

Creating Change

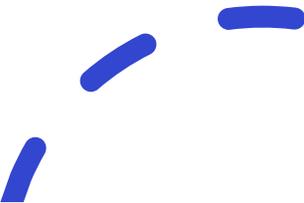
How to create structural change in organizations and institutions plagued by systemic racism and anti-blackness.

(especially online institutions)



We live in a culture of pervasive anti-blackness and systemic racism.

- All institutions, communities, and groups must necessarily reflect that system by default to at least some degree.
- The default mode, as Jessie Daniels points out in “Race, Civil Rights, and Hate Speech in the Digital Era,” is often to do this covertly. White people have the privilege of seeing their role in systemic racism as a neutral political position.
- Throughout their careers, both MLK and Malcolm X pointed out that well-meaning white liberals are the worst enemy black people have because they profess to want racial justice but refuse to lift a finger to get there by practicing critical self-examination to see how they are contributing to systemic racism and benefiting from it.





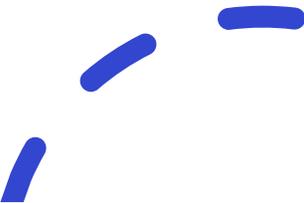
Measure the Racism and Talk About It:

- Does the group claim to represent a specific population?
 - Is it America? The world? The SF Bay Area? Fans of a particular TV show?
- What kind of people have the ultimate power to make decisions for the group?
 - How different is this group of decision makers from the demographics of the population they claim to represent?
- How do the rules and guidelines of the group reflect and reinforce systemic racism?
 - Look for racist dog whistles like “no politics” which establishes white privilege as the default and silences any criticism of systemic racism.
- How are black voices silenced or excluded?
- What percentage of the group’s posts center black people?





Before you can change the system, you need to build a powerful coalition...

- In the book, “Rules For Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals,” Saul Alinsky recommends drawing a clear line between two subgroups with no one in the middle:
 - Some people want to embrace progress and take real steps towards changing the structure of the group. Find them and connect with them!
 - Other people want to “leave politics out” or gatekeep who counts as part of the community. These are the racist white liberals who MLK and Malcolm X warned us about. These are the people on the other side of the line we are drawing. Any outright white supremacists in the group will be indistinguishable from these white liberals, and they will agree on all the important points. This is the covert racism Jessie Daniels tells us about.
- 



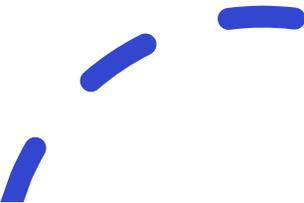
Before you can change the system, you need to build a powerful coalition...

- Your ideas are tools: a meme is any idea which spreads through culture. Memes are the tools for transforming the group. Create and share memes and ideas which speak to the people who are on your side, and show you who is not on your side. Use simple ideas and memes to explain what's wrong and suggest solutions.
 - For online communities this can be literal memes.
 - For in-person communities it can be ideas like
 - "Let's switch to equal opportunity hiring."
 - "Let's work on racism in the organization."
 - "Let's work on closing the wage gap."
- Whether online or in-person, some people will roll their eyes while others will smile and engage. People on both sides of the line will do the work of telling you which side they are on. Just show them the line and they will pick a side.





Before you can change the system, you need to build a powerful coalition...

- Pay attention to the responses you get when you talk about racial progress. Make a list of those who agree with you, and organize them into a coalition.
 - Start group chats and build connections between people who share your belief that structural change is needed to achieve racial progress in the organization.
 - Pay special attention to those in power who are on your side and those who are not.
 - Save screenshots of any problematic behavior for later use. Share these in the group chats so everyone can see the problems.
- 



Demand Specific Change

- Systemic racism is a structure that moves power and resources to white people at the expense of black people. We need to change the structure that the group is built on in order to change this flow.
- The demographics of the people in power who get to make decisions needs to reflect the population. Demand black representation on the board, the committees, the managers, the admin team, the mod team, etc.
- No matter what kind of group it is, resources are flowing from some people to other people. Even if no one is getting paid, money is changing hands. Whose hands is it going to, and does the demographics of that group reflect the population the group claims to represent?





Apply Pressure. Don't Be Afraid To Escalate.

- Racist institutions do not want to change; this is why we built a strong coalition before demanding change.
- Make clear public statements with a list of specific demands for change.
- Recruit partners from other groups and organizations to help amplify the black voices demanding change.
- Disrupt the group by any means necessary. If they will not accept progress, then they will not operate. “No justice? No peace.”
- Speak out about your efforts in other forums. Create infographics to share on other websites and groups. These should clearly explain your demands and how people can help, “This is a racist group. Help us fix it by doing x.”
- Don't let the pressure off until the demands are met.
- Use reporting tools to take down problematic content.





Avoid Distractions

- Racist institutions have tools for redirecting and harmlessly dissipating efforts towards racial progress.
 - “Listening sessions”
 - “Setting up a special committee to look into this”
 - “Have a racism workshop”
 - “Post a fundraiser to ask other people to do something about it”
 - “Racial bias training”
- Do not allow these distraction tactics to derail you. Your demands for specific change must be directly met at the highest level or they will continue to be ignored.
- The goal of the institution is to waste the time and energy of activists in order to avoid changing the system.





It Has To Be You

- It is only with the help of people like YOU that these groups and institutions can choose to deliberately cultivate a just alternative to the racist defaults in our society.
- Only through empowering black people to make decisions for the group and have a representative share of the resources can an organization move away from systemic anti-blackness and racism and towards an equitable alternative.
- As Jessie Daniels points out, we need to create new discourses which value the voices of marginalized people online. We need to cultivate multiple literacies in our institutions. We have to show these groups and institutions that valuing and including marginalized perspectives is not just an option, but a prerequisite if they want to be allowed to operate in our communities both online and in-person.

