a social justice movement they can opt out of. White people can afford to stop thinking about racism when leaving this discussion, but people of color cannot. It is customary for people of color to be asked to represent their race and to explain racism to white people.
- Purporting to champion the nexus of homelessness and health care, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council has much work to do in centering racial justice. This learning lab is one miniscule step in that direction.